“Can’t Go Home Again: Sovereign Entanglements and the Black Radical Tradition in the Twentieth Century”

by

Alvaro Andrés Reyes

Literature Program
Duke University

Date:_______________________

Approved:

Wahneema Lubiano, Supervisor

Michael Hardt, Supervisor

Kathi Weeks

Fred Moten

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Literature Program in the Graduate School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation investigates the relation between the formation of “Blackness” and the Western tradition of sovereignty through the works of late twentieth century Black Radical theorists. I most specifically examine the work of Stokely Carmichael, Amiri Baraka, Frantz Fanon, and Huey P. Newton in order to delineate a shift within Black Radicalism which, due to an intense de-linking of Black nationalism from the concept of territorial sovereignty throughout the 1960s and early 1970s led to the formation of a new subjectivity (“Blackness”) oriented against and beyond the Western tradition of political sovereignty as a whole.

This dissertation begins by outlining the parameters of the concept of sovereignty as well as its relation to conquest, coloniality, and racialization more generally. I then examine the formation of Black Power as an expression of anti-colonial sentiments present within the United States and uncover there the influence of W.E.B. DuBois’ concept of double-consciousness. I then further examine the concept of Black Power through the work of Amiri Baraka and his notion of “Blackness” as the proximity to “home.” Each of these expositions of Black Power are undertaken in order to better understand the era of Black Power and its relation to both Black nationalism and the Western tradition of sovereignty.
Next, I turn to the work of Frantz Fanon, whom I claim prepares the way for the idea of “Blackness” as an ontological resistance beyond, not only the territorial imperative, but also the logic of sovereignty more generally. This notion of “Blackness” as an antidote to sovereign logic present within the work of Fanon allows me to turn to the work of Huey P. Newton in order to demonstrate his conceptualization of “Blackness” as an antagonistic subjectivity within a fully globalized society whose onset he had theorized and which he termed “empire.” I conclude by drawing on each of the above theorists as well as the work of Angela Davis in order to build a retrospective summary of this alternative lineage of the Black Radical Tradition and its importance for the conceptualization of resistances to and life beyond our contemporary society.
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1. Introduction: Sovereign Entanglements

It was in 1852 that Martin Robinson Delany, a second-generation American born in Virginia to a slave father and free Black mother, first formulated the establishment of national sovereignty as the central problematic of Black liberation in the United States. In contrast to the history of “integrationist” strategies aimed at bringing Blacks into the fold of American citizenship under the banner of political emancipation and equality, Delany had concluded that such assimilation was impossible. Given the social quintessence of the American nation, and its juridical state form, Delany reasoned that even the abolitionists among white Americans could never truly recognize or accept Black people as their equals. He was an early proponent of the back-to-Africa ideal, a program which he briefly abandoned during the American Civil War when he enlisted in the Union Army and recruited many other Blacks to do the same. But following the war, the disastrous disappointments of Reconstruction, and the deeply deformed version of “freedom” it wrought, Delany would once again embrace a sovereign solution for Blacks in the U.S. From this historical perspective, he discerned that Blacks in the U.S. constituted a “nation within a nation,” a people denied their full humanity and subjectivity by their exclusion from the space of state sovereignty (Delany 1968, 177). His approximation of the Black condition has remained a popular one, and the political remedy proposed for this predicament has remained
largely the same: the establishment of Black national (territorial) sovereignty, be it on the African or North American continent. In other words, Black liberation for the past 150 years has been imagined as closely intertwined with the Black subject’s ascendance to the seat of sovereignty. Such a vision, I will argue, presents multiple and significant difficulties for the liberatory impulses of Blackness in the United States, as it misrecognizes the radically anti-egalitarian nature of sovereignty.

As a growing number of authors have shown and as I will also contend, the composition of sovereignty has always been intimately intertwined not only with the notion of Right, but also with the violent practicalities of establishing, maintaining, and extending social domination. An historical-philosophical examination of the concept and the formulations of subjectivity upon which it is articulated reveals that sovereignty has always been coextensive with the institutionalization of various systems of inegalitarian social control, and is therefore antagonistic to the stated liberationist impulses pervading much of the Black radical tradition. This thorough-going organization of social command, the very *raison d’être* of sovereignty’s historical trajectory, is continually undergirded by the same logic of spatialized and racialized rule through which the notion of European supremacy was formed. From the establishment of state sovereignty through colonial projects, conquest and domination have always been the necessary predicates for creating political sovereignty and the sovereign subject as well as the binomial structure of ‘ruler’ and ‘ruled’—in effect, for
resolving the problem of command by the One over the Many and for neutralizing the
political force of difference. Thus, by taking up the banner of sovereignty, Black
radicalism (as well as movements for decolonization more generally) was
simultaneously—though unwittingly—reinforcing the very logic that it had set out to
destroy.

As Black radical movements in the U.S. grew and transformed, and as new
forms of command were developed to combat them, the contradiction between
sovereignty and self-determination—so long mistaken as one and the same—slowly
became visible. Recognizing this dangerous contradiction at the very heart of their
liberation projects, some Black radicals prompted a rethinking of their goals and
strategies, proposing an open struggle either to redefine sovereignty entirely or to
reject it in toto.

The aims of this work are twofold. First, I will explicate the formation of
sovereignty, from the Aristotelian framework through the modern contributions of
Carl Schmitt as well as more contemporary thinkers. Despite its centrality to the
“problem of right,” as noted by Michel Foucault, sovereignty is a consistently under-
interrogated concept. As a consequence, its relation to the spatial and racialized
procedures of colonial conquest has gone largely unnoted in Western political
philosophy—as well as in the thought of many anti-colonial movements—with
continuously deleterious effects. It is essential to establish the links between forms of
sovereignty and the multiple, autocratic power structures of conquest in order to comprehend the historical itinerary of Black radicalism in the United States and the specificity of its historical conditions and subjects. Such a perspective allows for a fuller understanding of the multiple, sometimes competing arcs within Black radical thought and practice. While today’s scholarship often discusses these phenomena as a monolithic historical episode, freely appraising “Black Nationalism” and “Black Power” as if they were interchangeable labels, such a habit grossly underestimates the variations expressed both within and between these two currents. The figure of Malcolm X offers an instructive example of these dynamics, as his work has served for many to mark the moment of Black Nationalism’s revival in the 1960s. Such a supposition is not incorrect, but neither is it complete. The thought of Malcolm X, in the short but monumentally important tenure of his leadership, underwent a number of important shifts and ruptures, including and of central importance its relationship to Black territorial sovereignty. Some commentators manage to collapse this multiplicity of Black radical thought into an undifferentiated record of what is located under the umbrella of Black nationalism. A closer examination of the problematic entanglement of twentieth century projects of Black liberation with sovereignty and its attendant ills, through the work of Stokely Carmichael and Amiri Baraka, is useful in both identifying and challenging this analytical limitation.
Second, I will revisit the work of two major thinkers of Black liberation—Frantz Fanon and Huey P. Newton—through the very lens of this entanglement. Writing in the context of Algeria’s anti-colonial struggle against the French in the 1950s, Fanon made invaluable contributions to understanding the logic and function of colonial rule, as well as the potential for its undoing. However, much of his insight has been misunderstood and under-esteemed by subsequent thinkers, who have inferred in his work a re-instantiation of the colonial logic. It could be, rather, that Fanon points us toward the possibility of unmaking colonial rule and establishing an as-yet unforeseeable “new beginning,” something upon which Fanon insists and which successive interpretations of his work have almost entirely neglected.

Fanon was an important point of reference in the thought of Huey P. Newton, the founder of the Black Panther Party in the U.S. in the 1960s. Both Newton and Fanon challenged the normative conception of self-determination as sovereignty, rejecting the traditional aims and formulations of Black Nationalism. In addition, they both contested a central tenet of many other national projects, born in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, which stipulated that the industrial working class would comprise the vanguard of social revolution, and that all other populations were secondary (if not superfluous) actors. In the differing contexts of colonial Algeria and the urban United States, Fanon and Newton each realized that a new kind of revolutionary subject was poised to rise, not under the leadership of the industrial worker, but on her very own
terms. For Fanon, this insurgent agency belonged to the figure of the peasant class, specifically the lower ranks populated by prostitutes, petty criminals, and the unemployed—those who Marx had termed the lumpenproletariat. It was this same “dangerous class,” in its urban American expression, in whom Newton recognized a growing revolutionary fervor, more powerful than that of the white working class and far better positioned to effect its own desires. Because of their neglect by the dominant traditions of philosophy and political rule, these subjects are recognized by Fanon and Newton as uniquely capable of confronting the structure of sovereignty itself, and thus of opening previously unexplored possibilities for liberation.

In Chapter One, I trace the historical development of the concept of sovereignty in the Western juridical tradition. From its roots in colonial European thought, the notion of sovereignty has presented a schematic of both spatial and racialized logic. However, its easy (albeit erroneous) conflation with the idea of self-determination or autonomy, particularly in the context of modern struggles for national liberation, has functioned to obscure this central logic. In this chapter I begin by delineating the concept of sovereignty itself through the work of Carl Schmitt and those influenced by him. Following that I will turn to a more detailed historical account regarding the formation of the concept of sovereignty so as to better demonstrate its spatialized and racialized nature, beginning with the 16th century Spanish jurisprudences who rationalized and justified the European conquest of the Americas. The conception of modern
discourses regarding the nature and proper function of sovereignty appeared as early as the 1500s, in the semi-secular, humanist writings of Juan Gines de Sepulveda, who applied the order of Aristotle’s “natural slavery” to justify the subjugation of indigenous peoples in the Americas, arguing that it was their “natural condition” to be dominated.

But where Sepulveda fell short in this regard, Thomas Hobbes was able to proceed, by casting off the tradition of natural law that presupposed the social disposition of human beings. Hobbes’ theory of the “state of nature,” in which all men are savages and encounter one another as adversaries, forms the basis of his formulation of an absolute sovereignty. He identified the Americas as a prime example of this natural state, and conquest as the process through which these “brutes” might come to covenant with one another to live under the rule of the sovereign. Just as Hobbes had more fully developed the external duality of the nature of rule proposed by Sepulveda (between the sovereign and his subjects), the tradition of European philosophy and legal theory that followed him would further develop the dualities, both internal and external, that are the hallmark of sovereign rule. I trace this tradition from Sepulveda to Hobbes and through the work of René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, and G.W.F. Hegel, in order to demonstrate that, inasmuch as European modernity can be considered co-equivalent with sovereignty, both became fully articulated through the practice of coloniality. This is to say that the same logic of sovereign rule for the
European powers was deployed both domestically and in the colonies, the logic of *conquest,* which necessarily implies the subjugation of one element of the social order over the others. This schema was justified by the idea of the dualistic nature of rule, which allowed it to be applied infinitely, enforced in the context of a sovereign political territory and its subjects, or over distant lands and peoples.

In Chapter Two I turn to the history of Black radicalism in the United States to examine some of the complexities in the relationship between Black liberation movements and the idea of sovereignty. As a starting point, I consider the thought of Malcolm X, which, while beginning in the tradition of revolutionary nationalism, over time moved away from these tenets of separation and began to assert that Black national sovereignty would not necessarily guarantee Black liberation. Consequently, Malcolm advocated for control and self-determination of Black communities wherever they already existed, and that a “return to Africa” would be manifested as cultural autonomy for Blacks living in the United States. I consider this alteration in Malcolm’s thought as paradigmatic of a larger rupture within the philosophical field of Black Power as a whole.

Two major currents within the “Black Power” movement that attempted to respond to this rupture are embodied in the works of Stokely Carmichael and Amiri Baraka. Carmichael, who had come to believe that “Malcolm knew where he was going before the rest of us did,” attempted to pick up the fragments of Malcolm’s thought so
as to forge a conception of Black Power that would place emphasis, like Malcolm X’s later statements, on the fact that Blacks in the United States were both “African” and “American” (Carmichael 1992, 38). Yet, as I will attempt to show, Carmichael’s formulation quickly becomes a surreptitious revival of W.E.B. DuBois’ notion of “double consciousness” (even while the figure of Malcolm was closely associated with the inheritance of DuBois’ frequent antagonist Marcus Garvey). In order to address this paradox, I then undertake in this chapter a direct consideration of the philosophical origins of “double consciousness” as figured by DuBois so as to better understand how this notion would set very precise limitations on the vision of Black Power.

I will then consider Amiri Baraka’s notion of Black Power and Blackness as proximity to “home” in order to highlight Baraka’s attempts to completely bypass the centrality of the Western concept of the “nation-state” and thus respond to the rupture identified by Malcolm X. I argue that despite Baraka’s theoretical innovations, his formulation of home leads him to fall back into the very form of thought from which he seems to want to flee.

In Chapter Three I examine the thought of Franz Fanon. Within Fanon’s work I will expose three interrelated levels of his thinking. The first layer of “reverse Manicheanism” uncovers a discourse of the partisan that strongly challenges the given contours of domination as well as the accepted location for political action. The second level of Fanon’s thought will take us toward an encounter and critique of Hegelian
inflected social analysis within which lies a certain theory of the sovereign subject. Finally, Fanon’s analysis of the underlying force of “reverse Manicheanism,” added to his critique of Hegelianism, lays the groundwork for what in Fanon stands as his positive theory of sovereignty and his destruction of the European notions of this concept, that is, the creation of the new by the wretched of the earth.

In Chapter Four I turn to the work of Huey P. Newton who was perhaps the political leader of the era most affected by Fanon’s thinking. Newton’s contributions, which would rightly be considered among the most visionary and theoretically sophisticated of the twentieth century, have been, generally speaking, neglected altogether. Thus, I have attempted to summarize not only his important philosophical work, but also the unprecedented practical achievements of the Black Panther Party, which he founded, nurtured, and directed. I will begin my investigation of Newton by showing that prior to his incarceration he viewed the issue of Black liberation as inseparable from that of Black sovereignty. Next, I will analyze Newton’s groundbreaking analysis of the changing nature of global capitalism and the establishment of what he called “empire,” which he felt increasingly made the question of national sovereignty a secondary (although never illegitimate) issue for liberation. Finally, I will turn to Newton’s vision of Blackness as the force of a “homeless subject” whose historical mission was not the establishment of a Black sovereignty, but rather the dissolution of sovereignty and empire as such through the establishment of itself as
a political subject in the form of a “multitude.” Both Fanon and Newton were well aware of the rupture within Black Nationalism in the conjunctural moment of the 1960s, and both responded with a fresh approach. Not content to reduce this rupture to the im/possibilities of national sovereignty, Fanon and Newton instead move towards the idea that sovereignty as a particular structure of rule would have to be confronted directly if the question of liberation was to remain a goal for Black radicalism.

Finally, as a conclusion, in Chapter Five I will gather together a series of common lessons offered by the Black Radical Tradition as evidenced throughout the dissertation. I will argue that the Black Radical Tradition is uniquely placed to confront our contemporary biopolitical situation, and that “Blackness” today stands as the direct and repressed antagonist to the growing application of the “state of exception” within our society.
2. Sovereignty, or Domination

2.1 The Concept of Sovereignty

If, as Michel Foucault believed, “sovereignty is the central problem of right in Western societies,” then the delineation of this concept would seem paramount (Foucault 2003, 26). Yet, due to the hegemonic force of the discourse of rights and norms more generally, such a delineation is often bypassed, leading to a situation where sovereignty is frequently conflated with other juridical concepts such as self-determination and autonomy. This legalistic definition of sovereignty was most forcefully opposed by Carl Schmitt, whose work, Political Theology, attempted to show that sovereignty was in fact an extra-juridical concept. That is, sovereignty was a concept that would not be explained by any existing norms because it is what makes those existing norms possible. As Schmitt argued, if sovereignty was “the highest power,” then such a power could not by definition be derived from existing norms. Thus, according to Schmitt, it was the norm that had to be explained in relation to sovereignty and not vice-versa as the jurisprudes of liberal democracy had believed. As Schmitt explains, these jurisprudes ignore the following facts:

The norm requires a homogenous medium. This effective normal situation is not a mere “superficial presupposition” that a jurist can ignore; that situation belongs precisely to its immanent validity. There exists no norm that is applicable to chaos. For a legal order to make sense, a normal situation must exist, and he is sovereign who definitely decides whether this normal situation actually exists (Schmitt 1985, 13).
When this is taken into account, the legal order can only be viewed as resting on a prior decision, a decision that makes the application of the norm possible. As Giorgio Agamben notes, Schmitt allows us to see that the law necessarily presupposes the non-juridical “as that with which it maintains itself in a potential relation in the state of exception” (Agamben 1998, 21). That is, sovereignty is that which subtracts itself from the norm to guarantee the situation in which the norm would have the necessary regularity to be recognizable as norm. Sovereignty is therefore that which stands outside the norm so as to decide on that which will be “taken outside” the law (Agamben 1998, 18). The sovereign decision as exception (that which lies in the space of anomie, both inside and outside the law) is also that which is necessary for the creation of a spatial ordering (ortung), a topographical relation in which insides and outsides are distinguishable. To use a rather different language we might say that the sovereign exception is the moment of a “primitive accumulation” of social force, “the transcendental exercise of authority,” made possible due to “the victory of one side over another, the victory that makes one sovereign and the other subject” and not through the legitimate nature of norms (Hardt and Negri 2000, 98).

It is important to note that this moment of “primitive accumulation” is for Schmitt (as it was for Marx\(^1\)) intimately related with the conquest of the “new world.”

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\(^1\) In this regard it is important to keep in mind the following quotation from Marx: “The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extrication, enslavement and entombment in mines
As Schmitt states, this ordering was made possible “from a legendary and unforeseen discovery of a new world, from an unrepeateable historical event” (Schmitt 2003, 39). It was exactly this conquest that solidified the necessary “ur-acts of law creation,” the appropriation of land and the establishment of the colonies (Muller 2003, 88). Thanks to these acts a double ordering of sorts was made possible. The first was the establishment of a homogenous space for the creation of Europe, which came to light in contradistinction to the “uncivilized” space of the new world available for conquest and colonization. The second was the possibility to form an internal ordering made possible after the appropriation of land (the establishment of enclosures) which made the distinction between private and public possible. Thus, for Schmitt, this territorial localization (i.e. the establishment of geographic insides and outsides or ortung) embodied in the Europe/colonial divide made order (ordung) more generally a possibility. It is important to note then that the “new world” and its uncivilized character was not thought to simply lie outside of the law but rather was thought of as

of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve of the commercial hunting of black skins, are all things which characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.” Or consider Marx’s parallel notion of the exception in the Americas as the foundation for the norm in Europe: “While the cotton industry introduced child slavery into England, in the United States it gave the impulse for the transformation of the earlier more or less patriarchal slavery into a system of commercial exploitation. In fact, the veiled slavery of the wage laborers in Europe necessitated the unqualified slavery of the new world as its pedestal.” See Marx, Capital Volume 1 (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 915 and 925.
that upon which the sovereign decision would have to be applied in order to guarantee
the regularity of the internal European order. In other words, the uncivilized is here
“included” solely through its “exclusion” from the space (and order) of Europe.

Fundamentally, then, sovereignty is inextricably tied to the establishment of
domination, be that in domestic or colonial ordering. Yet, as I will attempt to show
below, the establishment of sovereignty as a form of domination also exceeds the
concept of domination in the strict sense. That is, as Michel Foucault described,
sovereignty was that process that established the relation between subject (of the
sovereign) and subject (the individual endowed with right, the sovereign subject) not
through processes of naked violence but rather through the habituation of “procedures
of subjugation” that make continual social domination possible (Foucault 2003, 43-45).
An even closer look at the formation of sovereignty, starting with the Spanish conquest,
will help us to further delineate the spatial and racialized character of these procedures.

2.2 The Logic of Conquest

Many commentators trace the modern notion of sovereignty to the formation of
domestic rule, as explained by such thinkers as Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes. As the
following pages show, such a consideration remains stunted as it divorces sovereignty
from its true origins in the Spanish conquest. Therefore, even domestic legal rule within
Europe will be analyzed here as inseparable from the moment of conquest and colonization.

In 1552, Juan Gines de Sepulveda, official chronicler for the Spanish kings Charles V and Phillip II, writes the following in his treatise, *Democrates Secundus*, as his fourth and last justification of the Spanish conquest of the Americas:

The last of these [justifications], and the most applicable to those barbarians we vulgarly call Indians…is the following: those whose natural condition is such that they must obey others, if they refuse the empire of that other, and there is no further recourse, should be dominated by arms; well, such a war is just according to the opinion of the most eminent philosophers…arising from only one principal and natural law: the empire and domination of perfection over imperfection, of strength over weakness, of virtue over vice (Sepulveda 1951, 20).

This principle, according to Sepulveda, can be seen in the relationship of all objects: form dominates matter, the soul dominates the body, man dominates animals, and the husband dominates his wife. In sum, according to Sepulveda, “the superior and more perfect rules over the inferior and imperfect” (*Ibid.*). Sepulveda ends his justification of the conquest and his explication of the principle order of natural law by referencing what he believes to be the concept which best encompasses this natural order and its application to the indigenous peoples of the Americas—Aristotle’s notion of “natural slavery” (*Ibid.*, 21). Aristotle explains this theory in Book I of *The Politics*, and within his exposition we see that the origin of the theory of natural slavery is directly related to a persistent problem within Western philosophy—a problem expressed in the classical idealism of Plato as that of the One and the Many, and alternatively discussed
in the realist or empiricist Aristotelian tradition as the problem of the whole and its parts (Widder 2002, 61). As Aristotle states, “in every composite thing, where a plurality of parts, whether continuous or discrete, is combined to make a common whole, there is always found a ruling and a subject factor” (Aristotle 1934, 19). Thus, despite the fact that not all forms of rule are the same, that a husband does not rule like a slavemaster, that a slavemaster does not rule like a father, and that a father does not rule like a statesmen, a primal duality, “the ruling and subject factor,” must exist within all relations. Consequently, in Sepulveda’s eyes, because the indigenous peoples do not have rulers of their own, they must submit to the rule of their conquerors.

It is interesting to note that even the staunchest Spanish defender of the indigenous peoples, and Sepulveda’s sworn enemy, Bartolomé de Las Casas, never places into question the central logic at work in Sepulveda’s justification of the conquest. That is, Las Casas’ primary defense of the indigenous peoples rests upon accepting Aristotle’s primary dualism—the persistence of “ruling and subject factors” in all relations. He instead intends to show that Sepulveda has simply misapplied this principle in the case of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. In Las Casas’ view, the Indians cannot be barbarians because, citing Ecclesiastes, he states, “God gave each nation its ruler” (Las Casas 1988, 114). The law of “ruling and subject factor” applies for Las Casas only in instances of natural union, where form and matter are given a particular composition within a single subject. Or, more importantly, Las Casas feels this principle
applies only within a single political community where “the ignorant must obey the knowledgeable and the ruled his ruler” (Ibid., 115). In effect, according to Las Casas, this rule of nature must apply within nations but not across nations since for him it is the transcendent unity of God that both guarantees and fulfills the unity of these nations and natural law.

In the end, both Las Casas and Sepulveda are concerned with a philosophy of the primacy of the One; the difference between these two Spanish thinkers seems to be the location of the One. For Las Casas, the One exceeds the physical world, whereas Sepulveda is interested in establishing the One in the seat of Spanish imperial power. In this sense, Las Casas’ system of Christian rule, although binomial, is not necessarily univocal. That is, for Las Casas there can be differing forms of rule within the earthly society, without the necessary anxiety such difference presents for Sepulveda in his effort to assure that differing forms be united or totalized under an earthly sovereign.

Yet, we must take note that if Sepulveda has unilaterally concluded that all indigenous peoples of the Americas are “barbarians” for lack of “a natural class of rulers,” Las Casas has flipped this fiction on its head and instead assigned to all indigenous peoples their “rulers” with the consequent insistence of the dualistic structure of their societies and the presence of “the ruling and subject factor.” In sum, if Sepulveda has concluded that the indigenous peoples are different from Europeans and thus unequal, Las Casas has rebutted that they are equal to Europeans to the extent they
are the same. Despite their differences then, underlying both Sepulveda and Las Casas’ positions is an agreement that the proper civilizational measure applicable to all peoples is the presence of a dualistic structure of rule—what both Sepulveda and Las Casas would call the existence of a sovereign (imperium)—that stands over the political body and acts as its soul, guaranteeing the rule of order over chaos, of unity over multiplicity.

Many have treated Sepulveda as the champion of the Spanish tradition that has come to be known, thanks in part to the work of Las Casas, as the “black legend”—a view that in effect attempts to pin the cruelty visited upon the indigenous people solely on the sins and brutality of the Spanish character. I would like to argue that far from being a strange exception within the European legal tradition, Sepulveda’s revival of Aristotelianism, and the conquest it helped justify, should be considered among the first building blocks in the construction of the modern notion of sovereignty (Tuck 1999, 43). If we examine Sepulveda’s treatise titled De Regno, for example, he justifies the existence of domestic political rule by calling upon the very same quote from Aristotle’s Politics that he had used to justify the conquest—the presence in all relations of a ruling and subject factor and consequently of the necessity of a command-obedience (mandato-obedecer) relationship in all unions (Sepulveda 2001, 48). From this principle Sepulveda proceeds to explain that in order to preserve existence, and in accord with this rule of nature, some members of the domestic order are born to rule and others are born to obey.
Yet, while drawing upon Aristotle allows Sepulveda to formulate one of the first secularist, if not fully secular, justifications for the Spanish monarchy, it does not allow him to adequately justify the absolute character of political rule he thinks necessary for the maintenance of order. That is, as Sepulveda acknowledges, the Aristotelian model allows for the justification of various forms of rule, ranging from monarchy to democracy, whereas he would like to argue that only the existence of a King, defined as he who holds “supreme and unconditional power,” can provide the stability necessary for the existence of political rule (Sepulveda 2001, 53). The inability to provide a coherent and properly philosophical justification for the absolute nature of political rule, despite his best efforts, is where Sepulveda reaches his conceptual limit. In the meantime he has provided us with two insights that I contend will from then on characterize modern notions of sovereignty: 1) the fundamentally binomial and dualistic nature of political rule; and 2) the fact that both domestic and colonial rule both share this nature.

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2 We should note that although Sepulveda draws on the classical tradition of natural law, he is a pioneer of the paradigmatic change that is to come in jurisprudence in that he parts with the classical legal tradition on a major instance: that the authority to decide upon war belongs solely to the sovereign or King, whereas in the classical tradition it belongs to an assembly of people who then elect a leader to be in charge of conducting the war. See James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pg. 78; and generally Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology* (Boston: MIT Press, 1976).

3 As Pérez-Prendes notes, this description of the dualistic or binomial nature of rule first noted by Sepulveda in the 16th century qualifies him as a strong predecessor of the thought of Carl Schmitt. See, “Introducción Jurídica,” by J.M. Pérez-Prendes in Juan Gines de Sepulveda, *De Regno* (Excmo, Ayutamiento de Pozoblanco, 2001).
2.3 Sovereignty: The Mirror of Power

2.3.1. From The Sovereign....

If Sepulveda’s humanism began the process of freeing the Spanish monarchy from theological jurisdiction by creating an independent philosophical justification for the conquest, it was left to Thomas Hobbes to conjure the paradigmatic justification for the absolute character of modern sovereign rule. Hobbes’ political theory begins by breaking with the classical natural law tradition upon which Sepulveda had drawn that had taken for granted that humans were born fit for society. Rather, Hobbes’ political theory is premised on the notion that before “man” enters into “society,” he lives in a “state of nature” consisting of a “war of man against every man” (Hobbes 1994, 78). That is, according to Hobbes, “the multitude,” the disaggregated and thus impotent subject of the state of nature, has not yet coalesced into one person (Hobbes 1998, 76). Consequently, this multitude is incapable of any single action. It cannot make promises, keep agreements, or acquire rights except as individuals, and thus, there are as many promises, agreements, rights, actions, and most importantly, conflicts, as there are men (Hobbes 1998, 76).

For our purposes it is extremely important to note that in Hobbes’ eyes, this “state of nature,” and consequently the presence of this multitude, is not a hypothetical condition. He clearly states:
It may be thought there was never such a time nor condition of war as this…but there are many places where they live so now. For the savage people in the many places of America…have no government at all and live at this day in that brutish manner… (Hobbes 1994, 77; see also, Hobbes 1998, 30).

This quote should not be taken lightly as it continues in the tradition begun by Sepulveda in showing the link between localization and ordering always implies a zone that is excluded from the law (a “beyond the line”). As Giorgio Agamben notes,

In the classical epic of *Jus Publicum Europaeum* this zone corresponds to the new world which is identified with the state of nature in which everything is possible (Locke: “In the beginning, all of the world was America.”) (Agamben 1998, 36).

Finding the life of the “state of nature” short, nasty, and brutish, man is impelled by fear, or a reason consisting of self-preservation, to overcome this state of affairs (Hobbes 1994, 106). The way out, according to Hobbes, is a contract, where every man says to every man, “I authorize and give up my right of governing to myself to this man, or this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner” (Hobbes 1994, 109). In order to highlight Hobbes’ innovations we must avoid a common misinterpretation of the Hobbesian contract; it is not a covenant between the sovereign and his subjects; rather, it is an agreement between the subjects themselves in order to create a sovereign, “a God on earth.” In Hobbes words:

Because the right of bearing the person of them all is given to him they make sovereign by covenant only of one to another, and not of him to any of them, there can happen to be no breach of covenant on the part of the sovereign, and consequently none of his subjects can be freed from his subjection (Hobbes 1994, 111).
We should highlight three points that emerge from Hobbes’ vision. First, no action of the sovereign is punishable—he is no way obligated to either the civil law or any of his citizens, for by definition how can there exist an authority greater than the sovereign if the sovereign is to remain sovereign? Thus, law must be understood as inseparable from the will and command of the sovereign (Hobbes 1998, 84). Second, and following logically from the first, the only relation the citizen has with his sovereign is that of absolute obedience (Hobbes 1998, 82). Finally, according to Hobbes, there is no way for the multitude to associate without subjecting themselves to a higher authority. Hobbes’ contract is a contract of association only to the extent it is a contract of subjection/subjugation (Hobbes 1998, 81 and 82, and Hardt and Negri 2000, 84).

We can see from all this that Hobbes has picked up where Sepulveda left off. He has reasserted the absolutely dualistic nature of rule and continued to include the “new world” in that space beyond the line. Yet, he has now offered a coherent argument for the absolute or necessarily unitary nature of that rule. That is, by positing a state of nature, “a war of man against every man,” as prior to the civil state or the rule of the sovereign, he can now claim that not only does man have to subject himself to a rule, but that rule by definition can exist only when man has submitted himself to the rule of the One (will). With this operation, Hobbes is able to accomplish a second feat, the conceptual disappearance of conquest within jurisprudence. By positing “the state of nature” as a condition actually present in the Americas, and potentially ever-present
everywhere else, Hobbes can claim that in both cases, in the colony and the metropolis, it is out of fear—either of the sword of the conqueror or of fellow citizens—that the “multitude” accedes to the rule of the sovereign. As Foucault remarking on Hobbes notes, “It’s [sovereignty] what you wanted, it is you the subjects, who constituted the sovereignty that represents you” (Foucault 2003, 98). After Hobbes, sovereignty no longer appears as the victory of one side over another in a reversible battle, but rather as the product of a primary will to overcome the state of nature within us all (Foucault 2003, 26).

2.3.2. …To The Sovereign Subject…

2.3.2.1 Francisco de Vitoria

The absolutist tradition that I have just outlined is often offset by a more reformist or “universalist” tradition that, although it finds its ultimate expression in Rousseau and Kant and has its most visible origins in Descartes, was also fully present within the construction of sovereignty as conquest during the subjection of the Americas through the juridical treatises of Francisco de Vitoria. As a Dominican theologian, like Las Casas, Vitoria was far from comfortable with Sepulveda’s Aristotelian premises. As Carl Schmitt points out, the Aristotelian notion of “natural slavery” and the consequent notion that sovereign majesty was a natural necessity due to the fact that man is wolf to man [homo homini lupus] (a premise that would later be mirrored in Hobbes’ state of
nature), was openly opposed and discarded as heathen by Vitoria (Schmitt 2003, 105).
Vitoria, in contrast, insisted that among Christians an understanding toward the Indians had to be established that would testify to what St. Augustine had already laid bare, “The people may be barbarous, but they are human.” That is, in contradistinction to Sepulveda’s Aristotelian humanism, Vitoria develops a Christian based natural law in which man is man for man [homo homini homo] (Vitoria 1967, 80).

Having rejected a series of illegitimate Spanish claims to the dominion over the native inhabitants of the Americas, many of which were based on the openly Eurocentric premises developed by Sepulveda, Vitoria proceeds in his Relectio de Indis to develop what he believes would be a legitimate basis for title. This title has as its basis the Christian duty to “love thy neighbor” (amar al projimo), with the caveat, as Vitoria explains, and as the discovery of the Americas now made necessary, that “your neighbor is every man” (Ibid., 80). Thus, for Vitoria, the declared supremacy of the Spanish Empire over the barbarians was not enough to justify conquest, as he believed that there existed a primary similarity of all humans that both the Spanish and the Indians had to recognize and respect. As Christian doctrine states, “all men are made in the image of god,” so too Vitoria, using the Corpus Iuris Civilis, reminds us that “there exists a certain similarity among all men,” from which Vitoria believes it follows that it is against natural law “for one man to abhor/abandon (aborrezca) another man without due reason” (Vitoria 1967, 81). From this natural law Vitoria derives his “law of peoples,”
defined thus: “The law of peoples [*ius gentium*] is that which natural reason has established between [all] peoples” (*Ibid.*, 78).

Again, unlike Sepulveda, Vitoria does not wish to establish the superiority of one people over another. Quite to the contrary, Vitoria is attempting to derive all his principles from an existing universal commonality—the capacity to reason (Anghie 2005, 22). It is from this commonality that Vitoria believes a certain number of obligations are due by man toward other men. These obligations derive for Vitoria from the fact that as “neighbors,” the Spanish and indigenous peoples owe each other the obligation of the Samaritan according to the teachings of St. Luke, the obligation to “love thy neighbor as you would love thyself” (Vitoria 1967, 80). As neighbors to the Spanish then, the indigenous peoples must take certain actions to fulfill these obligations, the most important of which are the granting of permission for “libre commercium,” the unhampered propagation of Christianity, and communication. Ultimately, it is the inability or lack of desire of the indigenous peoples to fulfill these obligations that finally justify their conquest and subjection (*Ibid.*, 81).

If one takes careful note of this analysis, what began as the attempt to justify the actions of the Spanish crown in their attempted conquest of the Americas has now ended for Vitoria with a judgment of the actions of the conquered. We must recognize this as truly innovative and note that Sepulveda himself was incapable (*in toto*) of such an exposition. It is this very accomplishment that I would like to mark as the initiation of
a second trajectory within the Western legal tradition—that of the split subject. Where Sepulveda has recourse to Aristotle’s notion of “natural slavery,” Vitoria puts the idea of “the neighbor” to use. Through this concept Vitoria is able to naturalize the necessity of domination through the figure of the human subject itself. Vitoria has in all respects described for us the paradigmatic case in Western legal theory of a conquest enacted in the name of the vanquished and not due to the purposive declaration of right of the conqueror. As Vitoria’s example makes explicit, all such conquests are premised on the notion that the human subject is split; the indigenous people may think that they would like to act to impede the Spanish from trading and propagating Christianity, but they cannot actually want that because such actions would be in violation of their essence (man as reasoning neighbor). Such actions that contradict the essence of humanity, according to Vitoria, create an obligation upon our neighbors toward us, and thus make us liable to “brotherly correction” (ibid., 87). In Vitoria’s eyes then it is not so much an offense against the Spanish that justifies the conquest (although such offenses may have existed), but rather it is the offenses of the indigenous peoples against themselves which in fact obligated the Spanish toward such a conquest. In Vitoria’s formulation then it is not per se the right of the Spanish to conquer the Americas, but rather it is a necessity created out of an obligation brought upon the Spanish by the outward action of the conquered and the discord of that action with their inner essence as neighbor. Vitoria has internally split the indigenous peoples of the Americas in two: he has first included
them in the ontological universal subject of humanity toward which are due obligations and reciprocity, while simultaneously reducing all particular historical Indians resisting Spanish conquest to an inability to live up to their own essence and thus to an incapacity to exercise sovereignty (Anghie 2005, 22 and Marks 2003, 458).

Vitoria is only the first of a long tradition that will constantly introduce the split subject in order to justify subjection, though due to the willful forgetting of the conquest of the Americas Vitoria’s contribution to Western philosophy has been forgotten and the split subject is thought to have developed with René Descartes. There is certainly no doubt that Descartes furthered such a concept, but without the historical reference of Vitoria and his justification of conquest, the political origins and thus effects of the split subject is lost. As we move on to examine the works of Vitoria’s successors, we must keep present this historical context.

2.3.2.2 In Vitoria’s Footsteps

As explained above, Hobbes attempts to solve the problem of the necessity of the transcendence of the One in an increasingly secular society through the creation of “a god on earth,” that is, by expressing the primary duality of command-obedience through the State. Descartes solves this same problem through an almost directly inverted process. Instead of externalizing the primary duality of ruling and subject factor, Descartes forces it into the interiority of the subject through his notion of the Cogito. As Descartes’ famous dictum states, “I think therefore I am” (Decartes 2000,
Although Decartes’ *cogito ergo sum* is frequently repeated, it is worth quoting Decartes in full as the lines from which this dictum arises aptly demonstrate the internal splitting of the human subject into a subject of intellect and a subject of bodily experience. “What about thinking? Here I make my discovery: thought exists; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am; I exist—this is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking; for perhaps it could also come to pass that if I were to cease all thinking I would utterly cease to exist. At this time I admit nothing that is not necessarily true. I am therefore precisely nothing but a thinking thing; that is, a mind, or intellect, or understanding, or reason—words of whose meanings I was previously ignorant. Yet I am a true thing and am truly existing; but what kind of thing? I have said it already, a thinking thing. I am not that structure of limbs which is called a human body, I am not even some thin vapor which permeates the limbs—a wind, fire, air, breath, or whatever I depict in my imagination; for these are things which I have supposed to be nothing. See René Decartes, Philosophical Essays and Correspondence, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000).
that for Descartes, reason is in fact a stand in, an immanent mediator, between God and
the world (Hardt and Negri 2000, 79).

In addition, we must also take note, as Gilles Deleuze explains, that this
Cartesian schema presupposes not only a hierarchical interiority to the subject, but also
presupposes this subject’s confrontation with a universal object in the face of which the
faculties of “the I” are ordered and coordinated (Deleuze 1994, 133). But perhaps it is
best left to Kant and his noumenal subject to inherit the Cartesian tradition of the “I
think” and to most coherently consolidate the subject-object split. Kant’s epistemological
project is perhaps best summarized by Foucault who describes it with the following
lines:

[the] uncover[ing] [of] a transcendental field in which the subject, which is never
given to experience (since it is not empirical), but which is finite (since there is
no intellectual intuition), determines in its relation to an object=x all the formal
conditions of experience in general… [it is thus] the transcendental subject that
isolates the foundation of a possible synthesis between [numerous]
representations (Foucault 1971, 243).

