CRITIQUE OF BLACK REASON

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ONE
THE SUBJECT OF RACE

The pages that follow deal with "Black reason." By this ambiguous and polemical term I mean to identify several things at once: forms of knowledge; a model of extraction and depredation; a paradigm of subjection, including the modalities governing its eradication; and, finally, a psycho-oneiric complex. Like a kind of giant cage, Black reason is in truth a complicated network of doubling, uncertainty, and equivocation, built with race as its chassis.

We can speak of race (or racism) only in a fatally imperfect language, gray and inadequate. Let it suffice to say, for now, that race is a form of primal representation. Unable to distinguish between the outside and the inside, between envelopes and their contents, it sends us, above all, back to surface simulacra. Taken to its limit, race becomes a perverse complex, a generator of fears and torments, of disturbed thoughts and terror, but especially of infinite sufferings and, ultimately, catastrophe. In its phantasmagoric dimensions, it is a sign of neurosis—phobic, obsessive, at times hysterical. Otherwise, it is what reassures itself by hating, deploying dread, and practicing altruicide: the constitution of the Other not as similar to oneself but as a menacing object from which one must be protected or escape, or which must simply be destroyed if it cannot be subdued.[1] As Frantz Fanon has noted, "race" is also the name for bitter resentment and the irrepressible desire for vengeance. "Race" is the name for the rage of those who, constrained by subjection, suffer injuries, all manner of violations and humiliations, and bear countless wounds.[2] We will therefore ask, in this book, about the nature of this resentment. We will provide an account of what race does, of its depth, at once real and fictive, and of the

relationships through which it expresses itself. And we will examine the gesture of race that, notably in the case of people of African origin, consists in dissolving human beings into things, objects, and merchandise.[3]

Fantasy and the Closing of the Spirit

It may seem surprising to resort to the concept of race, at least in the way that it is sketched out here. In fact, race does not exist as a physical, anthropological, or genetic fact.[4] But it is not just a useful fiction, a phantasmagoric construction, or an ideological projection whose function is to draw attention away from conflicts judged to be more real—the struggle between classes or genders, for example. In many cases race is an autonomous figure of the real whose force and density can be explained by its characteristic mobility, inconstancy, and capriciousness. It wasn't all that long ago, after all, that the world was founded on an inaugural dualism that sought justification in the old myth of racial superiority.[5] In its avid need for myths through which to justify its power, the Western world considered itself the center of the earth and the birthplace of reason, universal life, and the truth of humanity. The most "civilized" region of the world, the West alone had invented the "rights of the people." It alone had succeeded in constituting a civil society of nations understood as a public space of legal reciprocity. It alone was at the origin of the idea that to be human was to possess civil and political rights that allowed individuals to develop private and public powers as citizens of the human race who, as such, were shaped by all that was human. And it alone had codified a range of customs accepted by different peoples that included diplomatic rituals, the rules of engagement, the right of conquest, public morality and polite behavior, and practices of business, religion, and government.

The Remainder—the ultimate sign of the dissimilar, of difference and the pure power of the negative—constituted the manifestation of existence as an object. Africa in general and Blackness in particular were presented as accomplished symbols of a vegetative, limited state. The Black Man, a sign in excess of all signs and therefore fundamentally unrepresentable, was the ideal example of this other-being, powerfully possessed by emptiness, for whom the negative had ended up penetrating all moments of existence—the death of the day, destruction and peril, the unnameable night of the world.[6] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel described such figures as statues

without language or awareness of themselves, human entities incapable of ridding themselves definitively of the animal presence with which they were mixed. In fact, their nature was to contain what was already dead.

Such figures, he wrote, were the province of "a host of separate, antagonistic national Spirits who hate and fight each other to the death," dismembering and destroying themselves like animals—a kind of humanity staggering through life, confusing becoming-human and becoming-animal, and all along "unconscious of their universality."[7] Others, more charitable, admitted that such entities were not completely devoid of humanity. They were, rather, in a state of slumber and had not yet become engaged in the adventure of what Paul Valéry called the "leap of no return." It was possible, they claimed, to raise them up to our level, and shouldering that burden did not grant the right to take advantage of their inferiority. On the contrary, it was Europe's duty to help and protect them.[8] This made the colonial enterprise a fundamentally "civilizing" and "humanitarian" enterprise. The violence that was its corollary could only ever be moral.[9]

European discourse, both scholarly and popular, had a way of thinking, of classifying and imagining distant worlds, that was often based on modes of fantasizing. By presenting facts, often invented, as real, certain, and exact, it evaded what it claimed to capture and maintained a relationship to other worlds that was fundamentally imaginary, even as it sought to develop forms of knowledge aimed at representing them objectively. The essential qualities of the imaginary relationship remain to be elucidated, but the procedures that enabled the work of fantasy to take shape, as well as the violence that resulted from it, are now sufficiently well known. At this point, there are very few things we can add. But if there is one space in which the imaginary relationship and the fictional economy undergirding it existed in their most brutal, distinct, and obvious form, it is in the sign that we call Blackness and, as if by ricochet, in the seeming outer zone that we call Africa, both of which are fated to be not common nouns, or even proper nouns, but rather mere indicators of an absence of achievement.

Clearly, not all Blacks are Africans, and not all Africans are Blacks. But it matters little where they are located. As objects of discourse and objects of knowledge, Africa and Blackness have, since the beginning of the modern age, plunged the theory of the name as well as the status and function of the sign and of representation into deep crisis. The same was true of the relation between being and appearance, truth and falsehood, reason and

unreason, even language and life. Every time it confronted the question of Blacks and Africa, reason found itself ruined and emptied, turning constantly in on itself, shipwrecked in a seemingly inaccessible place where language was destroyed and words themselves no longer had memory. Language, its ordinary functions extinguished, became a fabulous machine whose power resided in its vulgarity, in its remarkable capacity for violation, and in its indefinite proliferation. Still today, as soon as the subject of Blacks and Africa is raised, words do not necessarily represent things; the true and the false become inextricable; the signification of the sign is not always adequate to what is being signified. It is not only that the sign is substituted for the thing. Word and image often have little to say about the objective world. The world of words and signs has become autonomous to such a degree that it exists not only as a screen possessed by its subject, its life, and the conditions of its production but as a force of its own, capable of emancipating itself from all anchoring in reality. That this is the case must be attributed, to a large extent, to the law of race.

