

## Chapter Two

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### The Black Panthers and the “Undeveloped Country” of the Left

Nikhil Pal Singh

#### I. America, the 1960s, and the Panthers

*[T]he 1968–9 period represents a watershed: the whole fulcrum of society turns and the country enters, not a temporary and passing rupture, but a prolonged and continuous state of semi-siege. Its meaning and causes then, and its consequences since, have been neither fully reckoned with, nor liquidated. The political polarization which it precipitated fractured society into two camps: authority and its “enemies.” This spectacle mesmerized the right, the center and the apolitical, precisely because it refused to assume the recognized forms of classical class conflict and the politics associated with it. But it also marked the left; and its legacies remain, active and unexorcised in the spectrum of radical and revolutionary politics to this day.*

—Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*

In discussions of the 1960s in the United States, the year 1968 figures prominently in defining the period and its consequences. The decade of the 1960s encompassed urban rebellions; the murders of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy; Lyndon Johnson’s abdication; the siege of Chicago in 1967–68; “festivals of the oppressed” (and not-so oppressed) at Woodstock and elsewhere in 1968–69; and ended with the largest student protests against the Vietnam war, killings at Kent State, and the Attica uprising and massacre in 1970–71. Nineteen Sixty-eight marks the culmination of this turbulent, if not revolutionary time. As the cultural and political flood tide of the 1960s, 1968 encapsulates the social anxiety and the political symbols of the decade. This is the moment, we are told, when the nation actually divided; these were the “days of rage” and “revolutionary suicide,” a time of urban guerrillas, prison revolts, hippies and yuppies, and, of course, the ever present specter of the repressive state—the FBI and its COINTELPRO program.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, the dizzying imagery and abundant metaphors can easily blind us to the ongoing struggle over the meaning of these increasingly distant social movements and political conflicts. In most accounts of the 1960s, 1968

actually has the proportions of myth and apotheosis, frequently in the form of a cautionary tale. Like other retrospective constructions, the story is necessarily ideological, a mobilizing of the resources of history and memory in political struggles for cultural authority and political legitimacy in the present. Thus, on the right, it is imagined that the politics of 1968 are ascendant in American culture, with tenured radicals leading an assault on the citadels of Western civilization and with countercultural preoccupations eroding the national character. The political center, meanwhile, pays homage to a hollow multiculturalism and rests assured that the political struggles and revolutionary hopes of the late 1960s were little more than the fads of youth with their enduring commodity value the surest alibi of measured retrospection. Finally, a putative left, ever in search of a "usable past" and a critical understanding of its failures, finds in 1968 the origins of its decline and bitterly debates the causes and consequences.

The historiography of the 1960s, of course, is significantly more complicated and contested than this brief summary admits. Nonetheless, at least on the left, a narrative of decline has become more dominant. As Alice Echols points out, this story tends to "dichotomize the decade into the 'good' and the 'bad' sixties," and in doing so places the preoccupations of White male New Leftists at the center as "representative of 'the sixties'" as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Echols and others have resisted subordination to a singular narrative of left emergence and decline<sup>3</sup> by mapping the different historical trajectories of the various "subaltern counter publics" that crystallized during the decade. For many of the self-declared founders of the New Left, the late or so-called bad sixties has been clearly repudiated as a series of deviations from the solid, participatory democratic—"in the American grain"—radicalism that flourished during the early years, particularly under the auspices of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).<sup>4</sup>

Todd Gitlin and Tom Hayden, two influential New Left figures, for example, argue that the liberatory potential of the 1960s was foreclosed when SDS disintegrated in 1968–69, which they attribute to revolutionary posturing and sectarianism and to the divisions opened within the left by the Black power movement and radical feminism. Thus Hayden, while acknowledging his own political debts to the Southern civil rights struggles of the early period, suggests that the identity obsessions and political extremism of the late 1960s destroyed the more productive and practical (so-called good sixties) legacy of coalition politics rooted in a redemptive vision of the nation as a "beloved community."<sup>5</sup> More pointedly, Gitlin condemns what he calls "the bogey of race," claiming that the radical coalition was bullied into making misguided, unstrategic concessions to Black militants, in particular the Black Panthers, whose violent rhetoric and vanguardist politics in various ways hastened the implosion of the wider movement, what Gitlin, in another context, calls "the crack-up of the universalist New Left."<sup>6</sup>

Often what lurks beneath these glib, though characteristic, denunciations of the political excesses of the period is a more basic premise, namely, that meaningful social struggles must necessarily aspire to some form of hegemonic address. Following from this view, the specific argument is that broadly intelligible and effective political discourse in the United States, radical or otherwise, conforms, in one way or another, to the dictates of American universalism, populism, and patriotism. All three are said to have characterized the early New Left and Civil Rights movement, and, according to many New Left historians and critics, these elements have been central to every historically consequential example of American radicalism.<sup>7</sup> This claim is perversely bolstered by the success of Reaganism in the 1980s, which is seen to have effectively mobilized the resentments of the White working class (which somehow remains the benchmark of any "real" politics and the true subject of history). One implication of this argument is that the left itself should inhabit the political languages and traditions of American populism in order to fashion a hegemonic appeal and build mass support. Central to this position, finally, is a critique of minority discourses and radical, cultural politics, including forms of "ultra-left" internationalism and anti-imperialism. Minority discourses are deemed too narrow, particularistic, and subjective; and anti-imperialism and internationalism are said to have distracted from the difficult work of politics at home.<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, the desire to valorize a kind of Jeffersonian legacy of patriotic radicalism for the left is difficult to distinguish from a more conventional neoliberal or neoconservative position that combines wholesale criticism of the movements of the 1960s with an attack on the excesses of contemporary identity politics, especially on questions of race and racial difference. Fashioning itself again as a neopopulism, proponents of this view tend disingenuously to invoke class politics in order to cast aside any explicitly antiracist initiative. Here, as the story goes, the sixties took a fatal turn when White leftists and liberals went soft on race, that is, on the sunglass-wearing Black militants, and hard on class, that is, on the hard-hats and White ethnics (known more colloquially in our time as the "Reagan democrats"). Remarkably, commentators from a range of political positions have come to the same overarching conclusion: the heightening of antiracist militancy hastened the disintegration of fragile political coalitions, alienated a "silent majority" of Americans, initiated a justifiable "backlash" against civil rights reforms, and helped to undermine the urgent project of Black bootstrap self-discipline and progress.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, although the Civil Rights movement or the early New Left may be credited with significant, and even inspiring gains, the later movement is said to have failed because of its tendency to divide both the official and oppositional public spheres, which can be attributed to the word-mongering and separatist inclinations of Black militants, uncritical support for revolutionary movements around the world, and the masochism, even slavishness,