As Kant states, “All experiences have the form of reason, and without this they
will not be experiences…[because] experience is nothing but the reflected sensation that
is reflected in a judgment…with experience we must be active through reason” (Zattimo
2002, 275). For Kant, then, it is the transcendental subject as a set of stable “faculties,”
untouched by experience but simultaneously its condition of possibility, that is to stand
in judgment of the representations of the objects that stand outside of “himself” and
with which he is faced. But, as Kant makes clear, these representations are simply “a
notion of the object in itself” and they in no way guarantee us access to that object (Kant 1997, 211). In other words, representation in Kant’s system is given the function of mediation: it allows us access to the world of phenomena, to the appearances of the object and our perception of those appearances, while simultaneously keeping from us an understanding of the noumena, that is, of the object in itself (Latour 1993, 56). In sum, we can delineate two achievements of Kant’s philosophy. First, it is the objects of knowledge that revolve around the transcendental subject’s “reception” of those objects. And second, the transcendental subject can attain certainty only about the processes of reception of those objects (i.e. the a priori categories of reason) but remains unable to understand “the first causes” of those objects.

For our purposes, we must note that by foregrounding the “universal basic truths of human cognition,” Kant presupposes both a hierarchy of ordered elements within cognition as well as a perceptual continuity applied to varying representations. That is, for Kant, the reintroduction of a “ruling and subject” factor is once again complete. By reducing knowledge to “reason,” by reducing experience to “phenomena,” and by guaranteeing the impossibility of reuniting the appearance of the thing with the thing itself, Kant has constructed a system in which the transcendental subject simultaneously assumes the role of judge and judged, of priest and layman, of subject and sovereign (Hardt and Negri 2000, 80). Kant, like Descartes before him, has interiorized the ruling and subject factor within the transcendental subject. For Kant,
However, it is not presupposed that on the other side of the distance between the subject and the thing in itself there lies God (although doubts arising about the “distance” certainly gave one ample room to remain religious). For Kant, rule was more immanent, it had no necessary connection with the metaphysical, a principle that becomes clearer if we summarize how Kant might have characterized his principle of rule: “you the subject of experience must obey the ‘universal laws of reason’ because it is you the subject of reason that commands” (Deleuze, March 26, 1973). Yet Kant does not rid us of the metaphysical; how else are we to explain “the purposiveness and order which are evident in everything?” (Montag 1999, 53).

The split hierarchy contained within the Kantian subject is made possible by the play of representation, which keeps that subject at a distance from experience while simultaneously drawing the criteria for judgment of those experiences from a certain continuity of perception. That is, that which differs appears to the Kantian subject only in measure to that with which it can be compared; it is either opposite, identical, or similar with reference to other objects within its perception. Just as with Hobbes’ view of the multitude, for Kant’s transcendental subject absolute difference is constantly sacrificed, this time through representation. That is, difference for Kant cannot be apprehended in itself in that it gains significance only as a secondary consequence of a more primary similarity (i.e. the schema of universal reason) (Deleuze 1994, 138). In other words, the reduction of the reception of the object through representation is the
most intricate form of the interiorization of the modern sovereign. The oneness and order of “universal reason” has prevailed over the multiplicity of lived experience.

**2.3.3. ...And Back Again, Or, Putting the Split Subject to Work**

It is extremely important to note that the outward freedom of the transcendental subject is limited to the manipulation of those objects that allow the transcendental subject to “think.” As Kant explains, it is the freedom of thought, the essence of man, that must be respected by law and that it is in connection to this freedom and only in connection to this freedom that we must be free to speak and write (Montag 1999, 54). In other words, the realm of freedom outside the transcendental subject is limited for Kant to the world of communication; freedom exceeding this realm, such as the freedom to act, are not those inherent to man and can, according to the dictates of universal reason, be coercively eliminated (Montag 1999, 55).

The internal split of the autonomous moral subject described above takes place for Kant in the realm of ethics, which works to harmonize conflicts resulting from individual belief. But Kant fully recognizes that conflicts and errors of subjective judgment would remain among individuals and that in this respect ethics must always give way to the realm of the external law. It is in this realm where it becomes obvious
that with regards to the external sovereign, Kant differs little from Hobbes.\(^5\) Take for example Kant’s following statement:

> It is not from experience from which we learn of men’s maxim of violence and of their malevolent tendency to attack one another before external legislation endowed with powers appears. On the contrary, however well disposed and law-abiding men might be, it still lies *a priori* in the rational Idea of such a condition (one that is not rightful) that before a public lawful condition is established, individual men, peoples, and states can never be secure against violence from one another, since each has its own right to do what seems right and good to it and not to be dependent upon another’s opinion about this. So, unless it wants to renounce any concept of Right, the first thing it has to resolve upon is the principle that it must leave the state of nature, in which each follows his own judgment, unite itself with all others (with which it cannot help interacting), subject itself to a public lawful external coercion, and so enter into a condition in which what is to be recognized as belonging to it is determined by law and is allotted to it by adequate power (not its own, but an external one) (Kant quoted in Tuck 1999, 208).

Besides reading as something like a short summary of the *Leviathan*, Kant’s description of the entrance into the realm of external law attempts to tie his “rational Idea” to the necessity of a transcendent external force (i.e. the sovereign). With this in mind we can highlight two more consequences of Kant’s thought in the realm of politics. First, as Etienne Balibar astutely points out, for Kant, man is most useful to other men to the extent that they are identical, that is, to the extent that he is completely interchangeable with other men (i.e. to the extent that he can “establish the maxim of his actions as universal law”) (Balibar 1998, 110). Second, Kant clearly intends to tie his

advances in the realm of morality to his theory of the state, but in this regard he falls short.

As Hegel would later point out, although Kant presupposes the necessity of a mechanism of coercion, he fails to give this mechanism the same grounding that he had given his transcendental subject. In other words, for Hegel, Kant’s mechanism of external coercion was missing mediation, a mediation between the realm of inner freedom and the universal realm, the realm of the State (Taylor 1975, 431). Thus, Hegel introduces the notion of a “civil society” that is structured in an internally hierarchical fashion: at the bottom there are agriculturalists, in the middle is the world of exchange and business, while at the peak stand the State functionaries. These “estates” within civil society in fact reflect and are derived from three larger elements present within society as a whole: the family, the market (civil society proper), and the State, the former two of which must be submitted to a process of “education” in order to rise to the level of universality (Hegel 1991, 220-280). We must note that here civil society and its market are thus the mediator in which a new play of representation (i.e. exchange and the two-sided nature of money) subsumes the particular into the universal (Ibid., 93). In sum,

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6 This capacity to represent through money becomes for Hegel a line of demarcation between civilized and uncivilized. As he states, “The agreement, which manifests itself by means of a sign, and the performance are therefore kept separate by civilized peoples, whereas they may coincide among the uncivilized. In the forests of Ceylon there is a nation of traders who lay out their property and peacefully wait until others comes and lay theirs down beside it; in this case, there is no difference between the mute declaration of will and its performance.” See G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
Hegel should be understood as the thinker who, through his schema of “civil society” as the mediating force at the service of the “Absolute” (i.e. the State), in fact synthesized these two traditions of the subject. That is, he brought together the “particular experience” of the modern individual with the “universal” existence of the State by showing that each was a torn half of a whole, without ever putting into question the dualistic nature of command-obedience, the primacy of the One over the multitude, the consequent subject-object split, and the victory of identity over difference within modernity.

2.4 Sovereignty and “The Veil”

I would like to summarize three major points regarding sovereignty. First, there was (and continues to be) conquest. Second, that conquest was (and is) justified by modern European legal theory through the necessity of a dualistic nature of rule, as expressed through the existence of a “ruling and subject factor” in all relations. Third, modern European legal theory then imposed this dualistic nature of rule, and the reality of conquest itself, into its domestic legal order and upon its own citizens through the notion of sovereignty. Consequently, I would like to argue that to the extent modernity can be considered co-equivalent with sovereignty, there did not exist a European modernity separate from coloniality. I am not, however, simply claiming that European modernity would not have been possible without coloniality—a point that from my
perspective seems both urgent and irrefutable— but rather that the dominant form of European modernity at its very core, in the colonies as well as at home, consisted solely in the application of the logic of conquest, of the victory of one element of society over others. As Michel Foucault claims, the right of colonization formulated during the conquest of the “new world” created a “boomerang effect” in which:

A whole series of colonial models were brought back to the West, and that result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonization on itself (Foucault 2003, 103).

From this perspective, the distinction that should be made between the rule of coloniality within Europe and the rule of coloniality abroad can be understood not as differing natures in the logics of rule, but as differences of degree within the same logic—sovereignty. If doubts remains about such a strong claim, let us remember Jean Bodin’s 16th century insight, “The main point of sovereign majesty and absolute power consists of giving the law to subjects in general without their consent” (Bodin 1992, 23). Hence, despite developments within modern legal theory, we do not travel far from the justification of conquest. For sovereignty, the State, and its laws there is no order unless there is transcendence— unless the one stands above and commands the multiple.

Academic discussion of colonialism has concentrated on the colonial processes of “othering” with special attention to the relationship of this othering to the project of

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Western rationalism and the Enlightenment. Yet, as this investigation has attempted to show and as has been clarified by Latin American theorists such as Enrique Dussel, the process of the Enlightenment and the “othering” it made possible cannot be considered as the originary moment of the European subordination of the non-European world. Rather, the Enlightenment and its categorizations were secondary effects of a yet more elusive moment of social “primitive accumulation” that took place during the “discovery” and attempted conquest of the Americas. At that juncture, humanity, much as in Vitoria’s thought, was not simply “excluded” from civilization; rather, humanity was gathered under a single ontological universality (a human race) while simultaneously historical/particular habits of the non-European world were thought incompatible with sovereignty (in either its strictly political or subjective forms). That is, after the initial gathering of the human race under ontological universality, this same race is then subdivided through the application of a single measure, the capacity or incapacity to exercise sovereignty, into a superrace and sub-race (that which stands as the very marker between a “race-war” and “racism”) (Foucault 2003, 61). The superrace (the European) is endowed with the capacity for a purely sovereign (internal and temporal) determination while the sub-races are viewed as determined by exteriority and spatiality (by the necessity for external domination) (Da Silva 2007, 4). Yet, the

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domination of the sub-race becomes all the more urgent in that due to its belonging within the single ontological universality of the human race, it actually constitutes an immanent threat to the internal order of the super-race itself (the actual, not hypothetical, threat pointed out by Hobbes of living like the “savages” of the Americas).

Thus, unlike the claims forwarded by many theorists today, I would like to assert that the attempted European conquest of the world was not based on Europe’s encounters and creations of “others.” Rather, the juridical record constantly demonstrates to us the exact opposite: in its exploration and colonization of the earth, Europe had a striking inability to ever once come across and recognize a single other. Sovereignty, as formed in the colonial encounter, is that which from then on guarantees that Europe will encounter nothing but itself, but in degraded form. That is, much like Vitoria, the unique nature of the European perspective is not that it is based on a play of exclusions and inclusions, of outsides and insides, but rather on the notion that there is no outside to itself.

As Denise Ferreira Da Silva incisively explains, the double movement of ontological gathering and historical segregation which is implicit in the conception of modern sovereignty creates a powerful double-bind for racialized subaltern subjects. That is, frequently these subjects, whether in movements for decolonization or in the theorizations of these movements, have been figured as the excluded from the site of sovereignty due to the domination (“the veil”) imposed on this subject from the West.
When figured in this fashion, the subaltern subject has little choice but to demand an ultimate inclusion, an inclusion in which their underlying humanity (i.e. sovereignty) might flourish (Da Silva 2007, 8). Yet, when we examine the nature of “inclusive exclusion” upon which Western sovereignty was built, in which the play of ontological universality and historical particularity not only internally split the subject but also created hierarchical differentiations assigned to geographic location, this demand for inclusion is surreptitiously a call for the self-annihilation of the subaltern subject and its particular difference (Ibid.). That is, when the subaltern subject is viewed as “excluded” from sovereignty, the only trajectory afforded that subject on the road to freedom is to “assume” sovereignty and leave behind one’s own particularities which have been deemed incompatible with it (i.e. their own racial difference). Following Frantz Fanon, we might say that given this view, there is only one path, “the future of the Black is always white”; the future of the rest of the world is always Europe. Given this impossible web that sovereignty has sown for the subaltern racialized subject, it is not surprising then that within the movements for decolonization, and within the Black radical movement in particular, which we will examine in the following chapters, the necessity to grapple with the constraints and violence of the logic of sovereignty became paramount. This is a concern that has increasingly shifted those movements away from the necessity for the “assumption” of sovereignty to the creation of alternative forms of social organization that will allow for the overturning of an even more originary
colonization, that moment at which Europe came to signify sovereignty and the rest of the world came to signify otherwise (Da Silva 2007, 8).
3. Black Power or Sovereign Power

3.1 Introduction

Today it has become commonplace in academic scholarship to look back at the Black radicalism of the 1960s and make judgments upon what is assumed to be the co-equivalent titles of Black Nationalism and Black Power. These approaches underestimate the internal variations within the Black nationalisms of the era, as well as their expressions within, and differences with, the Black Power movement. Even in a

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brief revisiting of the supposed site of the “paternity” of the resurgence of Black Nationalism in the 1960s—the thought of Malcolm X—it is possible to see that this era, far from being co-equivalent with Black Nationalism, was perhaps the first era in which the classical presuppositions of Black Nationalism were directly challenged from within the Black radical community. That is, if we accept Malcolm X as a central site for the initiation of the Black Power movement in the United States, then we must also accept that from its inception the conceptions of Black Power in the 1960s have a complicated, if not troubled, relationship to classical Black Nationalism. This troubled relationship can


2 For an explanation of Malcolm X’s unparalleled influence on the formation of the Black Power movement in the United States see William L. Van Deburg, New Day in Babylon; The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992), 1-10. When referring to the classical presuppositions of Black Nationalism, I am most specifically referring to the tie between Black identity formation and the possible attainment of some form of territorial sovereignty. Although the attainment of territorial sovereignty was at times purely symbolic and could even serve integrationist ends, the possible existence of that territorial sovereignty remained inseparable from the activation of Black Nationalist subjectivity. For the documents that bear witness to the birth of this link, see Wilson Moses, Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey; (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 101-215. For an exposition of the influence of these presuppositions on the formation of the Nation of Islam and other Black organizations, see E.U. Essien-Udom, Black Nationalism: The Search for an Identity, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), particularly pgs 250-297. For a discussion of how the Black nationalist search for territorial sovereignty is specifically tied to the structure of political sovereignty, especially with relation to the figure of Marcus Garvey, see Michelle Stephens Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).
be traced through the dramatic shifts within the thoughts of Malcolm X himself. In 1963, still a member of the Nation of Islam and under the orders of Elijah Mohammed, Malcolm X described the path for Black liberation as “complete separation on some land that we can call our own” (Van DeBurg 1992, 144). At that time, Malcolm X believed that this “separation” would come about in the following manner:

The honorable Elijah Mohammed teaches us that a desegregated theater or lunch counter won’t solve our problems. Better jobs won’t even solve our problems. An integrated cup of coffee is not sufficient pay for 400 years of slave labor, and a better job in the white man’s factory or position in his business is, at best, only a temporary solution. The only lasting or permanent solution is complete separation on some land that we can call our own.

The honorable Elijah Mohammed teaches us that the race problem can easily be solved, just by sending these 22 million ex-slaves back to our homeland where we can live in peace and harmony with our own kind. But this government should provide the transportation plus everything else we need to get started again in our own country. This government should provide everything we need in machinery, materials and finance, enough to last us from 20 to 25 years, until we can become an independent people in our own country. If this white government is afraid to let her 22 million ex-slaves go back to her own country and her own people then America must set aside some separate territory here in America, where the two races can live apart from each other, since we certainly don’t get along peacefully while we are here together.

The size of the territory can be judged according to our own population. If our people number one seventh of American’s total population, then give us one seventh of this land (quoted in Breitman 1967, 57; originally in Malcolm X 1963).

Yet, only two years later, after leaving the Nation of Islam and having met with a number of prominent leaders in the struggle for African liberation (some of whom were phenotypically white), Malcolm X began to enunciate a rather different direction for Black radicalism in the United States. He began to define Black liberation beyond the logic of national “integration” and “separation” that had up until that time dominated
the more moderate sectors of the civil rights movement and the more radical wing of the Black community, for which he had become an unofficial spokesperson. Malcolm began to reorient Black Nationalism away from national “separation” as he began to put forward the idea that “The political philosophy of Black nationalism means that the Black man should control the politics and the politicians in his own community; no more” (quoted in Breitman 1967, 61; originally in Malcolm X 1966, 38).

In addition to this shift, Malcolm X began to re-envision the migration “back to Africa” that had been a central tenant of classical Black Nationalism (as well as his own thought) in psychic rather than physical-geographic terms. The benefits of such a “migration” were outlined by Malcolm in the following fashion:

I believe that if we migrated back to Africa culturally, philosophically and psychologically, while remaining here physically, the spiritual bond that would develop between us and Africa through this cultural, philosophical, and psychological migration, so-called migration, would enhance our position here, because we would have our contacts with them acting as roots or foundations behind us…and this is what I mean by migration or going back to Africa (quoted in Breitman 1967, 63; originally in Malcolm X 1966, 226-227).

Thus, when questioned whether he still believed in the end goal of the establishment of a Black state, Malcolm answered directly, “No. I believe in a society in which people can live like human beings on the basis of equality” (Malcolm X 1966, 213). As a

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3 In this move we see Malcolm X moving away from the idea of the nation-state as substance and closer to what Benedict Anderson calls an “imagined community,” in which all communities larger than primordial villages are understood as created and thanks to cultural circulation, conceived as a deep horizontal fraternity beyond a set spatial coordinate. See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, (London: Verso Press, 1983), 6-7.
consequence of this shift, Malcolm had by 1965 gone so far as to completely give up using the phrase “Black Nationalism,” as he explained,

So I had to do a lot of thinking and reappraising about my definition of black nationalism. Can we sum up the solution to the problems confronting our people as black nationalism? And if you notice I haven’t been using the expression for several months. But I would be hard pressed to give a specific definition of the overall philosophy which I think is necessary for the liberation of black people in this country” (quoted in Davis, 282; originally in Malcolm X 1966, 212).

We can note then that within the figure of Malcolm X lies a certain crisis that would come to define the Black Power movement that would arise in his wake. This was a crisis that would force Black radicals to come to terms with seemingly irreconcilable propositions: on one hand the constants of Black nationalism—an understanding “that black people comprise a separate nation(al) entity within the dominant white culture,” and that this entity is pervaded by a “sense of being at war”; and on the other, the insight that the establishment of Black national sovereignty (the establishment of a separate nation-state) was no longer a sufficient goal to assure Black liberation.

Two exemplary currents within the Black Power Movement that attempted to respond to the crisis embodied in Malcolm X can be found in the work of Stokely Carmichael and Amiri Baraka. Carmichael attempted to respond to this crisis by picking up the fragments of Malcolm’s thought so as to forge a conception of Black Power that would place emphasis on the fact that Blacks in the United States were both African and American (Carmichael 1992, 38). Yet as I will attempt to show, Carmichael’s formulation quickly becomes a surreptitious revival of DuBois’ notion of double consciousness. I will
then undertake a direct consideration of the philosophical origins of double consciousness in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as adapted by DuBois, so as to better understand how this notion has a very particular relation to political sovereignty and the sovereign subject and therefore sets precise limitations on the vision of Black Power. Similarly, I will then turn to Amiri Baraka’s notion of Black Power and “Blackness” as the proximity to home in order to highlight Baraka’s attempts to completely bypass the Western concept of the nation-state and territorial sovereignty and thus to offer a second response to the crisis identified by Malcolm X. As I will show, despite Baraka’s inventiveness, although the space of territorial sovereignty eschewed, the structure of political sovereignty remains intact due to the exceptional and decisionist function assigned to the poet by Baraka.

As a whole, this chapter will help us to better understand the conjuncture of the 1960s so as to highlight the very distinct contributions that were made to this discussion by Frantz Fanon and Huey Newton. These two figures are also well aware of the crisis within Black Nationalism mentioned above. Yet as I will show in the following chapters, their response to this crisis is rather unique. Both Fanon and Newton are not content to reduce their position toward this crisis to a nostalgic recounting of the im/ possibilities of national sovereignty, but rather move toward the idea that sovereignty more generally as a structure of rule would have to be confronted directly if the question of liberation was to remain a goal for Black radicalism.
In sum, with Malcolm X we can see, as Wahneema Lubiano notes, the increasing dematerialization of Black nationalism. Lubiano points out Black nationalism has from its inception encompassed a series of disparate formations which have included intergroup solidarity, separatism, and most consistently, opposition to the racism of U.S. state. Given the difficulty and the increasingly questionable desirability of establishing territorial sovereignty, the idea of a “Black nation,” as well as the struggle over the establishment of sovereign control over that “nation,” becomes increasingly dematerialized onto the site of cultural production and consumption (Lubiano 2002, 159-163). In the pages that follow, what should become clear is the challenge that Black radicalism posed was not directed at the existence of this “imaginary” nation, but rather toward the equation of that nation with sovereign authority.

3.2 Black Power: Blackness as “Double Consciousness”

3.2.1 ‘What We’re Gonna Start Saying Now’

Although the phrase “Black Power” had circulated some years prior, it took on particular significance within the U.S. Black Liberation Movement on June 16, 1966, when Stokely Carmichael (in open defiance of the wishes of Martin Luther King) declared, “This is the 27th time I have been arrested and I ain’t going to jail no more! The
only way to stop them from ‘whoopin’ is to take over. What we’re gonna start saying now is Black Power!”

Carmichael’s most complete expression of his notion of “Black Power” came by way of the 1967 release of *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, which he had written with Charles V. Hamilton. In this book, Carmichael states that as an extension of the struggles of the “Third World,” “Black Power” proposed that as an “internal colony” of the United States, the Black community had to “close ranks” so as to achieve “liberation” through the adoption of two major goals. The first was the creation of the capacity for Black people to “define themselves,” to assert their own definition of themselves over and against the depiction of the “negro” as “lazy,” “apathetic,” “shiftless,” “goodtimers” (Carmichael 1992, xix and 36). Carmichael found inspiration for this power of definition in a quote from Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass* that he would repeat regularly:

> “When I use a word,” Humpty said in a rather scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”
> “The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”
> “The question is,” said Humpty, “which is to be master—that’s all” (Carmichael 1992, 36).

As Carmichael concluded, “Those who have the right to define are masters of the situation” (*Ibid.*). This redefinition would in effect be the very basis upon which Blacks would build “a new consciousness” (*Ibid.*, 39). This consciousness and redefinition would be achieved, according to Carmichael, through the conjunction of the term African in front of that of American (African-American) to describe the Black
community in the U.S. For Carmichael, this conjunction had two major effects. First, it would highlight and contest the implicit racial modifier of American as “white,” making it possible to assert that one could be both African and American simultaneously and thus creating the possibility of a path beyond assimilation for the Black leadership class (Ibid., 30-32). At the same time, the modifier African, similarly to the way that Malcolm had figured a psychic migration “back to Africa,” would highlight the fact that unlike the portrayal of Black in the white American imagination, the Black community did in fact have a culture, a heritage, a history that preceded their enslavement and that could thus serve as an anchor (or outside) within which the Black community could begin the process of “closing ranks” (Ibid., 38).

Second, Black people would have to achieve “political modernization” toward which Carmichael foresaw the necessity of three separate actions:

1) Questioning old values and institutions of the society

2) Searching for new and different forms of political structure to solve political and economic problems

3) Broadening the base of political participation to include more people in the decision making process (Ibid., 39).

Similar to Italians, Jews, and Poles, Blacks, according to Carmichael, would have to create links of solidarity so as to effectively assert a “group power” that would be attainable only by “control,” a “control” that would be achieved, for example, through the ascension of a “black sheriff” or a “black tax collector” as had taken place in
Carmichael’s organizing base of Lowndes County, Alabama. According to Carmichael, all of the actions listed above would be undertaken by the Black community with one “ultimate” goal in mind, “an effective share in the total power of the society” (Ibid., 47). In other words, for Carmichael, “Black power means proper representation and sharing of control” (Ibid., 46).

Many have pointed out a conceptual slippage present within this formulation of Black Power that would have rather contradictory effects toward the goal of Black liberation. If we take Carmichael’s formulation as a whole we can note that whereas he begins with the goal of “liberation,” this goal is filtered through a series of mediational moments that can be summarized as follows: Black liberation = Black Power = Black community control = Black control = Black representation = Black officials. As noted by Julius Lester, author of the widely read Lookout Whitey! Black Power’s Gon’ Get Your Momma, almost as soon as Black Power had been formulated, this chain of equivalence was seized upon by “the liberal establishment” so as to neutralize the radical potential of the Black movement (Lester 1969, 106-107). That is, as pointed out by Lester and more recently by Adolph Reed, this version of Black Power became a mechanism through which the Black elite could gain further “administrative control” of the Black community by leveraging the force of the Black movement within the established political process while legitimating that very process to those who suffered its most severe adverse consequences (Reed 1999, 66 and Lester 1968, 107). Yet it would be
wrong to simply isolate the thought of Carmichael as somehow exceptional and therefore simply misguided. Rather, I believe that as a response to the crisis of Black nationalism identified by Malcolm X right before his death, Carmichael has attempted to respond to this crisis by leaning upon a parallel narrative of Black nationalism that grew side by side with Marcus Garvey’s notion of a Black nation and migration “back to Africa”: W.E.B. DuBois’ idea of double-consciousness. As Ernest Allen Jr. would point out, Carmichael has read DuBois as a way to shuttle back and forth between the vacillations of nationalist fervor and integrationist tactics (Allen 1992, 262). I believe that it is here, in the writings of DuBois himself and not in the resurgence of Black nationalism more generally as seems to be suggested by authors such as Adolph Reed, that we can identify limitations that would then reappear with a vengeance in the Black Power movement. In the following section I will isolate DuBois’ development of the notion of double-consciousness so as to trace its philosophical origins and thus better understand its force and limitations. I will then turn briefly again to Carmichael’s idea of Black Power in order to summarize the ways in which it mirrored DuBois’ much earlier formulation.

Although in what follows I attempt delineate a critique of double-consciousness and its relation to Black Power, I in no way intend to form a critique of W.E.B. DuBois’ applicability to Black struggle as a whole. On the contrary, the critique here is directed specifically at the concept of double-consciousness that DuBois developed extremely
early in his career and which, although space and time does not allow me to
demonstrate this point, stands in sharp contrast to the vision of social action which he
would develop in later years, most specifically the vision expounded in Black
Reconstruction in America.

3.2.2 DuBois As Precursor

First, for the sake of clarity, I will simply restate DuBois’ argument relating to
“double consciousness” as presented in “The Strivings of the Negro People,” as well as
in the reformulation of that essay that appears as the first chapter of The Souls of Black
Folk. Having summarized DuBois’ argument, I will then turn my attention to the
structure of “double consciousness” using G.W.F. Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit as a
guide of sorts. In doing so I would like to highlight, as others have already
demonstrated, that DuBois’ notion of “double consciousness” is in fact a straightforward
attempt to craft a dialectical framework adequate to the African American condition. In
addition, with Hegel in mind, we can better appreciate the parameters of DuBois’ social
vision and help to narrow the possible interpretations of his argument. More
specifically, this method should help us understand the fact that DuBois’ tactical
employment of “double consciousness” is inextricably tied to the idealist and rather
anti-democratic theme of “the talented tenth,” a fact that seems to be continually
understated in contemporary scholarship and whose consequences have yet to be fully
understood. Second, through this juxtaposition I hope to show that even if it were possible to simply extract the concept of “the talented tenth” from “double consciousness,” one is still left saddled with an additional set of problems emanating from the structure of the dialectic itself. The most significant of these problems may be that the adaptation by DuBois of the Hegelian philosophical framework of “recognition” traps him, and those of us who would adopt his formulation, into a classically monological discourse—a discourse whose roots might very well stand at odds with the very “two-ness” identified by DuBois and taken up in so many different ways as the site of Black cultural autonomy and political opposition.

3.2.2.1 Double Consciousness, the Narrative

DuBois’ presentation of “double consciousness” takes place within two texts written some five years apart. The first, titled “Striving of the Negro People,” was published in Atlantic Monthly in 1897; the second, a revised version of this article, was published as the first chapter of The Souls of Black Folk in 1903. It is important to return to DuBois’ original formulation in an attempt to lay bare the underlying structure of his argument as well as to better identify its possible influences and their implications. A summary of DuBois’ argument would best begin with the famous exchange of visiting cards denied DuBois by a “tall newcomer” who rejects his offer “peremptorily, with a glance” (DuBois 1993, 38). Due to this rejection, DuBois states, “Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like mayhap, in life,
heart, and longing but shut out from their world by a vast veil” (Ibid., emphasis mine). DuBois goes on to explain that his reaction to this veil has been rather exceptional; unlike other “black boys” he has not been reduced to “hatred or sycophancy.” He instead has been able to understand that the “worlds” he “longed for” belonged to whites and that it was his place to find the means to wrest these “prizes” from them. But DuBois quickly turns from his own exceptionality toward these now famous lines:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and the Roman, the Teuton and the Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world, —a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels this two-ness, —an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (DuBois 1993, 38, emphasis mine).

Thus, according to DuBois, the entire history of the American Negro should be read through the lens of this “strife,” “the longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better truer self.” The ends of this struggle according to DuBois are clear, to “make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American” (DuBois 1993, 39). Following these lines, and expanded from the “Strivings” essay, DuBois vests “double consciousness” onto particular historical subjects, each of whom also lives with this “peculiar sensation,” the post emancipatory: black artisan, Negro minister, doctor, black savant, and the black artist (DuBois 1993, 39). It is these subjects who are endowed by DuBois with the task of overcoming the disappointments of the recent past by welding their dreams into one, that is by bringing together within the
black community and “through the unifying idea of race” the values of “Work, Culture
and Liberty,” values that up until this point had been for whites alone and “incomplete”
(DuBois 1993, 43). It is only after such unity was achieved that DuBois felt he could
return to the initial impetus of his essay, that is, to the moment of overcoming his
refused exchange, to a time when “on American soil two world-races may give each to
each those characteristics they so sorely lack” (DuBois 1993, 43).

3.2.2.2 DuBois’ Unhappy Consciousness

It is important to begin any analysis of DuBois’ “double consciousness” texts and
their possible relation to Hegelianism by noting the historical moment from which these
texts arose. Such a context is provided by DuBois himself when he states boldly that his
occasion for writing could be characterized in one statement, “the freedman has not yet
found in freedom his promised land” (DuBois 1993, 40). Despite the decades past since
formal emancipation from slavery and due to the ravages of war, the formation and
action of the Ku Klux Klan, manipulation by self-interested northerners, and the lack of
an economic alternative that would stand in the place of the plantation economy,
African Americans could now see clearly that they had yet to attain “freedom.” This
insight for DuBois was the cause for “[a] shadow of a deep disappointment [to] rest[s]
upon the Negro people” (DuBois 1993, 40). It was this “disappointment” that framed
DuBois’ mindset and set him looking for alternatives. Not surprisingly, given his recent
encounters with George Santayana and William James and their reading and circulation of G.W.F. Hegel, in addition to the context above described, DuBois seems to have gleaned support and sympathy from the pages of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, more specifically, and as I will explore in the next few pages, within the section of *Phenomenology* titled “unhappy consciousness” (Zamir 1995, 114). It is important to note, before we analyze the philosophic parallels and disjunctures between DuBois’ and Hegel’s texts in more detail, that “unhappy consciousness” is the moment that arises within Hegel’s thought once the master and slave dialectic has been seemingly resolved in favor of the slave (a “resolution” which increasing evidence has shown was in no way unrelated to the historical emancipation of slaves)\(^4\), and yet the former slave comes to the necessary realization that despite having thrown off the “master,” the conflict between the master’s values and his or her own now play themselves out within his or her own consciousness. This leads to what one might describe as a “maddening” situation in where there are no “masters” as such but the former slave can simultaneously exclaim, “But I am not yet free?” At this point consciousness is divided, against itself.

As Shamoon Zamir has shown in his seminal investigation on the relation between Hegelian philosophy and “double consciousness,” the question of DuBois’ use of the Phenomenology cannot be reduced to a question of a simple adoption. Rather, given the context of “disappointment” just described, DuBois’ adaptation of Hegel is carefully crafted so as to distinguish his own Hegelianism from the triumphalist Hegel common among his white U.S. contemporaries (Zamir 1995, 126). In order to better understand the unique nature of DuBois’ adaptation of Hegel’s dialectic, I would like to divide his texts, as suggested by Zamir, into four moments that most directly parallel various portions of The Phenomenology: (mis)recognition, life and death struggle, split consciousness, and an attempt at resolution in the arena of culture. Although this section will not attempt to break new ground—it will in many ways simply repeat the incites of Zamir—it is necessary both for the clarity it provides with regard to the relation between DuBois and the Hegelian dialectic as well as offering a helpful description of the dialectical narrative itself from which we can build when we move towards its critique.

Self-Consciousness

Our first moment is provided for us by DuBois’ description of the refusal by “a tall newcomer” to exchange visiting cards with him “peremptorily, and with a glance” (DuBois 1993, 38). It is at this instant that, for DuBois, “the veil” has descended, and it is from within this veil that he is able to recognize that he is “different.” That is, for DuBois, this veil has brought with it a gift, “the gift of second sight,” which lets the
African American “see himself only through the revelation of the other world,” or to feel “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (DuBois 1993, 38).

This moment in DuBois provides us with our first parallel to Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, even if in a rather unexpected manner. This moment of DuBois’ failed exchange, the moment of the “peremptory glance,” is what Hegel narrates as the moment when “self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness” (Hegel 1807, 111). Yet, unlike Hegel, who states that at this point it is required that “each [self-consciousness] sees the other do the same as it does” (Hegel 1807, 112), DuBois characterizes his encounter of his self-consciousness with another as the unilateral “refusal” of an exchange on the part of the “tall newcomer.” In other words, DuBois does seem to have adopted the opening moments of Hegelian “self consciousness,” but he makes clear that what for Hegel is a “process of recognition” and “acknowledge[ment]” is for DuBois a moment that can only be characterized as the experience of rejection. This reversal of the Hegelian moment of “self consciousness” is again explicitly invoked by DuBois when he claims that it is at the moment of the “refusal” of exchange by the other that “a vast veil” has descended to shut him out from “their world” (DuBois 1993, 38). That is, it is difficult not to see DuBois’ description in an inverse relation to the Hegelian moment of the arrival on the scene of self-consciousness, a moment made possible within *The Phenomenology* only when, according to Hegel, “this curtain [of appearance] (referred to elsewhere by Hegel as a “covering veil”), therefore,
hanging before the inner world is drawn away...What we have here is Self-Consciousness” (Hegel quoted in Zamir 135; originally in Hegel 1807, 24).

Life and Death Struggle

For DuBois, then, the process of encountering another, as an African American in the U.S., is simultaneously or automatically what Hegel refers to as “a life and death struggle” (between master and slave) that, for reasons we will discuss below, DuBois decides to couch in the seemingly innocuous context of a schoolyard “glance.” Regardless, it is the struggle against what DuBois describes as a “prison-house,” the “prison-house” of a subjugating glance (the walls of the prison-house become “unscalable”), which automatically threatens to reduce the recipient to that status of an “object,” an object upon which the white world “looks on with amused pity and contempt” (DuBois 1993, 38). Here DuBois has once again simultaneously adopted a version of the Hegelian narrative, this time firmly within the master-slave dialectic, and placed it in the service of his own ends. If we begin by examining the master-slave dialectic in Hegel we see that its starting point is similar to that of DuBois. It states:

…to begin with they [the two self-conscious individuals] are unequal and opposed...they exist as two opposed shapes of consciousness; one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is to live or be for another. The former is the lord the other is the bondsman (Hegel 1807, 115).

And yet, DuBois does not posit African American subjectivity simply from the perspective of “objectness” (the “being for another”) as described by Hegel. In the
Hegelian schema, the “process of recognition” would require that the master consciousness place itself in relation not only to the other as a thing, as an object of its desire, but also in relation to that other as another consciousness to which this “thingness” pertains—another consciousness (Hegel 1807, 115). This element is simply missing from the scene of DuBois’ failed exchange. Thus, for DuBois, it is consequently of utmost importance to think African American subjectivity not from the moment of the self-action of the slave (as would likely be the case from a more strictly Hegelian perspective) in relation to its other, but rather from the imposition of a stunted engagement on the part of the master (the peremptory glance). In other words, what DuBois would like to make clear is that the position of the African American is not (even) that of “another” for the consciousness of the “tall newcomer,” but rather, something more closely prefiguring Fanon’s later statement that in the eyes of the French he was simply “an object in the midst of other objects” (Zamir 1995, 140).

**A Doubly Unhappy Consciousness**

Despite first appearances, the descent of the veil is not a purely negative experience. On the contrary, the veil is itself the birth site of “a gift.” The gift of “second sight” which is described by DuBois as the ability to “see himself through the revelations of the other world,” or, alternatively, “a double consciousness,” is comprised of the capacity to sense that “one is always looking at oneself through the eyes of others” (DuBois 1807, 38). The place behind the veil then is, according to DuBois, the very site...
for the staging of difference—“I was different from the others” (Ibid.). It is important to note that this “gift” does not belong to, or that this space behind the veil is not inhabited by, African American consciousness as such. Rather, as DuBois attempts to narrate, his own experience and his “gifted” disposition are exceptional, not only in the face of white society (quite literally), but also when contrasted to “other black boys” whose own reaction to racism is characterized as oscillating between “sycophancy,” “hatred,” and tears (Ibid., 38). Thus, it is necessary to be more precise as to what characterizes the historical subject to which this “gift” of double-consciousness” belongs. That is, one of the characteristic experiences of this subject is the experience of rejection by white society, but to that there must be added a second characteristic experience described by DuBois as “the sense…of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.” I will return to this point below.