It would be a mistake to believe that we have left behind the regime that began with the slave trade and flourished in plantation and extraction colonies. In these baptismal fonts of modernity, the principle of race and the subject of the same name were put to work under the sign of capital. This is what distinguishes the slave trade and its institutions from indigenous forms of servitude.[10] Between the fourteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the spatial horizon of Europe expanded considerably. The Atlantic gradually became the epicenter of a new concatenation of worlds, the locus of a new planetary consciousness. The shift into the Atlantic followed European attempts at expansion in the Canaries, Madeira, the Azores, and the islands of Cape Verde and culminated in the establishment of a plantation economy dependent on African slave labor.[11]

The transformation of Spain and Portugal from peripheral colonies of the Arab world into the driving forces of European expansion across the Atlantic coincided with the flow of Africans into the Iberian Peninsula itself. They contributed to the reconstruction of the Iberian principalities in the wake of the Black Death and the Great Famine of the fourteenth century. Most were slaves, but certainly not all. Among them were freemen. Slaves had previously been supplied to the peninsula via trans-Saharan routes controlled by the Moors. Around 1440 the Iberians opened up direct contact with West and Central Africa via the Atlantic Ocean. The first public

sale of Black victims captured in a raid took place in Portugal in 1444. The number of "captives" increased substantially between 1450 and 1500, and the African presence grew as a consequence. Thousands of slaves disembarked in Portugal each year, destabilizing the demographic equilibrium of certain Iberian cities. Such was the case in Lisbon, Seville, and Cádiz, where nearly 10 percent of the population was African at the beginning of the sixteenth century.[12] Most were assigned to agricultural and domestic work.[13] Once the conquest of the Americas began, Afro-Iberians and African slaves could be found among ship's crews, at commercial outposts, on plantations, and in the urban centers of the empire.[14] They participated in different military campaigns (in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Florida) and in 1519 were among Hernán Cortés's regiments when they invaded Mexico.[15]

After 1492 the triangular trade transformed the Atlantic into an entangled economy connecting Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe. Relatively autonomous regions became interconnected, part of a vast Oceanic-Continental formation. The new multi-hemispheric ensemble engendered a series of transformations without parallel in the history of the world. People of African origin were at the heart of new and frenzied dynamics of coming and going, from one side to the other of the same ocean, from the slave ports of West and Central Africa to those in the Americas and Europe. The economy on which the new structure of circulation was based required colossal capital. It also involved the transfer of metals, agricultural products, and manufactures, alongside the dissemination of knowledge, the circulation of cultural practices that were previously unknown, and the development of insurance, accounting, and finance. The increasing traffic of religions, languages, technologies, and cultures set in motion new processes of creolization. Black consciousness during early capitalism emerged in part within this dynamic of movement and circulation. It was the product of a tradition of travel and displacement, one rooted in a logic that denationalized the imagination. Such processes of denationalization continued through the middle of the twentieth century and marked most of the great movements of Black emancipation.[16]

Between 1630 and 1780, far more Africans than Europeans disembarked in Great Britain's Atlantic colonies.[17] In this sense the height of Black presence within the British Empire was at the end of the eighteenth century. Ships leaving the slave forts and ports of West Africa and the Bay of Biafra with human cargoes deposited their wares in Jamaica and the United

States. But alongside the macabre commerce in slaves, whose only objective was profit, was the movement of free Africans, the new colonists—the "black poor" in England, or refugees from the War of Independence in the United States who left Newfoundland, Virginia, or Carolina to settle in the new colonies of Africa itself, such as Sierra Leone.[18]

The transnationalization of the Black condition was therefore a constitutive moment for modernity, with the Atlantic serving as its incubator. The Black condition incorporated a range of contrasting states and statuses: those sold through the transatlantic slave trade, convict laborers, subsistence slaves (whose lives were spent as domestics), feudal slaves, house slaves, those who were emancipated, and those who were born slaves. Between 1776 and 1825, Europe lost most of its American colonies as a result of revolutions, independence movements, and rebellions. Afro-Latins played an eminent role in the constitution of the Iberian-Hispanic empires. They served not only as servile laborers but also as ship's crewmen, explorers, officers, settlers, property owners, and, in some cases, freemen who owned slaves.[19] In the anticolonial uprisings of the nineteenth century that resulted in the dissolution of empire, they played diverse roles as soldiers and leaders of political movements. The collapse of the imperial structures of the Atlantic world and the rise of new nation-states transformed the relationships between metropoles and colonies. A class of Creole Whites asserted and consolidated their influence.[20] Old questions of heterogeneity, difference, and liberty were once again posed, with new elites using the ideology of *mestizaje* to deny and disqualify the racial question. The contribution of Afro-Latins and Black slaves to the historical development of South America has been, if not erased, at least severely obscured.[21]

The case of Haiti was crucial from this standpoint. The country's declaration of independence came in 1804, only twenty years after that of the United States, and it marked a turning point in the modern history of human emancipation. Over the course of the eighteenth century—the age of Enlightenment—the colony of Saint-Domingue was the classic example of a plantocracy, a hierarchical social, political, and economic order led by a relatively small number of rival White groups ruling in the midst of freemen of color and those of mixed heritage and over a large majority of slaves, more than half of them born in Africa.[22] In contrast to other independence movements, the Haitian Revolution was the result of an

insurrection of the enslaved. It resulted, in 1805, in one of the most radical constitutions of the New World. It outlawed nobility, instituted freedom of religion, and attacked the two concepts of property and slavery, something that the American Revolution had not dared to do. Not only did the new Haitian Constitution abolish slavery. It also authorized the confiscation of lands belonging to French settlers, decapitating most of the dominant class along the way. It abolished the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate birth and pushed then-revolutionary ideas of racial equality and universal liberty to their ultimate conclusion.[23]

In the United States, the first Black slaves disembarked in 1619. On the eve of the revolution against the English, there were more than 500,000 slaves in the rebel colonies. In 1776 about five thousand enlisted as soldiers on the side of the Patriots, even though most of them were not considered citizens. The struggle against British domination and the fight against the slave system went hand in hand for most. Yet nearly ten thousand slaves in Georgia and South Carolina deserted plantations to join the English troops. Others fought for their own liberation by escaping into swamps and forest. At the end of the war, roughly fourteen thousand Blacks, some of them now free, were evacuated from Savannah, Charleston, and New York and transported to Florida, Nova Scotia, Jamaica, and, later, Africa.[24] The anticolonial revolution against the English gave rise to a paradox: on the one hand, the expansion of the spheres of liberty for Whites and, on the other, an unprecedented consolidation of the slave system. To a large extent, the planters of the South had bought their freedom with the labor of slaves. Because of the existence of servile labor, the United States largely avoided class divisions within the White population, divisions that would have led to internal power struggles with incalculable consequences.[25]

Over the course of the Atlantic period briefly described here, the small province of the planet that is Europe gradually gained control over the rest of the world. In parallel, particularly during the eighteenth century, there emerged discourses of truth relating to nature, the specificity and forms of the living, and the qualities, traits, and characteristics of human beings. Entire populations were categorized as species, kinds, or races, classified along vertical lines.[26]