of White radicals and liberals in the face of militant Black demands. This viewpoint has made strange bedfellows of rightist, centrist, and left-wing commentators who see themselves as the defenders of a singular and unified public sphere defined by codes of liberal civility against a late-1960s legacy of flag-burning, bra-burning, and “burn-baby-burn” rhetoric. More important, despite their otherwise significant political differences, such critics are united in the core belief that the American nation–state form is the necessary horizon of social struggle, communal identification, and historical becoming. To paraphrase Benedict Anderson, perhaps more than anything else, these commentators share in imagining that the nation is in fact *a community*, one that must be defended against those who would challenge or subvert its centrality as the primary arena of political affiliation, contestation, and hope.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, it is telling that even those who argue that American racial struggles were central to the rejuvenation, if not the wholesale reinvention of American radicalism in the 1960s, reject the revolutionary instances of Black power for similar reasons. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, for example, herald the emergence of Black power as a “great transformation” in American politics, one that inaugurates a “new politics of social movements.” Nevertheless, they criticize what they regard as its indulgences and aberrations, in particular, that some Black radicals tried to adapt a political analysis of colonial societies to American conditions and as a consequence failed to grasp the “uniqueness and complexities of American racial ideology or politics.”<sup>11</sup> This violation of the cardinal rule of America’s racial/political exceptionalism is important because it is at the center of their version of the generalized account of 1960s political failings, in which Black power militants are viewed as the implicit or explicit cause of the disintegration of an imagined potentially more promising, national popular struggle:

Some organizations became romantically fascinated by Third World revolutionary movements whose lessons were largely *irrelevant to U.S. conditions*. This fragmentation resulted in the absence of a *unified politics* and in the inability to define a *coherent political subject* [emphasis added].<sup>12</sup>

Although Omi and Winant are either too polite or cautious to cite names, more determined revisionists have not been as reluctant to identify the source of their animus. In particular, the Black Panthers and the Black Panther Party have an odd centrality when it comes to filling the blank and definitively stating the wrong turn taken around 1968. Critics, scholars, and former movement participants have joined together, taking their cues from flippant conservatives like Tom Wolfe, in assailing the Panthers for crimes ranging from racial intimidation to “radical chic.”<sup>13</sup> Paradoxically, it is the centrality and influence of the Panthers within the spectrum of oppositional theories and practices of the late 1960s that is subject to the most derision, even as the Panthers’ actual role during the 1960s—yet to be the subject of

a comprehensive or rigorous historical account—is frequently rendered in an anecdotal, almost offhand manner. Nonetheless, more than any other 1960s actors, the Panthers seem to epitomize the irrationalist racial militancy and political extremism that are said to have hastened the left’s disintegration and the onset of the so-called White backlash. It is in this sense that they have been consistently privileged figures in what I call the national allegory of 1968.<sup>14</sup>

To be sure, there remain a few stalwart dissenters who continue to portray the Black Panthers as they imagined themselves, namely, as the heroic vanguard of American youth and minority liberation movements, who were the primary targets and victims of a campaign of state repression and terror throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. Invariably these accounts acknowledge the Panthers’ social legacy, the justly famous survival programs—the free breakfast programs for children, *The Black Panther* newspaper, and political education classes—which then heightens the moral and emotional power of the story of their victimization at the hands of the state. Yet in many ways, accounts that cling to the image of the Black Panthers as the 1960s ultimate martyrs mirror those that vilify them. In the end, the single-minded emphasis on the state’s violent campaign against the Party and its leaders rests on a similar reductionism, one that continues to inhibit historical investigation of the Panthers as a social movement or a critical reassessment of their cultural and political significance.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, in both instances, the case of the Panthers condenses many prevailing assumptions about the failures of liberation politics in America 1968. Ironically, this represents an extension of the way the (predominantly White) student left, along with the national media, superficially embraced and elevated the Party during the late 1960s. The views are structurally similar in that they accept at face value the idea that the Black Panthers are the privileged signifier of Black militancy writ large, along with all of its feared or longed for radical or subversive energies. Thus, the Black Panther becomes a kind of political “crossover” artist, mediating both official and oppositional relationships to the cultures of Black liberation, even as the more complex history and significance of Black radical traditions in the United States (and the Panthers’ place within them) is left unwritten and unexplored. In this sense, the revolutionary synthesis that the Panthers embodied, though now the subject of resentful disappointment, ridicule, or lamentations about what might have been, remains caught in inflated, though essentially superficial terms, the taken-for-granted origin for a tale of decline, defeat, and woe.<sup>16</sup>

The paradox whereby the Panthers are symbolically central and yet historiographically underdeveloped may also be a function of the more general, ambivalent constitution of Black liberatory aspirations within the history of radical and reformist movements in the United States. In the late 1960s, in the context of colonial warfare and omnipresent and sustained

racial oppression, the Panthers were the group who most definitively questioned who was best positioned to speak on behalf of radical, social transformation in America. To offer my own reading of the allegory, I suggest that the historical and personal memory that filters contemporary understandings of the 1960s is marked by what might be described as a "Panther effect," where the figure of the Black Panthers evokes the catastrophic sense of America's permanent racial chasm itself. Given that this historic blind-spot on the old dream of Jeffersonian democracy and national popular politics has been so doggedly rationalized and concealed since the end of the 1960s in mystifying discussions of racial backlash, social and political fragmentation, and the so-called underclass, it is not surprising that the Panthers continue to haunt the radical and progressive imagination as a sign of the revolution betrayed, or defeated.