Here we see that DuBois has moved from the presentation of self-consciousness and the master and slave dialectic to what Hegel referred to as “unhappy consciousness.”5 It is the recognition by consciousness of an unfinished reconciliation, a

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5 For Hegel, once the master-slave dialectic is assumed by self-consciousness there is a tendency for two possible reactions. The first is the withdrawal or refusal of self-consciousness to engage the other, to in fact acknowledge that one’s own destiny is indebted to that other (one might characterize this moment as a stunted dialectic), a position that we can see from DuBois’ description can most easily be ascribed to his white compatriots. Given the long-term impossibility of such a position, Hegel’s narrative passes from stoicism to skepticism, which can be seen as an interstitial moment between the master-slave dialectic and the unhappy consciousness.
striving. As Hegel asserts, in unhappy consciousness, consciousness has retracted itself from the direct struggle with the other, but it has surpassed the stages of isolation of stoicism and the oscillation and lack of self-certainty between self and other present within skepticism. As Hegel notes, unhappy consciousness is the point of contact between “individuality” (particularity) and the unchangeable (the universal). The truth of this movement for Hegel is the “oneness” of this dual or “doubled” consciousness. In Hegel’s own words,

The duplication, which was divided between two individuals, the lord and the bondsman, is [now] concentrated in one. Thus we have here that the dualizing self-consciousness within itself, which lies essentially in the notion of the mind; but the unity of the two elements is not yet present. Hence the Unhappy Consciousness, the Alienated Soul which is the consciousness of self as a divided nature, a doubled and merely contradictory being.

This unhappy consciousness, divided and at variance within itself, must, because this contradiction of its essential nature is felt to be a single consciousness, always have in the one consciousness the other also; and thus must be straightaway driven out of each in turn, when it thinks it has therein attained to the victory, and rest of unity. Its true return to itself, or reconciliation within itself, will however, display the notion of the mind endowed with a life and existence of its own, because it implicitly involves the fact that, while being an undivided consciousness, it is a double-consciousness (Hegel quoted in Zamir 145; originally in Hegel 1807, 251).

That is, consciousness finds itself passing over to the other while being at the point of recognition that the essence of the other remains internal to the self. In this sense, as mentioned above, the struggle between master and slave now presents itself fully within a single consciousness, and this internalized struggle, this duality, becomes the motor that propels consciousness to recognize that “its essence is only in its opposite,” and therefore that the truth of the particular individual can be found only in
the infinite unchangeable (Hegel 1807, 127). Unhappy consciousness remains, however, that moment at which despite the recognition of a mutual imbrication within one consciousness of the particular and the universal, this consciousness is not yet capable of reconciling this relation of these “two extremes” (Hegel 1807, 133).

*The Kingdom of Culture (mediation)*

But unhappy consciousness, much like the historical subject endowed with that consciousness by DuBois, is a launching pad of sorts for the possibility of a future reconciliation that to this point has been denied. That is, unhappy consciousness contains within itself both self and its opposite within a single body, and because of this is capable of achieving or maintaining the mark of difference while uncovering a larger identity that unifies both. As DuBois states, the “double consciousness” [of the talented tenth] provides the possibility of a future where it was possible to be both “a Negro and an American” (DuBois 1993, 39).

This future reconciliation is also made explicit by DuBois when he states that “the end” of the Negro striving is “to become an equal in the kingdom of culture.” Again this statement is immediately followed by a description of the divided nature of the “talented tenth” (Negro artisans, ministers, doctors, and savants). These actors alone, according to DuBois’ narrative, can mold the scattered efforts of the African American community in the areas of “work, culture, and liberty” into “one” (DuBois 1993, 38). For
DuBois, the assignation of “double consciousness” to the talented tenth carries with it the simultaneous role, parallel to that of Hegel’s unhappy consciousness, of mediation. That is, for Hegel, the presence of particularity and universality within unhappy consciousness allows this consciousness to play the role of a third term that stands between these “two extremes.” Within unhappy consciousness, particularity and universality are not only brought into relation, but consciousness is able to recognize that these terms can be united only by a “third term,” this middle term which carries within it both extremes, and therefore has the capacity to present the truth of each to the other (Hegel 1807, 136). Concretely, the “content of this action is the extinction of its particular individuality, the surrender of its own will, through which consciousness is able to turn its self-consciousness into “a Thing,” an object. Consequently, self-consciousness “ascribes” the capacity for this objectification as “a gift from above” (Hegel 1807, 136), “a gift” which DuBois explicitly ascribes to the “talented tenth.” That is, the “gift” of two-ness is contained in the capacity of, once again, “measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (DuBois 1993, 38).

3.2.2.3 Critical Idealism and the Talented Tenth

We are now in a position to better describe DuBois’ overall strategy in his writing on “double consciousness.” That is, we can now see that DuBois has adapted the
framework of the Hegelian dialectic with a certain inflection, an inflection that helps us to delineate DuBois’ own vision. We can see that DuBois’ reworkings of the first moments of the development of self-consciousness, the moments of recognition and of the master and slave struggle, have very clear aims. Both these moments in Hegel, as detailed above, involve the mutual reciprocity of two independent consciousnesses, each of which recognizes the other as such. Thus, within the Hegelian framework, there is a thrust, or teleological force toward a dialectical resolution of these two consciousnesses as early as these two moments. Given the racism of white U.S. society, which presented itself as the triumph of a development toward universalist values, DuBois carefully circumscribes these initial moments of The Phenomenology as a refused exchange, and thus uncovers the purported universalism of white U.S. society as a parochialism incapable of moving beyond its self-imposed stasis. In this way, much of the critical force of DuBois’ texts lies in his careful insistence that white U.S. society necessitates an outside (an other) in order to be pushed out of its blind complacency and in this way reinitiate an exchange that could eventually lead to the fulfillment of the ideals and principles it so vociferously purports to desire.

By isolating the last two moments of DuBois’ text (unhappy consciousness and the kingdom of culture), we can better specify what that “other” to white U.S. society might consist of. We can deduce from the argument that the initial “other” in this dialectic consists of the Black community in general. Yet, it is difficult within DuBois’
text to isolate any substantial elements that this community might leverage against white racism. As Ernest Allen Jr. points out, those elements of Black culture that are highlighted by DuBois remain ambiguous at best and more often derogatory (Allen 2003, 29). Perhaps the ambiguous nature of these elements of the Black community that might eventually serve as a contribution to U.S. society is best explained by DuBois himself when he posits that, as opposed to the “dollars” and “smartness” offered by white society, the African American would bring forth “pure human spirit” (DuBois 1807, 43). Taking this into account, we are forced to conclude that just as white society is denied the capacity for development without an engagement with its exterior, so too must the Black community look beyond itself in order to surpass its situation of “poverty and ignorance.” It is equally important, however, to note that this possible future engagement with their other remains in DuBois’ formulation extremely lopsided with the force of universalism which remains (even if unattained) unquestionably on the side of white U.S. society.

Despite this inequality, we can deduce from DuBois’ formulation that the “active” element, the element that is in actual movement, resides neither on the side of white U.S. society nor on that of the Black community. Rather, just as for “unhappy consciousness,” the active element consists of a “middle term” that belongs to neither white nor black communities by participating in both. Thus, from the perspective of either white or black society, this element remains truly exceptional. Like DuBois, this
middle term consists of a professional class that is given the title of the “talented tenth.” It is worth noting that these class qualifications of the talented tenth are not originary. That is, the talented tenth is not simply an elite sector of the black community. Rather, this class of elites was made possible, according to DuBois, due to racial mixing that created a “race” of mulattoes who were subtly favored among blacks. They were thus afforded elite educations and there instilled with the capacity to “measure one’s soul by the tape” of the white world. Because of this mixture, this “race” alone has the capacity to both unify and develop the black community while simultaneously forcing open an exchange with the white community, in this way forging the possibility for the development of an American national culture.

From this formulation we can see that DuBois is functioning under a rather conservative vision of social change. By carefully weaving the “talented tenth” as a “middle term” between white and Black America—and because of the neutering of African American culture that such an operation implies, DuBois can then present the talented tenth as relatively innocuous for whites while simultaneously calling for the development of the Black community. As others have pointed out, this vision coincided well on a tactical level with DuBois’ practice of encouraging white philanthropists to contribute to organizations, like the NAACP, that were dominated by members of his “talented tenth” (Allen 2003, 37-40). In addition to these immediate tactical gains, which the structure of “double consciousness” afforded DuBois, we can see that underneath
the molding of this “middle term” there lies an even more disturbing vision that goes well beyond tactics to matters of societal principle. In his 1903 essay titled “The Talented Tenth,” DuBois lays bare for us these very principles. The very first line of this essay indicates to us the tone the rest of the essay will attempt to set, “The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men” (DuBois 1903, 1). DuBois further solidifies the content of his vision with the following statement:

Was there ever a nation on God’s fair earth civilized from the bottom upward? Never; it is, ever was and ever will be from the top downward that culture filters. The Talented Tenth rises and pulls all that are worth the saving up to their vantage ground. This is the history of human progress; and the two historic mistakes which have hindered that progress were the thinking first, that no more could ever rise save the few already risen; or second, that it would better the uprising to pull the risen down (DuBois 1903, 5).

3.2.3 Double Consciousness and the Political Imaginary of Black Power

By adopting the formula of shuffling the signifiers African and American as counterweights to each other, Stokely Carmichael has, perhaps without reference, sought to revive the strategy of double-consciousness that DuBois had adapted for a form of Black nationalism at the turn of the 20th century. In doing so, Carmichael and much of the movement that mirrored Carmichael’s vision of Black Power somewhat unknowingly inherited the problems that were enmeshed within DuBois’ original formulation. That is, as I will attempt to demonstrate, this particular vision of Black Power is faced with four very immediate limitations that would eventually come to
cripple the movement. This was not because of the adoption of a Black nationalist framework per se, as some have suggested, but rather because of the very specific framework from which this form of Black nationalism was derived. The four limitations facing the vision of Black Power as double consciousness can be quickly summarized in the following: 1) the point of possible resistance is figured as a geographical and temporal “outside” (Africa); 2) the resistant content of that “outside” remains highly abstract; 3) the location of difference within the schema of double-consciousness ultimately resides within the agency of similitude; and 4) The conceptual dependence upon the primacy of similitude translates into a rather conservative vision of political strategy centered around elite social action. These are limitations which I will show derive from the proximity of the Hegelian dialectic’s schema to the notion of political sovereignty and the sovereign subject.

Carmichael would like to eschew the tendency of presenting the socially given situation (i.e. “America”) as a valid synthesis of disparate elements by placing his hopes in the recovery of an exteriority that in philosophical terms is presumed to appear in the steps prior to such a synthesis (i.e. at the moment of a possible stoicism). Yet it seems that, like DuBois, he is equally caught in the web of the dialectic. As Henry Louis Gates has shown, though for reasons rather disparate than my own, the positioning of blackness (or the non-west, i.e. Africa) as that which is simply exterior to Western culture does not escape dialectical discourse. Rather, these positions reduce Africa to the
negative reflection (or essence) of Western culture (i.e. if the West is reason Africa is emotion, if the West is mind Africa is body, etc...) and thus constantly tie blackness back onto the necessity of a Western supplement (Gates 1987, 274-275). In other words, and addressing our second perceived limitation, the signifier “Africa” in Carmichael’s African-American, like that of DuBois’ Negro in his formulation of Negro and American, remains an empty place holder with little if any content. Aside from gestures towards framing Africa as the anchor from which Blacks in the United States could draw a sense of heritage, history, and culture, the content of these categories remains completely empty. As Sibylle Fischer has astutely pointed out, the exteriority required in the stoic-like positions of Carmichael has the curious effect of glorifying non-Western culture as contestatory to the extent that it remains wholly outside of Western modernity while simultaneously rendering the non-West as a passive, inactive, and recoiling “sufferer” to the extent that it is present within modernity (Fischer 2004, 36). The richness and power of Black creativity and struggle within Western modernity is necessarily and sadly rendered non-existent while resistance is increasingly tied to the “memory” of a premodern communal past. In other words, the value of this “exterior” lies squarely within the psychic and imaginary dimensions while remaining extremely limiting if not paralyzing for practicable political action and thus making it difficult to locate the basis from which the parameters of that field itself might be placed into question (i.e. politics remains the politics of the given institutions). To use Carmichael’s terms, the Africa of
African-American allows the Black community to demand an “effective share in the total power of the society,” but it in no way allows you to challenge the structure of that power itself. To the extent that the dialectical structure of his argument requires the presumption of an “exteriority,” Carmichael’s re-adaptation of DuBoisian double consciousness does not escape this limitation.

Third, double-consciousness has been read by many as the paradigmatic presentation of the duality present in African American life in the United States (as being within but not of the United States). Despite these readings, of which Carmichael’s is but one, in DuBois’ text this duality is not presented as “a gift.” Rather, it is a problem, a problem to which the double-consciousness of the “talented tenth” (and not of Blacks in general) as the element of dialectical mediation (“a third term”) is presented as the (re)solution. Thus, does not the subsumption of difference necessitated in the dialectical framework eliminate (within a single consciousness) the very “two-ness” that so many African Americans have felt characterized black life in the U.S.? Another way that we might ask this question is whether the dialectic can both subsume and maintain difference? Clearly Hegel’s notion of *aufgehoben* (supercession) and DuBois’ adaptation of it both imply that this is in fact possible, but the structure of the dialectic itself presents certain difficulties in this regard. Within DuBois’ argument this problem presents itself in the following manner: the rejection of DuBois’ trading card by the “tall newcomer” allows him the “gift” of recognizing his “difference.” As we stated earlier, it
is a gift which is then leveraged by DuBois to force open the process of dialectical development that white racism has up until then made impossible. Yet, DuBois’ difference is solely directed toward the end of re-initiating the possibility of an exchange with white America—the exchange initially denied him. But if it was a lack of exchange that allowed for DuBois’ “difference,” would not the recommencement of that exchange signify the annihilation of that difference? Or would it not at least signify the inability to continue to identify that difference? In this sense the feeling of “twoness” for which double consciousness is many times invoked is, within DuBois’ own argument, actually a thought of the one. That is, if the refusal of recognition is posed as the problem by DuBois, the solution to this problem (a transparency in which contradictions can be sublimated) can be offered only by the dominant point of view (white society) that initiated the refusal and whose view now returns as the universal standard internalized by the subordinate (the “double consciousness” of the talented tenth). Simply put, within the dialectical framework adopted by DuBois, difference (although it may be split within itself, the talented tenth and the rest of the Black community) can be subsumed (or recognized) only to the extent that it can be viewed as being co-equivalent with the same (white society).

Although Carmichael’s discussion of Black Power does include a more strident critique of the express content of white U.S. society than that which is proposed by the DuBois of 1903, he does not escape the philosophical problem raised immediately above.
That is, even if Carmichael is staunchly opposed to the content of middle-class white American culture because, as he claims, it is devoid of any “viable conscience as regards humanity” (Carmichael 1992, 40), the eventual resolution that he proposes is just as tied to similitude as that of DuBois. What Carmichael has attempted to do is to take the “outside” (Africa) as a site of Black sovereignty so as to leverage that site against the exclusion faced by Blacks “inside” the site of sovereignty in the United States. Much like DuBois then, whose vision of the talented tenth provides the basis for recognizability for an eventual resolution between Black and white U.S. citizens, Carmichael’s claim does not derive simply from the particular cultural content of either group but rather from the similarity in the structure of social rule that is invoked by both. In other words, as with DuBois’ talented tenth, Carmichael’s reliance on Africa is not meant to provide Blacks with any particular cultural content outside of the readability that the exceptional structure of rule present within that signifier gives Blacks in the U.S. The fact of the exercise of sovereignty in one location is used to open the possibility for participation in the exercise of sovereignty in a second location while the common and unquestioned denominator (as in DuBois’ statements regarding civilization) is that in both locations “civilization” is made possible by a structure of power that is perceived to emanate from the top down. It is interesting to note that this perceived structure is then re-presented by Carmichael within his own theory of Black Power. That is, for Carmichael the theory of Black Power was not the expression of the activity of the Black community itself;
rather, it was presented as a “program” that was necessary for the Black masses to adopt if the Black revolt was to be successful. Thus, the exceptional body that in DuBois is presented as the talented tenth is within Black Power reproposed by Carmichael as the exceptional relation of the Black radical intellectual to the Black masses. In both cases then, for DuBois and Carmichael the structure of that exceptionality is that which still grounds the possible recognizability of the Black community by the structure of the exceptional sovereign power that it faces.

In sum, once “the veil” (or Hegel’s curtain) has been lifted by granting the African American community its possible existence outside of white domination in the United States, what emerges is the Black sovereign subject, as embodied in the talented tenth (the site for the completion of Hegelian self-consciousness) (Da Silva 2007, 8). Thus DuBois and Carmichael’s arguments can be read as a repetition of sorts of Las Casas’ argument in favor of the indigenous peoples of the Americas; “they too have sovereigns and should thus be treated equally” (see Chapter One). Once again that equality comes at the price of subordinating potential difference in the name of that common measure called sovereignty.

Some scholars have pointed toward the application of double-consciousness and its dialectical framework as a way to avoid or desolidify the essentialist tendencies of the
notions of racialism (be it the racism of whites or certain facile notions of nationalism). Against these essentialist notions, dialecticians have insisted on the relationality and eventual synthesis of distinct elements to highlight that these notions are neither tenable nor ultimately helpful. Yet it must be recognized that the dialectic itself and double consciousness as its variation can never move beyond a certain logical impasse in which the set of possibilities are always and forever laid out as the interplay of insides and outsides, as identity and difference which surreptitiously presuppose an even prior identity. This shuffling of insides and outsides (even if the force of synthesis is held at bay) does not allow us to ask a number of questions. First, what is the historical status of this “outside”? Can there come a time when the formation and production of subjectivity or the establishment of a “world market” make it impossible to formulate “the outside” as a helpful instrument for the radical imaginary? (Whether this point in history has been reached is a rather different question.) If not, are we not then openly faced with the ahistorical nature of the necessary categories formulated into the dialectic itself (i.e. the necessary permanence of the play of identity and difference)? Second, and perhaps more importantly, has African American resistance in the U.S. (cultural and otherwise) developed as a practice fundamentally based on the thought of the “outside?” Or, does not the very notion of the Black vernacular (and the historical

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conditions that made it possible) require a thought and an ethics of opposition and resistance without recourse to “the outside.” Is the vernacular not exactly the thought and practice of a people who historically were forced to conceive of their own difference and their own resistances without recourse to an “outside”? Does not the vernacular (from the Latin vernaculus, meaning native, which in turn derives from verna, which means slave born within the Masters house)⁷ itself imply that the very categories of possibility required for the application of dialectical critique simply cannot help to highlight the force of “truth” implicit in African American resistance? In sum, is it not necessary, would it not be more useful, to shift our thinking so that our theoretical framework does not force us into the vicious practice of judging contemporary Black radical practices by whether they can live up to the thought of the “outside” (Africa), but rather allows us to begin by asking whether the thought of the “outside” can itself live up to the actual force of the practices and resistance that has characterized Black history—a history that in the words of James Baldwin has been nothing short of “the perpetual achievement of the impossible.”⁸

### 3.3 Amiri Baraka: Black Power as “Home”

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If Stokely Carmichael’s response to the crisis within Black nationalism pointed out by Malcolm X comes in the form of a conception of Black Power that ties us to “double-consciousness” and is thus unable to account for the force of the Black vernacular (the force of the slave born in the master’s house), then the notion of Black Power presented by Amiri Baraka [formerly Leroi Jones] promises to lead us in a quite different direction in that it explicitly sets itself the goal of “destroying double-consciousness” while simultaneously attempting to forefront the power of the vernacular tradition.

As Leroi Jones most explicitly exclaimed in “The Myth of Negro Literature,” Negro authors up until that point (1966) had measured their success through the mimicry of, and inclusion in, what white society referred to as “high art,” thus ignoring and even despairing the vernacular tradition. According to Jones, these authors had confused the social status afforded through the notion of “cultivation” and “culture” that circulated among the “serious” art world of whites with an actual concern for aesthetic practice. Due to this confusion, many Black artists had failed to grapple with what at the time Jones felt was the true motor and imperative of aesthetic practice, what Jones referred to very generally as, a wrestling with “the profound meaningfulness of life” (Baraka 2000, 109). Although the content of the critique would later change, the conclusion remained: Black literature as “high art” had contributed minimally to the Black community. As fellow Black Arts scholar Larry Neal would later claim, “the text
[of Black literature] could be destroyed and no one would be hurt the least by it” (Neal 1989, 21).9

In contrast to the rather bleak evaluation of Black literature, Jones came to believe that the deepest development of the vernacular had taken place in Black music. It was there that Blacks had developed an aesthetic practice that had not only given rise to giants and standouts like Charlie Parker and John Coltrane, but that also implicitly carried within itself an innovative assessment of the social function of art that allowed Jones to place the question of a “Black aesthetic” front and center while sidestepping the question of form that had so plagued previous generations of Black artists (the debate between Richard Wright and James Baldwin that surrounded Baldwin’s evaluation of Wright’s Native Son is paradigmatic in this regard). In the following pages I attempt to summarize Jones’ approximation to the vernacular through music with no intention of evaluating the true content of that approximation (whether this is what the music actually said). Rather, my interest is in highlighting Jones’ philosophical approach to the question of Black resistance, in contradistinction to the theory of double consciousness we have just examined.

9 “The destruction of the text,” became a central concept in the Black Arts Movement. Although Neal is here referring to the literal destruction of Black literature, such a question, as I hope to show below, cannot be completely dissociated from the questions that arose later with regards to the metaphysical status of aesthetic creation.
Here I will specifically examine the way in which the vernacular was understood in the works of Leroi Jones. As Larry Neal would point out, it was Jones who had been a pioneer of sorts in the investigation of the vernacular tradition with his 1963 book titled *Blues People*. In this book Jones had set the agenda with respect to the centrality of Black music; he had understood that it would be key in both comprehending the nature of the Black vernacular and giving “Black art” a properly affirmative content (Neal 1989, 65). In the words of Larry Neal, Jones showed that there was no need “to establish a ‘Black aesthetic,’ rather, that one was already in existence. The question was; where did it exist? And what do we do with it?” (Benston 2000, 247). According to Jones, the overwhelming evidence presented in both Black music and Black speech led to the conclusion that the “Black aesthetic” can be distinguished from the Western artistic tradition due to its central focus on indirection in which “exact definition” is eschewed in favor of circumlocution, through which all statements can be regarded as implied, suggested, and ever-changing (Baraka 1980, 30-31).

The strongest evidence for this claim is presented by Jones in Chapter 3 of *Blues People*, “African Slaves/American Slaves: Their Music.” It is here that Jones lays out what he believes to be at the crux of the vernacular tradition. As Jones explains, at the heart of that tradition lies the Blues, the first truly unique development of “the Black man” in the United States (Baraka 1980, 15). That is, from Jones’ perspective, the Blues was a true innovation in that it cannot be considered a simple development of African music, and
even less could it have arisen from Anglo-European music without the presence of Black slaves in America (Baraka 1980, 17). As Jones explains, much of what developed as African American music—both Blues and Jazz, had come into being as the work music of African slaves in America. It was work music, however, that had as its primary condition the enslavement and attempted cultural subjugation of its producers. That is, both the conditions of livelihood, the daily reality of working endlessly for the good of another as well as the harsh enforcement of restrictions placed on language, instruments, and the subject of song helped to shape the direction of Black music and thus could not be considered as a mirror of existing African music. In addition, to emphasize the unique character of Black music, Jones notes that soon after enslavement there arose entire generations of Blacks who had known nothing from birth but “slave culture” and thus felt distance to the conditions and contexts which had made the African song of their parents possible (Baraka 1980, 20). These unique conditions gave rise to a music that despite variation contained a certain number of consistent characteristics.

First, due to the strict regulations on the use of instruments and subjects deemed rebellious, black music developed to place a very heavy emphasis on the human voice and the nature of an utterance. That is, much of black music and especially the blues scale, should be considered “vocal music” where the “cries, swoops, and squawks” which can be heard in the music of Charlie Parker and Ornette Coleman, for example,
can be considered as a development of the “field hollers” and “shouts” of the black slaves—musical utterances that, according to Jones, are nearly impossible to reproduce on the Western musical scale. In this manner, the Blues (as well as Jazz) gives central importance to the nearly infinite variability made possible by the voice through the simple application and acknowledgement of tone and pitch. As a consequence of this variability, even the brute repetition of a single simple phrase is thought to carry at each interval a significance all its own (Baraka 1980, 26). In addition, as hinted in the preceding lines, the musician’s relation to his instrument is not that of an independent artifact; rather, the instrument is viewed as a prosthesis which expands the self-expression of the musician’s voice.

Second, many of those “field hollers” later expressed through various musical instruments were in fact “rhythmical lyrics” which themselves reproduced the sound of the drum attempting the phonetic reproduction of words (Baraka 1980, 26). The centrality given to the drum in this effort lays bare a rhythmic sensibility, in contrast to the melodic qualities of much Western music—a sensibility that places emphasis on polyphonic and contrapuntal effects that produce stark harmonic contrasts and which thus has little to no relation to the West’s dominant diatonic scale (Baraka 1980, 26).

Third, Black music, like the speech that it (re)produces, presumes a collective setting. As such, much of the music is structured like a speech situation in which a person or musical leader sings out his or her theme and the chorus comments on that
theme with an answer and theme of their own and vice-versa. In fact, as Jones points out, the entire structure of Jazz can be viewed in this light as the instantiation of a musical statement followed by an arbitrary but insistent number of improvised responses based (even if most likely only partially) on that initial theme. It is what today is widely acknowledged as “call and response.” In sum, the voicedness of Black music, like the nature of the speech utterance, allows for a variability at least as extensive as the number of elements present, as well as for answerability, or the acknowledgment that all statements exist only in relation to those of others.

Having re-examined the Black vernacular tradition, Jones was prepared to make his case for the underlying difference between a “Black aesthetic” and the dominant trends in the Western artistic tradition—it was according to the Black Arts Movement nothing less than a matter of “ontology” (Neal 1989, 16). From the perspective of the Black Arts Movement, much of the Western artistic tradition had grown parallel to the increasing separation of daily life activity from questions of the beautiful which ensued with the decreasing influence of Church life and ritual. Due to this rift, questions of “the beautiful in the West were increasingly reduced to art as a socially isolatable “objet d’art” (artifact) toward which “man” stands as external observer judging “lines, proportions, and clarity” (Benston 2000, 77). Thus, the dominant Western aesthetic tradition developed as if art and life could emanate from distinct realms. As Kim Benston notes, at the heart of the Western compartmentalization of life activity arises a dualism in which
one element is thought to stand in a relation of non-participation or transcendence to the second element (Benston 2000, 76). This dualism perhaps can be characterized as a realm of “ideal forms” (i.e. the absolute, the original, the possible, artifice, reflection and language) standing in an external relation to a degraded and illusory realm of the “real” (i.e. imitation, nature, expression, speech). As Neal and Jones believed, the realm of forms through which “art” was to be assessed, crushed and isolated the force of the real and forced it into the practice of the predictable repetition of the always already existing.

In contrast, Black artistic expression had retained and further developed a sense of function which allowed the aesthetic to be understood not as a question of the cultivated observer, but rather, the collective daily practice of the imagination—a magic or Juju—in which through the actions of sounds, words and images on the world, one is projected past our sense of our selves as given “things” to the realm of possibility (Baraka 2000, 213 and Neal 1989, 22). Thus, the Black aesthetic as magic, according to Jones, brings us closer to the understanding that art, like the life it was part of, was not a “thing,” an object, or a noun as the West continued to believe, it was rather an active process, an action, a verb—“arting” toward which the aesthetic artifact stood as a simple remnant (Baraka 2000, 175). It is in this sense that we can return to the notion of the

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10 It is important to note that Jones and Neal were not unaware of parallel movements within Western Art. Jones specifically notes that Marcel Duchamp’s “anti-aesthetic” emphasis on found objects is also an attempt to move beyond the hegemony of the objet d’art in the Western tradition and towards an understanding of art as processuality (Jones 1996, 176).
“destruction of the text”: beyond a literal destruction of the literary tradition, its deeper significance was located in its call for the unhinging of the real from the crushing effects of the ideal forms (the degrading effect of “the text” on enunciation) (Henderson 1973, 61). In this manner, the Black aesthetic was not relegated to the realm of reproduction; rather, its status as action allowed it to constantly bring forth the as yet “unseen.” It was from the perspective of art as production that Black Art Movement saw its mandate to create “new forms, new values… new songs,” “new men, and new heroes,” in short, as Jones stated, the Black artist had to “become as the creative function of the universe” (Baraka 1980, 60). In Baraka then, we find the possibility of figuring Black resistance through the vernacular without recourse to an outside as was necessary with double consciousness. Yet, as we will see below, this possibility is foreshortened.

3.3.1 Home: Baraka’s Impasse

Despite the framework of “creation” that stands at the heart of Jones’ reading of the Black vernacular, Jones bypasses many of his own insights with regard to this tradition and consequently develops a rather confused if not contradictory position towards Black vernacular expression.

From the very first chapters of Blues People quoted above, Leroi Jones is quick to confuse if not conflate two related and similar but ultimately distinct phenomena: the “birth” of the Blues as “the product of the Black man in this country”...a truly “native
American music,” and the very same Blues as the simple transposition of the “African Tradition” which undoubtedly makes its presence felt in Black speech, Black music, and thus “the Black aesthetic” more generally. Jones recognizes that, after a generation, “the slave did not want to return to Africa,” and thus projects like those of Marcus Garvey would ultimately prove to be elusive. Yet Jones goes on to posit the development of African culture as that which is induced by the loss of “home.” In other words, these slaves did not want to go back to Africa but they did want to go “home.” If one follows the trajectory of Jones’ work one can begin to distill what is implied by his deployment of “home.” “Home” in Jones’ work can be, at first sight, associated with at least three different physical locations, the first of which as we have already mentioned is undoubtedly Africa. Second, according to Jones, for Blacks in the United States “The South was home”; communal Black society made possible under slavery produced “the natural attachment of man to land” and thus gave Blacks “a more intense sense of self in its most vital relationship to the world” (Baraka 2000, 105 and 158). With “The South” in mind, Jones then posits the role of Black art and the Black Arts Movement as the revival

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11 Nothing that follows should be interpreted as somehow challenging the presence of African elements in Black daily life in America. As Melville J. Herskovits and others have definitively shown Africanisms abound in America and to deny such a fact is to close one’s eyes to reality. See generally, Melville J. Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past, (Boston: Beacon Press Books, 1990). The question at issue here is the function or significance of these elements. That is, are they in fact determinative of Black culture in the U.S.? Or, rather than viewing the presence of these elements as a simple transposition of African culture to a new context, might it not be necessary to conclude that Black slaves in America were forced to innovate, to approach those elements of African culture within a framework that was previously unimaginable?
of “the inviolable roots” of Black culture present in southern slave society, and thus a promotion of a certain proximity to land. In a third moment, Jones urges African Americans in their diverse locations in the United States to come “home” by building a “Black nation” from “where we are” in Black cities across the United States (Baraka 2000, 243). What was needed according to Jones was nothing short of a “lebensraum” where the “aggregate of Black Spirit” and the revival of “Black roots” could take place (Baraka 2000, 248). It is extremely important to note then that according to Jones the issue of “home” for Blacks in the United States was not tied to a topographical or even historical location. Rather, “home” is figured by Jones as the proximity of “Black spirit” to the “intensity of self” provided by actual land and thus as nothing less than the renewal of a relation this land would once again make possible between “Black magicians” and “the gods” (Neal 1989, 73).

As Fred Moten has pointed out, this shift from a concern for a “Black aesthetic” to a concern for the “Black spirit” (as a “Black Nation”) as the location of “home” finds resounding parallels to the work of Martin Heidegger; it is a shift that, following Moten following Theodor Hudson, we might designate with the title: from Leroi Jones to Amiri Baraka (from bohemian to Black nationalist). We should emphasize that more than a simple resemblance, Baraka himself deploys Heidegger to help us better understand his formulation of “home”:
Life an abstract noun, living (Life-ing) is not (i.e., it is living)
Be (I think of Olson sd its root from the sanscrit Seen or Being seen)
And it is Verb. The Act.
Seinde. (Heidegger’s Being, & its Projection)
Or what he called Dasein Da-Sein, Sein it to Be. Da is literally There. To Be There. Or the positing of an existence that is not literally where we are now (Quoted in Moten 2003, 278).

If Baraka’s invocation of “Da-Sein” certainly places us in the midst of Heidegger’s thought, Heidegger’s own project may bridge us back to Baraka. More specifically, I would like to draw a parallel between Baraka’s turn to Black nationalism with Heidegger’s project to rethink the notion of the “polis” as an alternative to the modern nation-state (a goal that places Heidegger’s thought beyond but uncomfortably near the nationalism of German National Socialism). For Heidegger, the “polis” as used by the chorus in Sophocles’ *Antigone* became that “place” for the reinvigoration of man’s relation to Being as such. As Heidegger believed, the nature of the modern nation-state functioned as pure “politics,” a social organization founded on the management of man’s relationship to man (an ontic entity). As such, the modern-nation state was the central and primary site for the “covering” over of man’s essence—his relationship to Being in general (Ontology) (Heidegger 1959, 156-176). In Heidegger’s own language, we might say that the ontic foundations of “politics” in the nation-state necessitated the forgetting (a certain absence) of the question of the Ontological. As such, Heidegger, like Baraka, was less concerned with the historical patterns of human displacement and diaspora that had placed man at a certain distance from the boundaries of their
originary nation-states. Rather, both Heidegger and Baraka are concerned with the way in which “the West,” through the nation-state, had distanced itself from the question of Being and had in this way attained a sense of “homelessness” (heimatlosigkeit) that no particular historical process could ever account for, because for each the homeland was not a location but “a nearness to Being” (DeBestegui 1998, 108). Yet, in Heidegger, man is caught in a certain paradox which will simultaneously provide him with his destinal project. That is, man is that animal which is most at home among the being of beings but is also the most inundated with his relation to other beings and is thus both the most likely being to forget his essence as well as the only being to be able to live up to it. Man is that being which is able to become at home with his homelessness. As a response to the secondary “homelessness” brought on by the overwhelmingly ontic nature of modern “politics,” Heidegger dedicated himself to a re-evaluation of the polis that contrasts sharply with the “political” readings given to this concept in much of Greek philosophy. In his vision the polis was that “place,” the central “pole” around which all of being swirls. In other words, this “place” was the essential (i.e. ontological) and thus “pre-political” place where man established a relation between his terrestrial abode and “the world of the gods” (DeBestegui 1998, 139). It is thus this “polis” that must consistently be “uncovered” from the grips of the ontic happenings of “politics,” for it is this “place” that remains primary to any given order; it is that which makes all (re)ordering, political or otherwise, possible (and not vice-versa). The polis is the
“becoming home” of man’s “homelessness,” and as such, the “polis” functions for Heidegger as “the great beginning” in relation to which, and only in a “genuine relation” to which (a “return” to which is simultaneously a departure from that which has existed) “Revolution” becomes possible (DeBestegui 1998, 31).

We can see more clearly then why and how it might have been that Baraka took inspiration from Heidegger to imagine the “Black nation” as that project that would restore man’s “home” against forces of the nation-state. We might make several claims here against both Heidegger and Baraka, the first and certainly the most common has been that of pointing out that despite the necessity of a certain play of absence and presence, that is, the permanent absence of a certain presence involved in man’s “homelessness” in his forgetting, both Heidegger and Baraka’s positing of a “becoming home” requires the reducibility of the Ontological (that which is absent in beings) to the level of the ontic (that which is purely present), thus bypassing the nature of man as forgetful completely. This is a point of over-reach at which the “overcoming” of metaphysics as presence re-instantiates that which it has set out to oppose.

But this critique is not exactly what concerns us here. As Miguel DeBestegui shows, in Heidegger the thought of the “polis” (or the location of Blackness in this case) faces a major obstacle—the untenability of its “economic” vision. Of course, one might immediately reply that such ontic concerns (i.e. economy) are unrelated to the Heideggerian outlook; and yet, at every point, the reinvigoration of the “polis” (or the
Black Nation) as the establishment of “the proper” remains inextricable from a purely domestic economy (the law of the oikos) (DeBestegui 1998, 145). It is as if the economy of the abode is the central component of the “polis” and thus necessarily unsurpassable. Yet it remains absolutely necessary to ask whether this place of the proper relation to being is not always already mediated through the existence of exchange and the development of money that consistently exceeds the home and thus necessarily intervenes at the very center of man’s destinal project of “becoming home.”12 To be more precise, it remains the strength of both Heidegger’s project and Baraka’s adaptation of that project to have attempted to counter the increasingly global reach of the “universal equivalent” (even if only unintentionally) with the reinvigoration of a “pre-political” place from which to resist such an onslaught, but the cost of such a wager remains extraordinarily high when one considers that the “historical” homelessness created by the process of an increasingly globalized economy is reduced to a secondary phenomena that somehow never appears in, or affects, our valuation of the being of beings (Ibid.).

A similar economic framework pervades much of Baraka’s work during this time and many have attributed this to the fact Baraka, unlike other figures of the era, did not begin from the premise that Black nationalism and Marxism must be reconciled. Rather,

12 One would think such an outlook would be all the more closely related to a Black emancipatory vision in the United States given the painfully obvious connection between the historical processes of the establishment of a “world-market” and Black’s own status as “homeless.”
as Baraka himself has since described, he was caught in a “cultural nationalist” drift that gave little thought to Marxism (Baraka 2000, 340). It has been said that the later adoption of revolutionary nationalism under the banner of “Third World Marxism” saves Baraka from the limitations of his Heideggerian inflected thinking. I disagree, and in contrast insist that the commonalities between Heidegger and a particular form of Marxism allow Baraka’s logic to remain radically consistent. Whereas in his parallels to Heideggerianism Baraka identifies “home” with a certain proximity to the intensity of the being of beings, in his Marxist phase Baraka continues to promote elements of Black culture already present in “the superstructure” as that which remain as yet divorced or autonomous from the capitalist economic base.13 Thus, what Baraka had previously searched for in purely ontological terms (an outside), by the mid-seventies he sought in mere socio-historical terms—a culture untouched by the economy and that could thus be harnessed by the Black nation as a defense against capitalist incursion. In this regard, Baraka’s Marxism does not make a difference, for both visions are sustained by “the

13 It is interesting to note that from the beginning, Baraka figures Black communal society (i.e. U.S. slave society) as a society of peasants, similar to those of the “Third World.” Contrary to Baraka, since W.E.B. DuBois’ Black Reconstruction in America, there has been a plethora of work showing that Black slaves in the Southern United States were in fact communities with rather high levels of productive socialization and thus showing all the characteristics of economic cooperation pertaining to the “industrial proletariat.” See for example, Dale Tomich, Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003).
fantasy of a pre-capitalist economy, on a conception of labor equally distributed and geared toward use-value” (DeBestegui 1998, 145).