Paradoxically, it was also during this period that people and cultures were increasingly conceptualized as individualities closed in upon themselves. Each community—and even each people—was considered a unique

collective body endowed with its own power. The collective also became the foundation for a history shaped, it was thought, by forces that emerged only to destroy other forces, and by struggle that could result only in liberty or servitude.[27] The expansion of the European spatial horizon, then, went hand in hand with a division and shrinking of the historical and cultural imagination and, in certain cases, a relative closing of the mind. In sum, once genders, species, and races were identified and classified, nothing remained but to enumerate the differences between them. The closing off of the mind did not signify the extinction of curiosity itself. But from the High Middle Ages to the Enlightenment, curiosity as a mode of inquiry and a cultural sensibility was inseparable from the work of fantasy, which, when focused on other worlds, constantly blurred the lines between the believable and the unbelievable, the factual and the marvelous.[28]

By the time Georges-Louis Buffon attempted the first great racial classification, the language on other worlds was suffused with naive and sensualist prejudices. Extremely complex forms of life had been reduced to mere epithets.[29] We can call this the gregarious phase of Western thinking. The period represented the Black Man as the prototype of a prehuman figure incapable of emancipating itself from its bestiality, of reproducing itself, or of raising itself up to the level of its god. Locked within sensation, the Black Man struggled to break the chains of biological necessity and for that reason was unable to take a truly human form and shape his own world. He therefore stood apart from the normal existence of the human race. During this gregarious moment of Western thinking, and propelled by imperialist impulse, the act of capturing and grasping ideas became gradually detached from the effort to know deeply and intimately. Hegel's *Reason in History* represents the culmination of the gregarious period.[30] For several centuries the concept of race—which we know referred initially to the animal sphere—served to name non-European human groups.[31] What was then called the "state of race" corresponded, it was thought, to a state of degradation and defect of an ontological nature. The notion of race made it possible to represent non-European human groups as trapped in a lesser form of being. They were the impoverished reflection of the ideal man, separated from him by an insurmountable temporal divide, a difference nearly impossible to overcome. To talk of them was, most of all, to point to absence—the absence of the same—or, rather, to a second presence, that of *monsters* and *fossils*. If the fossil, as Michel Foucault writes,

is "what permits resemblances to subsist throughout all the deviations traversed by nature," and functions primarily "as a distant and approximative form of identity," the monster, in contrast "provides an account, as though in caricature, of the genesis of differences."[32] On the great chart of species, genders, races, and classes, Blackness, in its magnificent obscurity, represented the synthesis of these two figures. But Blackness does not exist as such. It is constantly produced. To produce Blackness is to produce a social link of subjection and a *body of extraction*, that is, a body entirely exposed to the will of the master, a body from which great effort is made to extract maximum profit. An exploitable object, the Black Man is also the name of a wound, the symbol of a person at the mercy of the whip and suffering in a field of struggle that opposes socioracially segmented groups and factions. Such was the case for most of the insular plantocracies of the Caribbean, those segmented universes in which the law of race depended as much on conflict between White planters and Black slaves as between Blacks and "free people of color" (often manumitted mulattoes), some of whom owned slaves themselves.

The Blacks on the plantation were, furthermore, diverse. They were hunters of maroons and fugitives, executioners and executioners' assistants, skilled slaves, informants, domestics, cooks, emancipated slaves who were still subjugated, concubines, field-workers assigned to cutting cane, workers in factories, machine operators, masters' companions, and occasionally soldiers. Their positions were far from stable. Circumstances could change, and one position could become another. Today's victim could tomorrow become an executioner in the service of the master. It was not uncommon for a slave, once freed, to become a slave owner and hunter of fugitive slaves.

Moreover, Blacks of the plantation were socialized into the hatred of others, particularly of other Blacks. The plantation was characterized by its segmented forms of subjection, distrust, intrigue, rivalry, and jealousy, ambivalent tactics born out of complicity, arrangements of all kinds, and practices of differentiation carried out against a backdrop of the reversibility of positions. But it was also defined by the fact that the social links defined by exploitation were never stable. They were constantly challenged and had to be produced and reproduced through violence of a molecular kind that sutured and saturated the master–slave relationship.

From time to time that relationship exploded in uprisings, insurrections, and slave plots. A paranoid institution, the plantation lived under a perpetual regime of fear. It combined aspects of a camp, a pen, and a paramilitary society. The slave master could deploy one form of coercion after another, create chains of dependence between him and his slaves, and alternate between terror and generosity, but his existence was always haunted by the specter of extermination. The Black slave, on the other hand, was constantly on the threshold of revolt, tempted to respond to the insistent call of liberty or vengeance, or else pulled into a form of maximum degradation and radical self-abdication that consisted in protecting his life by participating in the project of subjection.

Furthermore, between 1620 and 1640, the forms of servitude remained relatively fluid, particularly in the United States. Free labor coexisted with indentured labor (a form of impermanent servitude, or servitude of a predetermined length) and slavery (both hereditary and nonhereditary). There were profound class divisions within the settler population as well as between settlers and the mass of the enslaved. Slaves were furthermore a multiracial group. Between 1630 and 1680, a bifurcation took place that gave birth to plantation society as such. The principle of lifelong servitude for people of African origin stigmatized because of their color gradually became the rule. Africans and their children became slaves for life. The distinctions between White servants and Black slaves became much sharper. The plantation gradually took shape as an economic, disciplinary, and penal institution in which Blacks and their descendants could be bought for life.

Throughout the seventeenth century a massive legislative effort sealed their fate. The construction of subjects of race on the American continent began with their civic destitution and therefore their exclusion from the privileges and rights guaranteed to the other inhabitants of the colonies. From then on they were no longer humans *like all others*. The process continued with the extension of lifetime slavery to their children and their descendants. This first phase marked the completion of a long process aimed at establishing their legal incapacity. The loss of the right to appear in court turned the Black individual into a nonperson from a juridical standpoint. To this judicial mechanism was added a series of slave codes, often developed in the aftermaths of slave uprisings. Around 1720, with legal codification complete, what we might call the *Black structure of*

the world, which already existed in the West Indies, officially appeared in the United States, with the plantation as its core structure. As for Blacks, they were nothing more than pieces of property, at least from a strict legal perspective. The pressing question from 1670 on was how to deploy large numbers of laborers within a commercial enterprise that spanned great distances. The answer was the invention of Blackness. It was the cog that made possible the creation of the plantation—one of the period's most effective forms of wealth accumulation—and accelerated the integration of merchant capitalism with technology and the control of subordinated labor. The plantation developed over this period represented an innovation in scale, through the denial of liberty, the control of worker mobility, and the unlimited deployment of violence. The invention of Blackness also opened the way for crucial innovations in the areas of transportation, production, commerce, and insurance.