Generally, the evocation of trauma and failure is depicted as a question of who was the most violent during the 1960s, a discussion that proceeds as if violence is something transparent, rather than a concept in need of careful contextualization and theorization. Indeed, many accounts confirm this by regularly sliding between a condemnation of Panther gunplay and criticism of their militant or violent rhetoric, as if these are the same thing, or as if one automatically produces the other. This collapse of politics and poetics spurs obsessional efforts at adjudication, at sorting out the innocent from the guilty, the victims from the villains, and deciding where the Panthers finally fall. The irony of this is that while the Panthers' rhetoric is often dismissed as inflated, overheated, and out of touch, it invariably returns as the implicit cause and/or emblem of an all-too-real body count that effectively ends the discussion. What has resulted is a flattening and even erasure of the richness and ambiguity of the Panthers' racial and political self-fashioning, along with a more careful analysis and differentiation of the manifest and symbolic forms of violence that they both deployed and confronted.<sup>17</sup>

Since the 1989 drug-related murder of Huey P. Newton, cofounder of the Black Panther Party, there has been a spate of commentary, discussion, and writing that has again opened many troubling questions about the complex legacy of the Panthers. Recent memoirs by former Party leaders David Hilliard and Elaine Brown are self-conscious, critical portraits of the often brutal life in the Party, though as autobiography both works are sometimes skewed by an overt desire for personal exoneration and vindication.<sup>18</sup> This is hardly surprising given the overwhelming tendency of recent scholarship to indict the Panthers and everything they stand for. In fact, the most serious critics of the 1960s have been at the forefront of a veritable anti-Panther crusade. The best example of this is the work of David Horowitz and Peter Collier, Panther fellow-travelers during the 1960s, who now use the case of the Panthers as the occasion for their own second thoughts about their previous political commitments. For these conservative converts and many others, the Panthers were not only cynical ghetto hucksters who put one over on

them, but were also the exemplars of Black nihilism, chauvinism, and lawlessness, and the progenitors of contemporary urban violence and crime.<sup>19</sup>

Yet the post-1960s reaction formations that now appear to dominate contemporary U.S. political culture may not be the most reliable starting points for reconstructing our sense of the meaning of the Panthers' political experiment. Hailing from the other side of the post-war political divide bisected by the 1960s, Black journalist William Gardner-Smith held a diametrically opposite view. Returning to what he calls "Black America" in 1968 after twenty years of self-imposed exile in Europe and Africa, Smith was astounded by the intensification of political militancy around the country and the Black radicalism that was its center: "The '67 revolts marked the entry of the tough ghetto youths into the race battle, and the existing organizations, led by intellectuals or the middle-class, could not cope with them—the Panthers had to be born."<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, with the important exception of the Nation of Islam, Smith believed that the Panthers were doing something that was unprecedented within the Black movement of the day, namely, organizing the frustrated, undisciplined, and sometimes ingenious Black men trapped by rural out-migration from the South into a state of permanent ghettoization and underemployment in the North. In the current conjuncture, what may be most worth reengaging in a discussion of the Panthers is the dramatic story of their attempts to politicize and reshape the frequently episodic and disjointed life-world of urban, Black subalterns by replacing the everyday violence and temporary fulfillments of hustling and surviving with a purposive framework for political action, motivation, and desire.<sup>21</sup>

Founded in Oakland in 1966, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was actually one of many Black nationalist groupings that sprang up in American cities during the latter half of the 1960s. Indeed, the Panthers must be viewed as a part of what Manning Marable calls the "fragmented nationalist tradition" of Black America, "a social movement that retains deep roots within the cultural and social arena of Black life, yet acquires prominence only under certain historical conjunctures."<sup>22</sup> The intensification of the Southern freedom struggle, urban crisis, antiwar protest, and anticolonial revolution in the Third World was such a conjuncture, and very soon the Black Panthers were among those who stood at the forefront of efforts to invent a revolutionary politics for urban America.

In his revealing account of the Party's origins, Bobby Seale describes how he and Huey Newton first began raising money for the Panthers by hawking copies of Mao Tse-Tung's *Red Book* in nearby Berkeley. According to Seale, Newton came up with the plan to sell the books at the university, believing that the idea of "Negroes with *Red Books*" would pique the curiosity of Berkeley's campus radicals and get them interested in supporting (and financing) the Panther Party.<sup>23</sup> The more important agenda, however, was to use the money to buy guns; for it was guns, Newton believed, that would

give Panthers the necessary street credibility and allow them to capture the imagination of their primary audience: Black youth in the ghettos of Oakland and Richmond, California.<sup>24</sup> The symbolic formula of the book and the gun would be remarkably successful in authenticating all future claims by the Panthers to the status of revolutionaries.

As news of the first armed confrontations between Newton and the police started to spread by word-of-mouth networks in the local Black communities, the Panthers gained almost immediate recognition as a leading Black militant organization, and their local membership base was quickly established. Within three years there were thirty Panther chapters, one in every major city, and a membership numbering in the thousands.<sup>25</sup> More significant, almost every Black revolutionary figure of the time either had substantial contact or active membership in the Party, including the celebrated former convict-turned-writer Eldridge Cleaver, SNCC leaders Stokely Carmichael (now Kwame Ture), H. Rap Brown, James Forman, radical Black intellectual Angela Davis, and prison-movement icon George Jackson. In addition, the Panthers forged a series of tenuous (and frequently short-lived) alliances with like-minded organizations, such as the Dodge Revolutionary Union movement, Chicano nationalist Brown Berets, the American Indian Movement, the Puerto Rican Young Lords, Students for a Democratic Society, and women's and gay liberation organizations. Combining a flair for dramatic actions with a creative synthesis of many of the central radical ideas and revolutionary postures of the time, by 1968–69 the Panthers were considered by many to be the exemplary revolutionary organization in the country and the one most explicitly identified with anti-imperialism and internationalism.<sup>26</sup>

Few would have imagined that the Black Panther Party (as it was renamed) would exert such an enormous influence upon the history of the 1960s, or that the Panther leaders and Party members would travel to the ends of the earth as recognized agents of an American revolutionary struggle. Yet as I have suggested, there has actually been very little consideration of the political dynamics and cultural logic of the Panthers' local and global appeal. In fact, it may be impossible to understand the emergence of the Panthers and Black liberation politics in America 1968 apart from questions of translocal and transnational intercultural transfer and exchange. In other words, rather than defining the Panthers within the sutured confines of the national allegory of 1968, it may be more revealing to view them in terms of what Arjun Appadurai defines as the "mediascapes, ethnoscapes and ideoscapes" of a properly postcolonial "global cultural economy."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the fact that policy elites and other official commentators noted with so much alarm that the 1960s "Black movement had as surprising a resonance abroad as at home" should point to obvious questions.<sup>28</sup> For the remarkable thing that remains to be considered is how a relatively small band of self-styled, revolutionary Black youth like the Panthers could assume national

and global importance in the first place. What was the meaning of their attempt to adapt the rhetoric of national liberation and the anticolonial struggle to U.S. urban, Black minority populations and advanced capitalist conditions? And finally, why did their own most novel and resonant articulations so clearly betray the desire to disarticulate, if not dismember, the nation? The remainder of this essay is an attempt to offer extended, if at times provisional, answers to these questions.