For Baraka, such a wager on the logic of a pre-capitalist economy comes at the very moment in the late 1960s when it had become increasingly obvious that the national liberation projects of the preceding years had already been surpassed by the increasingly global force of capitalist rule (Moten 2003, 130). A second, and perhaps more thorough going critique of Baraka’s Heideggerian inflected thought (in both his and Black Arts Movement’s “cultural nationalist” and “revolutionary nationalist” manifestations), lies at the very point where the “Black aesthetic” present in the formation and productions of “Black vernacular expression” remain, if not opposed, then at least inassimilable to the project of nationalism. Da-sein, adopted by Baraka as the very center of the Black national project, remains at its core a notion of Being as pure negativity (nichtigkeit). As such, all expression of that which is (of beings) remains a mechanism through which, in both words and their lack, a primary silence (nothingness) as that which remains exterior to beings is permanently manifest. The voice and its enunciations are thus an effect (a sort of degraded mirror) of being without themselves ever participating in being as its cause. Or in Baraka’s own words, “The impulse, the force that pushes you to sing...all up in there...is one thing....what is produced is another (Baraka 2000, 187). As Fred Moten concludes, this negativity within which the Heideggerian framework functions inextricably intertwines being(s) to the
question of the proper and as such continues a rather classical philosophical conundrum
in which to be (existence) is always to be like (nothingness), infinitely reinitiating the
game of representation, mediation and their foundations in being (nothingness). Moten
summarizes this tradition as

iconicity from Plato through Peirce through Wittgenstein; from a representational
formulation of eikon as likeness or image—the spectral, phantomic emanation of
some absent essence that places us in the systemic epistemological and
ontological oscillation between sameness and difference (Moten 2003, 93).

This game of negativity has been taken to new heights since Hegel toward what
Moten identifies as the “dialectic of despair” of a “vicious modernism” in which the
apparently independent conditions of possibility each cannot avoid passing over into
their “other” but whose actual parameters never change (i.e. presence-absence, identity-
difference, despair-inevitability). In sum, the voice and its enunciations remain forever
trapped to one destination, a “return” to their foundations in nothingness. As shown
above there can be little question that the Black vernacular tradition speaks in
ontological terms, and yet the question that remains is whether Baraka’s ontology is in

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14 For explanations of Heidegger’s inability to think outside of this tradition (at times against
himself) see Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, (New York: Columbia Press, 1994) 66;
Antonio Negri, Subversive Spinoza: Uncontemporary Variations, (Manchester: Manchester
University Press, 2004) 84-87; Giorgio Agamben, Language and Death, (Minneapolis: University of
Minnesota Press, 1991) 1-16; and Michael Hardt, Dissertation: The Art of Organization, Chapter 6,
“The Constitution of Communism.”

15 For Heidegger’s own declared affinity with these aspects of the Hegelian project see, “Hegel
and the Greeks” in Martin Heidegger, Pathmarks. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1998).
fact its ontology or if Baraka had all along been trying to make the tradition say something it had not (wanted to).

In addition, despite the fact that poetry and not the nation-state has become the place to re-open the space "between men and the gods" (in both Heidegger and Baraka), I would like to highlight here that the space between Being and being allows the structure of "decision" in this imaginary to remain the same—the logic of the sovereign exception detailed by Carl Schmit. That is, it is the poet, above and against the forgetfulness of being displayed by his fellow man, that must make "the decision" as to whether we should "yield ourselves to the gods or withhold ourselves from them" (Gulli 2005, 168). It is only these poets that can reach into the abyss "beyond metaphysics" so as to turn us away from the danger of the "essence of technology" and toward man's relation to Being itself (Ibid., 169). As Wahneema Lubiano has pointed out with regard to Amiri Baraka, the dematerialization of "home" onto poetic practice does not rid Black nationalism of sovereignty as such, but rather makes cultural production the cite for the exercise of that sovereignty (Lubiano 2002, 159). If exceptionality was previously embodied in the political sovereign, here it has been simply transferred to the poet, and within a certain strain of Black Power of the 1960s, onto the person of Baraka himself.

This ontological outlook weighed heavily on both Baraka and Black Arts Movement. Although Baraka felt that the outlines for Black national redemption had already been drawn in “the music,” when Jones approaches the actual instantiations of
the Black musical tradition from within this “dialectic of despair,” he views it as a history of degeneration tied to the dissolution of the slave economy and the increasing predominance of commercialist values inherent to the migration of Blacks to the Northern industrial cities. In this sense, for Baraka, much of what has circulated as “the Blues” and “Jazz” has since the first wave of “classical Blues style” associated with Ma Rainy and her female contemporaries been nothing but a betrayal of “the inviolable roots” contained in male-dominated “country Blues.” In other words, what began as search for the valorization of elements within Black culture turned very quickly, in Baraka, into a condemnation of commercialization as the objectification of Black music by Blacks themselves, the very process in which Be-ing (“verb”) had been reduced to a thing-like nature in “noun” form (be) (Baraka 1980, 142-166). Such condemnations of Black culture were echoed by Baraka’s close friends and associates within the Black Arts Movement to such an extent that by the mid 1960s, Ron Karenga very frequently referred to “the Blues” as that favorite African American pastime of “collective resignation.”

3.4 Conclusion

If both Carmichael and Baraka respond to the crisis of Black nationalism pointed out by Malcolm X in rather disparate fashions, there remains among their projects a common oppositional imaginary tied to the logic of sovereignty. If sovereignty, as
Schmitt insisted, was the establishment of “a line,” the political determination of an exteriority necessary for the foundation of internal exceptionality (the possibility for the foundation of the norm), neither Carmichael nor Baraka challenge this logic. Carmichael shuffles between various instances of sovereign exceptionality (“Africa” and the U.S.) so as to attempt a moderation of the openly exclusionary effects of racism—as a demand for participation within this given site of sovereignty, the U.S. nation-state. In contrast, Baraka attempts to eschew the nation-state (be it in Africa or the U.S.) by equating that concept with the degrading effects of the ontic and he instead attempts to formulate Blackness as an ur-historical exteriority, a proximity to the intensity of the Ontological (“home”). Yet, in each of these instances “exteriority” figured in either geographic or ontological terms is constructed as a location for the establishment of a tribunal against Black daily life in the U.S. What begins in each of these projects as the announcement of a new Black assertiveness quickly slides into an operation of judgment of Black life: in Carmichael’s terms, does Black life in the U.S. live up to Africa? Or in Baraka’s language, does Black life enact the proximity to being? What begins in affirmation ends in judgment and at times the pathologizing of Black life. Equally troubling is that in the establishment of these “exteriorities” as tribunals is the location of each of these authors. In both Carmichael and Baraka, the radical intellectual and poet respectively (much like DuBois’ talented tenth) are thought to be exceptional, and are thus charged with the task of bringing to bear the truths of the exterior upon Black daily life. That is, much like the
logic of sovereignty, social rule within the imaginaries of these formulations of Black Power must come from outside and stand above the Black community as a whole. Although these formulations did attempt to deal with the in/sufficiency and im/possibility of a sovereign Black nation due to historical circumstances, they have each recentered the exceptional logic of top-down rule proposed by the long tradition of Western sovereignty. It is not then simply a matter of judging these authors for remaining within the sovereign tradition, but rather of pointing out the negative effects of this fact upon Black struggle. In addition, we are also left wondering whether Blackness might not be different… than this.
4. Fanon: Sovereignty, Alterity, and Authentic Love

I will attempt an original rereading of Fanon’s work. Having encountered two visions of Black Power as outlined by Stokely Carmichael and Amiri Baraka, I would now like to turn to the work of Frantz Fanon. Although Fanon was extremely influential within the Black Power movement in the United States, and not least of which with Carmichael and Baraka,¹ the following pages will attempt a rereading of Fanon’s work that shows quite a distance between Fanon’s own thinking and his reception in the U.S. By concentrating on the issue of sovereignty, I hope to show Fanon’s work as engaged in a project which eventually leads to a more direct challenge to the notion of sovereignty itself than is allowed for in either Carmichael or Baraka (and perhaps as was possible within the Black Power movement more generally).

In my rereading of Fanon, I would like to forefront Fanon’s challenge to the logic of sovereignty by analyzing his thought at three different levels, each of which will attempt to conserve a certain continuity throughout his major works while simultaneously allowing for disparities of emphasis as well as innovations between them. I will begin by analyzing the issue of “reverse Manicheanism” within Fanon’s work in order to highlight his ability to read the capacity of the colonized to both appropriate the logic of the colonizer (us vs. them) while almost immediately moving

beyond such a logic. By taking the “reverse Manicheanism” of the colonized seriously, Fanon is able, particularly in *The Wretched of The Earth*, to outline the formation of a partisan discourse (not dissimilar to that seen throughout the “Third World” during the era of decolonization) that forces open a space beyond sovereignty. That is, by expanding “politics” well beyond the given institutions of the state, Fanon is able to see all relations of force as strategic, and thus he begins to recognize that the power of the colonizer derives from the production of “the colonized.” This is an insight that quickly leads Fanon to posit the power of the colonized as deriving not simply from the force of arms, but from their capacity to destroy themselves as “colonized,” that is, to make themselves anew.

In order to clarify the import of this insight, I will return to Fanon’s engagement and critique of Hegelian inflected discourses developed most thoroughly in *Black Skin, White Masks*. It is here I believe that Fanon lays the groundwork to “turn away” from Europe while beginning to construct a logic beyond that of Manicheanism. Through a critique of the master/slave dialectic (where two sovereign subjects, one actualized and the other lying in latency “behind the veil,” face off in a life and death struggle) and certain consequences of the structure of dialectical thought in Hegel as such, Fanon is able to see a way beyond the options presented to “black consciousness” within the logic of sovereignty: recoil in the face of your master, or dare to take his place (to become him).
Beyond these options presented by sovereign logic, Fanon intuits the capacity for “authentic love,” a reciprocity without masters that can move humans beyond the reactional logic present within both “reversed Manicheanism” and the negational basis of Hegelian inflected dialectics. Yet, “authentic love” and actional man remain intuitive and abstractly conceptual for Fanon until we turn once again to *The Wretched* where the actions of the colonized toward a “new nation” and a “new man” help Fanon to finally clarify the elements and capacity of this “love.” It is in these collective practices of liberation where Fanon is able to finally confront the European tradition of sovereignty most openly through a direct challenge of the structures of the modern state system while simultaneously reformulating his own positive theory of sovereignty as the capacity of Blackness to open itself to the unforeseeable through the force of “the people themselves” to recreate themselves as such (i.e. the new).

### 4.1 Fanon and The Reductions of Manicheanism

#### 4.1.1 Ambivalence

For many readers, entering Fanon’s first chapter of the *The Wretched of the Earth* can be a bit disconcerting, not only for the positions expounded there concerning violence, which I will return to below, but also for what appears as an implicit affirmation of the very “Manicheanism” that according to Fanon subtends the colonial order. That is, when Fanon states that the colonial world is “a world cut in two,” it is in
no way a simple denunciation, but rather, in Fanon’s eyes, the announcement of the recovery of possibilities that until then had remained latent. This affirmation of Manicheanism has led commentators to view the opening of Fanon’s *Wretched* as a retreat from questions regarding the “ambivalences” of “identification” associated with Fanon’s previous writings, most specifically with his invocation of Lacanian psychoanalysis and its mirror stage of the I to approximate the question of “Black psychopathology” in Chapter 6 of *Black Skin, White Masks* (Bhabha 1994, 44). 2 In the words of Homi Bhabha, it is here in the opening pages of *The Wretched*, so enmeshed in the anti-colonial struggle that characterized insurgent Algeria, where Fanon is forced to “impede the exploration of the...ambivalent, uncertain questions of colonial desire. The state of emergency from which he [Fanon] writes demands more urgent answers, more immediate identifications” (Bhabha 1987, 142). In other words, Fanon’s affirmation of an “inversion of colonial Manicheanism” in *The Wretched* has been interpreted as a kind of deviation with regard to *Black Skin, White Masks* (Gibson 1999, 102). Although one could build such an approach internal to Fanon’s own thinking, this approach reduces Fanon’s method of describing the unfolding of the various moments of the national revolutionary impulse as if these moments existed as independent ends. That is, as if

2 As Ranjana Khanna points out, various readings of footnote 25 of Chapter 6 of *Black Skin, White Masks*, there has been a full-out attempt to mold Fanon into a “black Lacan” despite major discrepancies between Fanon’s own thinking and that of Lacan. Two foundational essays in this regard are Homi Bhabha’s “What Does a Black Man Want?” (*New Formations* 1(Spring), 1987), 118-124; and Henry Louis Gates’ “Critical Fanonism,” (*Critical Inquiry* 17, Spring 3), 1991.
Fanon’s thinking in *The Wretched* came to an end instead of beginning with reverse Manicheanism. In this fashion, not only do we reduce Fanon’s own thoughts on Manicheanism, but we are also led to underestimate the achievements Fanon intuits when this Manicheanism is placed in the hands of the colonized.

### 4.1.2 A World Divided in Two

Not only is Fanon’s “world divided in two” devoid of the social ambivalences present between colonizer and colonized, Fanon goes so far as to claim that the distinction itself exists at the level of a difference in “species” (Fanon 2004, 1), which he further describes as “congenitally antagonistic” due to the very “reification secreted and nurtured by the colonial situation” (*Ibid.*, 2). The language of species used by Fanon is chosen from the vocabulary of the colonists themselves whose dehumanization of the colonized subject leads them to speak in “zoological” terms when referring to the “yellow multitudes.” That is, for Fanon, the colonists do not tire of referring to the colonized in terms of “…hordes, …stink, …swarming, …seething…etc.” (*Ibid.*, 7). In addition, these zoological categories are assigned a hierarchy of value; that is to say, the animalistic colonized is incapable of holding values and is thus considered “the quintessence of evil” (*Ibid.*, 6). These differentiations stemming from a reduction to the biological then leads the colonists to the necessity of protecting the ruling species from “infection” emanating from the natives (Gibson 2003, 108). This is a protection that only arrives by the application of the “Aristotelian logic of mutual exclusion” expressed in
the strict spatial compartmentalization of the colony into European and Native quarters (of which South African apartheid was paradigmatic but not exceptional for Fanon) (Fanon 2004, 3). That is, the heart of the colonists’ project can be delineated through “the geographical configuration and classification[s]” which it then circularly employs to produce the very distinction between the species. Consider Fanon’s description of the conditions of the European quarters:

The colonists sector is a sector built to last, all stone and steel. It’s a sector of lights and paved roads, where the trashcans constantly overflow with strange and wonderful garbage, undreamed-of leftovers. The colonists feel...are protected by solid shoes in a sector where the streets are clean and smooth, without a pothole, without a stone...The colonist’s sector is a white folks’ sector, a sector of foreigners (Fanon 2004, 4).

This sector could not stand in sharper distinction to the native’s quarters;

The “native” quarters, the shantytown, the Medina, the reservation, is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people. You are born anywhere, anyhow. You die anywhere, from anything. It’s a world with no space, people are piled one top of the other, the shacks squeezed tightly together. The colonized sector is a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light...It is a sector of niggers, a sector of towelheads (Ibid.).

Accordingly, in the colony there exists a near confluence between geographical location, species/race, and social standing. That is, one’s social position within colonial society is directly correlated to which of these “species,” which of these “races,” one belongs to, which in turn determines what physical location one inhabits in the colony.

3 A certain circularity can be seen here between the classificatory schemas of the zoological terms and the physical manifestation of apartheid. That is, a relay between the creation of the colonized as an epistemologically knowable and fixed object and the spatial segregation of that object within the colony.
(Fanon 2004, 5). It becomes clear then from these descriptions that the colonial project is the production of a “Manichean world.” Yet, in order to keep these worlds apart domination cannot be hidden; thus, the zone of the colonist and that of the native face each other separated by “napalm and rifle butts,” directly opposed but never “in the service of a higher unity” (Ibid., 4). That is, for Fanon, the colonial world stands in immediate contradistinction to “capitalist societies” that are characterized by the fact that an educational system, a system of counselors and teachers, as well as that of a set of “moral reflexes” play a mediating role that help “to instill in the exploited a sense of submission and inhibition,” and which thus function to ease the labor of the particular into the social organization of the whole (Ibid.). In colonial societies no such mediation exists and consequently “the official, legitimate agent, the spokesperson for the colonist and the regime of oppression is the police officer and the soldier” (Ibid., 3). In addition, unlike capitalist societies where the “ruling class” is characterized by their possession of factories, estates, and bank accounts, in colonial societies the “ruling species” is characterized simply by being from elsewhere, by being “the others” to the native. Fanon explains this situation in the now oft-quoted statement: “In the colonies the economic infrastructure (the base) is also a superstructure. The cause is effect: You are

If Black Skin, White Masks, as we shall see in the following pages, can be productively read alongside Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, I propose that these descriptions of a lack of a mediational education within colonial society are formulated by Fanon more directly in relation to Hegel’s Elements of the Philosophy of Right. In other words, what Fanon seems to be referencing in the above paragraph is the lack of existence of “civil society” within the colony.
rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich” (Ibid., 5). Again, the Manicheanism of colonial society makes it so that the “reality” of the correlation between one’s racial belonging and one’s economic standing is “never masked,” making it clear that “no conciliation [between these species is] possible, one of them is superfluous” (Ibid., 4).

4.1.3 The Hidden Force of the Manichean Inversion

Fanon’s description is not intended to denounce the Manichean world of the colonies, but to outline the conditions of existence that can account for what is to follow. That is, it allows us to identify the very structure of the colonial world, its Manicheanism, as that which will provide the impetus for its demise. Fanon’s description allows us to see two aspects of this impetus. First, we see the inability of the colonial system to “mask domination and alleviate oppression” (Ibid., 4). As Fanon notes, the lack of mediation which presents itself as the reason for the particular brutality of the colonial system is in fact its Achilles heel. This is due to the fact that the very symbols of physical subjugation, “the bugle calls and the military parades,” the constant need of the colonist to announce “Here I am the master!” which serves as attempts to instill physical fear into the native, simultaneously and unwittingly allow the native to externalize and identify the reason for their plight (Ibid., 17). These actions by the colonist allow the colonized to “identify his enemy and put a name to all his
misfortune,” to move from fatalism to action (Ibid., 31). Second, this lack of mediation and the consequent reliance by the colonist on physical violence creates a situation in which the native is physically “dominated,” but there is nothing in place to assure that he is “domesticated” (Ibid., 16). As Fanon points out, in words that help us to understand the externalization made possible by the Manicheanism of the colonial world, “the native is made to feel inferior, but by no means [is he] convinced of his inferiority” (Ibid.). We might say that there is domination without hegemony, or force without consent. These two elements, the open creation of oppression and the constantly identifiably “external” reason for the existence of that oppression allows the native an anchoring point, a point of decision, in which the logic of Manicheanism used by the colonist becomes the very basis for the colonized to conclude that “destroy[ing] the colonial world means nothing less than demolishing the colonist’s sector, burying it deep within the earth or banishing it from the territory” (Ibid., 6). In sum, Manicheanism introduced by the colonizer and built into the colonial situation as a whole becomes the basis for unifying the subjugated race against their foreign oppressor (Ibid., 10). By inverting the colonizers’ Manicheanism the colonized are able to fashion a future without the colonizer. That is, if the status of the colonist comes from being “from elsewhere,” then certainly those “from here” can expel the colonizer and “eject him outright from the picture” (Ibid., 5 and 9). The unification of those “from here” against those “from elsewhere” allows the native to then act on a dream that had until then
remained latent, the dream of “taking the colonists’ place,” and more simply of going from the position of persecuted to that of persecutor \((Ibid., 16)\). In short, it is the Manichean reality of the colonial situation that provides all the necessary elements for the initial and “minimum” demand of decolonization… “the last shall become the first” \((Ibid., 10)\). Manicheanism best lays the groundwork for its own inversion and “the Manicheanism of the colonizer produces a Manicheanism of the colonized, “an anti-racist racism,” as Jean-Paul Sartre labeled it \((Fanon 2004, 50 and Sartre 1988, 296)\).

Having broken with fatalism and identified the colonist as the externalizable cause of oppression, the native is also able to identify the mechanism through which that oppression is made a reality—violence. That is, as Fanon states, it is the settler’s unmediated violence that has shown the native once and for all that “colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking, a body endowed with reason. It is naked violence and only gives in when confronted with greater violence” \((Fanon 2004, 23)\). It is the violence of the colonizer that has created the colonized; it is through their “bayonets” and “cannon fire” that they have destroyed the very the social fabric of native life, i.e. economy, lifestyle, and modes of dress \((Ibid., 6)\). Thus, it is through this violence that the colonist not only imposes a separation of the species but in fact “fabricates” its other, the colonized. If the colonists can say that the native is an animal it is because their violence has reduced him to an animal-like existence. Yet, according to Fanon, due to the law of “reciprocal homogeneity” that characterizes the Manichean reality of the colonial situation, this
violence emanating from the colonist shows the native the path that he must take to freedom… “colonialism only loosens its hold when the knife is at its throat” (Ibid., 23). Directly following in this line of Manichean inversion, Fanon states that “the colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence” (Ibid., 86). If the Manicheanism of the colonial situation has provided an end goal for the native—the expulsion of the colonizer—then the daily imposition of colonialism through visible violence has indicated the means by which this goal might be achieved. That is, it is either the direct violence of a unified people or the violence of other unified colonized subjects that diminishes the capacity of the metropolises to act, forcing the colonizer to eventually abandon the colony (Ibid., 30). We here find ourselves back at the very first lines of The Wretched of the Earth, “decolonization is always a violent event” (Ibid., 1).

4.1.4 Manicheanism, Partisan Struggle and Anti-colonial Strategy

Leaving aside the question of violence, which is in fact a subset of the larger issue of Manicheanism, what are we to make of Fanon’s insistence on the force of the colonized’s Manichean inversion of the colonial situation? That is, should we view Fanon’s sympathy for this inversion, as Bhabha and Gates have done, as an oversimplified identification with the plight of the colonized induced by the exigencies of an anti-colonial war? Or, might such an inversion exceed that sympathy and allow us to outline the conditions of possibility for that anti-colonial war? For Fanon this
inversion is absolutely necessary, as he is careful to point out it is in no way sufficient for a successful process of decolonization. It is important to remember the reason for the necessity of this “inversion.” The first reason is that through the Manichean inversion the colonized is able to see that colonialism did not arise out of ontological or historical necessity but rather through the contingent historical actions of the colonizer. That is, colonization is a historical phenomena in which the privileged agents are the colonists. Although the existence of this phenomenon limits the conduct of the colonized, it simultaneously reopens the field of history to the possibility of their own agency. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the rediscovery of historical possibility is accompanied by the acknowledgement that ontological and historicist justifications of colonization serve only to obscure the issue of force, and therefore that the violent imposition of colonialism can be matched by the violent actions of the colonized. In this turn of events, success or failure does not lie simply in a tactical defeat of the colonizer but in the strategic victory achieved in exposing the absolute “exhaustion of politics” as given (Gibson 2003, 119). At this point, “Tactics and strategy merge. The art of politics is transformed into the art of war. The militant becomes the fighter. To wage war and to engage in politics are one and the same thing” (Fanon 2004, 83).

By viewing both colonization and decolonization as simply “a question of relative strength,” and thus of revolutionary struggle, the colonized had forever given up on “government inquiries” and “searches for justice” within the colonial context.
Thus the race war that maintains these institutions resurfaces, making it clear that the only legitimacy sustaining the colonial regime is that of force (Ibid., 42-43). As Fanon notes, this realization comes in a world-wide context in which colonized subjects throughout the “Third World” were “shattering their chains” with the example of the Vietnamese at Dien Bien Phu to emulate. That is, through the organization of force, and more specifically the conduct of “guerilla war” (what Fanon refers to as “that instrument of violence of the colonized”), a Dien Bien Phu was “now within reach of every colonized subject (Ibid., 26 and 31). In sum, the Manichean inversion allows the colonized to see that colonization is a question of the organization of force, and that that organization, through guerilla warfare, is imminently within reach.5

This conclusion is not only a challenge to the colonizers themselves who cannot fathom a future in which they are no longer the sole agents of history; it is also and more importantly a contestation to those would-be sympathizers who mistakenly reduced the possible agency of the colonized to a compromise with the colonial powers. Fanon

5 Through his analysis of the “exhaustion of politics,” Fanon is rather typical of the formation of a partisan “Third World” left that developed independently of each other but which can be seen as coming to conclusions strikingly similar to those most clearly set out by Mao Zedong, whom Carl Schmitt went so far as to call the “new Clausewitz”:

“War is the continuation of politics.” In this sense war is politics and war itself is a political action; since ancient times there has not been a war that did not have a political character… When politics develops to a certain stage beyond which it cannot proceed by the usual means, war breaks out to sweep away those obstacles in the way…It can therefore be said that politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed” (Zedong, 135-136).
rightly noted that these objections to the organization of force and to the unleashing of violence repeated a certain developmentalist logic that declared the colonized losers from the start. To demonstrate this oft-repeated logic, Fanon cites a passage from Frederick Engels’ *Anti-Durhing* that is worth reproducing in its entirety, as it will serve to make a larger point about Fanon’s insight to which we will return later in this chapter:

> Just as Crusoe could procure a sword for himself, we are equally entitled to assume that one fine morning Friday might appear with a loaded revolver in his hand, and then the whole “force” relationship is inverted. Friday commands and it is Crusoe who has to drudge…So, then, the revolver triumphs over the sword; and this will probably make even the most childish axiomatian comprehend that force is no mere act of will, but requires very preliminary conditions before it can come into operation, that is to say, instruments, the more perfect of which vanquish the less perfect; moreover, that these instruments have to be produced, which also implies that the producer of more perfect instruments of force, *vulgo* arms, vanquishes the producer of the less perfect instrument, and that, in a word, the triumph of force is based on the production of arms, and this in turn on production in general—therefore on ‘economic power,’ on the ‘economic order,’ on the material means which force has at its disposal (*quoted in Fanon 2004, 25*).

Within Engels’ text, Fanon saw the construction of an argument that attempts to bury conflict within the discourse of economic development, reducing the question of will to a secondary position and thus seemingly freezing the relations of force, perhaps not between Friday and Crusoe but between those that have “economic power” and those who have yet to achieve it. Given the pervasiveness of this logic, even within the nationalist parties in the colonies, in which the anti-colonial struggle had been defeated before it was even initiated, it is important to highlight Fanon’s understanding that the formation of the consciousness of species/race struggle brought on by the inversion of colonial Manicheanism ran directly counter to the logic exemplified by Engels’ text. That
is, to use the terminology developed by Michel Foucault while analyzing a strikingly parallel situation, what Fanon is describing is a paradigmatic case of the formation of the “historical/political” discourse of the partisan, which faces off against the “juridical/philosophical” discourse dominant in “the West” and through which “the West” assures its dominance within the colonial situation (Foucault 2003, 57). According to Foucault, the juridical/philosophic discourse is the discourse of sovereignty which begins with three pre-given concepts: law, the unity of power, and the subject (Ibid., 44).

By starting with the “individual” (the subject) as pre-given, sovereignty is able to present subjection as the necessary given in any relationship of power. In sharp contrast, “historical/political” discourse begins with the reality of domination, with the establishment of sovereignty through the defeat of one portion of society by another. Therefore, and much as Fanon himself sees, it is “the colonist who fabricated and continues to fabricate the colonized subject,” the historical/political discourse of the partisan sees the individual and their subjection not as a necessary pre-given but as “manufactured” within the relations of power (Fanon 2004, 2). To quote Foucault, the emphasis of historical/political discourse is on “how actual relations of subjugation

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6 It is worth noting how strong the connection between the production of the individual and the structure of subjection is for Fanon as well. As he states, first among the “values” that the colonist tries to inculcate into the native intellectual is that of individualism: “The colonialist bourgeoisie hammered into the colonized mind the notion of a society of individuals where each is locked in his subjectivity, where wealth lies in thought. But the colonized intellectual who is lucky enough to bunker down with the people during the liberation struggles, will soon discover the falsity of this theory. Involvement in the organization of struggle will already introduce him to a different vocabulary. “Brother,” “sister,” “comrade….”” (Fanon 2004, 11).
manufacture subjects” (Foucault 2003, 45). Importantly then, politics for the partisan (i.e. as described by Fanon in the “Third World” guerilla movement as a whole) far exceeds the “political institutions” of any given society which are in fact a subset of “a relation of force” within which the subjugated, the colonized, act along with the colonizer. The logic of the partisan, according to Foucault, is that power does not emanate from the sovereign; rather, sovereignty itself is the expression of a given relation of force in a society.

As a consequence, the binary or Manichean logic of the partisan in this “race war” acts as a rather distinct antidote to sovereignty. That is, it is the subject of juridical-philosophic universality which subtends sovereignty, that subject which “establishes itself between the adversaries, in the center and above them, imposing one general law and founding a reconciliatory order” which is vitiated by the partisan insistence that you must belong to one side or another in this war (Ibid., 51-53). Consequently, “truth” itself is not the product of some “pacified universality” but an additional element of force in this race war, or, as Fanon stated, “Truth is what protects the “natives” and undoes the foreigners” (Foucault 2003, 53 and Fanon 2004, 14).

Perhaps in light of these insights we can more fully explore the discussion of Fanon’s apparent praise of the Manichean logic of decolonization. By placing it in the context of the formation of a partisan discourse, which helps to dissolve the premises of sovereignty, we can better understand the accomplishments and not just the
shortcomings of this unrepentant binarism. If the society is in fact composed from top to bottom of a relation of force, or a war, that exceeds the institutions, then the colonized have at their disposal a space for “political” action. Within this context, the issue of violence cannot simply be reduced to physical force but might more productively be seen as the mechanism through which the decolonization movement as a whole attempted to link the issue of military logic (i.e. strategy and tactics) to political outcomes. This is a logic which has the virtue of positing all relations of force, unlike the logic presented earlier by Engels and the nationalist bourgeoisie parties, as immanently reversible.

It is equally important to note that, throughout the first chapter of The Wretched, Fanon captures the virtue of the inverted Manicheanism of the colonized while never himself viewing that Manicheanism as an end. Rather, as he states on at least two occasions, this demand of “taking the colonists place” or “the last shall become first” is simply the “minimal demand” which he will later explain is related to a vague form of “a national framework” and which he makes clear is a rather ambiguous discourse that can as easily lead to manipulation by an elite domestic class as it can to liberation. It is thus more accurate to say that Fanon describes the initial motor of the anti-colonial struggle, and while noting its virtues, is himself never satisfied with this logic (a question I will return later in this chapter). But the issue of Fanon’s adoption of a partisan discourse against sovereignty is not meant to be fully resolved here. Rather, as I
would like to show below, it opens up into questions of the nature of Fanon’s own thinking about the nature of power in contrast to theories of sovereignty and the place of Blackness within it, and it is this discussion that will begin to allow us to see exactly how Fanon is able to move beyond the initial moment of reverse Manicheanism frequently and mistakenly attributed to his work as a whole.

4.2 Power, Repression and the Black Slave

4.2.1 White Master, French Black Slave

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon offers a portrait of the colonial world as characterized by the antagonism between the colonized and the colonist. This analysis should be read as an extension of his earlier work in *Black Skin, White Masks*, via an adaptation of G.W.F. Hegel’s master/slave dialectic, to describe the relation between two previous antagonists – the French Black slave and “his” white French master. It is here where I believe we will find further evidence of Fanon’s dismantling of the logic of sovereignty prior even to the exceptional exigencies required at the moment of Algerian revolt. For Fanon, the situation between the white master and the French Black slave (for which Fanon had Martinican Blacks specifically in mind)\(^7\) has to be sharply

\(^7\) Cedric Robinson raises the important issue of the location of this “black slave” frozen by the effects of “double-consciousness.” As Robinson notes, in his early work, Fanon seems to have too
distinguished from that conflict described in Hegel’s master/slave dialectic, which appears in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* under the title of “Self-Consciousness.” For Fanon, the central characteristic of Hegel’s narrative is the “absolute reciprocity” shared by both the master and the slave. As Fanon cites, in Hegel both elements “recognize themselves as mutually recognizing each other” (Fanon 1967, 217). Yet, in Fanon’s view, this reciprocity is absent in the case of the free French Black slave where the white master has decided to unilaterally (i.e. “without conflict”) recognize the slave (Fanon 1967, 217). The French master has acted upon the Black slave so as to allow him to “assume the attitude of a master” while as a matter of fact remaining a slave; it is he who is solely “acted upon” (Fanon 1967, 220). To prove this point, Fanon once again cites Hegel who states, “The individual who has not staked his life, may, no doubt, be recognized as a person, but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness” (*quoted in* Fanon 1967, 219; original in Hegel 1977, 114). As Fanon concludes, by unilaterally “freeing” the Black Slave, the white master has denied the slave a basis for conflict since he is now free to assume the “attitude of master” (to sit at

easily mistaken the black petit-bourgeois strata of the Antilles with whom he came into contact in Paris for “the black man” as a whole, even if of the Antilles. See Cedric Robinson, “The Appropriation of Frantz Fanon,” in *Race and Class* 35, no.1, (1993). Furthermore, the issue of Fanon’s own subjectivity, which seems to be able to move beyond the position of the black slave and thus understand it, becomes a question. In order to address this, I propose that Fanon gains his insights on the Black slave, or really the petit bourgeoisie from the lower strata of Antillian workers that Fanon has access to in Paris, and which he openly states in *Black Skin, White Masks* show no signs of the inferiority complex demonstrated by his “black slave.”

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the master’s table) while he simultaneously refuses to recognize in the Black slave his status as an independent conscious “other.” This leads to a situation in which the free Black slave is seen in the eyes of the master only with indifference, as expressed in the voice of the white master, “Brother, there is no difference between us” (Fanon 1967, 221).

The white master, according to Fanon, does not need an “other.” From Fanon’s perspective, it is clear that unlike Hegel’s master, the French white master is not interested in reciprocal recognition from the free Black slave (if the Black slave does not constitute an “other” he is by definition incapable of recognition). As Fanon explains in this instance, “the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work” (Fanon 1967, 220). Yet, because the free Black slave described by Fanon has been granted freedom without a struggle and simultaneously denied existence as an “other” consciousness worthy of reciprocity, this slave does not possess the capacity of the Hegelian slave to “turn away” from the master and toward the development of his self-activity through the “object” (Fanon 1967, 221). As Nigel Gibson writes about Fanon’s description, the white master has created the conditions in which the free Black slave seems to be trapped in a form of “double consciousness” where the only desire is to be like the master, and he is thus always “measuring himself through the eyes of another” (Gibson 2003, 35). For Fanon then, if the Black slave is to move beyond the donning of the “white mask” of “being like the master,” he must reinitiate the possibility of reciprocity. In order to do so, the Black
slave must first risk his own life in a struggle for freedom (in this regard, Fanon’s narrative remains in solid agreement with that of Hegel); and second, he must aim for nothing short of the “death of the master” (Gibson 2003, 38). The type of death afforded to the master is exactly that which I will attempt to show below separates Fanon’s account from that of Hegel.

4.2.2 The Power of Fanon’s Refusal of Labor

The refusal by Fanon to simply don the “white mask” forces him to break with the radical interpretations of Hegel’s master/slave dialectic circulated by Alexandre Kojève as well as those influenced by him, most specifically Jean Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan, who had already exerted great influence on Fanon’s thought. In Kojève’s Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, the notion of repression remains intact via a certain circularity of the slave/master relation as mediated by “work.” For Kojève, it is only by passing through slavery by “working” that man is able to both transform the world and “develop” himself as Man (Kojève 1980, 25). That is, through his production of the “object,” the product of his work, man is able to both contemplate an autonomous given being (the object) as well as his own activity (subjective action) in that being. Unlike the master, who only destroys the products of the slave, the slave is able to transform things and himself simultaneously through work—to harmonize the world of objects and the world of subjective action (Ibid., 28). Through this “development” and transformation it
is only the slave that can change the world, whereas the master finds himself at an existential impasse exactly to the extent that he changes only through the slave (Ibid., 29).

Although Kojève’s Hegelianism is attractive exactly because of the element of the seeming reversibility between the master and the slave, this reversibility comes at the expense of accepting repression as the necessary motor of “historical evolution.” That is, work for Kojève entails the necessary repression of the slave’s instincts to immediately consume the object of his work, and it is then this repression that allows the slave to work for another (i.e. to work at all, since for Kojève, work is always and only for another). Without this repression the slave’s cultivation through work would simply not exist. Kojève explicitly points out that “killing” (in a literal sense) the master does the slave little good as it is the master who is that necessary element for cultivation through repression. Rather, the slave must “overcome him ‘dialectically’” by sublimating (“keeping” and “preserving”) those elements of the master that remain essential, i.e. “work as repressed desire” (Kojève 1980, 15). This and only this fulfills the necessity that the slave’s desire “be directed toward [not a given object] but another desire,” that of the master. Here we have arrived at a certain circularity of values in which the slave overcomes the master only to uphold the pre-existing Desire of the master. As Kojève writes, “now to desire a Desire is to want to substitute oneself for the value desired by this Desire” (Kojève 1980, 7). Thus, even after the slave has acted on the elements of reversibility and a synthesis of master and slave takes place then, the slave finds that he
is now in the presence of an even higher or “divine” master, and therefore we have never really moved from Kojève’s initial premise that “Man can exist only where there is a master and a slave” (Ibid., 43 and 56). Therefore, we can view Kojève as a further attempt to ontologize the binomial structure of rule so central to sovereignty in the Western tradition.

This element of repression was present in those who had previously influenced Fanon. For Lacan, this desire for the other’s Desire is the very basis upon which he rewrote the Oedipal complex in structural linguistic terms in his now famous article, “The Mirror Stage of the I.” As Nigel Gibson notes, not only did Kojève and Lacan plan to jointly publish a text on Hegel and Freud, but, beyond that, and in the words of David Macey, to reread Kojève after reading Lacan is “to experience the shock of recognition, a truly uncanny sensation of déjà vu” (quoted in Gibson 2003, 215).

For Sartre, Kojève’s influence is also noteworthy as he too pushed the idea of reversibility between master and slave through the “third term” of labor as a liberating grain within Hegelianism. In fact, Sartre pushed the element of labor already present in Hegel so far as to claim that Hegel himself had overestimated the “slave’s” capacity for agency. As Sartre states:

In reality, Hegel saw just one side of the slave: his labor. And his whole theory is wrong, or rather it applies to the proletarian, not the slave. The proletarian does not have to please, he has relations only with things. The slave (at least the domestic and urban slave) has relations with things and masters. And he has to

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please, he acts to please. For doing so he is repaid, he avoids punishment. Thus
his smile is both real and willed. He is protected in that he does not have to
emerge into Nothingness through his transcendence (quoted in Khanna 2003, 130).

Therefore, for Sartre, it is not the slave per se but the proletarian, the industrial
worker of Marxist inflected politics, who, due to his singular focus on work, could fulfill
the reversibility found within Hegelianism.

4.2.3 Help From Friends

In Fanon’s view, however, the necessity of “repression,” as justified in either the
phylogenetic terms of Kojève (i.e. labor) or in the ontogenetic terms adopted by
psychoanalysis (i.e. desire), elided some very simple facts in the face of the colonial
situation, “the effective disalienation of the Black man entails the immediate recognition
of [reversible] social and economic realities” (Fanon 1967, 11). Fanon, in contrast to
Kojève and Sartre, concluded that “work” was not the term for some universal
development but rather an imposition that was instead directly responsible for the
conditions of “economic dependency” lived out on a daily basis in the colonies (Fanon
2004, 27).