Not all of the Blacks in the Caribbean or the United States were slaves, however. The racialization of servitude in the United States pushed Whites, and especially the "poor Whites" who did all kinds of labor, to distinguish themselves as much as possible from the Africans reduced to the state of slavery. Freemen had one great fear: that the wall separating them from the slaves was not sturdy enough. At one point or another, societies across the hemisphere included freemen of color, some of whom were owners of slaves and land, in addition to indentured Whites. The population of free people of color gradually grew as a result of waves of manumission and mixed unions between Black slaves and free Whites or between White women and Blacks. In the Caribbean in particular, the phenomenon of Whites with Black concubines became relatively widespread. Even with racial segregation officially in place, interracial libertinage and concubinage with women of color, whether free or enslaved, were commonplace among White elites.[33]

Recalibration

The twenty-first century is, of course, not the nineteenth century. That period was marked by the linked processes of colonial expansion in Africa and the deliberate biologization of race in the West. It was also, with the help of Darwinian and post-Darwinian evolutionary thought, the period that saw the spread of eugenicist strategies in many countries and rising obsessions

with degeneration and suicide.[34] Yet, encouraged by processes of globalization and the contradictory effects they provoke, the problematic of race has once again burst into contemporary consciousness.[35] The fabrication of racial subjects has been reinvigorated nearly everywhere.[36] Alongside anti-Semitic racism, the colonial model of comparing humans to animals, and color prejudice inherited from the slave trade and translated through institutions of segregation (as with Jim Crow laws in the United States and the apartheid regime in South Africa), new patterns of racism have emerged that reconstruct the figure of the intimate enemy within mutated structures of hate.[37] After a brief intermission, the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first have witnessed the return to biological understandings of the distinctions between human groups.[38] Genomics, rather than marking the end of racism, has instead authorized a new deployment of race.[39] Whether through the exploration of the genomic bases of illnesses within certain groups or genealogical efforts to trace roots or geographic origins, recourse to genetics tends to confirm the racial typologies of the nineteenth century (White Caucasians, Black Africans, Yellow Asiatics).[40] The same racial syntax is present in discourses on reproductive technologies involving the manipulation of ovaries and sperm and in those concerning reproductive choice through the selection of embryos, or in languages related to the planning of life in general.[41]

The same is true of the different ways in which living things can be manipulated, including the hybridization of organic, animal, and artificial elements. In fact, there is good reason to believe that in a more or less distant future genetic techniques will be used to manage the characteristics of populations to eliminate races judged "undesirable" through the selection of trisomic embryos, or through theriomorphism (hybridization with animal elements) or "cyborgization" (hybridization with artificial elements). Nor is it impossible to believe that we will arrive at a point where the fundamental role of medicine will be not only to bring a sick organism back to health but to use medical techniques of molecular engineering to refashion life itself along lines defined by racial determinism. Race and racism, then, do not only have a past. They also have a future, particularly in a context where the possibility of transforming life and creating mutant species no longer belongs to the realm of fiction.

Taken on their own, the transformations of the capitalist mode of production during the second half of the twentieth century cannot explain

the reappearance and various metamorphoses of the Beast. But they—along with major discoveries in technology, biology, and genetics—do undeniably constitute its background.[42] A new political economy of life is emerging, one irrigated by international flows of knowledge about cells, tissues, organs, pathologies, and therapies as well as about intellectual property.[43] The reactivation of the logic of race also goes hand in hand with the increasing power of the ideology of security and the installation of mechanisms aimed at calculating and minimizing risk and turning protection into the currency of citizenship.

This is notably the case in regard to the management of migration and mobility in a context in which terrorist threats are believed to increasingly emanate from individuals organized in cells and networks that span the surface of the planet. In such conditions the protection and policing of territory becomes a structural condition for securing the population. To be effective, such protection requires that everyone remain at home, that those living and moving within a given national territory be capable of proving their identities at any given moment, that the most exhaustive information possible be gathered on each individual, and that the control of foreigners' mobility be carried out not only along borders but also from a distance, preferably within their countries of departure.[44] The massive expansion of digitization under way nearly everywhere in the world partly adheres to this logic, with the idea that optimal forms of securitization necessarily require the creation of global systems of control over individuals conceived of as biological bodies that are both multiple and in motion.

Protection itself is no longer based solely on the legal order. It has become a question of biopolitics. The new systems of security build on various elements of prior regimes (the forms of punishment used within slavery, aspects of the colonial wars of conquest and occupation, legal-juridical techniques used in the creation of states of exception) and incorporate them, on a nanocellular level, into the techniques of the age of genomics and the war on terror. But they also draw on techniques elaborated during the counterinsurgency wars of the period of decolonization and the "dirty wars" of the Cold War (in Algeria, Vietnam, Southern Africa, Burma, and Nicaragua), as well as the experiences of predatory dictatorships put into power throughout the world with the direct encouragement, or at least complicity, of the intelligence agencies of the West.

The increasing power of the security state in the contemporary context is, furthermore, accompanied by a remodeling of the world through technology and an exacerbation of forms of racial categorization.[45] Facing the transformation of the economy of violence throughout the world, liberal democratic regimes now consider themselves to be in a nearly constant state of war against new enemies who are in flight, both mobile and reticular. The theater of this new form of war is both external and internal. It requires a "total" conception of defense, along with greater tolerance for legal exceptions and special dispensations. The conduct of this type of war depends on the creation of tight, panoptic systems that enable increasing control of individuals, preferably from a distance, via the traces they leave behind.[46] In place of the classic paradigm of war, in which opposing sides meet on a well-defined battlefield and the risk of death is reciprocal, the logic is now vertical. There are two protagonists: prey and predator.[47] The predator, with nearly complete control of the airspace, selects the targets, locations, times, and nature of the strikes.[48] The increasingly vertical character of war and the more frequent use of unpiloted drones means that killing the enemy looks more and more like a video game, an experience of sadism, spectacle, and entertainment.[49] And, even more important, these new forms of warfare carried out from a distance require an unprecedented merging of the civil, police, and military spheres with those of surveillance.

The spheres of surveillance, meanwhile, are also being reconfigured. No longer mere state structures, and operating as chains linked in form only, they function by cultivating private-sector influence, by expanding into those corporate entities responsible for gathering the data necessary for mass surveillance. As a result, the objects of surveillance become daily life, the space of relationships, communication (notably through electronic technologies), and transactions. There is not, of course, a total concatenation of the mechanisms of the market and those of the state. But in our contemporary world the liberal state is transformed into a *war power* at a time when, we now realize, capital not only remains fixed in a phase of primitive accumulation but also still leverages *racial subsidies* in its pursuit of profit.