## II. Decolonizing America: Fanonism Reconsidered<sup>29</sup>

*Decolonization never takes place unnoticed for it transforms individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. —Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth*

Despite their initial rather narrow emphasis on policing and self-defense and the problem of Black communal autonomy, the Black Panther Party emerged in the midst of currents of revolutionary hope at home and abroad that led them to a more profound utopian purpose and mission. Significantly enough, this began with the Party leadership developing a thoroughgoing critique of the limits of nationalism—both the American nationalism of the mainstream Civil Rights movement and the forms of Black separatism and cultural nationalism espoused in different ways by their chief competitors for the allegiances of Black subalterns, the Nation of Islam, Maulana Karenga, and Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones).<sup>30</sup> The Panthers argued that the prevailing political and economic options presented to America's Black people were all inadequate. From a dead-end choice between low-wage work and crime, to the hollow and unrealistic promises of middle-class integration and uplift, to the fanciful or palliative notions of a separate Black economy or culture, the Panthers believed that no one had addressed the central problem, namely, the sustained imbrication and reproduction of racism within capitalist social and economic relations.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, the Panthers argued, Black nationalism and civil rights struggles each provided what were essentially "bourgeois" answers to the properly "revolutionary" needs of America's Black poor.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps more than any other intellectual and political issue, the members of the Panther Party, like C. L. R. James before them, attempted to define what they considered to be "the Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Question in the United States."<sup>33</sup> In contrast to James, however, the Panthers, along with many other Black radicals during the 1960s, believed that racism was such a deep and defining contradiction in American life that the idea of Blacks and Whites united in class struggle toward a socialist revolution was simply out of the question. The problem, as the Panthers understood it, was to define Black political subjectivity and a revolutionary sense of Black peoplehood in the context of the failure of middle-class and working-class struggles for integration and the impossibility of Black nationalist schemes



of separation. In the end, this dualism, which has structured Black American politics throughout the twentieth century, was one the Panthers straddled, albeit uneasily. They did so by blurring the two positions, by emphasizing separation and Black difference, not in terms of racially defined notions of Black nationhood, but as a question of highly localized, spatially defined demands for communal autonomy. They also emphasized integration and equality, not as a moment of entry into the American mainstream but as a commitment of solidarity with all those who defined America's margins and with all the victims of Americanism at home and around the world.

Like many other young Black power militants, the Panthers relentlessly criticized the older generation of integrationist elites for their accommodations to American nationalism and the state and for concealing intraracial class divisions among the agencies of the Black struggle.<sup>34</sup> Most important, the Panthers suggested that civil rights leaders had failed to grasp the main lesson of anti-imperialism, which was that the United States itself was not a nation into which Black people could be successfully integrated, but was an empire they needed to oppose—not a beloved community of shared traditions and aspirations—but a coercive state that needed to be overthrown. “We cannot be nationalists, when our country is not a nation, but an empire,” Huey Newton writes. “We have the historical obligation to take the concept of internationalism to its final conclusion—the destruction of statehood itself.”<sup>35</sup>

The Panthers reserved their most scathing criticism, however, for Black nationalists, especially those whom they derided as “pork-chop nationalists.”<sup>36</sup> Although the Panthers recognized that Black nationalists had frequently opposed the United States government, they felt that nationalists made a different kind of error from the Civil Rights movement in choosing separatism over solidarity. Not only was this choice self-defeating, it was also a profound misreading of the political and historical interrelationships of racial and national oppression in the United States and around the world. Thus, while organizations like Maulana Karenga's Us correctly viewed Black people as domestic victims of the American empire, they had also demonstrated their interest in becoming at least partial beneficiaries of that empire. Indeed, as the Panthers pointed out, the nationalist emphasis on Black culture and Black business and the ease with which these ideas were taken up by integrationist elites demonstrated the degree to which Black nationalism was not fundamentally aimed at transforming the power relations of American capitalism and the American state. That someone as odious as Richard Nixon could blithely celebrate “Black Power” in terms of Black capitalism was cause for suspicion and alarm and indicated the need for a more rigorous political analysis and practice.<sup>37</sup>

In defining themselves as “revolutionary nationalists” and true internationalists, the Panthers attempted to formulate a distinction between the nationalism of liberation and the nationalism of oppression and, in Newton's

words, “to reconcile support for revolutionary nationalism abroad, while disclaiming all forms of nationalism within the U.S. context as necessarily bound up with American oppression.”<sup>38</sup> In making this distinction, the Panthers self-consciously redefined their own quasi-nationalist politics in terms of anticolonialism by fashioning themselves in the flamboyant image of anticolonial revolutionaries like Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh and drawing upon a range of “resistance literature,” from the *Red Book* to *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the best way to describe the Panthers is as “resolute counternationalists”—men and women who believed themselves to be “inoculated against all national anthems.”<sup>40</sup> In this way, they embodied Black America's critical duality on questions of nationality and citizenship, looking simultaneously for a way into and a way out of the nation-state, as the latter was perceived both as a source of oppression, but also as the possibility of a subjecthood heretofore denied.<sup>41</sup>

Although the Panthers' adoption of a generalized Marxism and anticapitalism was important in this regard in legitimating them as revolutionaries, it was derivative of a more primary emphasis upon anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism. This is what produced the Party's extremely important, though troubled, alliance with the movement to stop the war in Vietnam, a stance that placed them at the center of a broad array of oppositional social forces. In fact, as one of the few Black radical groups willing to work closely with White radicals in the aftermath of the Civil Rights era, the Panthers became transmitters for struggles within the decolonizing world and for the appropriation and absorption of “third worldist politico-cultural models” across the spectrum of 1960s oppositional practices. It may actually be the case, as Frederic Jameson suggests, that the “entire progressive thrust of the '60s was predicated on precisely these kinds of political innovations: those that sought to bind support for “the great movements of decolonization in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean” with the demands of the “inner colonized” of the overdeveloped world.”<sup>42</sup> In a similar vein, Stuart Hall points out that it was largely through groups like the Panthers that the metaphor of “the third world” was transformed into a broad, politically generative signifier—not of a strictly geographical relationship—but of “a set of characteristic economic, social and cultural exploitative relations.”<sup>43</sup>

In developing their brand of “third worldism,” the Panthers turned to what was by far their most important ideological resource, the writings of Frantz Fanon.<sup>44</sup> Although Fanon has undergone something of a revival in recent years, especially in literary studies,<sup>45</sup> his importance to the development of American Black radicalism during the late 1960s has never been properly charted. Works about the 1960s that actually mention Fanon often do so in passing, implying that his influence did not extend beyond supplying aphorisms for would-be revolutionaries. Writing in this vein, some critics have decried what they view as the sloppy application of ill-considered Fanonist ideas about violence and national liberation where they do not apply,

namely, to the urban, metropolitan context.<sup>46</sup> Recently, and perhaps more acutely, Wilson Moses has resurrected a version of American exceptionalist argument, criticizing the popularity of Fanon among Black intellectuals and political radicals of the 1960s for overshadowing the more pertinent and meaningful work of American intellectuals like Harold Cruse.<sup>47</sup>