Fanon’s refusal to accept “repression” (i.e. labor as repressed desire) in the name
of “development” led him to further conceptual innovations. While accepting that
Europe had taken the place of the “Master” in the Hegelian inflected framework (i.e.
that Europe’s existence was “static” and “inessential” because its very being was literally the creation of the Third World), Fanon refuses to complete a “dialectical overcoming” of Europe by placing “Blackness” as the minor term in a movement toward the universal assumption of European values in which the black slave simply assumes the place of his master (Ibid., 39 and 58). This refusal was most openly played out in Fanon’s dispute with Sartre regarding Sartre’s *Black Orpheus* in which, much to Fanon’s dismay, Sartre had reduced the assertion of “Blackness” in the work of Aimé Césaire and Leopold Senghor to a minor (or particular) term in an unfolding dialectic that necessarily moved through labor (a universal) toward a new raceless synthesis. This dispute with Sartre is of particular importance here, because it is Césaire’s conceptions of “Blackness” that Fanon will later take up in *The Wretched of the Earth* as the initial moment of the native’s Manichean reversal (Ibid. 2004, 44-46). As Sartre makes clear, and Fanon quotes at length in *Black Skin, White Masks*, what frames the discussion is exactly the relation of the Black slave to labor, as Sartre states:

> But that does not prevent the idea of race from mingling with that of class: the first is concrete and particular, the second is universal and abstract; the one stems from what Jaspers calls understanding and the other from intellection; the first is the result of psychobiological syncretism and the second is a methodical construction based on experience. In fact, Negritude appears as a minor term of a dialectical progression: The theoretical and practical assertion of the supremacy of the white man is its *thesis*; the position of negritude as an *antithetical* value is the moment of its negativity. But this negative moment is insufficient by itself, and the Negroes who employ it know this very well; they know that it is intended to prepare the *synthesis* or realization of the human in a society without races. Thus negritude is the root of its own destruction, it is a transition and not a conclusion, a means and not an ultimate end (Sartre quoted in Fanon 1967, 133, *emphasis mine*).
Given Sartre’s near exclusive emphasis on labor in the previous quote on Hegel’s slave, it is likely that class here in fact stands in for labor as the abstract universal element. Although Fanon delineates a number of rebuttals to Sartre’s position (and the dialectic more generally) to which we will return below, for now it is important to highlight the way in which Fanon rejects the developmentalist arrogance with which “labor” is introduced by Sartre as a pre-given path into which the Black slave must “pass over” in order to be allowed entry into the “universal.” As Fanon claims, given the framework of “labor” deployed by Sartre,

… it is not I who make a meaning for myself, but it is the meaning that was already there pre-existing, waiting for me. It is not out of my bad nigger’s misery, my bad nigger’s teeth, my bad nigger’s hunger that I will shape a torch with which to burn down the world, but it is the torch that was already there, waiting for the turn of history (Fanon 1967, 134).

If we note that Fanon sees “labor” as used by the Hegelian inflected left as the simple extraction of labor by the master, and not as the figure of universal development, Fanon cannot but see Sartre’s analysis as leading toward a dead end that in the meantime has rolled over the subjective action of the Black slave.

4.2.4 War and Repression

For Fanon, then, decolonization was amenable neither to the framework of the Hegelian dialectic of self and other as mediated through “labor,” nor to the structure of “the unconscious.” As Nigel Gibson makes clear, it was instead more closely related to
the elimination of “the open secret” of colonization (Gibson 1999, 102). Fanon then attempts to operate within a third field of analysis which he terms sociodiagnostics, which is more interested in the composition of social forces than conceptual pre-givens. In order to highlight the direction of Fanon’s thinking in this regard, we will once again turn to Foucault, who in the mid-1970s came to similar conclusions with regard to the function of “repression” within leftist theories of the unconscious and labor. As Foucault notes, what unites the Freudian and Marxian inflected theories of “labor” and “the unconscious” was the notion taken directly from Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, that power is that which represses (nature, instincts, a class, or individuals) (Foucault 2003, 15). This view of power is thus derivative of the idea of sovereignty, the function of which is “an elimination of domination and its consequences,” thus placing it squarely within the juridico-philosophic tradition. In the end, “repression,” like sovereignty, has the effect of eliminating the historical reality of conquest and the division in “species” which it produced, insisting instead that “[domination] is what you [the subject] wanted,” what the structure of the subject itself necessitates (Foucault 2003, 98). If for Foucault “repression” since Hegel stands in for a theory of sovereignty, it is the Hegelian inflected uses of the dialectic that acts as a lure, promising a basis for political opposition which will only subsume that opposition into a mirror of existing reality. That is, as Foucault believed (and as Fanon amply demonstrates in his analysis of the Hegelianism of Sartre), the dialectic was the mechanism through which the historical practice of “race war” was
pacified by the *logic* of a philosophy. In order to clarify, it is worth quoting Foucault at length:

> The dialectic may at first sight seem to be the discourse of the universal and historical movement of contradiction and war, but I think that it does not in fact validate this discourse in philosophical terms. On the contrary, it seems to me that it had the effect of taking it over and displacing it into the form of philosophico-juridical discourse. Basically, the dialectic codifies struggle, war, and confrontation into a logic, or so-called logic, of contradiction; it turns them into the twofold process of the totalization and revelation of a rationality that is at once final but also basic, and in any case irreversible. The dialectic, finally, ensures the historical constitution of a universal subject, a reconciled, truth, and a right in which all particularities have their ordained place. The Hegelian dialectic and all those that came after it must….be understood as philosophy and right’s colonization and authoritarian colonization of a historico-political discourse that was both a statement of fact, a proclamation, and a practice of social warfare (Foucault 2003, 58).

Here Fanon, like Foucault, has identified in the Hegelian inflected theories of Kojève, Sartre, and Lacan, an attempted pacification of the race war emanating from the colonized world. He has therefore set out to attempt to neutralize the effects of this dialectic and the continual imposition of the logic of sovereignty through his stringent critique of Sartre. As we will see below, this critique is not simply of Sartre’s deployment of the dialectic, but of the negationist elements present within the structure of the dialectic itself.
4.3 The Dialectic and Black Ontological Resistance

4.3.1 Initial Misgivings

In the last section I attempted to approach the issue of the dialectic with regards to a very specific question—its relation to the issue of “repression” and sovereignty. Yet, the question of Fanon’s analysis of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic itself in relation to a “black ontology” remains to be examined. By introducing what Lou Turner refers to as a specifically “Black ontos” into the issues surrounding the structure of Hegelian dialectics, Fanon comes to the conclusion that the foundation of “absolute reciprocity” did not exist between whites and Blacks, nor could it be reached through the application of the Hegelian schema to the situation of whites and Blacks, given its inability to account for the historical and economic conditions which this relation has entailed. In other words, as Fanon reminds Sartre, the white European and the Black slave do not relate as just any “other.” The European has fully assumed the place of the “master” (Fanon 1967, 138), a master that has set out to “free” the Black while simultaneously reducing the Black to a mere object of fear, an object that in the eyes of the white is the merely biological (Fanon 1967, 165 and Turner 1996, 140). This fear has no relation to an “other” per se but rather to an empty assertion of self; it projects a struggle of the self/same onto the other, which in Fanon’s eyes must be destroyed. As Fanon attempts to explain this fear in the following fashion,
In the degree to which I find in myself something unheard-of, something reprehensible, only one solution remains for me: to get rid of it, to ascribe its origin to someone else. In this way I eliminate a short circuit that threatens to destroy my equilibrium (Fanon 1967, 190).

Given this position that the Black had been assigned by European society, “Wherever he goes, the Negro remains a Negro” (Fanon 1967, 173), any thinking that sidesteps this fact, as Sartre seems to have done, too easily offers “development” and “progress” as the friendly face to an unmodified structure of dis-encounter in which the only future of the Black is always to become white. Fanon’s attempt to move beyond this impasse of the application of dialectical thought to the colonial situation should help us to move beyond the constraints placed on Fanon’s thinking; that is, beyond the belief that Fanon is interested in the space between self and other, between master and slave.

### 4.3.2 Consciousness from an Almost Substantive Absoluteness

If our initial look at Fanon’s opposition to Sartre’s *Black Orpheus* remained at the level of “labor” and its relation to “repression” stemming from a certain interpretation of the Hegelian dialectic in Kojèveian terms, Fanon’s response to Sartre should not be reduced to this point alone. Rather, it touches on the question of the Hegelian dialectic itself, on the very structure of that dialectic and its capacity to act as a guide for, or even an ally of, decolonization. Fanon notes that within the dialectical framework, Sartre is in a certain way forced to position Blackness as the “negative moment” in a progression
and which therefore is always “insufficient in itself” (Fanon 1967, 135). In doing so, Fanon claims that Sartre has not understood “that this negativity draws its worth from an almost substantive absoluteness” (Ibid.). Although Fanon associates this negativity with Hegel’s “night of the absolute,” his response is carefully chosen and is not made in reference to the absolute per se, but very specifically toward “a substantive absolute.” As Lou Turner notes, this statement leads us away from thinking that Fanon has simply fashioned a Hegelian response to Sartre but shows that he has rather raised the specter of Baruch Spinoza against Hegel (Turner 1996, 138). That is, as Hegel himself asserts, “the philosophy which adopts the standpoint of substance and stops there is the system of Spinoza” (Hegel 1966, 580). In fact, Hegel’s own thought revolves around the necessity of moving beyond this Spinozian position, that is, on the necessity of substance leading beyond itself toward the Concept. In order to understand the root of Fanon’s objection to Sartre we must move beyond the level of the historical sort provided by Sartre and his phylogenetic Hegelian-Marxist reading of the dialectic. Rather, the possibility for such a reading stems from the nature of movement within Hegel’s own conception of the dialectic. As Simon Duffy has summarized, for Hegel, “thought determinations” are premised upon a relation of contrastive determinations, the elements of which are then considered contradictory. Thus, in direct opposition to Spinoza, Hegel begins his own consideration of being by immediately placing it in relation to its opposite category—nothingness. Here each concept, being and
nothingness, must then “pass over” into each other, and thus these objects which initially appear as isolatable are folded into a broader thought determination—becoming. This movement, “becoming,” is for Hegel the ever-increasing complexification of categories which provides ever broader syntheses for contradictions that continue to appear between thought determinations. This movement within Hegel’s dialectical thought is best demonstrated through a recounting of the very categorical complexification involved in his own writing. For example, in the Science of Logic we begin with the relation of being to its opposite nothingness (being logic), then proceed to a subsumption of these contradictions into a higher set of contradictions: being as appearance and being as essence (essence logic), which in turn are further subsumed into the consideration of the reconciliation of being and essence in the concept (concept logic). In other words, the application of dialectical logic to substance, into which being and essence are subsumed, results in the production of the concept. For Hegel, then, it is the concept that provides a unity of subjective and objective ideas (of appearance and essence) in that “the logical structure of our thought is simultaneously believed to be the structure of the real” (Duffy 2006, 16). In this sense, self-consciousness for Hegel is identical to the concept, in that the concept is the becoming subject of substance only after absolute substance has been negated. That is, it is important to note, however, that this self-consciousness is formed by the reciprocal negation of consciousness and an apparently independent object (substance), in which each must pass over into the other.
If something like absolute substantiveness could be said to exist in Hegel, although it would be a misnomer to characterize “substance becomes subject,” it would be a promise to be fulfilled only through negation, whereas for Spinoza and Fanon’s Blackness, substantive absoluteness is a premise.

Considering how Hegel’s dialectic necessitates the negation of substance, Fanon’s choice of words to describe Black consciousness as a “substantive absoluteness” cannot be taken lightly. Rather, it seems to point to Fanon’s discomfort not only with Sartre’s account of historical progression but also with the structure of the dialectic itself and particularly its movement through negativity. That is, Fanon seems to identify a certain relation between the negation of substance and the vision of historical becoming in which the future of the Black always remains white, between the historical progression described by Sartre that reduces Black consciousness to a minor term and the unfolding of the dialectic by a reciprocal negation. This complicity was later highlighted by Louis Althusser, whose formulation is useful to understanding Fanon’s departure from Hegel:

Of course, as we can now begin to say, what irremediably disfigures the Hegelian conception of History as a dialectical process is the teleological conception of the dialectic, inscribed in the very structures of the Hegelian dialectic at an extremely precise point: the Aufhebung (transcendence-preserving-the-transcended-as-the-internalized-transcended), directly expressed in the Hegelian category of the negation of the negation (or negativity) (Althusser 2007, 181).
This notion of *Aufhebung* is the same proposition that Fanon had rejected with regards to “labor” in the “dialectical overcoming” between the slave and the master. As Althusser continues,

To criticize the Hegelian philosophy of History because it is teleological, because from its origins it is in pursuit of a goal (the realization of Absolute Knowledge), hence to reject the teleology in the philosophy of history, but to return to the Hegelian dialectic as such at the same time, is to fall into a strange contradiction: for the Hegelian dialectic too is teleological in its structures, since the key structures of the Hegelian dialectic is the negation of the negation, which is the teleology itself, within the dialectic (Althusser 2007, 181).

In sum, for Fanon (as well as Althusser), there is no way to avoid the teleological or developmentalist applications of the dialectic without challenging the structure of negation within the dialectic. Another way to say this would be that for Fanon, the question of a future for the Black man that would not be white is intimately connected to the presentation of a revolutionary theory beyond negation.

### 4.3.3 Beyond Negation, Authentic Love

The centrality of negation for the movement of the dialectic raises two additional problems for Fanon. First, accounts that attempt to use the dialectic in a prospective manner in order to highlight the likely direction of “historical becoming” lock dominant and subordinate groups into a future implied by the determinations possible in their reciprocal negation. That is, their possible reconciliation at a historical level is something that must take place in an exchange *between* these two given elements. Yet, as Fanon
repeatedly points out, the European element in the context of colonialism is a homeostatic element that does not contain any parts capable of propelling dialectical progression; moreover, it refuses to even acknowledge the existence of any elements outside itself. Therefore, for Fanon, to push the notion of historical becoming as implied by the dialectic as a mechanism to move beyond the impasse of colonialism is to simply place a mirror onto the situation. The lack of reciprocity continues while the future is set by the given parameters of a single unilateral consciousness (i.e. the colonizer): “it is there waiting for me” (Fanon 2008, 169). In order to avoid this trap of figuring the future as taking shape in a space between the colonizer and the colonized, and at the same time to avoid taking the present existence of the colonized as an end (as Fanon believes that certain thinkers of Negritude and Bantu Ontology would like to do), Fanon proposes that the colonized must use their initial driving force to turn away from the homeostatic element and toward the “unforeseeable,” which lies beyond “historical becoming” (Fanon 1967, 135). In other words, for Fanon, Black consciousness is not the negative element in the face of Europe, but rather “a new beginning” that in itself contains the capacity to face the ‘third space’ of the unforeseeable. “Black consciousness” is thus for Fanon this capacity to turn toward the unforeseeable, although we should be careful to note that Blackness is not the unforeseeable itself. That is, “black consciousness” is the only element within historical becoming that is capable of turning toward or harnessing this third space. As unforeseeable, this third space does not constitute a subsumable
difference. Therefore, Fanon terms this capacity to turn toward the unforeseeable as an “alterity of rupture” (Fanon 2008, 197).

By understanding “black consciousness” as a “new beginning” made possible by the “alterity of rupture,” Fanon definitively moves away from negation as the basis for his own reconstructed dialectic and he delineates two further limitations of negation. The first, related to his original riposte to Sartre, involves the relation of negativity to the reduction of “black consciousness” to an historical “insufficiency” that necessarily awaits its own transcendent negation. As Fanon exclaims, “black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes…my negro consciousness does not hold itself out as a lack. It is. It is its own follower” (Fanon 1967, 185). This refusal on the part of Fanon to accept “black consciousness” as the negative moment to Europe’s racial thesis, as a lack, echoes the very first pages of Black Skin, White Masks, in which Fanon states,

“Man is not merely a possibility of recapture or of negation. If it is true that consciousness is a process of transcendence, we have to see too that this transcendence is haunted by the problems of love and understanding. Man is a yes that vibrates to cosmic harmonies (Fanon 1967, 8).

That is, the “no” implied must be equally matched with a set of new affirmations, affirmations which Fanon quickly summarizes as a “Yes to life, Yes to love, Yes to generosity” (Ibid. 222). Yet, according to Fanon, the reduction of social dynamics to the prospect of mutual negation has the limitation of placing all human endeavors under the banner of the “reactional.” He cites Nietzsche Will to Power to reiterate this position (Fanon 1967, 222). Fanon again confirms his belief that the education of man
toward the “actional” must remain the single highest priority of “those who prepare to act” (*Ibid.*).

Through the recuperation of the “alterity of rupture” and the “affirmation” that it makes possible, Fanon proposes to then return to the stated foundation of the Hegelian dialectic, to the necessity of an “absolute reciprocity.” Through the expulsion of the colonizer the colonized are now able to set the conditions not only for their own formal independence but also for the opening of an unforeseeable future as well as the possibility for the proliferation of different subjectivities beyond those of colonizer and colonized, beyond those of master and slave. That is, decolonization becomes the precondition for the proliferation of “I’s,” each maintaining their “alterity” while simultaneously acknowledging an “absolute reciprocity” with others. That is, for Fanon, the action of the colonized leads beyond even themselves and toward the formation of “an authentic love,” free of both the negation of differences and/or the reign of indifference (*Gibson 2003, 39 and Fanon 1967, 42*).

It is worth summarizing where Fanon has led us in his vision of an alternative to the Hegelian dialectic. First, he has highlighted the problem of negativity within the structure of the dialectic itself by positioning “black consciousness” (his alternative) as a “substantive absolute.” Second, he has attempted to show the effects of the applications of this negativity to social conflict, by which everything is reduced to a predictable “historical becoming,” to the complete detriment of the “unforeseeable.” Third, he has
proposed “black consciousness” as a propositional consciousness that is not accountable within historical becoming due to its ability through “the alterity of rupture” to turn itself away from the negation of the colonizer and toward the affirmation of the unforeseeable (to act, and not react). Finally, Fanon attempts to show that this capacity of “black consciousness” to turn toward the unforeseeable is the very requirement for the establishment of the conjunction of difference and reciprocity that he believes holds a different future for all of humankind. Therefore, and it is worth reiterating, Fanon has neither “sought the universal” in the dialectical sense, nor has he remained content to posit “blackness” as a historical given or an end. Rather, as Fanon boldly states, “The body of history [black and white] does not determine a single one of my actions…and it is by going beyond the historical instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate the cycle of my freedom” (Fanon 1967, 231). Fanon’s statement closely follows the lines of Karl Marx, with which Fanon begins the final chapter of Black Skin, White Masks: “The social revolution…cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future” (Ibid., 223).

4.4 The New Nation and the New Humanity

4.4.1 Beyond National Consciousness

I would like to briefly summarize what this chapter so far has attempted to clarify. First, we outlined Fanon’s appreciation of the colonized’s Manichean reversal
and within that found a direct challenge to sovereignty. This is a challenge that by
Fanon’s own account is necessary, but remains ambiguous and ultimately insufficient. In
order to move beyond this Manicheanism and the logic of sovereignty as a whole, Fanon
is forced to deal directly with this logic in the guise of the dialectic and the teleological
premises of negation. Having found an alterity of rupture, and as we will see in the
following pages, Fanon is now ready to return to the conflict between colonizer and
colonized armed with insights that allows us to move well beyond Manichean inversion.
That is, I will hear read Fanon as proposing the conflict between colonizer and colonized
beyond the logic of physical warfare and toward the antagonistic production of varying
subjectivities.

Having cleared a path away from the pre-determined future imposed on the
Black slave through colonization, Fanon is now ready to ask his readers to take “leave
[of] Europe” and instead turn toward the unforeseeable, which makes the production of
the new possible. More specifically, Fanon relates this turn toward the unforeseeable in
Black Skin, White Masks to a proposal of concrete forms that the new will take in the
pages of The Wretched of the Earth—the “new nation” and the “new man.” We will return
below to Fanon’s idea of the new man; but first, this section will examine Fanon’s
concept of the “new nation” that has as its aim the “restor[ation] [of] national
sovereignty” (Fanon 2004, 179). As I will attempt to show, although Fanon’s
propositional concepts remain entangled within and ambivalent toward the Western
tradition of sovereignty, it would be a mistake to think that Fanon’s “new nation” is the simple substitution of a domestic sovereign for the colonizer, of one species for another. As Ranjana Khanna points out, it was clear to Fanon that his “new nation” would necessarily stand in sharp contrast to the “nationalist blueprints” offered by Europe, for it was exactly these blueprints that had sustained the “exclusivist politics, racism, and homicidal tendencies” inflicted by Europe on much of the earth (Khanna 2003, 169). In order to see exactly how it is that Fanon’s “new nation” does in fact differ from European nationalism and the concept of sovereignty, this section will consider two distinguishing features: the classed location of the new nation, and the reorganization of the structure of political command. Although Fanon clearly regarded “reverse Manicheanism” as a necessary initial stage in the struggle for decolonization, from the very first pages of *The Wretched of the Earth* it is clear that his philosophical outlook on decolonization, as well as his more practical propositions, extend well beyond this initial stage. Although decolonization for Fanon necessarily implied a struggle for “the total liberation of the national territory,” this territorial imperative and the reverse Manicheanism that allow that territorial struggle to be conducted are from the very beginning subordinated to much larger (yet intimately connected) ends: “a social fabric that has been changed inside out,” a change “in the order of the world, and the “alter[ation] of being” (Fanon 2003, 1 and 2). Thus, for Fanon, the nationalism characteristic of the initial stages of decolonization (the nationalism of reverse
Manicheanism) must give way to a more complex understanding of friends and enemies of the “new nation.” In this regard Fanon states clearly,

> We have seen in the preceding pages that nationalism, that magnificent hymn that made the people rise against their oppressors, stops short, falters and dies away on the day independence is proclaimed. If you really wish your country to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step must be taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness (quoted in Pithouse 2003, 14; original in Fanon 1963, 203).

From the beginning of *The Wretched* Fanon is very careful to guard his idea of the “new nation” from that of “nationalism.” Rather, as the very structure of *The Wretched of the Earth* makes clear, “the new nation” will come about only with an analysis that highlights the irreconcilable antagonisms present within the “national territory.” That is, although the liberation of the “national territory” from the colonizer remains a necessity, the achievement of this goal opens a new level of understanding in which the colonized can re-imagine the face of their oppressors, a new understanding that Fanon describes in a key passage that, due to the common reduction of his position to the promotion of a simple reverse Manicheanism, is worth quoting at length:

> The people realize that national independence brings to light multiple realities which in some cases are divergent and conflicting. At this exact moment in the struggle clarification is crucial as it leads the people to replace an overall undifferentiated nationalism with social and economic consciousness. The people who in the early days of the struggle had adopted the primitive Manicheanism of the colonizer—Black versus white, Arab versus infidel—realize en route that some blacks can be whiter than the whites, and that the prospect of a national flag or independence does not automatically result in certain segments of the population giving up their privileges and their interests. The people realize that there are indigenous elements in their midst who, far from being at loose ends, seem to take advantage of the war to better their material situation and reinforce their burgeoning power. These profiteering elements realize considerable gains from the war at the expense of the people who, as always, are prepared to
sacrifice everything and soak the national soil with their blood. The militant who confronts the colonialist war machine with his rudimentary resources realizes that while he is demolishing colonial oppression he is indirectly building another system of exploitation...It was once all so simple with the bad on one side and the good on the other. The idyllic unreal clarity of the early days is replaced by a penumbra which dislocates the consciousness. The people discover that the ubiquitous phenomenon of exploitation can assume a black or Arab face. They cry treason, but in fact the treason is not national but social, and they need to be taught to cry thief. On their arduous path to rationality the people must also learn to give up their simplistic perception of the oppressor. The species is splitting up before their very eyes. They realize that certain colonists do not succumb to the ambient climate of criminal hysteria and remain apart from the rest of their species. Such men, who were automatically relegated to the monolithic bloc of the foreign presence, condemn the colonial war. The scandal really erupts when pioneers of the species change sides, go “native” and volunteer to undergo suffering, torture, death...Some members of the colonialist population prove to be close, infinitely closer, to the national struggle than certain native sons (Fanon 2004, 93-95).

Treason is not national, but social. Fanon has clearly moved beyond the “us versus them” moment of the initial revolt and a more complex picture of friends and enemies begins to emerge.

To summarize then, for Fanon, national “independence” is very clearly not the achievement of the new nation; it is rather the necessary precondition within which “the people” can achieve a view of the complexity of domestic economic and social antagonisms with which they will have to contend in order to bring about the “new nation.” Given Fanon’s emphasis on the necessity of this “social and economic” consciousness, it is important to mark the first distinction between Fanon’s “new nation” and the European formulations of national sovereignty. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have pointed out, European national/popular sovereignty was closely affiliated with two tendencies towards the elimination of alterity; the construction of a
homogenous national identity that took its grounding from dialectical opposition to Europe’s others, and the play of political representation that allowed a certain group, the emerging bourgeoisie, to stand in for the interests of the entire nation (Hardt and Negri 2000, 103-104). The “unity” of the nation in European “blueprints” is in fact a stand-in for a class victory of the bourgeoisie over and above other classes. It is important to keep these characteristics of the European nation-state project in mind, as it appears that Fanon had recognized these very qualities and sought to attack them directly.

4.4.2 The New Nation and Class Conflict

Given the necessity of the conversion from a “national consciousness” during the struggle for independence to “a social and economic consciousness” after independence, Fanon spends much of The Wretched of the Earth delineating the class make up of the former colonies, and pointing out the energy and obstacles within this class composition to the birth of the “new nation.” Importantly, Fanon does not simply borrow these categories from the European context and give them the same meaning in the colonies. Rather, he is extremely careful to demonstrate how the dynamics of each class differ substantially from their idealizations in Western social theory.

Fanon begins his analysis of the class composition of the colony by sharply distinguishing the native bourgeoisie from the bourgeoisie present in the European metropolis. As Fanon notes, the European nation-states were born at the very moment
when the bourgeoisie had accumulated a vast amount of wealth within the European territories, allowing them to make large investments in industrialization, the development of communications technology, and even the establishment of oversees markets (Fanon 2004, 53). This wealth and the investments that it entailed gave the European bourgeoisie the appearance of a dynamic class capable of defending its own interests and thus forming itself as a class. In contrast, the native bourgeoisie in the colonies and former colonies are immersed in a situation in which they are almost totally devoid of any real independent wealth, and thus incapable of any large scale social investments. Lacking in any inventive capacities, the native bourgeoisie attempts to ensure its well being by accessing the intermediary roles available in export trade with the European former colonizers (i.e. lawyers, tradesmen, managers, dealers, and shipping agents) (Ibid., 100 and 102). Given this dependence on trade with the European metropolis, the bourgeoisie lost sight of the well-being of the majority of the inhabitants of the colony, focusing solely on the interactions of the town centers and ports. In fact, this class explicitly abandons “the interior” of the former colony as it would require investment beyond that expended to extract raw materials—investments which the native bourgeoisie simply could not make. Lacking in the more inventive and dynamic characteristics of the metropolitan bourgeoisie, the native bourgeoisie is equally incapable of freeing itself from the values established by the metropolis, and is thus unable to imagine an end to the relations of exploitation under which the vast majority
of the former colonial population still lives (in other words, this class is incapable of enacting and alterity of rupture). In Fanon’s words, the bourgeoisie in the metropolis is sustained by an “economic reality,” a reality that remains completely foreign to the colony (Ibid., 122). The native bourgeoisie does not constitute a class at all, but is rather a subsidiary of the metropolitan bourgeoisie who have now been assigned the role of administering the colony for their former bosses in the metropolis in a situation that Fanon fully recognizes as neocolonialism (Ibid., 112 and 123). Given this obvious complicity between the native bourgeoisie and the former colonizer, it is no surprise that, as Fanon recognizes, it is this class that is most wedded to all the “parades and trumpet blares” of nationalism. By constantly conjuring the recent struggle against the colonizer, this native bourgeoisie attempts to cover over its own class antagonism with the rest of the recently independent nation. These displays of reverence for “the nation” and their calls for “nationalization” are in Fanon’s eyes attempts to both demand unbearable sacrifices from the laboring classes and simultaneously “[replace] the foreigners” in their unjust positions of privilege (Ibid., 105).

If the native bourgeoisie does not in fact constitute itself as a class, it is equally true for Fanon that the proletariat of the former colony is hardly an oppositional group to that bourgeoisie. Rather, from Fanon’s perspective, the urban proletariat in the colonies is composed of a tiny fraction of workers (tram drivers, taxi drivers, miners, and nurses) who have been relatively “pampered” and “privileged” within the colonial
context and therefore cannot be seen as an independent class but rather as a fragment of
the native bourgeoisie. That is, given their social position within the former colony, this
proletariat (unlike the images of its European counterpart) has “everything to lose”
(Ibid., 64). In addition, the dependence of this group on their European counterparts is
no less than that of the native bourgeoisie, and many of its labor organizations are
basically outgrowths of the metropolis that simply transplant their slogans to the colony
and attempt to impose “an a priori schedule” on the masses (Fanon 1963, 113).

Given the “sickening mimicry” of the metropolis by the native bourgeoisie as a
whole, Fanon leads us to the conclusion that this class will in no way contribute to the
construction of the “new nation.” To the contrary, he explicitly states, “the [native
bourgeoisie] must be resolutely opposed because literally it serves no purpose” (Fanon
2004, 120). Fanon could not be clearer. The “new nation” and the national bourgeoisie
are simply irreconcilable:

Barring the way to the national bourgeoisie is a sure way of avoiding the pitfalls
of independence, the trials and tribulations of national unity, the decline of
morals, the assault on the nation by corruption, and economic downturn and, in
the short term, an antidemocratic regime relying on force and intimidation (Ibid.,
121).

In addition, we should see the birth of the native bourgeoisie within the
neocolonial system as the colonizer’s own attempt to move beyond Manicheanism.
Therefore we should not confuse the colonized’s attempt to rid itself of the national
bourgeoisie as a metaphysical preference toward binarisms, but rather as the political
necessity to maintain a strategic duality. As Immanuel Wallerstein notes,
This format in three strata has an essentially stabilizing effect, while the format in two strata would be essentially disintegrating. I don’t mean to say that there always exist three strata. What I am trying to say is that those that find themselves in the superior strata try to assure the existence of three strata, with the end of better preserving their privileges, while those that find themselves in the lower strata, on the contrary, try to reduce the strata to two, in order to more easily dismantle those privileges. This combat over the existence of a third or intermediary strata is continuous, be that in political terms or through basic ideological concepts. Pluralists against Manicheans. And this is the central question around which class struggle is centered (Wallerstein 2004, 293; translation mine).

Once again it is worth highlighting that, unlike European sovereignty, which was a cover for the victory of the bourgeoisie against all other classes, for Fanon the establishment of the new nation entails the destruction of the bourgeoisie and therefore of that sovereignty which provides a false sense of national unity behind which they could hide. If the national bourgeoisie and its proletarian fraction are impediments to the “new nation,” we are still left with the question of which social subjects Fanon believes can counter them and thus act to consolidate the “new nation.” In this regard Fanon points to an agglomeration of two distinct social groups, each of which stands vehemently at odds to the native bourgeoisie and each of which has strengths with which to act independently of the former colonial powers (the ability to enact an alterity of rupture). It is important to note that it is this agglomeration, and only this agglomeration, that in Fanon appears under the terms of “the masses” and “the people.”

A key element of “the masses” for Fanon is the rural peasantry who, due to distance and disinterest on the part of the colonizer, was able to maintain a coherent social structure under its own command. For Fanon this social structure represents a
mechanism to enforce social cohesion and discipline, which might serve as the basis for future organizational endeavors. In addition, this peasantry upholds a series of “altruistic” values that serve to counteract the growing individualism of the bourgeoisie and once again make it possible to place the notion of community at the center of social life as opposed to the staunch individualism posed by the colonizer (Ibid., 67). If the peasant for Fanon provides the basis for revolutionary organization and alternative values, a particular sub-group of this peasant class—the landless peasant who has been forced to move to the peripheries of colonial towns to take up lives as pimps, prostitutes, the unemployed, and petty criminals—provide the greatest of revolutionary fervor (Ibid., 81). This “lumpenproletariat” is not devoid of problems for Fanon, as this group is almost completely lacking in a political vision of its situation. Yet its very presence at the center of the colonizers’ town constituted what Fanon calls “a biological decision” on the part of the colonized “to invade the enemy citadels at all costs” (Fanon 2004, 81). In addition to directly attacking the geography of exclusion that had been sustained by the colonizers’ apartheid, the lumpen are also able to act as “an urban spearhead” for the revolutionary forces and in effect push the colonizer to split his military efforts between rural and urban theaters (Ibid., 129). Fanon also posits that it has been a major flaw of revolutionary theory of the Third World to continually ignore the lumpenproletariat, because if their spontaneous energies are not directed to a larger revolutionary project they might quickly be captured and redirected by the “the oppressor,” who is more than
willing to arm and promote black-on-black violence (*Ibid.*, 87). Yet the spontaneity of this group also constitutes its key strength in the eyes of Fanon. That is, although it tends not to be amenable to centralized organization, its scattered character makes it difficult if not impossible to domesticate. As Fanon states, “However hard it is kicked or stoned [the lumpenproletariat] continue to gnaw at the roots of the [oppressors’] tree like a pack of rats” (*Ibid.*.) Here we see then that the backbone of the “new nation” will come from these two elements of the colonized peasantry, from the rural peasant and the recently displaced lumpenproletariat, the former providing the basis for discipline and alternative values and the latter providing spontaneity and unchecked revolutionary fervor. Yet, according to Fanon, what unites these figures should not be reduced to the traditional European dualism of town and country where the former represents traditional values and the latter the social dissolution necessitated by industrialization and capitalist production.\(^9\) Rather, the colonized peasantry is distinct in that “it is excluded from the benefits of colonialism,” unlike its bourgeois counterparts (of which, for Fanon, the industrial proletariat are a part), that have “[managed] to turn the colonial system to their favor” (*Ibid.*, 67). Therefore, this peasantry has a total distaste for the compromises of the native cosmopolitans. Rather, for them, the struggle can never stop

\(^9\) This dichotomy which has appeared in much of European reactionary thought is well demonstrated by Ferdinand de Tonnies’ concepts of *gemeinschaft* and *gessellschaft*. See F.d. Tonnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gessellschaft*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1887).
short of “taking back the land from the foreigners,” a feat that they have always understood necessitates “armed revolt” (*Ibid.*, 79).

Finally, the backbone of the “new nation” located in the peasantry is reinforced by “the revolutionary intellectuals” (*Ibid.*, 119). Having pushed a radical agenda within the bourgeoisie parties and unions of the towns, these intellectuals have been forced to take flight into the rural regions and take refuge with the peasants. Here the “revolutionary intellectual” realizes that the demands of the rural masses far exceed those of even the most progressive of cosmopolitan organizations, and they therefore find fertile ground for their vision of a revolutionary movement, as well as for their recently acquired antagonism to the native bourgeoisie. The strength of this group is twofold: first, many of these intellectuals have also had military training and are therefore capable of teaching basic military movements to the peasantry; and second, each of these “intellectuals” brings with them a deep “political consciousness,” which they are committed to sharing. That is, these intellectuals provided the basis to take the peasants and lumpen to a higher understanding of the requirements of change in their context through what Fanon refers to as “political education” (the substance of which I will address below).

It should be evident from the preceding paragraphs that Fanon’s “new nation,” unlike the European nation-state and its concept of sovereignty as described by Hardt and Negri in the preceding pages, cannot be confused with the false sense of unity
created by the bourgeoisie to stabilize its class victory over the subordinate classes. Rather, as Fanon makes clear, it is only these subordinated classes that have the will and the capacity to bring about the “new nation,” and they can do so only at the direct expense of the social existence of the native bourgeoisie.

### 4.4.3 The People Themselves

If Fanon’s vision for the “new nation” stands in sharp distinction to the European blueprints for nationalism in its class character, it also differs in a second key characteristic—his demand for a horizontal structure of rule. The class antagonism between “the people” and the native bourgeoisie is not simply economic. Rather, Fanon notes that the tendency on the part of the national bourgeoisie to become neocolonial administrators also forces them to attempt to occupy the mediatory positions of civil service, effectively turning the state into a machine for their own individual advancement (Fanon 2004, 115). By centralizing the national budget, by calling for the nationalization of natural resources, and by enforcing single party rule, the native bourgeoisie effectively creates a monopoly on financial resources while simultaneously crushing the possibility of opposition. Thus, for Fanon the struggle against this bourgeoisie is simultaneously a struggle for the transformation of state and party structures. As a counter-offensive to the bourgeois occupation of the state and political party, Fanon argues that “the people” must be “politicized.” Fanon is careful to explain
that the “politicization” of the people does not mean exhorting them toward any given ideology, but rather creating a commitment that the state and the party have to govern “with the people and for the people” (Ibid., 124). The politicization of the people means making them the active agents of politics. As Fanon explains, the “new nation” must make a second break with the European bourgeois revolutions by finally abandoning the notion that “the masses are incapable of governing themselves” (Ibid., 130). The “new nation” would have to insist instead that “people are no longer a herd” that need to be “driven” by some leader. On the contrary, it was the “new nation” that would make it possible for the people to drive their leaders (Ibid., 127). In sum, for Fanon to “politicize” the people meant acting against the figures of the “exceptional”:

To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean, making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people (Fanon 1963, 197).

In order to achieve this goal of the “politicization” of the people, from Fanon’s perspective, it was necessary to take a series of measures within the structure of the revolutionary party which, as he noted, tended to “resist any innovation” (Fanon 2004, 77). The first measure was to decentralize radically the functions of the party so as to avoid a unitary location of decision-making, but also to place the functions of the party closer to the peasantry—those most likely to resist the bourgeoisification of the political
structures. In addition, Fanon calls for the proliferation of local “cells” and the formalization of the “djemaas” (local assemblies) where everyone is allowed to listen and talk so as to build a practice where “the people themselves” are allowed to “innovate” through a process in which “all decide and understand” (Ibid., 135). We must be careful here not to attribute to Fanon some vulgar form of populism in which he is asserting the innate capacity of the people to govern. Rather, he makes clear that it is exactly through the practice of collective decision-making that the people are “educated” toward this capacity. The intelligence of the collective for Fanon is not some given substance (good or bad). As he explains, “with every meeting the brain multiplies the association of ideas and the eye discovers a wider human panorama” (Fanon 2008, 136).