In this context the citizen is redefined as both the subject and the beneficiary of surveillance, which now privileges the transcription of biological, genetic, and behavioral characteristics through digital imprints. In a new

technetronic regime characterized by miniaturization, dematerialization, and the fluid administration of state violence, imprints (fingerprints, scans of the iris and retina, forms of vocal and facial recognition) make it possible to measure and archive the uniqueness of individuals. The distinguishing parts of the human body become the foundations for new systems of identification, surveillance, and repression.[50] The security state conceives of identity and the movement of individuals (including its own citizens) as sources of danger and risk. But the generalized use of biometric data as a source of identification and for the automation of facial recognition constitutes a new type of populace, one predisposed toward distancing and imprisonment.[51] So it is that, in the context of the anti-immigration push in Europe, entire categories of the population are indexed and subjected to various forms of racial categorization that transform the immigrant (legal or illegal) into an essential category of difference.[52] This difference can be perceived as cultural or religious or linguistic. It is seen as inscribed in the very body of the migrant subject, visible on somatic, physiognomic, and even genetic levels.[53]

War and race have meanwhile become resurgent problems at the heart of the international order. The same is true of torture and the phenomenon of mass incarceration. It is not only that the line between war and peace has been blurred. War has become a "gigantic process of labor," while the military regime seeks to impose its own model on the "public order of the peace state."[54] While some citadels have collapsed, other walls have been strengthened.[55] As has long been the case, the contemporary world is deeply shaped and conditioned by the ancestral forms of religious, legal, and political life built around fences, enclosures, walls, camps, circles, and, above all, borders.[56] Procedures of differentiation, classification, and hierarchization aimed at exclusion, expulsion, and even eradication have been reinvigorated everywhere. New voices have emerged proclaiming, on the one hand, that there is no such thing as a universal human being or, on the other, that the universal is common to some human beings but not to all. Others emphasize the necessity for all to guarantee the safety of their own lives and homes by devoting themselves—and their ancestors and their memories, in one way or another—to the divine, a process that only subtracts them from historical interrogation and secures them completely and permanently within the walls of theology. Like the beginning of the nineteenth century, the beginning of the twenty-first constitutes, from this perspective, a significant moment of division, universal differentiation, and identity seeking.

The Noun "Black"

In these conditions the noun "Black"—which serves as the anchor for this book—is less polemical than it seems. In resuscitating a term that belongs to another era, that of early capitalism, I mean to question the fiction of unity that it carries within it. Already in his own time, James Baldwin had suggested that the Black Man (what he and other writers of his day called the Negro) was not at all easy to define in the abstract. Beyond ancestral links, there was very little evidence of an automatic unity between the Blacks of the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa. The presence of Blacks from the Caribbean in the United States, for example, dates from as early as the seventeenth century. During that period slaves arriving from Barbados represented a significant portion of the population of Virginia. Likewise, South Carolina was in many ways a subcolony of Barbados until the beginning of the eighteenth century. The number of Blacks from the Caribbean increased significantly after the Civil War, from 4,067 to 20,236 between 1850 and 1900. Most of the new arrivals were artisans, teachers, and preachers, but they also included lawyers and doctors.[57] Afro-Caribbeans made a key contribution to Black internationalism and the rise of radicalism in the United States and Africa. But the various conflicts that accompanied these processes laid bare the distance that often separated the Blacks of North America and those of the islands.[58]

The Blacks of North America and the Caribbean came to know Africa first as a form of difference.[59] Most of the Black thinkers of the period claimed both their Africanness and their Americanness. There were very few separatists.[60] Even though they constituted an undesirable minority in the country of their birth, the Blacks of the United States belonged to an American "we," to a subculture that was at once fundamentally American and *lumpen*-Atlantic. This led to the development of the motif of double consciousness, which among authors like Ralph Ellison could lead to a refusal to recognize any filiation with Africa.[61] Africa was a drypoint print of a reality that was unknowable—a hyphen, a suspension, a discontinuity. And those who traveled to Africa or chose to live there never felt at home, assailed as they were by the continent's strangeness, by its devouring character.[62] Their encounters with the Blacks of Africa from the first constituted an encounter with *another's other*.[63]

That said, a long tradition of coidentification and of *mutual concern* characterized the relationship of Blacks beyond their dispersion.[64] In his "letter" concerning "the Relations and Duties of Free Colored Men in America to Africa," Alexander Crummell started from the principle of a community of kinship linking Africa to its "children" and "sons" living in "foreign lands." By virtue of a relationship of kinship and filiation, he called on them to take advantage of their rights as inheritors. In his eyes at least, the right to inherit the cradle of their ancestors in no way contradicted their desire to belong fully to the "land of their birth," the United States. Claiming kinship with Africa and contributing to its regeneration was an act of self-love and self-respect. It was, he said, a way to get rid of the shroud that Blacks had carried from the depths of the tomb of slavery. Crummell's Africa had two characteristics. On the one hand, it was an amputated member of humanity. Prostrated in idolatry and darkness, it lived awaiting revelation. On the other hand, Africa was the land of unfathomable natural riches. Its mineral riches were colossal. With the race to capture its treasures under way, its faraway sons should not exclude themselves from sharing in the spoils. Africa would emerge from its cave, out into the light of the world, through trade and evangelization. Its salvation would come from outside, through its transformation into a Christian state.[65]

Because of this mutual concern, the encounter between the Blacks of the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa was not only an encounter with another's other but also, in many cases, an encounter with *others of my kind*—a castrated humanity, a life that must at all costs be pulled out of the dungeon and that needed to be healed. In this encounter Africa was a transformative force, almost mythico-poetic—a force that referred constantly to a "time before" (that of subjection), a force that, it was hoped, would make it possible to transform and assimilate the past, heal the worst wounds, repair losses, make a new history out of old events, and, according to the words of Friedrich Nietzsche on another topic, "[rebuild] shattered forms out of one's self."[66]

But just beneath the surface of this constellation there was always another, carried by those who believed that Blacks would never find peace, rest, or liberty in America. For their own genius to flourish, they had to emigrate.[67] This constellation saw liberty and territory as indivisible. It was not enough to build one's own institutions in the context of worsening segregation, to acquire expertise and gain respectability, when the right

to citizenship was fundamentally contested, fragile, and reversible. It was necessary to have one's own state and to be able to defend it.[68] The vision of exodus was consolidated in particular between 1877 and 1900, within three different projects. The first was that of colonization, which had a racist dimension to the extent that it aimed, largely through the American Colonization Society, to rid America of its Black population by deporting Blacks to Africa. The second consisted of free emigration, spurred by the rise in violence and racial terrorism, particularly in the South. The third developed in the context of American expansionism between 1850 and 1900. Henry Blanton Parks, for example, considered that American Blacks and Africans formed two distinct races. As a result of their prolonged contact with civilization, American Blacks were more evolved than the natives of Africa.[69] The latter had, on the other hand, preserved a primal power. Combined with what American Blacks brought home to Africa from their centuries of accommodation with civilization, this power would reanimate the virility of the Black race as a whole.[70]

On one level, then, Black reason consists of a collection of voices, pronouncements, discourses, forms of knowledge, commentary, and nonsense, whose object is things or people "of African origin." It is affirmed as their name and their truth (their attributes and qualities, their destiny and its significance as an empirical portion of the world). Composed of multiple strata, this form of reason dates at least from the time of antiquity. Numerous works have focused on its Greek, Arab, Egyptian, and even Chinese roots.[71] From the beginning, its primary activity was fantasizing. It consisted essentially in gathering real or attributed traits, weaving them into histories, and creating images. The modern age, however, was a decisively formative moment for Black reason, owing, on the one hand, to the accounts of travelers, explorers, soldiers, adventurers, merchants, missionaries, and settlers and, on the other, to the constitution of a "colonial science" of which "Africanism" is the last avatar. A range of intermediaries and institutions—scholarly societies, universal exhibitions, museums, amateur collections of "primitive art"—contributed to the development of this reason and its transformation into common sense and a habitus.