By pitting Cruse against Fanon, however, Moses himself obscures what may be a deeper relationship between their two projects. In the mid-1960s, it was Cruse himself, after all, who pointed to the popularity of Fanon among “the young Black generation of his day” in order to repudiate those who stressed “the fundamentally American outlook of the American Negro.”<sup>48</sup>

Cruse’s own attempt to fashion an indigenous theory of Black liberation, moreover, began with an assumption that was also central to political experiments like the Panthers. “The racial crisis in America,” Cruse writes, “is the internal reflection of this contemporary world-wide problem of the readjustment between ex-colonial masters and ex-colonial subjects.”<sup>49</sup> Though Cruse’s own exceptionalist sense of the American sociocultural situation may have prevented him from developing the theoretical and historical implications of this insight, he was clearly aware that the reinvention of Black nationalism in the American 1960s was in important ways related to the projects of decolonization.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, that the curmudgeonly Cruse so clearly recognized the political importance of Black Americans reading Fanon should give us pause. If nothing else, Cruse’s work starts from a premise crucial for thinking about the history of Black political experiments and struggles, namely, that Black America’s national question had never been fundamentally resolved and that attempts to do so cannot “hinge merely on pragmatic practicalities.”<sup>51</sup>

Fanon’s relevance was by no means immediately evident to the Panthers themselves. David Hilliard, for example, candidly recalls the feelings of self-loathing and futility brought on by his many frustrating attempts to make sense of Fanon’s complex prose.<sup>52</sup> Yet Hilliard also tells of his perseverance and increasing excitement as he began to understand new concepts and ways of thinking about the Black experience in America in discussions of Fanon’s writings in the Party’s political education classes. Indeed, these programmatic efforts to understand the applicability of Fanon suggest that the Panthers may have been more careful students of his work than many of their erstwhile critics. In his last, and what was for America’s Black militants his most important work *The Wretched of the Earth*,<sup>53</sup> Fanon himself had actually foreseen the extension of the anticolonial struggle in many of these unexpected directions.

Fanon’s substantive references to the American context are prescient precisely in identifying the political examples out of which the Panthers would fashion themselves. Early on in the text, for instance, Fanon indicates just how significant he finds it that “minority groups” living within the borders of the world’s superpower no longer “hesitate to preach violent methods for

resolving their problems.” “It is not by chance,” he continues, “that in consequence Negro extremists in the United States organize a militia and arm themselves.”<sup>54</sup> Although *The Wretched of the Earth* is sometimes cited for its arguments against the cultural conflation of the Black world into ideologies such as negritude,<sup>55</sup> I suggest that Fanon is actually identifying an important theoretical and historical basis for relating diverse regions of struggle. Fanon’s brilliant text, as the Panthers recognized, was not addressed exclusively to the properly anticolonial Third World. In these passing comments about “the American Negro’s new emphasis on violence” and the emergent problem of “minorities,” Fanon is actually considering a series of questions concerning the global context of local conflicts, the implications of neocolonialism, and the possibility of internationalizing and thus extending struggles against empire.<sup>56</sup>

Further on in the text, Fanon suggests that despite the fact that anticolonial struggles had thus far only achieved partial victories, “the political logic of colonialism mandated that nations could be empires only over nonnations,” a logic decisively weakened by the very first extension of the nation form to the rest of humanity.<sup>57</sup> What resulted from this process, however, was not simply the creation of new nations, but the constitution of a new political logic defining international relations—an empire without territories—what critics of American imperialism would refer to as “empire as a way of life.”<sup>58</sup>

In other words, although decolonization was not yet complete, the world had already been redefined in terms of the universalization of formal nationhood within a sphere of international commodity relations dominated by the United States. What this demonstrated, according to Fanon, was both the supersession of the political stakes defined by the Cold War and the foreclosing of the liberatory possibilities of decolonization itself as a simple question of nation-building.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, even as independent nationhood was being normalized, what Mosadegh in Iran, Arbenz in Guatemala, and the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutionaries discovered was that its organization was to be closely monitored, policed, and, if necessary, punished, depending upon whether a given nation-state was seen to be favorable or unfavorable to the expansion of American capitalism and the overall stabilization of the multilateral state system. Developing his own views along these general lines, Huey Newton actually came to the conclusion that nations-states were becoming things of the past as a result of the global hegemony of U.S.-sponsored capital. As Hilliard recounts,

In prison Huey developed an analysis of the present political moment. . . . Nationalist struggles, even revolutionary ones, [he said] are beside the point. Capital dominates the world; ignoring borders, international finance has transformed the world into communities rather than nations. Some of these communities are under siege—like Vietnam—and others conduct the siege, like the United States government. The people of the world are united in their desire to run

their own communities: the Black people of Oakland and the Vietnamese. We need to band together as communities, create a revolutionary intercommunalism that will resist capital's reactionary intercommunalism.<sup>60</sup>

Under the rubric of intercommunalism, Newton attempted to transcend questions of nation-states and nationalism altogether by suggesting that shifts in the spatial scales of capitalism had disrupted the organization of nations as integral territorial and ideological units.<sup>61</sup> More suggestively, by avoiding the language of nation entirely, he sought to elide the American nation with the actions of an imperial state and link the intercommunal fates of Vietnam and Oakland as equivalent local instances in a struggle with transnational dimensions.<sup>62</sup>

These formulations obviously beg many questions.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, by the mid-1970s, the closure of the high era of decolonization with the end of the bloody Vietnam war,<sup>64</sup> Nixon's formalization of detente, and the crisis of the Bretton Woods system, would begin to bear out certain aspects of the globalizing vision implicit in these projections. Since the mid-1970s, the primary preoccupation of the world's dominant powers has revolved less and less round the epochal struggle between capitalism and socialism and turned instead to the problems of growth and uneven development within the global economy.<sup>65</sup> The end of the Vietnam war, in this sense, may have been the last, decisive battle of the ultra-imperial "American Century," pre-saging the onset of a full-blown postimperial/postcolonial order. Yet far from leading toward global equality via nationhood, the process of decolonization, as Fanon anticipated, has revealed "the impossibility of autarky" within the context of the general extension and universalization of an American model of imperialism, built from the outset on the premise of formal nationhood, free trade, open markets, and internal colonization. From this point onward, primary struggles are "traversed by a constantly shifting frontier—irreducible to the frontiers between states—between two humanities which seem incommensurable, namely, the humanity of destitution and that of 'consumption,' the humanity of 'underdevelopment' and that of overdevelopment."<sup>66</sup> This is the dynamic, in Fanon's prophetic view, that now has the potential to "shake humanity to pieces."<sup>67</sup>