With these ideas Fanon attempts to put “the party and the government at the service of the people,” rather than the reverse, a feat that was absolutely necessary for the “new nation” to claim sovereignty (Fanon 2004, 139). Sovereignty in Fanon’s formulation is thus never achieved by the expulsion of the foreigners because under the experience of colonialism, the colonized subject has learned that sovereignty can never be divorced from the concept of dignity. Sovereignty then does not exist unless “the people themselves” are the “demiurge” of the new nation; to build the nation otherwise would be to reinscribe government in place of and without the people (Fanon 2008, 139). Sovereignty as defined by the binominal nature of rule and the command-obedience relation of sovereign and subject in Western modernity is exactly what must be
overcome for Fanon in order for the new nation to come to life, in order for his notion of positive sovereignty to be attained.

4.4.4 Conclusion: Sovereignty and the New Humanity

Although “national sovereignty” always remains an essential goal for Fanon’s colonized, this move towards an affirmative notion of sovereignty carries within it a forceful critique of the conceptions of sovereignty that have dominated Europe. Thus, as Fanon announces on the very first page of *The Wretched of the Earth*, he has purposefully chosen to ignore all the traditional symbols of sovereignty to get closer to his positive definition of that concept:

> It is true that we could equally stress the rise of a new nation, the setting up of a new state, its diplomatic relations, and its economic and political trends. But we have precisely chosen to speak of that kind of tabula rasa which characterizes at the outset all decolonization. Its unusual importance is that it constitutes, from the very first day, the minimum demands of the colonized. To tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up. The importance of this change is that it is willed, called for, demanded (Fanon 1963, 35).

This change “from the bottom up” frequently remains hidden. For the former colonizer, this change signifies the danger of a “regression” into “barbarism” and is therefore purposefully misapprehended. Similarly, due to the fact that native intellectuals are concerned with countering the former colonizers’ narrative of barbarity in terms of the “universality” already laid out by Europe, they are frequently forced to recreate a narrative of the greatness of their past civilizations. Yet, as Fanon points out,
When the black man, who has never felt as much a “Negro” as he has under white domination, decides to prove his culture and act as a cultivated person, he realizes that history imposes on him a terrain already mapped out, that history sets him along a very precise path and that he is expected to demonstrate the existence of a “Negro” culture (Fanon 2004, 150).

In order to create this counter-narrative, the native intellectual begins to reify native culture and reduce it to what Fanon calls a series of “customs, traditions, and costumes” (Ibid., 160). As others have pointed out, and as Fanon seems to agree, this is due to the tendency by formerly colonized intellectuals to imagine the colonized in the very location of the sovereign-subject from which the colonizer has been careful to exclude them. As Fanon believes, this tendency leads the native intellectual to extol naively and abstractly “the goodness of the people” (Ibid., 158). For Fanon this is a caricature of the people, an abstraction created as a direct “counter-subject” to the colonizer. In contrast, Fanon insists that there is far more happening beneath the surface of the native intellectual’s narrative and he demands more of them:

It is not enough to reunite with the people in a past where they no longer exist. We must rather reunite with them in their recent counter move which will suddenly call everything into question: we must focus on that zone of hidden fluctuation where the people can be found, for let there be no mistake, it is here that their souls are crystallized and their perception and respiration transfigured (Fanon 2004, 163).

It is in this “zone of hidden fluctuation” where “the people” cease to counter the colonizers’ narrative and instead go on the offensive. Much as in Fanon’s alterity of rupture, the natives’ actions in this zone are not contestatory; rather, they aim for a total “redistribution of relations between men” (Ibid., 178). This is a redistribution that, according to Fanon, not only destroys colonialism but perhaps more importantly allows
the native to destroy “the colonized” (Ibid.). Therefore, in this “zone of hidden fluctuation” or “place of action,” the primary product is not some cultural object (a custom, a tradition, a costume, or even a literary genre), but rather “a completely new audience” (Ibid., 173). As Fanon explains, in sharp contrast to the abstractions of the native intellectual, the “culture” of combat that circulates among “the people” in struggle begins to take on the quality of an “invocation” where the artist or cultural worker ceases to repeat frozen images and narratives and instead “gives free reign to his imagination, innovates, and turns creator” (Ibid., 179). In re-discovering the agency of “misfits” and “outlaws,” the artist, with the direct assistance of this “totally new audience,” begins to reveal “the existence of a new man” (Ibid., 174). In this process, the actions of this totally new audience and the imagination of the artist can be thought of as existing in a relation of reciprocal determination, that is, in which neither can be thought without the other.

Thus, although the apparatuses of the party and the state remain necessary preconditions, the “restoration of national sovereignty” for Fanon always lies beneath the surface of these institutions and fully within the “zone of hidden fluctuation” where “the people” are able to create themselves beyond their conditions of oppression. That is, the location where, as Fanon had stated in relation to Nietzsche’s will to power, the people are able to move from reaction to action, from a defense of past cultural achievements to the production of “the new.” In the space of the “here and now,” which
can be accessed only by clearing all forms of transcendence (whiteness, the master, the nation, etc.) that attempt to deny the existence of this zone, the people themselves always exercise sovereignty in the creation of themselves as “new men” (Pithouse 2003, 18). Perhaps then Fanon’s alternative notion of sovereignty is best described by following Kenneth Surin’s reading of George Bataille. In Bataille’s *Accursed Share*, “sovereignty” appears as opposed to the forms of mastery frequently presented under the banner of sovereignty in European political philosophy. According to Bataille’s formulation, sovereignty appears at the very moments in which the déclassé subjects are able to make “the impossible come true, in the reign of the moment” (Surin 2001, 56). That is, sovereignty is possible when the formerly colonized subjects are able to access “alternative realities” so as to bring about “the new,” and therefore transgress “the given” without recourse to the negation of the master or the creation of a counter-mastery now under the control of the formerly colonized subject. The proximity of this formulation to Fanon’s ideas allows us to posit that Fanon’s “new man” is neither the mirror of the European sovereign-subject nor a concept unrelated to sovereignty. It is rather the expression of a notion of sovereignty that remains at odds with the traditions of Western political philosophy that I have examined in previous chapters.
5. Huey Newton: Can’t Go Home Again, Blackness in the Age of Empire

5.1 Introduction: Huey Newton, Radical Theorist

On August 5, 1970, after serving 22 months in prison for his conviction on manslaughter charges related to the death of police officer John Frey, Huey Newton returned to the streets of Oakland and reassumed his leadership role within the Black Panther Party (BPP). Newton’s return to the BPP was not without conflict, however, and for many within the Black Liberation Movement, Newton’s release would forever symbolize the commencement of a violent power struggle within the leadership of the BPP—a struggle that would eventually divide and destroy that party. Newton’s return to the BPP was also complicated by statements he made soon after his release from prison in which he expressed discontent with the theoretical formulations that had been circulated by the BPP since its inception. Newton’s dissatisfaction sprung not only from his differences with political rivals within the BPP, but also from a deep-seated belief that something within society had changed so radically since his arrest in 1967 that the BPP’s previous political outlook had been surpassed. In a series of speeches and essays that date from 1970 to 1976, Newton attempted to express his insight into these changes and the consequences that they would have for political practice. Despite the fact that many within the BPP spoke of ”Huey’s genius,” very few people outside his circle of
friends and associates have taken the time to consider Newton’s theoretical formulations seriously.¹ Instead, the content of Newton’s thought has been effectively neutralized both by sympathizers too awe-stricken to examine and question his work, as well as by outright enemies who presented Newton as a lunatic whose desire to become a living god had caused him to lose his grasp on reality. Both of these obstacles have inhibited a broader understanding of the nature of Newton’s most important insights.

It is my contention that once we have escaped the existing parameters of Newton’s reception, it becomes clear that the ideas he circulated during this period represent an unparalleled grasp of the "unhinging" of post-1968 world events from previously sedimented conceptions of space, time, and political practice. Newton’s understanding of the post-68 conjuncture led him to radically break with what until then had been the very justification for the existence of the BPP—revolutionary nationalism and the concomitant strategies and tactics of Tricontinentalism.² This radical break,

² Tricontinentalism is used here as a term to describe the theoretical and political formations that arose within the Third World after the Tricontinental Conference held in Havana in January of 1966, and distinguishes those formations from the previous era of Third World movements which
which we can mark with the exact date of Newton’s release from prison, is best described in a series of propositions he circulated, each of which hinges on the existence (for the first time in history) of a global sovereign, an “empire.” This empire had integrated the entirety of the world’s communities and definitively signaled the exhaustion of the era of national liberation, creating the necessity to recommence the Black liberation struggle on a new terrain. Newton came to believe that the characteristics of the Black subject as homeless made this subject uniquely qualified to understand and thus counteract this empire. That is, he believed its capacity to produce Blackness as the direct antagonist to empire.

5.2 Founding the Party

5.2.1 Beginnings

On the heels of the assassination of Malcolm X on February 21, 1965, the Watts Riots in August of that same year, and a series of attempts throughout the early to mid-

sixties to channel their activism into the existing political organizations present on the campus of Merritt College in Oakland, California (specifically, Donald Warden’s Afro-American Association, Kenneth Freeman’s Soul Students Advisory Council and the recently formed Bay Area chapter of the Revolutionary Action Movement), Bobby Seale and Huey Newton decided to begin their own political organization. Based on a Ten Point Program that they carefully assembled in Bobby Seale’s living room in October, 1966, and borrowing a powerful symbol from the Lowndes Country Freedom Party, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense was born. In the view of Seale and Newton, the events of the previous year had proven that the non-violent strategy circulated by Martin Luther King, Jr., and the NAACP had reached an impasse, and that a new type of political strategy had become necessary. A strong impulse for social change had been circulating within the Black community for some time. Influenced by Malcolm X, the Deacons for Self-Defense, and Robert Williams, Newton and Seale believed (as Point 7 of

3 See Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1961), 26-29; and David Hilliard, *Huey, Spirit of the Panther*, (NY: Basic Books, 2006), 21. Although Bobby Seale was a charter member of the West coast chapter of RAM, according to Seale, Newton was denied membership due to the fact that the existing members had deemed him and his family too “bourgie.”

4 A full copy of the Black Panther Party’s October 1966 “Ten Point Program” has been included at the end of this text as Appendix A. Although most accounts of the adaptation of the Black Panther as the symbol and name of the party that Seale and Newton founded tend to lead back to the influences of Stokely Carmichael and the Lowndes County Freedom Party, Muhammad Ahmad points out that the Revolutionary Action Movement in New York had already named its chapter “The Black Panther Party.” Being that both Seale and Newton were well aware of the activities of RAM, it might also be presumed that they were aware of this East Coast “Black Panther Party.” See Muhammad Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2007), 166-169.
the BPP platform makes clear) that the police violence which led to the Watts riots had to be directly confronted before the Black community could gain the sense of self-confidence necessary to move on that impulse. With this in mind, Newton spent several months researching California law pertaining to police searches and seizures, as well as a citizen’s right to bear arms. Newton discovered that California statutes in fact permitted the state’s citizens to carry pistols, shotguns and rifles, and existing California Supreme Court precedent stated that all citizens had the right to stand and observe a police officer carrying out his official functions. With this information in hand, as along with Seale’s previous weapons training in the U.S. military, Seale and Newton set out to recruit members for a citizen’s police patrol.⁵

After conducting a series of successful police patrols and spearheading a community investigation into the murder of Denzil Dowell by the Martinez Sheriff’s Department, the BPP began to get attention from both the Black community and the state legislature. As a direct response to these BPP actions, conservative Republican representative Donald Mulford introduced a bill into the California State Legislature that would outlaw the possession of loaded weapons on one’s person or in a vehicle, in addition to the prohibition of such weapons in state and government buildings. In response, Newton and Seale organized a march onto the steps of the California State

Legislature to read “Executive Mandate No. 1,” written by Huey Newton to briefly explain to the Black community, and the country as a whole, the BPP’s belief in the central importance of armed self-defense for Black people in the United States.\footnote{For the complete text of Executive Mandate No. 1 see Huey Newton, \textit{To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton}, (NY: Random House, 1972), 7-8.}

Thus, on May 2, 1967, the BPP made its first notable national appearance. Wielding rifles on the steps of California’s Capitol Building in Sacramento, demanding “self-determination” for Blacks in the United States and promising to protect the Black community from police brutality, the Black Panthers gained unprecedented media attention. This attention allowed them to grow at an exponential rate. Before their Sacramento appearance the BPP had been limited to members in the Oakland area; however, soon after this event BPP chapters were organized in every major city in the United States. As their popular base grew, these chapters coalesced into a coordinated, unified, mass-based organization of national scope and significance, and became what George Jackson would later refer to as, “the only communist party in this country” (Jackson 1994, 177). It was thus for good reason that, just one year after their first appearance, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover would pronounce that the Black Panther Party was “…the single greatest threat to the internal security of the United States” (Jones 2005, 366).
5.2.2 A Nation Within A Nation

Having experienced the brutality of police violence directed specifically at the Black community, and finding this situation inexplicable within the traditional Marxist rhetoric of “capitalists” and “proletarians,” Huey Newton and Bobby Seale identified deep affinities between the Black situation in the United States and the anti-colonial movements of the Third World. In fact, from its very inception the BPP understood the Black community in the United States as a colonized people (i.e. “the Black colony”), driven by its objective situation to stand against the exploitation imposed upon them by a colonial oppressor (i.e. “the white mother country”) (Seale 1991, 182). Like other Black radical movements of the time, and in the much longer tradition of Black Radicalism in the United States, the BPP thus viewed the Black community as “a nation within a nation” (Seale 1991, 71). In Newton’s words, despite living in close proximity to the factories and technology of an imperialist power, Blacks in the United States had effectively been reduced to “the wretched of the earth” (Newton 1972, 83).

The inclination to view the Black community in the United States as a colony was strengthened under the influence of Eldridge Cleaver, who would become Minister of Information of the BPP. Cleaver was energized by the proposition of Malcolm X that the United Nations should conduct a plebiscite to ask whether the masses of Black people consider themselves a nation, and whether they should therefore be granted representation within the United Nations independent of the United States. Cleaver’s
fervor for this issue was so influential on the BPP that in mid-1967 Point Ten of the Black Panther Party Platform, which had originally stated “We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace,” was amended to read “We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny” (Seale 1991, 63). Not surprisingly, Newton and Seale found great theoretical inspiration in the works of Mao ZeDong, Che Guevara, and Frantz Fanon, who had each in their own context attempted to work out strategies for national liberation. Fanon was particularly attractive to the leadership of the BPP, as well as the larger Black liberation movement, due to the fact that he alone had theorized the question of decolonization in a racially charged social field, and within what they took to be a “Black” context. They found this analysis pertinent to the situation of Black people in the United States, but as historian Louis Heath noted, “they adopted the Fanonian perspective, but they gave it a uniquely Afro-American content” (Heath 1976, 75). Eldridge Cleaver explained the significance of this work for the development of the Party’s own analysis, remarking that,

Not until we reach Fanon do we find a major Marxist-Leninist theoretician who was primarily concerned about the problem of Black people, wherever they may be found...It is because of the fact that Black people in the United States are also

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7 The revised 10 Point Program of the Black Panther Party of 1967 is included as Appendix B at the end of this text.
colonized that Fanon’s analysis is so relevant to us (quoted in Heath 1976, 75, emphasis mine; original in Cleaver 2007, 177).

It should be noted that the framing of de-colonization within the Black community as a question of “national liberation” within the BPP, mirroring the anti-colonial struggles of the Third World, was from the outset taken up most strongly by Eldridge Cleaver. Not only had Cleaver sufficiently lobbied Huey Newton to include the demand for a plebiscite in the Ten Point Program, he also put forward the idea that the struggle against “integration” (white colonial dominance) could only be solved by securing control over a geographically contiguous piece of land (Cleaver 1969, 66). This position was adopted from the Black Power formulation of Stokely Carmichael (who briefly held the charge of Field Marshal of the BPP), which Cleaver regarded as the greatest theoretical contribution to Black radicalism since Marcus Garvey. Carmichael had shown, much like Theodor Herzl had done with the Jewish National Congress, that Blacks could build a national organization for a “homeland” on someone else’s land. As Cleaver summarized, this outlook called for Black liberation to become a project of nation-building:

The necessity upon Afro-America is to move, now, to begin functioning as a nation, to assume its sovereignty, to demand that sovereignty be recognized by other nations of the world…Black Power must be viewed as a projection of sovereignty, an embryonic sovereignty that black people can focus on through which they can make distinctions between themselves and others, between themselves and their enemies, in short, between the white mother country of America and the black colony… (Cleaver 1969, 67, emphasis mine).
With these formulations in mind, it is evident that from its inception, and well into Newton’s prison term, the BPP varied little from the tradition of “revolutionary nationalism” and “anti-imperialism” that had circulated within the Black left since Martin Delany’s idea of a “nation within a nation.”

5.2.3 Picking Up The Gun

Despite their unique success in building a truly national organization, the Black Panther Party, at its beginning, was still rooted in the tradition, prevalent within other “U.S. Third World” movements, of framing their struggle in terms of “national liberation,” to be achieved through violent means. Today it is well documented that the

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8 Although Lenin’s *Imperialism*, and the notion of “revolutionary nationalism” that it had made possible, provided a way to bridge race and class through the figure of the nation, each organization within the Black Liberation Movement differed on which terms within this equation were emphasized. Early on in the formation of the Black Panther Party, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale had a series of tense and somewhat degrading confrontations with organizations that had placed emphasis on race over class (i.e. what they termed “cultural nationalists”). These organizations were primarily centered around college campuses, but according to Newton and Seale, were unable to grow into the surrounding Black communities. As a consequence of these confrontations, the Oakland Black Panthers developed a strong aversion to cultural nationalism, which they came to view as an attempt to mask over the class dynamics internal to the Black community. Thus, in sharp contrast to those organizations, the BPP made a conscious decision to emphasize class rather than race in order to become the political party of “the Black community” in general, but of the “Black lumpen” most specifically. This emphasis on class led the Panthers to a position that could, as Nikhil Singh notes borrowing from Fanon, more properly be termed “counternationalist” (Jones 2005, 67). Although I will return to these “counternationalist” tendencies, it is worth noting that the BPP’s struggle against “cultural nationalism” would continue and eventually lead to a violent confrontation on January 17, 1969, between the BPP and Maulena Karenga’s US organization (based out of Los Angeles) in which BPP member Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter was killed.
reading and dissemination of Frantz Fanon's text, *The Wretched of the Earth*, deeply affected the vision of the global anti-colonial movement regarding its struggle, and particularly its relationship to violence. Fanon's reception within the BPP was no different. His work allowed the BPP to theorize the anti-colonial struggle within the United States and to envision a strategy for action. Huey Newton was perhaps the first within the BPP to fully comprehend the importance of the opening provided by Fanon and the other theorists of the Tricontinental. In devising the BPP’s strategy for “armed self-defense,” Newton stated,

Mao and Fanon and Guevara all saw clearly that the people had been stripped of their birthright and their dignity, not by any philosophy or mere words, but at gunpoint. They had suffered a hold up by gangsters, and rape; for them the only way to win freedom was to meet force with force. At bottom this is a form of self-defense (Newton 2002, 50).

It was therefore, according to Newton, the job of the Black Panther Party to disseminate and teach “the correct strategic method of prolonged resistance” (Newton 1972, 15). Newton described the situation of the Black community as a “triangle of death.” At one point of the triangle was the white colonizer who wished to openly speak for the Black community. Short of this, the white colonizer settles for endorsing and implanting a class, a “talented tenth,” within the Black community to circulate the notion that the Black community must endear itself to the white majority and do nothing to anger them (Newton 2002, 139). These “endorsed spokesmen,” who make up the second point of the triangle, could be recognized as the preachers of “submission, fear, and love” (*Ibid.*). At the third point of the triangle lies what Newton refers to as the
“implacables.” It is these “heirs of Malcolm” who believed that the liberation of the Black community is possible only by “kill[ing] the slave master, destroy[ing] him utterly, and mov[ing] against him with implacable fortitude” (Newton 2002, 139). Historically, the “endorsed spokesmen” have had the upper hand; yet, as the accumulation of “spontaneous rebellions” in the years before the BPP was founded had shown, the Black ghettos had broken with the “endorsed spokesmen” and had instead embarked upon a course of open resistance that included Molotov cocktails and property destruction. Newton thus reasoned that the question was not between violence or non-violence, but rather determining the correct strategy for prolonged violent resistance (Newton 2002, 142). That is, for Newton, the function of the BPP was to move the Black ghettos from the Molotov cocktail to the proven effectiveness of “the guerrilla warfare method” as explained by Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth and the works of Mao Zedong (Newton 2002, 137 and 142). As Newton explained, the Black community had been denied all the sources for political power; it did not own land, had been absented from the centers of economic life, and had no military. Black people would have to enter political life by “picking up the gun,” so that they might impose consequences on the white colonizer when their desires had not been met (Newton 2002, 148). In sum, as Newton stated, if

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9 It is important to note that unlike many other radicals of the era Newton dedicated quite a bit of time to actually reading the Tricontinental Theorists. Besides being obviously familiar with work of Che Guevara and Frantz Fanon, Newton had, even before the founding of the BPP, gone far beyond The Little Red Book and studied the complete volumes of The Selected Works of Mao Zedong. See Robin Kelley, Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 69.
Black people had been forced to build the United States, by “picking up the gun” they could now show that they were equally capable of tearing it down (Ibid., 137). For Newton, then, adopting guerilla warfare was an integral part in building what he termed “Self-defense power,” the basis for a political action that would “end the terror of white society over the Black community” and thus “transform the world” (Ibid.). The import and specificity of the violent act for Newton, and the obvious echo of Mao, was astutely summarized by Bobby Seale, who, in describing a disagreement that the early Panthers had with members of the Revolutionary Action Movement, writes,

They didn’t understand Huey when he said, ‘Politics is war without bloodshed and war is politics with bloodshed, a continuation of politics with bloodshed.’ They didn’t understand antagonistic contradictions and non-antagonistic contradictions both being lodged in the arena of politics. They didn’t understand that the plight of the black people’s struggle in the confines of decadent America is a political-military whole, unified within itself (Seale 1991, 117).

5.2.4 The Death of Non-Violence

In contrast to Newton’s “political-military whole,” other Panthers, as observed by Robin D.G. Kelley, seemed fixated on the first chapter of The Wretched of the Earth, which they believed contained a strategically prescriptive (rather than phenomenologically descriptive) analysis of decolonization (Kelley 2002, 127). Although this reading of Fanon was widespread within the BPP, it was a position most closely associated with Eldridge Cleaver, and from all evidence it began to gain prominence from his “reading” of a particular event—the April 4th, 1968 assassination of Martin
Luther King, Jr. (Cleaver 1969, 78). Two days after this event, Cleaver sat down at the request of his *Ramparts* magazine colleagues to share his thoughts about this momentous event in an article subtitled, “Requiem for Non-violence.” In this article Cleaver comes to the definitive conclusion that the assassination of Martin Luther King was literally the assassination of non-violence. It was the clearest signal yet that white Americans had openly repudiated “any hope of reconciliation...any hope for change by peaceful and non-violent means” (Cleaver 1969, 74). Thus, in Cleaver’s estimation, there was no longer any doubt that “the only way for Black people in this country to get the things they want...is to meet fire with fire” (*Ibid*). Cleaver reasoned that “the war has begun” and that a “holocaust” reminiscent of the Algerian liberation struggle would inevitably ensue (Cleaver 1969, 196). Such feelings could have only been heightened for Cleaver as he was forced to leave his article on Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination mid-sentence, when he was summoned to the Oakland offices of the BPP, where he and other party members exchanged gunfire with the Oakland Police Department. The result of this confrontation was the death of 17-year-old Bobby Hutton (the third member of the BPP, following Newton and Seale), and the shooting and incarceration of Cleaver himself (Cleaver 1969, 81-94).

Reading Mao Zedong’s *On Protracted War*, Cleaver seems to have been drawn to a particular line: “When politics develops to a certain stage beyond which it cannot proceed by the usual means, war breaks out to sweep away the obstacles in the way”
Thus, Cleaver unequivocally concluded that “politics has been transformed into war,” and therefore the possibility for adjudication, arbitration, and negotiation had disappeared. Given this situation, it seemed to Cleaver that Fanon’s framework was more pertinent than ever, that the United States was a “world split in two” and the colonial situation of African-Americans in the U.S. could be seen just as Fanon had described colonial power in Africa: “violence in its natural state, [that] would yield only when confronted with greater violence” (Fanon 2004, 61). From this point onward the contradiction between the “white mother country” and the “Black colony” could find a resolution only by meeting the violence of the colonizer with the even greater violence of the colonized (Foner 1970, 119). Given this post-1968 situation, Cleaver believed it would only be a matter of time before the contradictions present within U.S. society led to the emergence of a "people's army" that would "take up arms and overthrow the system" through a violence that "the pigs" could only recognize as "madness" (Heath 1976, 28 and 59).

By July of 1970, Cleaver was calling upon the BPP and other revolutionary organizations to form a guerilla army, the North American Liberation Front, which would take on the U.S. military across the mountainous and rural regions of the United States (Heath 1976, 28, and Cleaver 1969, 165). It was a call that did not fall on deaf ears and would later be taken up explicitly within and beyond the Black Panther Party. Summarizing his position, Cleaver explained,
The Black Panther Party recognizes, as do all Marxist revolutionaries, that the only response to the violence of the ruling class is the revolutionary violence of the people. The Black Panther Party recognizes this truth not as some unspecified mechanistic Marxist-Leninist truism, but as the premise for relating to the colonial oppression of Black people in the heartland of imperialism where the white ruling class, through its occupation police forces, agents, and dope peddlers, institutionally terrorize the black community. Revolutionary strategy for Black people in America begins with the defensive movement of picking up the Gun, as the condition for ending the pigs reign of terror by the Gun (Foner 1970, 19).

In sum, like the movements that had emerged in the Third World, the Black Panther Party, up until Newton’s incarceration, struggled for national liberation as its declared end, with the exertion of violence, or, more specifically, some form of guerrilla warfare, as its intended means.

5.3 Intercommunalism

5.3.1 Revolution is a Process, Not a Conclusion

After his release from prison, Newton dedicated much of his intellectual and political life to demonstrating that the era of “imperialism” had come to a definitive and irreversible end, and that the coordinates of the struggle for liberation would have to be recharted accordingly. In place of the Tricontinental-style theses that had previously driven the BPP, Newton would offer a series of propositions culminating in his own vision of a renewed struggle. He argued that this struggle would be waged on a new
battlefield he termed “empire,” or reactionary intercommunalism, a battlefield that carried within itself an unprecedented possibility for worldwide revolution.

Newton’s split with the tenets of Tricontinentalism began in the very place which had for years been regarded as the birthplace of Tricontinentalism, the writings of Mao Zedong. Much like his fellow party members, Newton was a great admirer of Mao, and writing from his jail cell in March of 1969, Newton insisted that the BPP “[will] follow the pattern and follow the thoughts of Chairman Mao” (Foner 1970, 48). But what exactly were the patterns and thoughts of Chairman Mao that Newton found so attractive? Were they contained in the same pages of Mao’s book, On Guerrilla Warfare, so admired by the Black Liberation Movement and the Third World liberation movement at large? Or had Newton discovered something else buried in Mao’s writings?

The answer to this question became obvious when he presented a speech at Boston College on November 18, 1970, and made clear that the Maoist influences within his own thought were far from limited to military strategy. On the contrary, Newton staked out his own political position through an elaborate defense of “dialectical materialism” as he understood it. This is a notion that, to take a small sample of Newton’s own words on the matter, implies an understanding that “contradiction is the ruling principle of the universe: it gives motion to matter”; or similarly that,

10 See for example, Philip Foner The Black Panthers Speak, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970), 43-44.
“contradiction, or the strain of the lesser to subdue that which controls it, gives it motion”; or finally, “that the internal struggle of opposites based upon their unity causes matter to have motion as a part of the process of development” (Newton 2002, 200, 216, and 275). One can hear within Newton’s formulations the opening lines of Mao’s famous essay, “On Contradiction,” which states, “The law of contradiction in things, that is, the law of the unity of opposites, is the basic law of materialist dialectics” (Mao 1990, 33).

What does Newton find so useful in Mao’s notion of contradiction? In May of 1970, Newton states: “Any conclusion or particular action that we think is revolution is really reaction, for revolution is a developmental process” (Newton 2002, 214). In order to understand the significance of this insight for Newton, however, we must once again analyze the context in which he is writing and theorizing for the BPP. Very schematically we can say that Newton was struggling against two opposing viewpoints present within the left in the United States at the time. These positions were typified on one end of the spectrum by traditional Marxist-Leninist organizations such as the Communist Party USA, which Newton characterized as believing “that revolution was impossible,” and on the other end by Eldridge Cleaver, who, according to Newton, wished for everyone to “pick up the gun” so that he could “order everyone into the streets tomorrow to make a revolution” (Newton 2002, 165 and 207).11 That is, for the

11 By the time of Newton’s release, Cleaver’s vision of a Black guerrilla army had found resonance with Black militants who would eventually go on to form the Black Liberation Army. In 1968,
Marxist-Leninist organizations the objective movement, or laws, of the unfolding dialectical antagonism between capital and labor made subjective revolutionary action not only superfluous but in fact impossible. Similarly, for Cleaver and his “Fanonian” dialectic of colonialism, the contradiction of a “society split in two” had only one resolution (one future)—that of an increasingly violent antagonism. In other words, from both of these perspectives the future had already been determined, and for the movement it was simply a matter of living out the inevitable unfolding of future events.

As a counter to this very notion of historical materialism, Mao had stated:

Cleaver left the United States for Algeria to avoid charges stemming from an armed confrontation with the Oakland Police Department. Once in Algeria, differences began to intensify between Cleaver and the Black Panther Party leadership. Cleaver would eventually publicly denounce Newton’s turn away from revolutionary violence as “reformism” and those members of the BPP that agreed with Cleaver left the Panthers to join the pre-existing Black Liberation Army. Although much of this “split” within the Black Panther Party was engineered by the FBI’s COINTELPRO program, and although Newton and Cleaver did in fact differ on a number of points of political strategy, I believe it is most fruitful to view this “split” in the context of the strains placed on the organization by the formation of a new historical epoch rather than as simply a personal or even organizational conflict unique to the BPP. For a description of the “split” within the BPP, see Mumia Abu Jamal, We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party, (Cambridge: South End Press, 2004), 205-226; and Curtis J. Austin, Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 273-333.

It is important to note that although Cleaver assumes this position in relation to a certain reading of Fanon, that reading bears little relation to Fanon’s own views. Whereas Cleaver takes Fanon’s first chapter of The Wretched of the Earth, “On Violence,” to be proscriptive, Fanon himself had the intention of providing a phenomenological description of an unfolding process whose moments move well beyond mere Manichean violence to encompass the concepts of “organization” (in the very next chapter of The Wretched) and the relation of the national situation to the international context in which “high finance” tends to mediate against outright “massacre” (Fanon 2004, 66). See Chapter Four of this text.
Where our dogmatics err on this question is that, on the one hand, they do not understand that we have to study the particularity of contradiction and know the particular essence of individual things before we can adequately know the universality of contradiction and the common essence of things, and that, on the other hand they do not understand that after knowing the common essence of things, we must go further and study the concrete things that have not yet been thoroughly studied or have only just emerged (Mao 1990, 49).

And thus he concluded:

Contradiction and struggle are universal and absolute, but the methods of resolving contradictions, that is, the forms of struggle, differ according to the differences in the nature of the contradictions. Some contradictions are characterized by open antagonism, others are not. In accordance with the concrete development of things, some contradictions which were originally non-antagonistic develop into antagonistic ones, while others which were originally antagonistic develop into non-antagonistic ones (Mao 1990, 86).

Mao’s notion of contradiction had allowed Newton to see that these two positions in fact shared one fundamental premise that he personally rejected, a notion that Newton, like Mao, identified as a remnant of Hegelianism within Marxism: the idea that there is an even and single-centered development within contradictions that allows one to predetermine the mode of resolution of any particular contradiction (Newton 2002, 164). Armed with this newfound understanding, Newton would attempt to redirect the BPP’s theory and practice to a focus on the fundamental role of constant change within society, and away from narratives of linear continuity. Newton summarized the practical and strategic implications of this focus by explaining, “if we are using the method of dialectical materialism we don’t expect to find anything the same even one minute later because ‘one minute later’ is history” (Newton 2002, 165).
Thus, Newton insisted, the role of the revolutionary was not to adhere steadfastly to a set of principles and actions that one could apply to all situations regardless of events (Erikson 1973, 103). Rather, Newton preferred to push the members of the BPP and the public at large to think of revolution as a process—a process with no exterior end. Or, as Franz Schurmann would recognize, Newton’s unique contribution was to insist on revolution as “a process, not a conclusion” (Schurmann 1974, 563). According to Newton, the role of the revolutionary was to “analyze each instant” so as to be able to conceive of thought and action worthy of the “situation” and its resolution (Newton 2002, 183). This insight was made possible only by turning the dialectic against itself, as, in Newton’s words, “if under a dialectical materialist analysis, nothing ‘stood outside’ of the process, [does] that not negate the process itself?” (Brown 1992, 256). Like many revolutionary Marxists of the era, Newton found in Mao a way to fight the idealist elements of Hegelianism still found in much of mainstream Marxism so as to reopen the possibility and necessity of innovating practice. Perhaps the power of Mao identified by Newton was best summarized in the work of Louis Althusser, whose essays “Contradiction and Overdetermination” and “On the Materialist Dialectic” are both lined with footnotes referencing Mao. It seems that Althusser sensed in Mao a way out of the stale pages of Soviet resignation, and thus found a weapon with which to wrest control of the French Communist Party from Kruschev’s Moscow line.\footnote{For an excellent discussion of Althusser’s relationship to the Chinese Cultural Revolution, see}
of Mao, Althusser drew a conclusion similar to Newton’s regarding dialectical methodology, remarking, “That is what constitutes the grandeur of Mao: that he practically questioned the metaphysical idea of the dialectic, audaciously submitting the dialectic to the dialectic...” (Althusser 1990, 276). In short, Mao’s work allowed for a critique of the dialectic that turned it from abstract metaphysics to an instrument for the “concrete analysis of concrete contradictions” (Mao 1990, 177).

With a newfound focus on non-linear change, Newton was able to insist that understanding African-Americans in the United States as a mirror of the colonized Third World subject had blinded the BPP to new developments within capitalism, developments that had changed the nature of domination and thus changed the battlefield upon which the struggle for liberation would take place. According to Newton, the adoption of the Tricontinental model to the United States had trapped people like Eldridge Cleaver into believing that the exertion of violence and national liberation (a particular action) were in and of themselves revolutionary. Thus, after 1970, Newton’s focus was not on the continuity of the colonial situation of Africans in America, but rather on the understanding that transformation was the constant that


14 For a similar vision of the importance of Mao and his ability to understand the centrality of Lenin’s re-reading of Hegel, see Antonio Negri, La Fabrica de la estrategia: 33 lecciones sobre Lenin, (Madrid: AKAL, 2004), 143-144.
made their continual subjugation possible. With the analysis of continual transformation as the keystone of the BPP’s dialectical materialism, Newton turned away from the analysis, based on a stunted reading of the Tricontinental theorists (Mao, Fanon, and Che), which reduced social struggle to a colonial “world split in two.” This analysis had enjoyed wide circulation among the Black Liberation Movement and the BPP, but Newton recognized that this view, if it had ever been an adequate description of the lives of Black people in the United States, had been definitively superceded by recent events. As his first sketches of this new situation intimate, Newton believed that, despite the fact that the end of colonialism had meant anything but liberation, there had in fact been a fundamental shift in the nature of imperialism. According to Newton, the “new imperialism” was no longer satisfied with the domination of distant colonial subjects but had instead turned its forces inward, toward the “mother country” itself, in a process that Newton would later label “an imperialistic variation of imperialism” (Newton 2002, 152).

5.3.2 The Industrial Working Class Will Be Transformed Out of Existence

When the Black Panthers first appeared in Oakland, they were far from welcomed by the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) and other Marxist-Leninist inspired organizations. At first, these groups tried to contain the scope of the BPP to the
elimination of police violence within the Black community. When it became apparent to the radical community at large that the BPP had no intention of remaining isolated within the Black community and that they were instead committed to the much larger goal of leading a social revolution, the resentment of Marxist-Leninist organizations grew into open antagonism.

The history of Marxist-Leninist organizations’ relations to Black movements in the United States is a long and complicated one. Schematically, this history shows that, despite the efforts of Marxist-Leninist groups to tap into the Black Nationalist fervor of the 1930s, these organizations were in fact never able to form any lasting union with Black radical struggles. This difficulty seems to have arisen for two very particular reasons. The first was Moscow’s use of the CPUSA as a tool of Soviet foreign policy. In retrospect, it is clear that the CPUSA made a conscious effort to understand and promote Black struggles only when it was convenient for the Soviet Union to promote internal discord within the U.S. (i.e., in the 1920s and 1930s). Yet when the Soviets needed the United States to enter the Second World War, and thus social peace on the U.S. homefront became paramount, the CPUSA performed a strong about-face, and went as far as openly opposing various efforts for the establishment of Black civil rights. The

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second reason seems to have arisen due to the belief, prevalent within Marxist-Leninist organizations, that Black struggles comprised a distraction from the primary and most important contradiction, that of the white industrial working class with capital. Commenting on the Marxist-Leninist perspective toward the Black community, C.L.R. James, one of the most trenchant critics of the reactionary function of the CPUSA, summarized the CPUSA’s position:

the independent struggles of the Negro people have not got much more than an episodic value and, as a matter of fact, can constitute a great danger not only to the Negroes, themselves, but to the organized labor movement. The real leadership of the Negro struggle must rest in the hands of organized labor and of the Marxist party (James 1948).

This view of Black liberation movements was not particular to Marxist-influenced parties in the United States; its seeds could be found within the texts of Karl Marx himself. That is, in the pages of Capital, Marx described the existence of a series of social subjects outside of the industrial working class that he termed the "relative surplus population" (Marx 1990, 795-797). According to Capital, this population was composed of four categories: the floating (the excess of the industrial workforce itself), the latent (rural migrants to industrial centers), the stagnant (the permanently underemployed), and finally, the lumpen-proletariat (the permanently unemployed, the vagabonds, the criminals, the prostitutes) (Ibid.). Marx’s description of these classes was not, in itself, problematic for Black liberation movements; in fact, due to their marginalization and constant discrimination within the waged work force, many within the Black community could easily recognize their own conditions somewhere within
these categories. Rather, the problem that Marx’s writings posed for the Black movement was that, in addition to objectively describing these social groupings, he also assigned to them a subordinate position with respect to the industrial working class. As the *Communist Manifesto* states, "the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class," and the other classes that constituted the "relative surplus population," as described above, are assigned the role of "reactionary" forces which are even liable to act against the interest of the proletarian revolution (Marx 1948, 19 and Marx 1990, 796). It must be noted that Marx’s writings are rather inconsistent in this regard, and although Marx seemed to believe that capitalist development (within Western Europe) had assigned the industrial working class a vanguard position with regard to revolutionary potential, a belief that he made evident in the *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*, his later writings, especially those regarding the struggle of the Russian peasants, complicate the view of the industrial working class as the sole bearer of revolutionary potential, as well as the "inevitability" of capitalist development from which the proletariat arose.\(^\text{16}\) Regardless of these subtleties within Marx’s later thinking, his earlier writings were constantly turned against Black radical movements by Marxist-Leninist organizations, in order to assert that organizations such as the BPP had no choice but to wait for the white industrial worker to lead them in a struggle against capitalist exploitation.