Black reason was not only a system of narratives and discourses with academic pretensions but also the reservoir that provided the justifications for the arithmetic of racial domination. It was, admittedly, not completely devoid of a concern for the truth. But its function was first and foremost

to codify the conditions for the appearance and the manifestation of a *racial subject* that would be called the Black Man and, later, within colonialism, the Native (*L'indigène*). ("Who is he?" "How does one recognize him?" "What differentiates him from us?" "Can he become like us?" "How should we govern him and to what end?")[72] In this context "Black reason" names not only a collection of discourses but also practices—the daily work that consisted in inventing, telling, repeating, and creating variations on the formulas, texts, and rituals whose goal was to produce the Black Man as a racial subject and site of savage exteriority, who was therefore set up for moral disqualification and practical instrumentalization. We can call this founding narrative the *Western consciousness of Blackness*. In seeking to answer the question "Who is he?" the narrative seeks to name a reality exterior to it and to situate that reality in relationship to an *I* considered to be the center of all meaning. From this perspective, anything that is not identical to that *I* is abnormal.

This founding narrative was in reality a constellation in perpetual reconfiguration over time. It always took on multiple, contradictory, and divergent forms. In response came a second narrative, one that saw itself as a gesture of self-determination, a way of being present to oneself and looking inward, and as a form of utopian critique. The second narrative answered a series of questions of a new kind, again posed in the first person singular: "Who am I?" "Am I, in truth, what people say I am?" "Is it true that I am nothing more than *that*—what I appear to be, what people see me as and say of me?" "What is my real social status, my real history?"[73] If the Western consciousness of the Black Man is an *identity judgment*, this second narrative is, in contrast, a *declaration of identity*. Through it the Black Man affirms of himself that he is that which cannot be captured or controlled; the one who is not where they say he is, and even less where they are looking for him. Rather, he exists where he is not thought.[74]

The written work of the second narrative had a series of distinctive traits that are worth briefly recalling. It sought, above all, to create an archive. If Blacks were to reclaim their history, the foundation of an archive was the first step. The historical experiences of Blacks did not necessarily leave traces, and where they were produced, they were not always preserved. How could one write history in the absence of the kinds of traces that serve as sources for historiographical fact? Very early, it became clear that the history of Blacks could be written only from fragments brought together

to give an account of an experience that itself was fragmented, that of a pointillist people struggling to define itself not as a disparate composite but as a community whose blood stains the entire surface of modernity.

Such writing sought, furthermore, to create community, one forged out of debris from the four corners of the world. In the Western Hemisphere, the reality was that a group of slaves and free people of color lived for the most part in the gray zones of a nominal citizenship, within states that celebrated liberty and democracy but remained foundationally slave states. Across the period, the writing of history had a performative dimension. The structure of the performance was in many ways theological. The goal was, in effect, to write a history for the descendants of slaves that reopened the possibility for them to become agents of history itself.[75] During the period of Emancipation and Reconstruction, the act of writing history was conceived more than ever as an act of moral imagination. The ultimate historical gesture consisted in enacting the journey from the status of a slave to that of a citizen *like all others*. The new community of freed peoples saw itself as linked by common faith and certain ideas of work and respectability, by moral duty, solidarity, and obligation.[76] Yet this moral identity took shape in the context of segregation, extreme violence, and racial terror.[77]

The declaration of identity that is characteristic of the second narrative was, however, based on profound ambiguity. Although its authors wrote in the first person and in a mode of self-possession, they, as subjects, were haunted by the idea that they had become strangers to themselves. They nevertheless sought to assume their responsibility to the world by creating a foundation for themselves.[78] On the horizon was full and complete participation in the empirical history of liberty, an indivisible liberty at the heart of "global humanity."[79] That is the other side of Black reason—the place where writing seeks to exorcise the demon of the first narrative and the structure of subjection within it, the place where writing struggles to evoke, save, activate, and reactualize original experience (tradition) and find the truth of the self no longer outside of the self but standing on its own ground.

There are profound disjunctures but also undeniable solidarities between the second narrative and the first narrative it sought to refute. The second was traversed by the traces, marks, and incessant buzzing of the first and, in certain cases, its dull injunction and its myopia, even where the claim

of rupture was most forceful. Let us call this second narrative the *Black consciousness of Blackness*. It nevertheless had its own characteristics. Literary, biographical, historical, and political, it was the product of a polyglot internationalism.[80] It was born in the great cities of the United States and the Caribbean, then in Europe, and later in Africa. Ideas circulated within a vast global network, producing the modern Black imaginary.[81] The creators of the imaginary were often people in motion, crossing constantly from one continent to another. At times involved in American and European cultural and political life, they participated in the intellectual globalization of their epoch.[82]

Black consciousness of Blackness was also the fruit of a long history of radicalism, nourished by struggles for abolition and against capitalism.[83] Over the course of the nineteenth century in particular, this resistance was to a large extent driven by international anarchism, the principal vehicle for opposition movements against capitalism, slavery, and imperialism. But it was also carried forward by a number of humanitarian and philanthropic currents in whose struggles, as Paul Gilroy reminds us, lay the foundation for an alternative genealogy of human rights.[84] The content of the second narrative was most of all marked by the efforts of people subjected to colonization and segregation who sought to free themselves from racial hierarchy. The intelligentsia among them developed forms of collective consciousness that, even as they embraced the epistemology of class struggle itself, attacked the ontological assumptions that resulted from the production of racial subjects.[85]

The notion of Black reason, then, refers to different sides of the same framework, the same constellation. It refers, moreover, to a dispute or a conflict. Historically, the conflict over blackness has been inseparable from the question of our modernity. The name raises a question that has to do, first of all, with the relationship of what we call "man" with animals, and therefore the relationship of reason to instinct. The expression "Black Reason" refers to a collection of deliberations concerning the distinction between the impulse of the animal and the *ratio* of man, the Black Man being living proof of the impossibility of such a separation. For, if we follow a certain tradition of Western metaphysics, the Black Man is a "man" who is not really one of us, or at least not like us. Man distinguishes himself from animality, but this is not the case for the Black Man, who maintains within himself, albeit with a certain degree of ambiguity, animal possi-

bility. A foreign body in our world, he is inhabited—under cover—by the animal. To debate Black reason is therefore to return to the collection of debates regarding the rules of how to define the Black Man: how he is recognized, how one identifies the animal spirit that possesses him, under which conditions the *ratio* penetrates and governs the *animalitas*.