Rather than interpreting this transition in terms of a prophecy of endless domination, in the 1960s, the generalization of colonization (rather than its undoing) became the basis for a renewed vision of a universal struggle that transmuted the Marxist opposition between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie into an opposition between the "revolutionary" and the "bourgeois," or "the people" and the "power bloc."<sup>68</sup> The Panther's rhetorical signature, "all power to the people," or their desire to equate themselves with the Vietnamese, functioned within this logic and cannot be dismissed merely as romantic fascination or the products of faulty, analogical reasoning. In fact, the emergence of what Kwame Nkrumah formally labeled "neocolonialism"<sup>69</sup> and

what Henri Lefebvre called "neo-capitalism" was thought to have inaugurated a "vast displacement of contradictions," the most salient of which was the emergence of questions of colonization and struggles for liberation of an internal as well as external variety.<sup>70</sup> In this context, decolonization, in the "Fanonist" text, as appropriated by the Panthers and others, marked out a broad terrain of liberatory theory and practice, under the auspices of U.S. capitalism and the American state, that was responsive to a fundamental synchronization of the histories of internal and external colonization across the world. Rather than being the place where the 1960s ran aground, this ideological context may actually have been where it was first invented.<sup>71</sup>

It was in this complex sense, moreover, that Fanon himself referred to the arming of the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. South in the 1950s, in the figure of Robert Williams or Louisiana's Deacons for Defense, as the emergence of the violence of decolonization in the metropolitan center, which, up to that point, had been largely externalized and confined to the global periphery as a result of the Cold War.<sup>72</sup> Significantly enough, Malcolm X launched his later career about this time by making a similar observation, one that precipitated his break with the Nation of Islam and his rapid movement into a geopolitical imaginary redefined by Third World struggles. Responding to the assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963, Malcolm X suggested that it was simply a case of "the chickens coming home to roost."<sup>73</sup> When asked to elaborate upon a comment many considered tantamount to treason, he calmly recounted the bloody history of U.S. support of colonial and neocolonial regimes and specifically cited U.S. involvement in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the first premier of the former Congo. The death of Kennedy, Malcolm implied, was a sign that the U.S. was reaping the violence it had sown. By the late 1960s, after his own untimely death, Malcolm X would be the equivalent of America's Lumumba for those like the Panthers who claimed him as their own.<sup>74</sup>

In what may be a slightly more obscure case of anticolonial celebrityhood, Robert Williams began to fashion himself in much the same terms at the onset of the 1960s. A former U.S. Marine, Williams was an NAACP organizer in Monroe County, North Carolina, who in early 1959 challenged the national office by organizing local African Americans into rifle clubs for the purpose of self-defense. Later that year, in an event that would prove crucial to broadening the implications of his local efforts, Williams joined a well-publicized delegation that visited Cuba, in an effort to garner support for the new revolutionary government. After a series of confrontations with the NAACP leadership, the local Ku Klux Klan, and law enforcement agencies, Williams was forced to flee the county. He soon had the distinction of being the first Black radical of the 1960s to become the focal point of a nationwide FBI manhunt. Escaping first to Canada, Williams eventually made his way back to Cuba, where he was granted political asylum.<sup>75</sup>



Williams' Cuban exile quickly elevated him within the mediascapes and ideoscapes of decolonization, as he too joined an emerging pantheon of anticolonial heroes. In his newsletter, *The Crusader*, which he began publishing from Cuba, he even began to refer to the island as "liberated territory of the Americas."<sup>76</sup> Cognizant of the unique nature of his sudden celebrity, Williams remarked, "When the racists forced me into exile, they unwittingly led me onto a greater field of battle."<sup>77</sup> Williams's greater field of battle, of course, was the figure he cut in his own movement through space and across national borders that signified successful resistance to an American geography of apartheid and informal empire. Although his baldly titled book *Negroes with Guns* (comprising mostly press clippings and earlier speeches) is in large measure a reformist and pro-integrationist critique of principles of nonviolence<sup>78</sup> for young Black militants, Williams's confrontation with the American state was the prologue to their own brand of liberation politics.<sup>79</sup> Most importantly, what Williams's exile demonstrated was the incontrovertible power of what the Panthers later called "picking up the gun."

Although he faded somewhat from the American scene as he continued on in his travels from Cuba to China, Williams' experience was by no means exceptional. Indeed, within an international context dramatically reconfigured by the Cold War and decolonization, the most uncompromising and critical Black voices in the United States from the 1930s and 1940s—W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, C. L. R. James and Richard Wright—had all been subject to some form of state harassment, internal detention, and even deportation. These figures were in different ways central to an earlier moment of antiracist radicalism that emerged under the auspices of the Popular Front and the left-wing of the New Deal. Indeed, these intellectuals believed that the incremental advances in the cause of racial democracy in America during the late 1930s and early 1940s (the success of the CIO, the March on Washington movement, Roosevelt's establishment of the Fair Employment Practices Commission, and the global defeat of fascism), had in fact created the context for completing America's "unfinished democratic revolution" at home and resolving what Du Bois in 1945 called the problem of "color and democracy" in the world arena.<sup>80</sup>

That James and Du Bois, as well as Wright and Robeson, spent the 1940s and 1950s locked in bitter conflict with various agencies of the American state and ended their lives either in some form of exile or ceaseless travel indicates the degree to which the substantive optimism of the racial liberalism of the 1940s was eviscerated by the Cold War. By the 1950s, solving Gunnar Myrdal's *American Dilemma* (1944) had been effectively sacrificed to securing the prerogatives of Henry Luce's American Century and a quasi-religious defense of what was called the "American way of life" in its death struggle with "demonic communism."<sup>81</sup> The surprising resurgence of American antiracism at the height of the Cold War, under the banner of civil

rights and militant nonviolence, must be understood as a highly complex departure from this earlier tradition of antiracist radicalism as a result of the profound strictures placed upon progressive forces in the U.S. by polymorphous anti-Communism and Americocentric ultra-imperialism.