Having repeatedly encountered such arguments, Newton and the BPP set out to counter their theoretical force. First, Newton insisted that regardless of their “objective” validity, the circulation of these positions was primarily intended to further the white chauvinist agenda of the industrial worker in the U.S. These workers, according to Newton, continued to show little sympathy, if not outright disdain, for the life struggle of the Black community in a highly racist U.S. society. Second, as is obvious from Marx’s descriptions, Newton would note that the great majority of the Black community did not belong to the industrial working class—nor would they ever, given its deeply racialized structure. Newton also questioned the propensity of the (white) industrial working class toward revolution. As Eldridge Cleaver argued, following Fanon’s analysis and extension of Lenin’s theses regarding proletarian “bourgeoisification” in the imperialist countries, the industrial working class was in fact a “pampered class” within the domestic colonial situation (Cleaver 1967, 171-182). Much as in the colonies, there existed in the U.S. an enormous contradiction between the employed and unemployed proletariat, a contradiction that effectively inoculated the industrial worker against revolution and led him instead to prefer the incremental or “developmentalist” changes provided for by the capitalist economy and the parliamentary apparatus (what Fanon would refer to as the “a priori” schedule of industrial working class organizations) (Fanon 1967, 113).
From Eldridge Cleaver’s perspective, the U.S. working class had become a sort of elite, the focus of which was job security and increased wages, to be achieved through the legislative actions of the Democratic Party. This strategy effectively silenced all alternatives on the political left. Given these contradictions within the U.S., the BPP was forced to stretch Marxist categories to their limit and, much like a long line of theorists within the “Black Radical Tradition,” to recognize that any analysis limited to the capitalist “organization of production” or the “industrial and manufacturing centers of capitalism” was insufficient to explain the persistence and consistency of non-waged insurgency (i.e., the actually existing structure and effectivity of Black revolt). To account for these realities, categories larger than those afforded by political economy (power, domination, and resistance) were necessary (Robinson 1997, 135 and Robinson 2001, 4). Thus, the BPP highlighted the fact that the industrial working class in the U.S. (what they referred to as the “right wing of the proletariat”), through the formation of the Tricontinental and Black revolutionary organizations, was now being directly challenged by “the lumpen” (the “left wing of the proletariat”) for the leadership of the proletariat as a whole (Cleaver 1967, 177-179).\(^\text{17}\) They came to believe, as Fanon had stated before them, that, “It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty-

\(^{17}\) It is thus a misunderstanding and a caricature to posit that the BPP intended to dispense with the category of the “proletariat” so as to then oppose it to some exterior social group called “the lumpen.” Rather, the question for the BPP (as well as for Fanon) was the contemporary location, composition, and competing social inclinations present within the proletariat. For an example of such a caricature of the BPP and Fanon see Nicholas Thoburn, *Marx, Deleuze and Politics*, (London: Routledge, 2003).
towns, at the core of the lumpen-proletariat that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead” (quoted in Jones 1998, 160). In other words, the BPP came to believe that a proletarian movement for the destruction of the capitalist system would not come from the industrial worker, but rather was most likely to arise from the lumpen

...all those who have no secure relationship or vested interest in the means of production and the institutions of capitalist society...Those who don’t even want a job, who hate to work and can’t relate to punching some pig’s time clock, who would rather punch a pig in the mouth and rob him than punch that same pig’s time clock (Cleaver: 1967, 177, emphasis mine).

In addition, from the perspective of this “disinterested” proletarian subject, Newton was able to build upon Cleaver’s analysis to understand that the formulations emanating from Marxist-Leninist organizations simply repeated the descriptions of the industrial working class provided by Marx in the 1860s and 1870s and by Lenin in 1917, as if this same class composition still existed, thus ignoring what he determined to be the constantly transformative nature of capitalism (Newton 2002, 167). In other words, Newton’s argument against the Communist Party USA and the Progressive Labor Party was not simply a moral one that attempted to defend the righteousness of the independence of Black struggle from white working class control, although this alone would certainly seem valid. Rather, Newton’s critique of these parties was a thoroughly materialist one, based on a "concrete analysis of concrete conditions"—that is, on a detailed description of the actual composition of labor in the capitalism of the time. Newton proposed that the changes unleashed within capitalist production during the previous decade had radically transformed the nature of the industrial working class,
and that with this change it was necessary for the industrial working class in the United States to reconsider its relation to the lumpen-proletariat. Newton described this new situation by explaining,

While the lumpen proletarians are the minority and the proletarians are the majority, technology is developing at such a rate that automation will progress to cybernation, and cybernation to technocracy...and if the ruling circle remains in power the proletarian working class will definitely be on the decline because they will be unemployables and therefore swell the rank of the lumpen, who are the present unemployables (Newton 2002, 166).

Newton’s key thesis here was that as technology was developed, capitalism’s need for waged workers would decrease (Newton 2002, 193). Consequently, capitalism would abandon the masses of the industrial working class and would instead develop a "technocracy," a small group of individuals that were so highly specialized that they could no longer objectively or subjectively be considered proletarians (Newton 2002, 170). In this new situation, the rest of the industrial working class that had been privileged under previous capitalist regimes would enter into what Marx had termed the "relative surplus population" due to the erosion of their social position vis-à-vis capital, and eventually become "unemployables," part of the "lumpen." In this fashion, the class that Marx and Engels had described as the only truly revolutionary class was slowly but surely being transformed out of existence, as was the fate of previous social

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18 It is highly likely that both Newton and Cleaver were influenced by James Bogg’s widely circulated book, *Racism and the Class Struggle*, in which Boggs details the onset of “cybernation” and the growth of permanent unemployment in the Black community in a language very close to that used by the BPP leadership. See James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle*, (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 22-25.
classes. For Newton, this did not signal the end of revolutionary struggle, but rather the increasing transference of revolutionary potential from the industrial working class to the "lumpen" and the "unemployables." That is, under the new capitalist regime, struggles such as that of the BPP became increasingly central in that they expressed the "consciousness" and "needs" of this newly growing majority of the general population. It was Newton’s hope that the traditional industrial working class would recognize this shift and "join forces with those people who are already unemployable" (Newton 2002, 193). According to Newton, these changes in the structure of capitalist production after the 1960s, and consequently of the class composition of capitalist society, had changed the world forever, and all movements for social change—especially Marxist-Leninists—had to come to grips with this change. The only way out was to move forward; or, in Newton’s words, "the wind is rising and the rivers flowing, times are getting hard and we can’t go home again. We can’t go back to our mother’s womb, nor can we go back to 1917" (Newton 2002, 168).

5.3.3 Nations No Longer Exist

The second proposition that emerged from Newton’s invigorated "concrete analysis of concrete contradictions" was that "nations no longer exist," and more remarkably, "nor...will they ever exist again" (Newton 2002, 187). Certainly, this proposition must have appeared as odd and contradictory coming from Newton, who
until then had labeled himself and the BPP as "revolutionary nationalists." But in order to evaluate Newton's logic and its consequences, we must first understand what he meant by "nation." According to Newton, a nation was defined primarily by "self-determination," that is, the ability of a people, or the dominant class of a people, to come together with the goal of establishing economic independence, cultural determination, and above all a sense of territorial integrity and safety, free from the dangers of attack and violation from outsiders (Newton 2002, 169 and 186).

In Newton’s definition of nationhood it is possible, and I will argue helpful, to identify the Western philosophical tradition of sovereignty which aimed at constructing an architecture of rule in order to create a protectorate of the ruled by the ruler, vis-à-vis a dangerous and menacing exterior. Within this theoretical tradition, the Hobbesian sovereign and the constant threat posed by the "poor, nasty, brutish" conditions of the state of nature loom large. One need only consider the rights conferred by Hobbes to the sovereign to conclude that his intention is the creation of a space for the control of the entry, exit, and circulation of wealth, ideas, and physical forces. That is, the creation of the Hobbesian sovereign is in fact the space of the "nation," the creation and maintenance by an "overwhelming force" of an "inside," an interior whose freedom is constantly asserted only through its negative relation to its outside—that which is "beyond the line" (Agamben 1998, 36). In short, the "nation" is the maintenance of a territorial space that makes possible a decision, a determination, on "the other, the
stranger; he or she with whom combat is possible” (Schmitt 1996, 27). It is, in sum, the
space for the practice of what Carl Schmitt aptly termed “the friend-enemy distinction”
(Schmitt 1996, 30).

Lest we underestimate the importance of this definition of nationhood for the
BPP and thus doubt the ascription of the Hobbesian tradition to Newton’s definition of
nationhood, let us once again consider the target of Newton’s thought. Remember that
Eldridge Cleaver had concluded in 1968 that Stokely Carmichael, in articulating the
demand for Black national sovereignty, had made the largest theoretical contribution to
Black Power since Marcus Garvey. This should help eliminate any confusion; when
Newton writes that “nations no longer exist,” we can conclude that he was stating that it
was no longer possible to ground the friend-enemy distinction in purely territorial
terms. This change was concomitant with the dramatic shift in the nature of capitalism
that he wanted to describe. In this regard, Newton invites us to consider the
consequences of the development of technology, specifically the development of the
mass media, the infinite reach of newly invented military technology, and the
consolidation of a worldwide network of mass transportation (Newton 2002, 170, 173,
and 186). These changes led him to conclude that it would simply no longer be possible
to think or actualize oneself as a separate entity, as a nation, within what had already
become “one world” (Newton 2002, 173).
Of course, Newton was well aware that peoples around the world conserved many elements of cultural difference, but unlike previous capitalist regimes in which these elements were considered qualitative differences of nature, to be suppressed and excluded, in the post 1960s world these differences would be treated as mere quantitative differences (differences of degree), to be integrated and managed under a unitary capitalist machine (Newton 2002, 172). It must also be emphasized that Newton’s argument is not a denial that people under contemporary capitalism would attempt to recreate the space for “nationhood,” but rather that any actualization of those attempts would no longer necessarily have any progressive relation to liberation, as had been implied since Lenin’s *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

Stemming from this analysis, Newton also concluded that colonialism had come to an end, despite the fact that victory remained as elusive as ever for the forces of anti-colonialism. Newton expressed this seeming contradiction in the following fashion:

> We believe that there are no more colonies or neocolonies. If a people is colonized, it must be possible for them to decolonize and become what they formerly were. But what happens when the raw materials are extracted and labor is exploited within a territory dispersed over the entire globe? ...Then the people are so integrated into the imperialist empire that it’s impossible to ‘decolonize,’ to return to the former conditions of existence (Newton 2002, 187).

The stakes for Newton were clear: with the creation of a truly integrated worldwide capitalism, it was no longer enough for anti-colonial forces to simply liberate a particular territory or "nation" through physical force (Newton 2002, 259). Newton then turned this analysis against those like Eldridge Cleaver and Stokely Carmichael who
insisted on posing the existence of the BPP in terms of a movement in search of some form of national territorial sovereignty:

What, then, do the words "black nationalism" concretely mean to the U.S. blacks? Not forming anything resembling a nation presently, shall U.S. blacks somehow seize (or possibly be "given") U.S. land and expect to claim sovereignty as a nation? For what does a national flag actually mean when Gulf Oil is in control? Or if Gulf Oil is expelled, what happens if the "nation" cannot supply for its own needs? (Newton 2002, 253).

We can see with this last formulation how far Newton’s “concrete analysis” had forced him to travel from the nationalist roots of the BPP. But was Newton’s conclusion that revolutionary action itself had become obsolete? On the contrary, he made explicit, it was not revolutionary action that had been superceded by capitalist integration, but only those forms of action that had insisted on conflating the construction of the nation with the revolution itself.

5.3.4 The Non-state Has Already Been Accomplished

Newton’s third proposition can be summed up rather simply: the ruling circle, because of its desire to have ever-increasing control of the productive capacities of the world’s population, had “laid siege upon all the communities of the world, dominating the institutions to such an extent that the people were not served by the institutions in their own land” (Newton 2002, 170 and 171). Thus, a purely reactionary “non-state” had come into being, under which capitalist rule was maintained. The “withering away of the state” had taken place, “but it [was] reactionary” (Newton 2002, 171). In effect, the
inner circle’s siege had initiated a stage in which “politics” as previously understood had become unrecognizable, due to the fact that “in reality, it [was now] a non-politics” (Newton 2002, 263). To more fully understand Newton’s third proposition, we might once again take a short detour through the theoretical traditions of sovereignty. In Newton’s second proposition he denies the capacity of “the nation” to withstand the over-coding effects of the worldwide capitalist economy; he also denies the possibility that an “inside,” created through command-obedience relationship, could actually serve to protect subjects from threats of that which is “beyond the line.” In his third proposition, we see Newton taking aim at the other side of the same coin of sovereignty—the state.

For much of the left, and especially the left that Huey Newton encountered, the definitive statement regarding the revolutionary position in the face of the state had been circulated by Lenin in State and Revolution. There, Lenin interprets Marx’s call to “smash the state” not as the necessity of immediately abolishing the state, but rather as the necessity of destroying the bourgeois character of state structures so as to pave the way for the “socialist reconstruction of the state” (Lenin 1992, 41). Lenin identifies the locus of this character in the division of powers within the bourgeois state, and he thus seeks to place the power of the revolutionary state in the hands of a single power that would act as the simple executor of the proletarian will (Ibid., 45). Lenin, while simultaneously attacking the separation of state powers, defends the necessity of
political representation against those who would propose “primitive democratism”—those who believed the whole of society should discharge state functions (Ibid., 40). Thus, Lenin concludes that in the revolutionary state "representative institutions remain, but parliamentarianism does not exist here as a special system" (Ibid., 43). We should, I believe, read Lenin’s attack on parliamentarianism as an attack on those who thought it possible to propose a purely “political” solution to the very real “economic” inequalities lived by the proletariat. As envisioned by Lenin, then, the “withering away of the state” would not be possible as the product of a “political” solution; rather, it could not take place until “economic” inequalities had been eliminated. The revolutionary state in Lenin’s system was thus charged with “safeguarding the common ownership of the means of production” and “suppressing classes” (Ibid., 80). The revolutionary state would, in sum, serve as the hinge for the transition between socialism and communism (Ibid., 75-91).

We could say, then, despite the fact that his thesis was radically different from a Rousseauian-like egalitarianism in that it did not accept “political” equality (i.e. social democracy) as a solution to actual material inequalities, Lenin did believe that the state could come to stand above those inequalities and could in fact overcome them, rather than be molded as their product. Consequently, it should be noted that, for Lenin, the premise of a separation between the political and economic spheres of society was both possible and desirable, despite his problematization of the social democratic thesis. How
else are we to explain that the State (as transition) is reintroduced to mediate between the proletariat and the possibility of communism? (Negri 1999, 297).

Thus, the Leninist model of “dictatorship,” whose overwhelming force would intervene in the economy from the “outside,” is as dependent on the social transcendence of the state as that of the social democrats. In both cases, a “vertical” resolution (state transcendence) is offered to address the internal contradictions present within capitalist society (Surin 1990, 45). But what can be the use of this tradition of state transcendence when, according to Newton, "the state" has already disappeared, when it has been “nullified in the latest capitalist onslaught”? (Newton 2002, 171). What can the revolutionary function of the state be when the space of political representation is now equally invested in the maintenance and reproduction of capital, and thus, when the state can only be the reflection and not the disruption of the balance of class forces? (Surin 1990, 44). Newton concludes that under these conditions, state solutions to the exploitation ensuing from the “siege” waged by the “worldwide” capitalist system—be they social democratic or socialist—amount to mere fantasy. He highlights this failure with regard to social democratic systems in saying that,

…despite the congressional and parliamentary enactment of progressive tax laws in all these countries, the spirit of the law has been thwarted everywhere. And nowhere has the significant redistribution of income promised by these democratically ratified statutes taken place (Newton 2002, 298).

About socialism he writes, even more pointedly,

We think it is very important to know that as things are in the world today, socialism in the United States will never exist. Why? It will not exist because it
cannot exist. It cannot at this time exist anyplace in the world. Socialism would require a socialist state, and if a state does not exist how could socialism exist? (Newton 2002, 171).

It is important to note that because all states around the world, according to Newton, were no longer intended to serve the needs of their peoples, an international or inter-state solution to the current structure of world-wide exploitation of the people would be as illusory as socialism or social democracy in any one state. According to Newton, these proposals merely amounted to a plea for the (re)distribution of resources from one part of the world-wide capitalist system to another, but would in no way disrupt the balance of power and resources between the capitalist system itself and the masses of people (Newton 2002, 172). Similarly, as a consequence of this proposition, Newton seems to abandon all hopes for mediation of the contradiction between “the ruling circle” and the people tout court. According to him, any such solution would be an attempt to “redistribute” a quantifiable amount of material to the people for their labor. Yet, within these redistributive schemes, the world-wide “technological” machine, created by the investments of all people, would remain intact and beyond the reach of those whose labor made its existence possible. The only true “reparation,” in Newton’s eyes, was now beyond measure, beyond mediation; it was for “the people of the world to have control—not a limited share of control for ‘X’ amount of time, but total control forever” (Ibid., 172). All schemas of state mediation as transition were but a sad illusion given the parameters of the contemporary capitalist system.
5.3.5 The World is One Community

In the above exposition of Newton’s first three propositions, I have posed Newton’s ideas in purely negative terms, that is, as a description of what had ceased to exist. This was done for the sake of clarity. But in fact, Newton’s propositions could equally be written starting with the fourth, from which all other propositions necessarily follow. Thus, Newton’s fourth proposition should, I believe, be considered his most central.

Since Newton’s investigations into the changing nature of capitalism had begun in earnest shortly after his release from prison in 1970, he had come to the conclusion that the new organization of global capital was far from being “business as usual.” Yet he was at first unable to make explicit the source of these dramatic changes and thus to put forward a coherent political program that could take them into account. According to those around him, this lack of clarity caused Newton a tremendous amount of anguish (Brown 1992, 277). Then, as Newton himself explains, after wrestling with these contradictory notions for months, he awoke one morning having resolved all of these contradictions in his sleep with a single spontaneous vision: intercommunalism (Erikson 1973, 133). As this conception came into focus, his anguish was put to rest.

Newton found plain evidence for this proposition in daily newspapers and periodicals, as he began to notice a trend in popular advertisements, such as the following, which appeared in Business Week:
It is our goal to be in every single country there is. We look at a world without any boundary lines. We don’t consider ourselves basically American. We are multi-national; and when we approach a government that doesn’t like the United States, we always say, “Who do you like, Britain, Germany? We carry a lot of flags.” Robert Stevenson, President of Ford Motor Company (Newton 2002, 261).

Similarly, when Newton turned on his television set, he saw a similar integration and management of racial and national differences. He looked with fresh eyes on the now famous Coca-Cola commercial that depicted Asian, African, and Latin American faces singing “I’d love to buy the world a Coke.” Newton soon came to the conclusion that these advertisements were not simply the result of a catchy campaign; rather, they were signs of a change underway at a much deeper level. These advertisements were actually made possible, according to Newton, because “the U.S. capitalists have taken a turn, a right turn. And I think it’s affecting the economic structure of the entire world. We’re in a brand-new ballgame” (Brown 1992, 279). In other words, these advertisements were the final pieces of a jigsaw puzzle which clarified for Newton once and for all that,

we can’t define the world anymore as a collection of sovereign states with independent economies...a new economic arrangement has taken hold, one that exists irrespective of language, custom, ideology, flags, and most of all territory (Brown 1992, 278).

Newton goes on to explain that the rise of capitalism in the last centuries had created wealth based on industrial profit that in effect outstripped the power of feudal society and its agricultural economy (Ibid., 278). Yet, this shift was only quantitative due to the fact that in both cases (feudalism and industrial capitalism), the economy was co-
equivalent with the nation. The latest capitalist transformation, in contrast, totally de-linked the economy from the nation and for the first time introduced a truly global economic structure and thus a qualitative leap beyond national capital (\textit{Ibid.}, 278). According to Newton, this global economic structure differed from industrial capitalism in the following way: whereas industrial capitalism and its foreign correlate, national imperialism, were based on the theft of labor and raw materials from “the darker nations” for the distribution and consumption of goods within domestic markets, the new global situation was premised on the fact that national markets had been saturated and technological innovation now allowed for the creation of synthetics minimizing the need for both raw material and industrial labor (Newton 2002, 256 and Brown 1992, 279).

As national markets had reached their limits, capitalism, with its new technological capacity, was faced with the unprecedented opportunity of creating new markets throughout the world. In Newton’s words, everyone around the world, whether they were aware of it or not, “was going to buy a coke” (Brown 1992, 279). In this quest to create an integrated community of producers and consumers, the ruling circle of the United States had transformed the U.S. from an imperialist nation to the first true “empire—reactionary intercommunalism” (Newton 2002, 187). That is, whereas previous “primitive” empires had controlled a particular area of the earth for the benefit of a “mother country,” the U.S. ruling circle now controlled the entirety of the planet,
“all the world’s lands and peoples,” for its own benefit (Ibid., 169, and 187). Reactionary intercommunalism’s true novelty lay in the fact that the integration of all the world’s communities had already taken place. Thus, Newton would make one of his most astounding claims:

…no one is outside the system. The world is so close now, because of technology, that we are a series of dispersed communities, but we’re all under siege by the one Empire-state authority, the reactionary inner circle of the United States (Ibid., 18).

In fact, this integration had been so complete that according to Newton our situation from that point on would be characterized by the fact that neither “God nor reason [could] mediate from the outside” (Ibid., 324). In order to identify the contours of this empire, Newton would consistently point out how interventions by the ruling circle of the United States taking place around the world had ceased to be called “wars” and were now consistently termed “police actions”—the same phrase that had recently been used to describe the repression of African-Americans during the late 1960s (Brown 1992, 280). What else could explain this peculiar coincidence except that, as Newton would conclude, “the police are everywhere and they all wear the same uniform and use the same tools, and have the same purpose: the protection of the ruling circle” (Newton 2002, 173). In other words, there existed only differences in degree and not in kind between what happened to a community within the United States and communities around the world (Newton 2002, 170 and Brown 1992, 280). In effect, the world had now been recoded and the differences of note for revolutionary thought were no longer
national differences among a variety of sovereigns, but rather differences within a single
global sovereign. In Newton’s eyes, the lines in the struggle for liberation had been
redrawn so as to be almost unrecognizable. But having intuited the notion of
intercommunalism, Newton was prepared to propose a new revolutionary politics that
would emerge from within empire to challenge its exploitative nature. Just as Newton
had come to understand the nature and novelty of empire as reactionary
intercommunalism, he also understood that there existed an unprecedented potential to
overturn this exploitative project on the very grounds it had laid: that is, the
unprecedented possibility of a truly global revolution. According to Elaine Brown,
Newton explained that “there’s only one machinery to seize, the toppling of which
makes way for an egalitarian redistribution of wealth of the whole world—true
communism” (Brown 1992, 281). Thus,

The people of the world...must seize power from the small ruling circle and
expropriate the expropriators, pull them down from their pinnacle and make them
equals, and distribute the fruits of our labor that have been denied us in some
equitable way. We know that the machinery to accomplish these tasks exists and
we want to access it (Newton 2002, 188).

This project was possible now more than ever, thanks to the fact that,

There are only two classes: the billions of us and the few of them. Whatever the
differences in the levels of oppression, from the industrial and technological
workers to the impoverished Third World millions, the majority of the world’s
people have become one class of dominated people (Brown 1992, 281).

Despite having strayed far from the BPP’s previous formulations on anti-colonial
struggle and politics, Newton was ready to announce the necessity for a politics that
understood the realities of a post 1960s world. He would consequently disseminate what is perhaps the least circulated and most misunderstood statement within the Black Liberation Movement, which is worth quoting at length:

In 1966 we called our Party a Black Nationalist Party. We called ourselves Black Nationalists because we thought that nationhood was the answer. Shortly after we decided that what was really needed was revolutionary nationalism, that is, nationalism plus socialism. After analyzing conditions a little more, we found that it was impractical and even contradictory. Therefore, we went to a higher level of consciousness. We saw that in order to be free we had to crush the ruling circle and therefore we had to unite with the peoples of the world. So we called ourselves internationalists. We sought solidarity with the peoples of the world. But what happened? We found that because everything is in a constant state of transformation, because of the development of technology, because of the development of the mass-media, because of the fire power of the imperialist, and because of the fact that the United States is no longer a nation but an empire, nations could not exist, for they did not have the criteria for nationhood. Their self-determination, economic determination, and cultural determination has been transformed by the imperialist ruling circle. They were no longer nations. We found that in order to be internationalists we had to be also nationalists, or at least acknowledge nationhood. Internationalism, if I understand the word means the interrelationship among a group of nations, but since no nations exists, and since in fact the United States is an empire, it is impossible for us to be internationalists. These transformations and phenomena require us to call ourselves, “intercommunalists” because nations have been transformed into communities of the world. The Black Panther Party now disclaims internationalism and supports intercommunalism (Newton 2002, 170).

5.4 Surviving Empire

5.4.1 Contradiction and Cultural Revolution

Toward the end of his “intercommunalist” period, Huey Newton began to face further legal troubles. Accused of the murder of Kathleen Smith in 1974, Newton was forced to seek exile in Cuba where he would spend the next three years of his life.
Meanwhile, back in the U.S., the Party, which by all accounts Newton had treated as his personal empire, began a long but precipitous decline that would end with its total dissolution in the first days of the 1980s. Yet, as early as Newton’s departure for Cuba, it was already apparent that the mood had changed dramatically in the U.S. The ruthless physical repression meted out on the BPP and other radical organizations by the F.B.I., as well as the changes within society that Newton had so presciently described, had left many within the Black Liberation Movement confused and unsure of what was it was that they were fighting for. As Gil Scot-Heron famously described, it was evident that the situation had changed for the worse and the social energy that had circulated for the previous 15 years had dissipated; it was once again “Winter In America.” Due to the downfall of the BPP, constant legal and physical harassment, and a vicious drug addiction that would eventually cost him his life, Huey Newton was never able to elaborate on his intercommunalist writings so as to systematically address the question of political organization and action in the age of empire. Despite this, Newton did leave us with a number of suggestive proposals in this regard.

Newton continued to defend the original BPP “self-defense” strategy and he would continue to declare, “the gun by all revolutionary principles is a tool to be used in our strategy…” (Newton 2002, 204). Yet, thanks to the influence of Mao, Newton was able to reduce the previously all-encompassing role of violence to the resolution of particular contradictions that were from then on to be carefully and constantly
(re)analyzed, so as to assure that the violent resolution of those contradictions would be in accord with the intended revolutionary ends (Ibid., 202). In sum, Newton directed three main criticisms to those, such as Eldridge Cleaver, in the Black Liberation Movement who could not distinguish between violence and revolution. First, their “Fanonian” dialectic presented itself as an infinitely violent antagonism, and for that very reason refused strategic analysis. Second, they confused violence with the revolution itself (in that it is not just a means but becomes indistinguishable from ends). Third, Cleaver’s confusion regarding violence did not allow him to see that other forms of power could be developed in order to resolve contradictions without physical confrontation.

It is this last point that I believe threw Newton back into Mao’s texts, digging for answers to a simple question that must have been posed to him constantly (and which still haunts us today): if violence was not the means with which to resolve the contradictions present within U.S. society, what were the means which the BPP intended to use in order to achieve revolution? That is, if the BPP was not going to accept the inevitability of a heightening violence or the passivity of economism, what was their intended vehicle for revolutionary change?

In his rejection of Cleaver’s position, Newton had been forced to rethink the significance of Mao and his famous statement, “Political power grows from the barrel of a gun” (Mao 1990, 61). Newton, having gone back to Mao’s texts, felt that this dictum
had been taken out of context and that Mao’s emphasis on the term “grows” meant that in fact there were other means beyond the gun with which to assert political power; otherwise, according to Newton, Mao would have simply stated, “political power is the barrel of a gun” (Newton 2002, 204 *emphasis mine*). In “On Contradiction,” Mao had not only emphasized the uneven development of contradictions that, as illustrated above, had allowed Newton to present a dialectical critique of Cleaver’s anti-colonial metaphysics, it also contained a short paragraph that would lead Newton beyond the reduction of revolutionary politics to a choice between economism or naked violence:

For instance, in the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, the productive forces are the principal aspect; in the contradiction between theory and practice, practice is the principal aspect; in the contradiction between the economic base and the superstructure, the economic base is the principal aspect; and there is no change in the respective positions. This is the mechanistic materialist conception, not the dialectical materialist conception. True, the productive forces, practice and the economic base generally play the principal and decisive role; whoever denies this is not a materialist. But it must also be admitted that in certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production, theory and superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role. When it is impossible for the productive forces to develop without a change in the relations of production, then the change in the relations of production plays the principal and decisive role. The creation and advocacy of revolutionary theory plays the principal and decisive role in those times of which Lenin said, “Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement…” When the superstructure (politics, culture, etc.) obstructs the development of the economic base, political and cultural changes become principal and decisive (Mao 1990, 73).

Taking up Mao’s opening for the possibility of action within culture, Newton set out to correct the BPP’s over-reliance on the organization of violence as the only method for revolutionary change by planting the seeds for a “cultural revolution” in the United States. From Newton’s use of Mao we can conclude that he had come to discover the
revolutionary potential of the superstructure (i.e. theory, politics, culture) at a moment when both the “objective” conditions of the economic base and the subjectivist immediacy of naked violence had proven incapable of producing revolutionary change. Therefore, Newton insisted that the BPP return to the institutions present in the larger Black community that it had previously condemned as accomplices of the capitalist system: the Black Church, Black middle-class businesses, and Black colleges—all of which Newton now saw as centers for the contestation of cultural production and thus as possible battlefields in the struggle for revolutionary change.19

5.4.2 The Primacy of Affirmation

Beyond the insights of “cultural revolution” that would have been common among Maoists of the era, Newton insisted that the rhetoric of violence that had pervaded much of the 1960s was the consequence of a vision that was unable to place any belief in the power of transformation and was thus forced to equate all revolutionary action with destruction (Newton 1973, 331). For Newton, in contrast, whatever weapon one had at one’s disposal was to be used, as George Jackson had

19 This turn toward “cultural revolution” and away from armed violence placed Huey Newton among a number of black militants who had felt from the very beginning of the Black Liberation Movement that the adoption of the guerrilla strategy of the Tricontinental movements was a dead end given the U.S. context. Perhaps the first and most vocal opponent of such a strategy who very early on insisted that “cultural revolution” would be an alternative space from which the Black Liberation Movement could leverage change in the U.S., was Harold Cruse; see generally The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, (NY: New York Review of Books, 1967).
insisted (with reference to the martial arts), by taking the “dragon position”: simultaneously kicking both backwards and forwards so as to destroy the old, while, in the very same motion, affirming that which is yet to arrive (Ibid., 332). Consequently, Newton firmly believed that true remediation for past injustices belonged only to those who had the courage to create the future (Ibid., 332). In other words, it was simply not enough to hate, to despair, to fear, or even to destroy; the revolutionary was obligated to affirm, to “give everything to the present” out of an “intense love of the earth” (Ibid., 331). Thus, Newton noted that revolution does not hinge on particular ends, but should instead be understood “as a process,” a journey subtended by the transformative potential offered by the collective affections of fellow travelers encountered along the way. Revolution, according to Newton, is a suicide, a death of self, and yet always an opening, a becoming, that had little reference to the violent negation of one’s adversaries. Those who could not see this would forever be trapped under the power of “reactionary suicide” and ran the risk of endangering and isolating the movement from its supporters through self-righteous action and terrorist drift. As Newton summarizes, the difference between reactionary and revolutionary suicide

...lies in hope and desire. By hoping and desiring, the revolutionary suicide chooses life; he is, in the words of Nietzsche, “an arrow longing for another shore.” Both suicides despise tyranny, but the revolutionary is both a great despiser and a great adorer... The reactionary suicide must learn, as his brother the revolutionary has learned, that the desert is not a circle. It is a spiral. When we have passed through the desert, nothing will be the same (Ibid., 332).
5.4.3 Multitude and the Death of Sovereignty

Newton states, “‘I am we.’ This is revolutionary suicide: I, we, all of us are the one and the multitude” (*Ibid.*, 332). But what might such a statement have to tell us about the relation of sovereignty to affirmation? A final return to Hobbes, “the father of modern sovereignty,” might help us answer this question.

As I delineate in Chapter One, Hobbes believed that before man enters into society he resides in the “state of nature,” where men remain incapable of any concerted action. This disaggregated subject of the state of nature, the “multitude,” is incapable of keeping promises or acquiring rights except as individuals (Hobbes 1998, 76), and the way out of the “state of nature” is for these individuals to covenant amongst themselves to cede the right of governing to an authority and authorize the actions of that authority over them (Hobbes 1994, 109). This contract allows the sovereign to impose upon the multitude a common measure or law applicable to all (Hobbes 1998, 79) whereby the multitude “become(s) one person” (Hobbes 1998, 77) and the sovereign rules the multitude in order to provide it with a single will (Hobbes 1998, 89).

From within this “state of nature” narrative, I would like to highlight the following characteristics of Hobbes’s vision. First, the primary unit of analysis for Hobbes consists of the sovereign subject—the individual (the “I” of the “I authorize”), a unitary whole that rules over the parts of his body as the sovereign rules over his subjects. Second, according to Hobbes, humans can associate with other humans only to
the extent that they are subjugated; that is, all covenants of union must necessarily be
covenants of subjection and thus there can be no association of the multitude qua
multitude (of difference qua difference) (Hobbes 1998, 77). For there to be rule in the
schema of sovereignty, the one must transcend, it must stand above, the multitude.
Finally, order, or association, is possible only when the differences of the multitude give
way to the imposition of a single common measure of these very differences—the
absolute necessity of handling difference only through the assertion of a primary
similarity. This is a necessity which arises from the dualistic nature of the transcendent
rule of sovereignty; that is, the primary opposition of the one and the multitude
immediately gives rise to the polarities of ruler and ruled.

But what might Newton mean, then, when he claims, “we are all the one and the
multitude?” If we examine carefully this idea, we can see that Newton has carefully
dismantled the fundamental presuppositions upon which sovereignty rests. First, as the
formulation “I am we” suggests, Newton was well aware that the construction of
modern sovereignty had as its correlate the diminution of our “selves” to “individuals,”
to an interior ego that finds itself in immediate conflict with the ego and interests of
others. Newton sidesteps this imposition of the sovereign subject, and clarifies “It is not
that our ego is too large, the problem is that our ego is too small” (Newton 1975, 19). We
can extrapolate from Newton’s comments that the individual/sovereign subject is then
the product of a series of restraints placed upon a latent and potential collective
subjectivity by an unjust order. In other words, Newton is suggesting that a primary, trans-individual subjectivity has been effectively negated in Western society, a subjectivity that nonetheless could not be erased or reduced to the “interests” and “ego” of the modern individual… “I am we.”

The disaggregation of the interior sovereign subject necessarily entails the destruction of sovereign rule. That is, in contrast to modern sovereignty and its opposability of the one and the multitude, Newton begins with the presupposition that these two figures exist simultaneously as the foundation of human relations. As such, social organization need not wait for the transcendence of the one, for the world “from above” to give it commands, in order to achieve concerted action. Rather, each social element carries within itself both the capacity to generate life and to organize itself. Newton has thus gone beyond the traditional predicative relationship of the one and the multitude necessary for the modern formulation of “sovereignty” to a consideration of both the one and the multitude as substantives. That is, neither one nor multitude exist as such; everything that exists is multiplicity; all one’s contain a multitude and all multitudes already contain the capacity for organization. 20 Inasmuch as there is no outside to being, there is no room for the one to transcend the multitude and it must

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20 This reading of Newton’s idea of “multitude” was guided by the work of Gilles Deleuze, whose lecture “Dualism, Monism, Multiplicity” allowed me to more fully understand the unique insights of Newton’s thought. See (http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=167&groupe=Anti%20Oedipe%20et%20Mille%20Plateaux&langue=2). Last visited May 5, 2009.
accordingly remain a component within it. As such, multiplicities must be considered inexhaustible in their process of self-production.

To clarify the link that Newton established between multiplicity and the death of the sovereign, and its direct political consequence, let us consider his thoughts on Freudian psychoanalysis, whose “law of the father” we might place here as analogous to the transcendence of the one in the sovereign tradition. Consider the following exchange:

Newton: Well, the Oedipus myth…is used in psychoanalysis as a symbol. The son competes for the mother’s love and feels hostility toward the father because he keeps him from the mother. Now I conclude that it is not always the father per se, but the controller in the house. The Oedipus complex is not so much a sexual drive as a drive to eliminate the controller or take control away from the controller. As a matter of fact, that is something we have to make quite clear: eliminating the controller and assuming the place of the controller are two different things.

Eric Erikson: […] You love your father and you want to become like him. So it is built into a society that you end up being more or less like your father, and represent the same to your children. Now I gather you are saying something happens in a revolution to change that repetitive pattern, but I don’t quite see…

Newton: That is exactly what I wanted to take note of. There’s a difference between eliminating the controller and assuming control: it is possible to get rid of the controller without assuming all of his negative characteristics (Erikson 1973, 116 and 140).

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21 As Susan Ludemann writes, both the Hobbesian “social contract” and Freudian “primal repression” function under the sign of a “ban,” in Giorgio Agamben’s terms, in which “each system constitutes itself by drawing a border against its surroundings.” In this sense, Freud’s account of the Oedipus complex functions as an under-theorized suture of sorts between this originary ban (primary repression) and a given social structure (secondary repression), between an ontological and a socio-historic accounting. See Susanne Ludemann, Figures of Foundation in Thomas Hobbes and Sigmund Freud, (http://www.uni-konstanz.de/kulturtheorie/LudemannFigures.pdf). Last visited May 5, 2009.
In other words, for Newton, affirmation and the permanent revolution that it entailed could not be satisfied with “killing the father”—that is, with destroying one Oedipal structure of control only to have another take its place. Rather, he maintains that through new forms of social organization drawing on the existence and potential of multiplicity, revolution can kill off the Oedipus function itself; it is possible to organize a society where the primary polarity of those who rule and those who are ruled comes to an end. As Newton envisioned, this would be a society where “leadership will become a coordinated effort among people and maybe even titles and statuses will no longer be necessary.” Or, as Newton alternatively stated, it might constitute a belonging no longer premised on that which it excludes (Erikson 1973, 139 and 141).