Second, the expression "Black Reason" turns our attention to the technologies (laws, regulations, rituals) that are deployed—as well as the devices that are put in place—with the goal of submitting animality to measurement. Such calculation aims ultimately to inscribe the animal within the circle of extraction. Yet the attempt at inscription is inevitably paradoxical. On the one hand, it requires that the price of that which simply *is* (facticity)—but which carries no price, or only ever a potential price, since it has been emptied of value—be measured and calculated. On the other hand, the operation makes clear how difficult it is to measure the incalculable. The difficulty flows partly from the fact that the *thing* that must be calculated is part of the ontological—what thought itself cannot think, even as it demands to be thought, as if in a vacuum. Finally, the term refers to what, in principle, requires no explanation because it is off the books, unaccountable, part of an antieconomy. There is no need to justify it because it creates nothing. Moreover, there is no need to offer an account of it since, strictly speaking, it is not based on law, and no calculation as such can ever guarantee its exact price or value.

Appearances, Truth, and Simulacrum

When we say the word "race," what do we really mean? It is not enough to say that race itself has no essence; that it is nothing more than "the effect, profile, or cut" of a perpetual process of power, of "incessant transactions" that modify, displace, and shift its meaning; or that, having no guts because it has no insides, it consists only of the practices that constitute it as such.[86] It is not enough, furthermore, to affirm that it is a complex of microdeterminations, an internalized effect of the Other's gaze and a manifestation of secret, unfulfilled beliefs and desires.[87] On the one hand, race and racism are part of the fundamental process of the unconscious. In that respect they relate to the impasses of human desire—to appetites, affects, passions, fears. They symbolize above all the memory of a lost original desire, or of a trauma whose causes often have nothing to do with the

person who is the victim of racism. On the other hand, race is not only the result of an optical effect. It is not only a part of the world of the senses. It is also a way of anchoring and affirming power. It is above all a specular reality and impulsive force. For it to operate as affect, impulse, and speculum, race must become image, form, surface, figure, and—especially—a structure of the imagination. And it is as a structure of the imagination that it escapes the limitations of the concrete, of what is sensed, of the finite, even as it participates within and manifests itself most immediately through the senses. Its power comes from its capacity to produce schizophrenic objects constantly, peopling and repeopling the world with substitutes, beings to point to, to break, in a hopeless attempt to support a failing *I*.

Race and racism also have the fundamental characteristic of always inciting and engendering a double, a substitute, an equivalent, a mask, a simulacrum. A real human face comes into view. The work of racism consists in relegating it to the background or covering it with a veil. It replaces this face by calling up, from the depths of the imagination, a ghost of a face, a simulacrum of a face, a silhouette that replaces the body and face of a human being. Racism consists, most of all, in substituting what *is* with something else, with another reality. It has the power to distort the real and to fix affect, but it is also a form of psychic derangement, the mechanism through which the repressed suddenly surfaces. When the racist sees a Black person, he does not see that the Black person is not there, does not exist, and is just a sign of a pathological fixation on the absence of a relationship. We must therefore consider race as being both beside and beyond being. It is an operation of the imagination, the site of an encounter with the shadows and hidden zones of the unconscious.

I have emphasized that racism is a site of reality and truth—the truth of appearances. But it is also a site of rupture, of effervescence and effusion. The truth of individuals who are assigned a race is at once elsewhere and within the appearances assigned to them. They exist behind appearance, underneath what is perceived. But they are also constituted by the very act of assigning, the process through which certain forms of infralife are produced and institutionalized, indifference and abandonment justified, the part that is human in the other violated or occulted through forms of internment, even murder, that have been made acceptable. Foucault, dealing with racism and its inscription in the mechanisms of the state and power, noted in this regard that "the modern State can scarcely function

without becoming involved with racism at some point, within certain limits and subject to certain conditions." Race or racism, "in a normalizing society," he noted, "is the precondition that makes killing acceptable." He concludes, "Once the State functions in the biopower mode, racism alone can justify the murderous functions of the State."[88]

The people to whom race is assigned are not passive. Imprisoned in a silhouette, they are separated from their essence. According to Fanon, one of the reasons for their unhappiness is that their existence consists in inhabiting the separation as if it were their real being, in hating what they are and seeking to be what they are not. The critique of race is, from this perspective, more than a simple critique of separation. The *racial theater* is a space of systematic stigmatization. The call to race or the invocation of race, notably on the part of the oppressed, is the emblem of an essentially obscure, shadowy, and paradoxical desire—the desire for community.[89] Such a desire is obscure, shadowy, and paradoxical because it is doubly inhabited by melancholia and mourning, and by a nostalgia for an archaic *that* which is always doomed to disappear. The desire is at once worry and anxiety—linked to the possibility of extinction—and a project. Moreover, it is the language of bemoaning, and of a mourning that rebels in its own name. It articulates itself around, and creates itself by circumventing, a terrible memory, the memory of a body, a voice, a face, and a name that, if not completely lost, have at least been violated and dirtied, and that must at all costs be rescued and rehabilitated.[90]

For Blacks confronted with the reality of slavery, loss is first of a genealogical order. In the New World, the Black slave is legally stripped of all kinship. Slaves are, in consequence, "without parents." The condition of *kinlessness* is imposed on them through law and power. And eviction from the world of legal kinship is an inherited condition. Birth and descent afford them no right to any form of social relationship or belonging as such.[91] In such conditions the invocation of race or the attempt to constitute a racial community aims first to forge ties and open up space in which to stand, to respond to a long history of subjugation and biopolitical fracturing. Aimé Césaire and the poets of Negritude, for example, made the exaltation of the "Black race" a tremendous cry whose function was to save from total decay what had been condemned to insignificance.[92] As conjuration, announcement, and protest, the cry expressed the will of the enslaved and the colonized to escape resignation, to *form a body*, to

produce themselves as a free and sovereign community, ideally through their own work and achievements. They sought to make themselves their own points of origin, their own certainty, and their own destination in the world.[93]