The renewal of antiracism in the 1950s is complex because its effectiveness was largely predicated on exploiting the tension between what Myrdal had called "America's claim to be humanity in miniature"—or the world's exemplary nation-state—and the continued irresolution of the Negro problem in the U.S. South.<sup>82</sup> Traditional civil rights forces in the United States, however, no longer articulated the moral and political significance of Black struggles in America in terms of the explicitly anti-imperialist aspirations of the earlier period. In contrast to Du Bois', Wright's and James' pre-Cold War invocations of the possibilities inherent within the American revolutionary democratic tradition, the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s was captive to the Cold War discourse on Democracy that accepted the necessity of an anti-Communist purge at home and upheld the prerogatives of the American national security state abroad. Indeed, the civil rights discourse itself, with its emphasis on Christian transcendence, consumer sovereignty, and national redemption, was successful, at least in part, because of the ways it was able to align itself with the principle markers of Cold War patriotism. The fact that Martin Luther King's late opposition to the Vietnam war could provoke wide condemnation and calls for his ostracism by other mainstream civil rights leaders indicates how far domestic antiracism had traveled from the internationalism of the 1930s and early 1940s.<sup>83</sup>

What is important about Robert Williams' and Malcolm X's respective journeys out of the old Southern Black belt and Black millennial sectarianism into the geopolitical ambit of decolonization is that both their careers signaled a profound return of the resurgent American antiracism of the 1950s to an earlier emphasis upon racialized geopolitics. Yet the still more important departure exemplified by a Williams or a Malcolm X was that they not only redrew the coordinates of the intranational struggles of Black Americans in light of events within the decolonizing world, they also began to draw on and popularize revolutionary practice and symbolism that stretched the borders of the American democratic imaginary. Thus, while the nonviolent Civil Rights movement linked the failure to enfranchise Black people in the U.S. South with forces that would mock the moral and political claims of American democracy and Judeo-Christianity in the international arena, Williams and Malcolm X joined in the mockery, ruthlessly criticizing America's democratic pretensions, and literally and figuratively severing their own "identificatory links" with the American nation-state.<sup>84</sup> In the context of the worldwide acceleration of struggles for decolonization, their uncompromising disaffiliation and disidentification opened up significant new routes for radical thinking at home by the latter half of the 1960s.<sup>85</sup>

The purpose of this extended discussion is to demonstrate that groups like the Panthers did not simply arise *ex nihilo* out of the supposed madness of 1968 and to suggest how they are a part of an admittedly discontinuous Black radical and revolutionary tradition. In the introduction to his biography of Huey Newton and the Panther Party, Bobby Seale suggests the complex of influences that created the Panthers in an allegory about the naming of his son. "The nigger's name is Malik Nkrumah Stagolee Seale," Seale writes; Malik for Malcolm X, Nkrumah to commemorate the first successful African revolutionary, and Stagolee for the folkloric Black hustler, badman and outsider.<sup>86</sup> To make sense of the Panthers, however, we must do more than invoke the characteristic markers of their militancy (that is, the relationship to Malcolm X, Fanon, the repudiation of nonviolence, etc.). Rather, we must situate these signs and invocations within a cultural and political history of African Americans' tortured negotiations for American nationality and citizenship. What significantly differentiates the Panthers is their significantly enhanced ability to bring their claims onto a world stage and their deep mistrust of attempts to domesticate their radicalism.<sup>87</sup>

The emergence of forty new nation-states between 1945 and 1960, most of them within the former colonial world, ushered in "a new world for America's Negroes."<sup>88</sup> In defining the Negro's "new mood" in 1960, James Baldwin put the issue more pointedly: "The American Negro can no longer, nor will he (*sic*) ever again be controlled by White America's image of him. This fact has everything to do with the rise of Africa in world affairs."<sup>89</sup> Baldwin, whose own political trajectory through the decade significantly led to increasing militancy, national disaffiliation, and a poetic identification with groups like the Panthers,<sup>90</sup> chose his words with characteristic care and precision. By the 1960s, both decolonization and the struggles against American racism were cast in terms of a geopolitics of images that would be decisive in shaping the specular-rhetorical appeal of groups like the Panthers. As the remarkable Black auto worker James Boggs recognized in 1965, "Revolutions have never depended upon sheer numbers, but rather upon the relationship of forces in the existing political arena. Today when the existing political arena is a world arena, the Negro's relationship is to the world."<sup>91</sup>

### III. The Geopolitics of Pride and Shame

*Prophecy now involves a geographical rather than a historical projection; it is space not time that hides consequences from us.*  
—John Berger, *The Look of Things*

*So where can these virtual martyrs prepare their revolt from?*  
—Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*

The perception of a new, global, image-centered stage for insurgent politics can shed light on some of the continuities between traditions and formations of the Black struggle during the 1960s, especially around the problem

of violence/nonviolence that governs the dominant conception of a break between the earlier and later parts of the decade. I would argue that the Panthers no less than the marchers and freedom riders of the early 1960s were engaged in a war of conscience aimed at the transfiguration of a historical system of Black shame into one of pride and empowerment. In terms of their specular logic then, the nonviolent protest strategy of the Civil Rights movement is not entirely opposite to the explicitly confrontational Panther strategy of picking up the gun and patrolling the police. Both attempted to expose racist violence upon Black bodies, and both were attuned to what I call the "geopolitics of pride and shame" governing televisual transmission, reception, and interpretation of their spectacular performances.

The Civil Rights movement, engaging the force and violence of the state under the international sign of militant pacifism and secured by the successes of Gandhian nonviolence in India, was not without its own global analogue and appeal. In this context, as Harold Isaacs suggested, Little Rock too entered a global vernacular and mediascape as the symbol of American racism and racial strife with "images of armed soldiers, screaming mobs and Negro children, circulat[ing] around the world."<sup>92</sup> Yet while the absorption of violence by civil rights protesters was predicated upon an appeal to the world's conscience, it primarily evoked the desire for national redemption and reconciliation through the shameful/shaming violence that was enacted across the martyr's body. Finally sending federal troops into Little Rock in 1957, the previously quiescent Eisenhower indicated that he realized just how potent this logic and imagery had become and justified his action as one that would reestablish the nation "in the eyes of the world . . . [and] restore the image of America, and all its parts as one nation indivisible."<sup>93</sup>