Yet, by raising the affirmation of multiplicity over and above the primary dualisms of the sovereign tradition, had Newton not lost all criteria necessary to make political distinctions? That is, more directly to the point, would the ensuing politics of a “belonging no longer premised on exclusion” not consist of a kind of relativism, wherein every person or action was of equal worth compared to any other? If not, how would the revolutionary identify the criteria necessary to recognize her foe? The answer may lie in the very same pages of Nietzsche’s work that inspired Newton’s turn toward affirmation. Nietzsche explains that the “friend” is the one who intervenes between “I” and “me” to prevent the fall into the abyss of self-identity (the sovereign subject implicit in the Hobbesian contract) (Widder 2002, 131), whereas the foe, possibly contained in the
very same person, is he who would have us return to our selves as sovereign subjects and, thus, to subjects of the sovereign. In short, far from abandoning any ground for political action, Newton has pointed us beyond the reduction of politics to extensive exclusions and toward intensively selective affirmations.

**5.4.4 Black Power, or the Power of Blackness?**

In February of 1968, the BPP attempted a merger of sorts with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which Stokely Carmichael had personally led in previous years. As part of this attempt, Carmichael was named Prime Minister of the BPP, and Carmichael’s SNCC colleagues H. Rap Brown and James Forman were integrated into the BPP as Minister of Justice and Foreign Minister, respectively (Cleaver 1967, 132). Yet, this coalition soured almost as fast as it had formed, and Carmichael resigned from his post less than a year later. Once Carmichael’s resignation had become official, both Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton unleashed a full out assault on Carmichael’s notion of Black Power. As they both pointed out, with the inclusion of James Farmer into his administration, even Richard Nixon had openly proclaimed himself in favor of “Black Power” and thus, according to Cleaver, “Black power ha[d] become the grease to ease the black bourgeoisie into the power structure”(*Ibid.*, 210). These contradictions would lead Newton to repeat, “the Black Panther Party does not subscribe to ‘Black Power’ as such” (Newton 1972, 192). For Newton, Carmichael’s
definition of Black Power amounted to little more than a cultural garb through which “Black capitalism” could take cover within the Black community, creating a situation of “Black oppressing Black” (Ibid.).

Eldridge Cleaver attempted to counter the assimilationist force of “Black Power” and its representatives in the Black bourgeoisie by emphasizing the irresolvable “colonial” antagonism, as I have highlighted above, that would lead him to embrace the organization and deployment of an increasing violence as a lever for change. Having adopted the necessity of affirmation and the multitude as an anecdote to sovereign domination, Newton was able to oppose Black Power on rather different grounds. In Newton’s eyes, Carmichael had mistakenly left the concept of “power” uninterrogated. For Carmichael, “Blackness” had implied a becoming, as is evidenced in statements such as, “every negro is a potential black man” (Carmichael 2007, 114). Yet this becoming had been conjoined with a search for primary origins (i.e. “African culture”), which, according to Newton, had blinded Carmichael to the deadly antagonisms present within the Black community. As Newton attempted to point out, leaders such as Zaire’s Mobutu Sese Seko and Haiti’s Papa Doc Duvalier had both strongly promoted African culture and opposed anything extraneous. Yet, each had done so with the purpose of replacing foreign rule with their own rule while leaving the existing structure of power intact (Foner 1970, 50). As Julius Lester had already noted, “Black Power got stuck on Black and didn’t move onto power” (Lester 1969, 105). Thus, although Newton
considered the recovery of the African cultural matrix an absolute necessity for Black self-assertion in the U.S., he was equally convinced that it was an insufficient basis for the social revolution that he and the BPP had envisioned. Like “white power,” it was unable to free itself from the concept of sovereignty, or what he alternatively called “power over” (Foner 1970, 61). That is, both were entrapped in the oxymoron of establishing “self-determination” from within the constraints of sovereignty and its primary duality between rulers and ruled.

In contrast, Newton believed that the journey of becoming Black, that the journey Black people in the United States had undertaken, showed that Black Power could only exist as the possibility and necessity of “wiping out the controller” (ibid.). In distinction to Carmichael and the sovereign tradition as a whole, Newton believed that the actual force of the Black revolt lay in its tendency toward the elimination of “power over.” This was a tendency that Newton had identified as the latent “truth” of the Black community as a whole:

The street brothers were important to me, and I could not turn away from the life shared with them. There was in them an intransigent hostility toward all those sources of authority that had such a dehumanizing effect on the community. In the school “system” was the teacher, but on the block the system was everything that was not a positive part of the community. My comrades on the block continued to resist that authority … These brothers had the sense of harmony and community that I needed… (Newton quoted in Jones 1998, 161).

In order to live up to this truth, Newton attempted to function outside of the sovereign tradition and instead began to formulate a non-repressive conception of power which he frequently summarized in stating, “power is the ability to define
phenomena and make that phenomena act in a desired fashion” (a notion that extended Carmichael’s earlier theorizations of Black re-definition) (Ibid.). For Newton, the tremendous effectivity of this kind of power was displayed by the Black movement within the realm of “the power of the word” because, according to him, “words are another way of defining phenomena, and the definition of any phenomena is the first step to controlling it or being controlled by it” (Newton 1973, 164). As Newton would point out, thanks to the BPP, the word “pig” brought anger and fear into every policeman who heard it, and the phrase “power to the people” had been disseminated throughout Black communities across the country, encouraging them to go on the offensive in the larger balance of social forces (Newton 1973, 164). In fact, Newton noted that because the Black movement had been able to exercise this power of definition, authority in general was decreasingly referred to as “The Man” and increasingly also thought of as “the pigs.” This was a clear sign for Newton that the Black community had felt the power of its own humanity, and was now lamenting the authorities’ incapacity to live up to theirs (Foner 1970, 61). Lastly, Newton noted that the BPP had made “Black” a powerful word, a word that had become a source of pride and that allowed the Black community to take joy in the “biological” characteristics that had previously been markers of shame—e.g., black skin, natural hairstyles, beards and whiskers (Newton 1973, 164). In sum, we might recall the words of Jean Genet, who noted that after the Black Panther Party, the entire American dictionary would have to change so as
to take note that, “People=Noble and Black=Beautiful” (Genet 1992, 215). Likewise, in the words of Michel Foucault, we could say that Blackness for Newton was the paradigmatic example of the struggle for the production of an “ethos,” “a way of being and behavior. It was a way of being for the subject, along with a certain way of acting, a way visible to others. A person’s ethos [is] evident in his clothing, appearance, gait, in the calm with which he responded to every event” (Foucault 1997, 286). In short, Black Power’s force never did derive from the demand for inclusion within forms of sovereign power, but was rather more closely related to the efforts toward a “transvaluation of values” made possible by the creation of Blackness as a new subjectivity (Gayle 1970, 78 and Jones 1998, 89).

Although the nation-state, the state, and therefore nationalism had come into question, and although the affirmation of a non-sovereign conception of power through the notion of multitude would be central to the possibility of change in the age of empire, this in no way led Newton away from the specificity of Black life or toward the abstracted notion of “universal belonging” common to forms of cosmopolitanism that Fanon liked to refer to as “facile internationalism” (Fanon 2004, 83). To the contrary, the conditions of empire led Newton even deeper into the power of Blackness. That is, for Newton, a multitudinous sensibility had been sown deep within the pain of those ways of living that had never been assimilable to any project for sovereignty, whether in the First, Second, or Third World. If empire was the time when, as Newton explained, “we
[could] not go home again,” it was now more necessary than ever to learn from those who had never had a home. Newton states,

We [Black people in America] have never controlled a land that was ours. We have never controlled our economy. We know of one culture, that as slaves. We know of one language, that of the slavemaster. Our sovereignty was not violated, for we United States Blacks were never a sovereign nation. It is true that we were snatched from African shores. The present fact is that we cannot ask our grandparents to teach us some “native” tongue, or dance or point to our “homeland” on a map. Certainly we are not citizens of the United States. Our hopes for freedom lie in the future, a future which may hold a positive elimination of national boundaries and ties; a future of the world, where a human world society may be so structured as to benefit all the earth’s people (not peoples) (Newton 1972, 209).  

In sum, for Newton, Black people in America were at the edge of historical change because they (unlike the First, Second, and Third World) were subjects with no national project to redeem, literally no home, and who had thus been forced to place

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22 This extreme singularity of the Black subject’s relation to “homelessness” has been taken up more recently by Abdul Janmohamed, who in words closely resembling those of Newton states, “For me, personally, the move from postcolonial to minority discourse studies, particularly as situated in the United States and African American literature, is based on my view that the nature of either colonial and/or racial oppression—and I think quite often they overlap in very significant ways—is most dramatically discernible in the African American context than in the postcolonial or colonial context. And I’ve alluded to the reasons for this before: whatever the nature of colonial oppression, colonialism was never able to immediately or completely eradicate indigenous cultures in such a way that a given colonized subject could not have recourse to his/her indigenous culture in some empowering way. The oppression of the colonized subject, then, is in my opinion never quite as drastic as the oppression and the formation of the African American subject—given slavery and Jim Crow culture, given the systematic stripping away of the bulk of the African cultures the slaves brought with them. My point is that there is no better record of the systematic oppression of a subject group, and also of the systematic resistance mounted by that subject group, than the evidence we have available in African American literature and culture. If one wants to study the now famous question that Spivak posed—“Can the Subaltern Speak?”—we have in African American culture, in individuals like Douglass and Jacobs, Hurston and Wright, subalterns who became intellectuals.” In Jouvert: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies, (v.1, Issue 2, 1997). See also, Abdul Janmohamed, “Worldliness-Without-World, Homelessness-As-Home: Toward of Definition of the Specular Border Intellectual” in Edward Said: A Critical Reader, ed. Michael Sprinker, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992).
their energies in the construction of “a new earth, a new society, and a new world” (Newton 1972, 195).

5.4.5 Territory and Community

If national liberation was no longer a sufficient event for revolution, for Newton this did not mean that struggles over territory were no longer a necessity. Rather, he attempted to fold these struggles into a project that would move beyond a purely territorial imperative. As Newton had come to believe, the shift from imperialism to empire had relocated the locus of struggle from the Third World to the metropolitan centers of the world (Newton 1972, 179). Given this tendency, and although Newton continued to support national liberation movements in the Third World as attempts to establish temporarily liberated territories, he was inclined to see Black struggles in the inner-city United States as models for the future development of revolutionary intercommunalism—that is, as experiments toward a post-empire society. Much like James Boggs had expounded in his seminal The City is the Black Man’s Land, and as Amiri Baraka did, from a rather different perspective, in Malcolm X and the Coming of the Black Nation, Newton believed that the Black movement had been forced to develop new strategies and tactics in the struggle over the control of the territory which it inhabited, i.e., the metropolitan areas of the United States. This gave the movement a privileged position to understand the nature and possibilities of struggle in empire. In order to act
upon this insight, shortly after Newton was released from prison he ordered the entire BPP apparatus to move its operations to Oakland, where they would set up what George Jackson referred to as “a center-city commune” with the goal of making Oakland the first “liberated territory” in the United States (Hilliard 2007, 60). Yet, the very purpose of this “territory” was the spatialization of the production of “Blackness,” that is, the production of those social relations that would make possible the “elimination of the controller.” As Boggs had foreseen, this would imply the implementation of a program in which the community itself would have to secure control not only of the repressive State structures, but over all the mechanisms for the establishment of “human relations between man and man” (e.g., political organization, social services, and education) (Boggs 1970, 43).

Thus, Newton’s vision of the inner city as a central battlefield in the struggle against empire allowed him to rediscover and reinterpret the very foundation of the BPP, most specifically the founding document of the “Ten Point Program.” In fulfillment of this document, the BPP launched several community projects that coalesced into an alternative community infrastructure, which included: a free breakfast program that fed tens of thousand of children across the U.S.; the establishment of the Intercommunal News Service that distributed over 125,000 thousand copies of the Black

Panther each week; police brutality watches across the country; a food collection and distribution program; a prisoners’ aide and accompaniment project; a sickle cell anemia initiative; free community health clinics; a factory for the production of children’s shoes; and, most important to Newton himself, an Intercommunal Youth Institute that taught young people physics, mathematics, and, of course, dialectics (Newton 2002, 196). If the State had been nullified as a location for the implementation of reform and revolution, Newton came to believe that the community programs, or “survival programs,” as he termed them, were not simply a means to some other end. Rather, they had to take on the special significance of being political instruments beyond simple opposition, serving as the source and “model for alternative institutions,” the very seeds for what he called “a new America” (Newton 2002, 15). In other words, Newton’s center-city commune would have to function, as James Baldwin described, as “the creation and protection of a nuclei which will bring into existence a new people” (Baldwin 1972, 166).

5.4.6 Not a Conclusion

Retrospectively, we can identify the legacy of Huey Newton’s thought not as some strange aberration of 1960s radicalism, but rather as a hinge between that era and

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our own. That is, we can detect in Newton’s theorization the tendencies within contemporary struggles against empire. His work is valuable not only in outlining the shift from imperialism to empire, but also in explaining the characteristics of the subjectivities which currently point beyond that formation. That is, we can see that the very elements that Newton describes as requirements for the formation of “revolutionary intercommunalism” (the acknowledgement of a new transnational battlefield called empire; the primacy of affirmation; the birth and centrality of a multitudinous subjectivity deeply tied to “Blackness” and the “denationalized” and “disinterested” population; and the necessity for the spatialization of struggles tied to the creation of community-controlled non-state institutions) have today reappeared with a vengeance across the “movement of movements.” They are identifiable in contexts as distant and disparate as the Abahlali baseMjondolo shackdwellers movement in Durban, South Africa, the Zapatistas of Southern Mexico, and the indigenous peoples of El Alto, Bolivia. We might say that Newton’s work, along with that of Fanon, lays the very basis for us to recognize that even in the age of empire “the wretched are still with us,” and that, far from exhausted, their movements still carry within them a powerful “truth,” a truth beyond sovereignty and its contemporary manifestation, empire.
6. Conclusion: Blackness and Biopolitics

6.1 Introduction: Biopolitics, Race, and Resistance

Today the process of “inclusive exclusion” that has been dominant since the construction of sovereignty in the Western legal tradition is perhaps best captured in the complex interaction of “biopolitical” global capitalism with the circulation and consumption of the “ethnic” and “racial.” As Rey Chow proposes, despite the traditional differences between the concepts of race and ethnicity, today the concept of ethnicity holds two distinct analytical advantages. First, ethnicity moves us away from the biologism usually associated with race and is thus more adequate to the situation of “differential racism” where the culturalist aspects of difference are highlighted and exploited. Second, ethnicity has the additional advantage of pointing to exactly the situation of “inclusive exclusion” in which this concept is simultaneously conceptualized as a universal and concomitantly assigned as a marker of hierarchical order. That is, ethnicity today signifies both “peoplehood” in general as an attribute of all of humanity while also marking the existence and subordinate relationship of an “outside” (Chow 2002, 28).

Yet, as Chow insists, it would be wrong to take the existence of this “outside” literally as referring to a migrant or diasporic cultures that have moved into a new
“inside.” Rather, the “outside” that is signaled by ethnicity is more fruitfully viewed as the marker of the existence and maintenance of alienated labor within even phenotypically homogeneous societies (as Chow notes, how else are we to explain the existence of “white niggers”? (Chow 2002, 35). Given this link Chow would like us to see this phenomena of hierarchization as “the ethnicization of labor.” If we follow Chow along this path we come to a situation in which ethnic subjects today (not dissimilar to the proletariat subject of the recent past) are called upon to resist their commodification while existing within a situation in which their “difference,” their mark as “outsiders” (i.e. their labor), is exactly what so closely ties them to the process of commodification. Such a situation today underwrites the ethnic subject as a figure of resistance (of an outside) to global capitalism at the same time that that outside has been internalized in order to propel capitalism forward. In a sense then the ethnic subject is fully ensconced within a “biopolitical” situation in which captivity and emancipation can no longer be seen as exteriorizable antagonists but rather as complimentary parts of an increasingly integrated capitalism.

The subsumption of the “outside” that characterizes the biopolitical era and which entails a shift from a purely exclusionary to a more generative form of power (a shift that as we saw in Chapter 4 had already been intuited by Huey Newton), leads Chow to conclude the impossibility of an exit from our contemporary regime of global capitalism through resistance, because, as she states, today “power lurks in the very
mechanisms of resistance to power” (Chow 2002, 4). Or alternatively in her formulation, ethnic resistance is not only not oppositional to global capitalism, it is in fact what “constitutes the economically logical and socially viable vocation” for ethnic subjects to assume within contemporary capitalism. In other words, as Chow notes, these ethnic resistances have today become “the reasons capitalism flourishes” (Chow 2002, 48).

6.2 Some Common Characteristics of the Black Radical Tradition

In the preceding chapters I have tried to explore the conception of “Blackness” within the Black radical tradition and its relationship to the “outside.” Whether it be in the increasing difficulty of formulating a sovereign Black nation or in the recognition of an increasingly globally integrated system of production and exploitation that constituted the passages from colonialism to neocolonialism and from imperialism to empire, the Black radical tradition has increasingly insisted on the de-linking of resistance to a given “outside.” Given this propensity we might then ask how the formulation of “Blackness” within this tradition might help us to imagine an exit from the “biopolitical” fabric of contemporary capitalism envisioned by Chow. That is, “Blackness” must be seen as a central key to the formulation of effective resistance in an era without an “outside.” In order to understand how resistance might be possible without an “outside” I would like to summarize a series of characteristics of the Black radical tradition that begin to congeal around the struggles of the 1960s and 70s that I have examined above.
6.2.1 In The Beginning There Was Resistance

In her unfinished 1969 lectures titled, “Recurring Philosophical Themes in African American Literature,” Angela Davis purports to find a great difference in the conceptions of freedom dominant within what she calls Western society and those expressed within Black literature. For her this difference can be summarized in the idea that in the Western tradition the very concept of freedom remains a “static given principle” located at either some future point or fully outside of present existence (and in this sense falling under the literal definition of utopia coined by Sir Thomas More by amalgamating the greek οὐ, meaning no, and τόπος, meaning place). In Davis’ eyes the concept of freedom present in Black literature is radically different due to the fact that it is the direct expression of a people who have been denied a place in the formal world of “freedom.” For Davis, the difference lies in that in the Black Radical tradition (reaching as far back as Frederick Douglas) the notion of freedom always appears as the concretized act of resistance, where resistance is figured as a “microcosmic act of liberation” in which the rudiments of freedom are always already present (Davis 1971, 7). Herbert Marcuse would later write of his indebtedness to Davis’ conception, for with this particular insight Davis had taught him that “freedom is not only the goal of liberation, it begins with liberation, it is there to be ‘practiced’” (Marcuse 2005, 49). In other words, for the Black radical tradition freedom does not exist outside of the act of
resistance, outside of a “practice” that precedes it. Rather, it is the condition of possibility for and the thing upon which the captive subject must build “liberation.” Here then the temporal and topographical relationship between freedom and liberation common among the dominant forms of thought within Western society has been twisted. Whereas this dominant Western tradition views freedom as a moment or point of exteriority, as either an abstract universal present only in the realm of ideas or as lying at a currently unreachable future point (“after the revolution”), for the Black radical tradition freedom is envisioned as the very act of resistance with which every sedimentation of power is met. As Angela Davis explains then, for the Black radical tradition there is “a way out” within all relations of power, even with those as extreme as slavery, and that “way out” carries the name of “resistance” (Davis 1971, 6). The force of this resistance always remains far more substantial than that of power in that, as Davis explains, the power of power (in this case that of the “master”) necessarily remains abstract because it is always only the power to “suppress other human beings,” to suppress resistance (Davis 1971, 5). It is in effect a power derivative of resistance. In other words, as Fred Moten has proposed elsewhere, in the Black radical tradition the “freedom drive” is primary, and therefore within this tradition there exists “the ontological and historical priority of resistance to power and objection to subjection” (Moten 2003, 12). Interestingly, it is Michel Foucault, the very author from who Chow borrows the concept of the “biopolitical,” that enunciates a position that is strikingly
similar to that of the Black radical tradition as explained by Davis. Consider the following exchange:

Q: You write that power is not just a negative force but a productive one; that is always there; that where there is power, there is resistance and that resistance is never in the position of externality vis-à-vis power. If this is so, then how do we come to any other conclusion than that we are always trapped inside that relationship—that we can’t somehow break out of it.

MF: Well I don’t think the word trapped is a correct one. It is a struggle, but what I mean by power relations is the fact that we are in a strategic situation towards each other. For instance, being homosexuals we are in a struggle with the government and the government is in a struggle with us. When we deal with the government, the struggle of course is not symmetrical, the power situation is not the same but we are in the struggle, and the continuation of this situation can influence the behavior or non-behavior of the other. So we are not trapped. We are always in this kind of situation. It means that we always have possibilities, there are always possibilities of changing the situation. We cannot jump outside the situation, and there is no point where you are free from all power relations. But you can always change it. So what I've said does not mean that we are always trapped, but that we are always free. Well anyway, that there is always the possibility of changing.

Q: So resistance comes from within this dynamic?

MF: Yes. You see, if there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience. You have to use power relations to refer to the situation where you’re not doing what you want. So resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So I think that resistance is the main word, the key word, in this dynamic (Foucault 1996, 386).

Therefore, for both the Black radical tradition and for Foucault, resistance is a historically and ontologically preceding element that makes the derivative power of power possible. Having framed freedom then as the ever present potential for the practice of resistance, the Black radical tradition is able to help us radically reformulate the issue of “biopolitics” presented by Chow as the fully complimentary relation between captivity and emancipation. That is, placing Davis in conversation with those
authors examined above (especially Fanon and Newton) helps us to see that “Blackness” in the Black radical tradition is the name for that resistance which, due to its ontological and historical priority to and therefore non-homology with, always exceeds power. It is this priority of resistance that helps us to explain the unique capacity of Fanon’s Black slave, as explained in Chapter Three, to turn away from both the “master” and “the object” and toward the “unforseeable,” a capacity honed mostly (although not exclusively) by those who have been accustomed to being made objects by their masters (“I was an object amidst other objects”).

This non-homology between resistance and power is exactly what lets us view all fields of power, including the biopolitical, always as a relation and never as an inescapable monologue. As Maurizio Lazzarato has pointed out, bio-“power,” like power more generally, can always only remain a single element within a larger field called biopolitics which is “political” exactly because it implies a relation. That relation is to a resistance which always “comes first,” with the consequence that “Biopower is always born of something other than itself” (Lazzarato 2002, 104). In other words, due to the non-homology of power and resistance within the Black radical tradition we can avoid the trap that Chow falls into of believing that because power (captivity) and

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25 In Lazzarato’s words, “biopolitics is the strategic coordination of these power relations in order to extract a surplus of power from living being. Biopolitics is a strategic relation; it is not the pure and simple capacity to legislate or legitimize sovereignty. According to Foucault the biopolitical function of “coordination and determination” concede that biopower, from the moment it begins to operate in this particular manner, is not the source of power. Biopower coordinates and targets a power that does not properly belong to it, that comes from the ’outside’” (Lazzarato 2002, 104).
resistance (emancipation) today exist within the same field of “biopolitics,” this makes them “complimentary” and each a product of the seamless function of “biopower.”

6.2.2 Blackness and The Location of Living Labor

Perhaps the consequences of such a position can be more forcefully presented when we consider the relation of the Black radical tradition to capitalism. For the Black radical tradition, “communism” (which taking up Fred Moten’s reading of Cedric Robinson, remains the very essence of the Black radical tradition) is not the future goal of an anti-capitalist movement; rather, it always already exists as the ever present, even if mutilated, precondition of capitalism.26 “Blackness” therefore, in this tradition, is once again the name for that creative process (i.e. resistance) that seeks to “preserve” the “ontological totality,” the collective historical existence of Black people, their concrete resistance, which made possible “a metaphysical system that never allowed for property” in any sense (Robinson 1983, 168-169). This was a collective existence of resistance that, as pointed out by Stefano Harney taking up Cedric Robinson, maintained itself internally to capital by its absolute excess, a resistance “that is no longer about capital at all [...] but prior to it, and after it” (Harney 2008, 7). This

26 It is, for example, not clear how “primitive accumulation” as described by Marx in Section 8 (and most specifically Chapter 27, “The Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land”) of Capital would have been possible had the cooperation necessary to create the “common lands” that were eventually cleared not existed prior to the encroachment of capital. See Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. I., (NY: Penguin Books, 1990), 877-895.
perspective certainly helps us to shed some light on the emphasis and insight of Huey Newton’s expressed “need” for the “brother on the block” and his ever present resistance, a resistance which in the end would help to ground Newton less in any recognizable ideology and more closely to “the integral totality of the people themselves” (see Chapter 4 above and Robinson 1983, 169).

Fittingly, this “communism” of the Black radical tradition built on the excess of resistance that precedes and follows capitalism is thought by Angela Davis to be constructed upon Marx’s idea that “labour is the living shaping fire; it represents the impermanence of things, their temporality” (Davis 1971, 117). That is, much like the practice of freedom in Davis’s formulation of the Black radical tradition, here the excessive resistance of labor as “life-activity” over and above commodification allows for a not-capitalist practice (of living labor) even if present at the very site of capitalist production (dead labor) (Gulli 2005, 93).

Although we can place “Blackness” within the terms of the excess of “living labor” over and above commodification, from the perspective of the Black radical tradition a mistake is often made within Marxist inflected discourses present in the West: reducing living labor to the process of the production of capitalist surplus value within the sites of remunerated labor (e.g. most often to the factory floor) and thus simultaneously reducing other socially productive sites (sites which may perhaps produce other values) to the realm of the merely “reproductive.” Due to the
marginalization of the Black subject from the factory, the Black radical tradition has been forced to break with this traditional Marxist schema that would in effect deny them decisive subjective action within the global relations of force. Rather, as theorized by both Fanon and Newton (and the BPP at large), the category of the “lumpenproletariat” stands as an attempt to both expand the notion of resistance well beyond the factory floor while simultaneously narrating the historical rise of this “wing of the proletariat” onto the world-historical stage. Therefore, we should be careful to note that the question of the “lumpenproletariat” in the Black radical tradition extends well beyond the glamorization of the “criminal element” (with which it is most often conflated) and in fact entails a direct challenge to the supposed location for the production of value(s) within contemporary global society. This challenge has remained difficult for many Marxisms to answer given their frequent (although never total) reduction of productive labor to remunerated labor. In essence then what the Black radical tradition insists on is a radical critique of the capitalist process of valorization and an affirmation of the possibility for the self-valorizing activity (i.e. “the elaboration of new ways of being, of new social relationships alternative to those of capitalism”) of subjects far beyond the “working class” and its “class struggle” (Moten 2003, 13-14 and Cleaver 2000, 16).
6.2.3 Blackness as the Production of A New Subjectivity

This break from the site of capitalist production allows the Black radical tradition to see “Blackness,” from Fanon and Newton’s “new man” to James Baldwin’s characterization of the Black Panther Party’s programs as the nuclei for the “creation of a new people,” not as some externalizable product but rather as the formation of a new subjectivity, a work of “self on self.” As Angela Davis has noted, the primary outcome of the Black radicalism of the 1960s and 70s was the establishment and consolidation of the Black subject as such (the subject of Blackness) (Davis 1998, 300). Nathaniel Mackey helps us to understand that historically, Black people have had a particularly intense relationship to “othering” but in two senses of that term. Mackey proposes that not only have Black people been “othered” in the sense of marginalizations and exclusions (what he calls social othering), but they have also formed an intense attachment to what he terms “artistic othering,” that near “shamanistic” capacity to innovate, to change, to create themselves (Mackey 1993, 265). That is, exactly because of their attempted “confinement” to a predetermined status (“keeping them in their place”), Black people have developed a sharp collective capacity for self-movement/variation, a capacity to recognize even (or perhaps most centrally) their identity not as a given but as a project for collective construction (Mackey 1993, 266 and Davis 1998, 300). Blackness then is precisely not a given identity, something already there. Rather, as Davis, Carmichael, Fanon, Newton and others did/do not tire of repeating: Blackness is this practice of
(self)-transformation within dispossession, so that, as Amiri Baraka believed, even “the Black Man must aspire to Blackness” (Baraka 1999, 167 and Nealon 1998, 86). Blackness then is not some given “outside” as it has been conceptualized, but rather that which neutralizes the division of that which is inside and that which is outside, that irruption where “that which is given inside is that which is out-from-the-outside” (Moten 2003, 14).

Blackness (and the whiteness it has denounced) then does not refer to a given phenotypical or sociological category but rather a model of behavior, a conduct, a mode of being, that has a particularly intense relation to the dispossession of Black people, but as a conduct formed in relation to that dispossession it is not completely co-extensive with it. That is, one could imagine people who have lived this dispossession and do not choose to practice this conduct called Blackness, and one can also imagine a person who has not directly lived this dispossession but comes to understand, and thus enact, this conduct. Therefore, the creation of Blackness as a new subjectivity places the logic of racial inclusion (“we would like to be like them”) and exclusion (“they are not like us”) that has sustained the sovereign tradition from its inception into total disarray due to the fact that this “mode of being” called Blackness is satisfied with neither of the options presented (under the regime of whiteness) and would instead require the creation of a world with other options (Malgre Tout 1998, 12). As Lou Turner writes in this regard, “The irruption of Black subjectivity on the world-historic stage” must also be considered
“a rupture in the thought of the world” (Gordon 1996, 149). In this sense, the subjects who had been most distant from the sites of production in the strict sense came to intuit that their ability to view their identity as itself a site of production, for “becoming Black,” was able to unleash a social force far in excess of the more narrowly defined economic or political influence of the Black community at large.

6.2.4 From Territories to Territorializations

The tendential shift within Black radicalism—away from the search for a site for the exercise of sovereignty (a Black nation-state) to an increasingly “dematerialized” form of intragroup solidarity focused on the production of a new subjectivity—is never thought as an issue distinct from that of territory. Be it the re-evaluation of the Third World countryside in Fanon or Newton’s idea of the establishment of “inner city” communes, the tie to territory remains central for the Black radical tradition and yet quite distinct from that dominant within the tradition of sovereignty in Western modernity. If the Western conception of the nation-state, that which was formally instituted in 1644 at Westphalia and based on the territorial boundedness and political sovereignty described by Carl Schmitt as *Jus Publicum Europaum*, has come into crisis due to the fact that it has been placed within, and increasingly subordinated to, a more extensive network of institutions, corporations, and markets, those struggles that were previously imagined to take place within those given coordinates of territory have also
been met with a radical sense of disorientation. In response, many within the left have simply insisted on the necessity to revive the nation-state centered system, a tendency which seems to have trapped this left in a nostalgic relationship to a system of which it was never totally convinced.

In contrast, by identifying the “homeless” Black subject and its (ethical and political) tendencies, the Black radical tradition, and Huey Newton in particular (although one could also claim that similar thought processes were taking place in Newark under the leadership of Amiri Baraka, or in Detroit under the influence of James Boggs and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers), is able to discern that space and territory are not a-historical substances, thereby prior to the social relations and subjectivizations that take place within them. That is, the attempt to re-appropriate the inner city space of the United States led to a larger global (re)mapping (a counter-cartography) by the Black radical tradition which stands in sharp contrast to the Westphalian system. This counter-cartography allows the Black radical tradition to specify the spatial coordinates of its politics while simultaneously eschewing the pre-existing topographical imaginary that serves in large part as a conduit to the existing social relations which it opposes. As Carlos Walter Porto Goncalves has described with regard to contemporary Black movements in rural Brazil, this counter-cartography cannot adequately be thought of as a search for a “territory,” but rather as the process of “territorialization” where processes of subjectivization are thought through the lens of
the inhabitation of a particular location in order to produce a new territory. In that sense, Blackness stands as an exemplary location for the investigation of the spatialization of the practice of “outsiding” in an era without “outsides.”

6.3 Blackness and The Exception

If some, like Rey Chow, have envisioned the era of the “biopolitical” in terms of an all-encompassing process of capitalist commodification, others, like Giorgio Agamben, have seen it as the era of an ever growing application of the state of exception (which underwrites the rule of law as whole) made possible by the “politicization of life itself” (“the processes by which…natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of State power”) (Agamben 1998, 3 and 120). For Agamben, an increasing number of states (including those considered “democratic”) have increasingly adopted a “permanent state of emergency” that recreates an “undeclared civil war” as was present under modern forms of totalitarianism (Agamben 2005, 2). This state of emergency allows these states the “elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system” (Ibid.). Interestingly, after visiting Attica prison, site of the famous 1971 uprising led by Black and Puerto Rican prisoners indignant over the shooting death of Black Panther inmate George Jackson at San Quentin, Michel Foucault stated the following:
That it’s a question simply of a great trick of sleight of hand, a curious mechanism of circular elimination: society eliminates by sending to prison people whom prison breaks up, crushes, physically eliminates; and then once they have been broken up, the prison eliminates them by “freeing” them and sending them back to society; and there, their life in prison, the way in which they were treated, the state in which they come out insures that society will eliminate them once again, sending them to prison which in turn...Attica is a machine for elimination, a kind of prodigious stomach, a kidney which consumes, destroys, breaks up, and then rejects, and which consumes in order to eliminate what it has already eliminated...

American prisons in fact play two roles: a role as a place of punishment, as there has existed now for centuries, and a role of “concentration camp” as there existed in Europe during the war and in Africa during the European colonization (in Algeria, for example, during the period when the French were there). One must not forget that there are more than a million prisoners in the United States out of two hundred twenty million inhabitants, to be compared with thirty thousand in France for fifty million inhabitants. The proportion is not at all the same. Then, in the United States, there must be one out of thirty or forty Black men in prison; it is here that one can see the function of massive elimination in the American prison. The penal system, the entire pattern of even minor prohibitions (too much drinking, speeding, smoking hashish) serves as an instrument and as a pretext for this practice of radical concentration (Foucault 1989, 114-116).

Since Foucault made the above statement in 1973, the U.S. prison population has grown to over 2.5 million, meaning that over one in 100 people from the general U.S. population is currently living behind bars. These numbers are even more extreme when one considers the rates of incarceration within the Black community where one in 15 Black adults are behind bars and one in nine Black men between the ages of 20 and 34 (not including another five million people who are currently on probation or parole within the U.S.). Two years prior to Foucault’s statement of the U.S. prison as a concentration camp for elimination (most specifically of Black people), Angela Davis

had already warned that the reaction of the U.S. government to the rise of Black radicalism of the late 60s and early 70s and embodied in the FBI’s COINTELPRO program against the Black Panther Party, had not only begun to spread to the population at large but also directly mirrored the political tenets of fascism. As she believed,

It is not surprising Nazi Germany’s foremost constitutional lawyer, Carl Schmitt, advanced a theory which generalized a priori culpability. A thief for example, was not necessarily one who has committed an overt act of theft, but rather one whose character renders him a thief. Nixon’s and J. Edgar Hoover’s pronouncements lead one to believe that they would readily accept Schmitt’s fascist legal theory. Anyone who seeks to oppose oppressive institutions, whether or not he has engaged in an overt illegal act, is a priori a criminal who must be buried away in one of America’s dungeons (Davis 1971, 30-31).

Although Agamben’s idea of an increasing normalization of the “state of emergency” has in the context of the United States been most frequently thought with regards to the actions of the George W. Bush administration, it would seem that if we take the above statements seriously and place the question of the state of exception in the context of Blackness, a more complicated situation comes to the fore which places the Bush administration’s actions squarely within, rather than as an exception to, the increasing encroachment of a “legalized” undeclared civil war. That is, although the measures entailed within the “war on terror” might stand as extreme examples of a “state of exception,” these measures might be seen as the outgrowth of processes of open state repression that began in earnest in the 1970s and were, and are, applied most specifically to the Black community.
Although this repression is certainly indicative of the continuation and mutation of biological and cultural forms of racism (where Black bodies come to symbolize genetic and civilization inferiority), I would like to conclude this dissertation project by proposing that the application of the “state of emergency” in the United States has to be seen as intimately tied to the threat posed by the creation of Blackness to the sovereign exception. That is, Blackness as a subjectivity remains extremely unique in that it carries within it many of the elements (as explained above) necessary to undo the structure of sovereign exceptionality and therefore stands as the paradigmatic site for the construction of new forms of non-sovereign life. In this sense, we should think of the growth of the state of exception within the U.S. context as intimately tied to anti-Blackness (in a strict sense), and conversely the growth of anti-Blackness as directly related to the threat posed by it to the state of exception. In other words, the state of emergency in which we live, which, as Walter Benjamin has taught us, is in fact not the exception but the rule, has intensified in order to wage an undeclared war against Blackness—that which would undo that rule and bring about “a real exception” (Benjamin 1969, 257). We must add then to the biological and culturalist reasons for racism those more strictly political reasons related to the production of an

28 With this unique character of Blackness in mind, I would agree with Jared Sexton regarding the vacuousness and danger of much discourse within multiculturalism and Comparative Ethnic Studies that would like to place Blackness as one difference among other differences. See Warfare in the American Homeland, ed. Joy James, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 197-218.
unsubsumable subjectivity. In other words, the phenotypically Black community has, as Davis intuited years ago, been found \textit{a priori} guilty; and the charge is nothing other than... Blackness.
Appendix A

The Black Panther Party Platform and Program, October 1966


1. We Want Freedom. We Want Power To Determine The Destiny Of Our Black Community.

We believe that Black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

2. We Want Full Employment For Our People.

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the White American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. We Want An End To The Robbery By The Capitalists Of Our Black Community.

We believe that this racist government has robbed us, and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken...
part in the slaughter of over fifty million Black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

4. We Want Decent Housing Fit For The Shelter Of Human Beings.

We believe that if the White Landlords will not give decent housing to our Black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

5. We Want Education For Our People That Exposes The True Nature Of This Decadent American Society.

We Want Education That Teaches Us Our True History And Our Role In The Present-Day Society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

6. We Want All Black Men To Be Exempt From Military Service.

We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Black people, are being victimized by the White racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

7. We Want An Immediate End To Police Brutality And Murder Of Black People.
We believe we can end police brutality in our Black community by organizing Black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all Black people should arm themselves for self-defense.

8. We Want Freedom For All Black Men Held In Federal, State, County And City Prisons And Jails.

We believe that all Black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.

9. We Want All Black People When Brought To Trial To Be Tried In Court By A Jury Of Their Peer Group Or People From Their Black Communities, As Defined By The Constitution Of The United States.

We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that Black people will receive fair trials. The Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the Black community from which the Black defendant came. We have been, and are being, tried by all-White juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the Black community.

10. We Want Land, Bread, Housing, Education, Clothing, Justice And Peace.
When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect of the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.
Appendix B


**What We Want**

**What We Believe**

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.

   We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

2. We want full employment for our people.

   We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

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   We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment as currency which will be distributed to our many...
communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over twenty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.

We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.

We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.
7. We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people.

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9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.

We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the black community.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariable the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their
right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security
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