We can therefore say of the invocation of race that it is born from a feeling of loss, from the idea that the community has suffered a separation, that it is threatened with extermination, and that it must at all costs be rebuilt by reconstituting a thread of continuity beyond time, space, and dislocation.[94] From this perspective, the call to race (which is different from racial assignation) is a way of resurrecting the immolated corpse that had been buried and severed from the links of blood, soil, institutions, rites, and symbols that made it a living being. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this was the meaning of the call to race in Black discourse. At times the call became a search for original purity or a desire for absolute separation. Such was the case for Marcus Garvey, for example. At other times it was more the expression of a will to escape the principle of immolation and sacrifice. And in other cases it was a response to a desire for protection in the face of the threat of disappearance, an instinct for survival and preservation. The goal was to imagine and create a different space, where isolation would guarantee protection. Safety would require a redistribution of feeling and affect, of perception and speech. Whatever the case, the racial community was a community founded on the memory of a loss—a community of the kinless. It was a "community of loss" in the way that Jean-Luc Nancy, dealing with community in general, has defined it: a space inseparable from death, since it is precisely through death that community reveals itself.[95]

Finally, race is one of the raw materials from which difference and *surplus*—a kind of life that can be wasted and spent without limit—are produced. It does not matter that race does not actually exist as such, and not only because of the extraordinary genetic homogeneity of human beings. It continues to produce its effects of mutilation because from the beginning it is, and always will be, that for which and in whose name the hyphens at the center of society are created, warlike relationships established, colonial relationships regulated, and people distributed and locked up. The lives and presence of such people are considered symptoms of a delimited condition. Their belonging is contested because, according to the classifications in place, they represent a surplus. Race is an instrumen-

tality that makes it possible both to name the surplus and to commit it to waste and unlimited spending. It is what makes it acceptable to categorize abstractly in order to stigmatize, disqualify morally, and eventually imprison or expel. It is the mechanism through which a group is reified. On the basis of this reification, someone becomes their master, determining their fate in a way that requires neither explanation nor justification. We can therefore compare the work of race to a sacrificial cut, the kind of act for which one does not have to answer. A dead-letter address—this is precisely what in our modern world the principle of race oversees, producing its targets as complete signs of radical exteriority.

The Logic of Enclosure

Historically, race has always been a more or less coded way of dividing and organizing a multiplicity, of fixing and distributing it according to a hierarchy, of allocating it to more or less impermeable spaces according to a *logic of enclosure*. Such was the case under the regimes of segregation. It does not much matter that, in the age of security, race is expressed through the sign of religion or culture. Race is what makes it possible to identify and define population groups in a way that makes each of them carriers of differentiated and more or less shifting risk.

In this context the processes of racialization aim to mark population groups, to fix as precisely as possible the limits within which they can circulate, and to determine as exactly as possible which sites they can occupy—in sum, to limit circulation in a way that diminishes threats and secures general safety. The goal is to sort population groups, to mark them simultaneously as "species," "classes," and "cases" through a generalized calculation of risk, chance, and probability. It is all to prevent the dangers inherent in their circulation and, if possible, to neutralize them in advance through immobilization, incarceration, or deportation. Race, from this perspective, functions as a security device based on what we can call the principle of the biological rootedness of the species. The latter is at once an ideology and a technology of governance.

This was the case under the regime of the plantation, at the time of apartheid, and in the colony. In each case, race served to assign living beings characteristics that permitted their distribution into such and such a box on the great chart of human species. But it also participated in a

bioeconomy. Race reconciled masses, classes, and populations, respectively the legacies of natural history, biology, and political economy. Work and the production of wealth were inseparable from the problems specific to life and population, the regulation of movement and displacement—in short, the processes of circulation and capture. And the processes of circulation and capture constituted a central dimension of both the technologies of security and the mechanisms that inscribed people within differentiated juridical systems.

As phenomena, racism and the phobia of others share a great deal. Racist logic supports a high degree of baseness and stupidity. As Georges Bataille noted, it implies a form of cowardice—that of the man who "attributes to some external sign a value that has no meaning other than his own fears, his guilty conscience and his need to burden others, through hatred, with the deadweight of horror inherent in our condition"; he added that men "hate, it would seem, to the same extent that they are themselves to be hated."[96] It is false to think that racist logic is only a symptom of class warfare, or that class struggle is the final word regarding the "social question." Race and racism are certainly linked to antagonisms based on the economic structure of society. But it is not true that the transformation of the structure leads ineluctably to the disappearance of racism. For a large part of modern history, race and class have coconstituted one another. The plantation and colonial systems were the factories par excellence of race and racism. The "poor Whites" in particular depended on cultivating differences that separated them from Blacks to give themselves the sense of being human. The racist subject sees the humanity in himself not by accounting for what makes him similar to others but by accounting for what makes him different. The logic of race in the modern world cuts across social and economic structures, impacts the movements within them, and constantly metamorphoses.

As a slave, the Black Man represents one of the troubling figures of our modernity, and in fact constitutes its realm of shadow, of mystery, of scandal. As a human whose name is disdained, whose power of descent and generation has been foiled, whose face is disfigured, and whose work is stolen, he bears witness to a mutilated humanity, one deeply scarred by iron and alienation. But precisely through the damnation to which he is condemned, and because of the possibilities for radical insurgency that he nevertheless contains and that are never fully annihilated by the mecha-

nisms of servitude, he represents a kind of silt of the earth, a silt deposited at the confluence of half-worlds produced by the dual violence of race and capital. The enslaved, fertilizers of history and subjects beyond subjection, authored a world that reflects this dark contradiction. Operating in the bottoms of slave ships, they were the first coal shovelers of our modernity. And if there is one thing that haunts modernity from beginning to end, it is the possibility of that singular event, the "revolt of the slaves." A slave uprising signals not only liberation but also radical transformation, if not of the system of property and labor itself, then at least of the mechanisms of its redistribution and so of the foundations for the reproduction of life itself.

18 See Stephen Graham, *Cities under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (London: Verso, 2010); Derek Gregory, "From a View to a Kill: Drones and the Late Modern War," *Theory, Culture and Society* 28, nos. 7–8 (2011): 188–215; Ben Anderson, "Facing the Future Enemy: U.S. Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Pre-insurgent," *Theory, Culture and Society* 28, nos. 7–8 (2011): 216–40; and Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).

19 Alain Badiou, "La Grèce, les nouvelles pratiques impériales et la ré-invention de la politique," *Lignes*, n. 39 (2012): 39–47; see also Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40; Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007); Adi Ophir, Michal Givoni, and Sari Ḥanafi, *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (New York: Zone Books, 2009); and Weizman, *Hollow Land*.

20 David H. Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009); Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* (New York: Nation Books, 2007); John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Grégoire Chamayou, *Théorie du drone* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2013).

21 Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, trans. J. D. Jordan (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012).

22 Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

23 See in particular the poetry of Aimé Césaire. On the thematic of the salt of the earth, see Édouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau, *L'intraitable beauté du monde: Adresse à Barack Obama* (Paris: Galaade, 2009).

24 Éric Fassin, *Démocratie précaire: Chroniques de la déraison d'état* (Paris: La Découverte, 2012); and Didier Fassin, ed., *Les nouvelles frontières de la société française* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010).

One The Subject of Race

1 James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name* (New York: First Vintage International, 1993).

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Two **The Well of Fantasies**

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