By contrast, Black liberationists of the late 1960s were buoyed by the fact that America's racial fissures had been opened for all the world to see. In the midst of the dramatic refiguring of an imaginary world system under the pressures of revolutionary nationalism emanating from Cuba, Algeria, China, and Vietnam, they seized every opportunity to demonstrate that America itself was neither united, nor secure. Thus, the Panthers not only repudiated the historical legacy of racist violence, but called for a reversal of its shameful/shaming effects. Refusing the premise of peace and reconciliation, the Panthers instead projected violence back upon the nation. In the emblematic, prison cell projections of George Jackson, they conjured another image of Black revolutionaries

bringing the U.S.A. to its knees . . . closing off of critical sections of the city with barbed wire, [with] armored pig carriers criss-crossing city streets, soldiers every-where, tommy guns pointed at stomach level, smoke curling Black against the daylight sky, the smell of cordite, house-to-house searches, doors being kicked down, [and] the commonness of death.<sup>94</sup>

Severing their own identificatory links with the nation-state, Panthers instead fashioned themselves as the avatars of Baldwin's doomsaying prophecy of *The Fire Next Time*.<sup>95</sup> Reversing the civil narrative of rights and redemption, they threatened to carve up the nation, defined the Black ghetto as a territory to be liberated, and in a final, brutal mockery, cast the most visible representatives of the American state—the police—as “pigs.”<sup>96</sup>

The emphasis upon violence that Fanon thought so remarkable, in other words, was itself complex, expressive, and polyvalent and not, as some critics maintain, simply a descent into “psychopathic panegyrics.”<sup>97</sup> What Williams, Malcolm X, and the Panthers all recognized, moreover, was that the relationship between violence and racism was inextricable. In Balibar's useful formulation, they understood that for the victims of racism there was “a permanent *excess* of actual violence and acts over [racist] discourses, theories and rationalizations,” and it was these acts that needed to be met with a credible response.<sup>98</sup> By advocating organized counter-violence by Black people in the U.S., they suggested that the American state, as the holder of a monopoly on the legitimate uses of violence,<sup>99</sup> was either inadequate to, or complicit in the perpetuation of forms of racist violence that continued to be exercised over Black bodies. What this amounted to was a *de facto* repudiation of the state as the entity safeguarding a sphere of public civility and order. The call for violence, in other words, was a powerful assertion of the necessary autonomy of Black life in the United States, and regardless of the programmatic political vision to which it was attached, it constituted a challenge to the founding premise of the nation-state itself.

Although the arming of small pockets of the Civil Rights movement or the emergence of a figure like Malcolm X may have presaged the initial insertion of Fanonism into the U.S. context, it was the violent upheavals that took place in scores of American cities during the mid-1960s that confirmed its appeal. Of all the so-called race riots in American history—1863, 1919, 1943—the 1960s were a time when Black people were primarily on the offensive, attacking the representatives of the state (and private property). In all previous urban unrest of this sort, Black people had generally been the intended targets and primary victims. It is thus not surprising that supporters of Black aspirations described these riots as revolts or uprisings and that they became one of the rallying points for a Black power imaginary.<sup>100</sup> As Dan Watts of *Liberation* put it,

[You're] going along thinking all the brothers in these riots are old winos. Nothing could be further from the truth. These cats are ready to die for something. And they know why. They all read. Read a lot. Not one of them hasn't read the Bible . . . Fanon . . . You'd better get this book. Every brother on the rooftop can quote Fanon.<sup>101</sup>

Astutely identifying the corresponding, radically localizing shift in the geopolitics of pride and shame, Eldridge Cleaver noticed that though “Watts [had been] a place of shame. . . an epithet,” after the riot, “all the Blacks in

Folsom are saying, ‘I'm from Watts baby’! . . . and proud of it.”<sup>102</sup> Most significantly, as David Hilliard recalls, it was when the afterglow and “excitement of Watts was beginning to fade,” that a few hundred miles to the north, the Panthers were founded.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, more than any other events, the Black riots that swept American cities in the mid-1960s occasioned the first programmatic understandings of Black liberation and full-fledged visions of a Black revolutionary struggle within the United States. In one of their most famous essays, two of the most original radical theorists of the 1960s, James and Grace Lee Boggs, declared “the city. . . the Black Man's Land.”<sup>104</sup> Using urban population projections, the Boggs proposed what was actually a clever rewriting of a much older theory of Black liberation, the Communist Party's (CPUSA) Black belt thesis, which held that the contiguous counties holding a Black majority population within the Southern “Black belt” states really comprised an internal colony, an incipient Black nation with the right to self-determination. The CPUSA argued that Black outmigration from the South had nullified this position and abandoned it in 1958, embracing instead the NAACP's mainstream, integrationist slogan “Free by '63.”<sup>105</sup> The Boggs, in effect, relocated the Black belt in light of Black urbanity.

Deploying the resonant historicization of the Civil War as America's “unfinished revolution,” the Boggs argued that the Watts riots, like the Birmingham and Harlem riots the year before, was an initial skirmish in a “second civil war” that would be played out in America's cities. Vice President Humphrey seemed to confirm this view, when he claimed, “[T]he biggest battle we're fighting today is not in South Vietnam; the toughest battle is in our cities.”<sup>106</sup> The use of national guardsmen alongside police to quell the riots, and the oft-repeated refrain that Vietnam itself was little more than a police action, sealed the association of intra- and international conflict and struggle. As Newton argued, “[T]he police are everywhere and use the same tools, and have the same purpose: the protection of the ruling circle here in North America.”<sup>107</sup>

The Boggs', the Panthers', and other arguments and experiments that came on the heels of urban revolt embraced the Black ghetto as the basis of a renewed and very different kind of Black radical vision: the site of a radically dispersed Black nation and the model of the internal colonization of America's Black people.<sup>108</sup> Reappropriating ghettoized spaces from the pathologizing discourse of social science, Black liberation politics instead figured the ghetto as a place of “irredeemable *spatial* difference”<sup>109</sup> within the nation-state, irrecuperable to unifying temporal narratives of national belonging and citizenship.<sup>110</sup> The spontaneous violence of the ghetto revolts, in this sense, became the ultimate sign of the “vast displacement of contradictions” that Lefebvre and Fanon in their different ways understood as specific to the era of decolonization.<sup>111</sup> The Black Panther Party, though it never developed a comprehensive urban theory or strategy as did the Boggs', was nevertheless the product of this emergent understanding of the

socio-spatial logic and politics of ghettoization. Once again seizing upon Fanon's work for appropriate concepts, the Panthers emphasized the colonizing, as opposed to the strictly national aspects of ghettoization, and identified Fanon's lumpen proletariat as a ghetto archetype and the most "spontaneously revolutionary" agent of the Black struggle in the overdeveloped world.<sup>112</sup>

Insofar as the Black revolution in America was understood to be an urban revolution, Fanon's work invited just these kinds of extrapolations (though only with a degree of license). According to Fanon, the peasantry and the lumpen proletariat were the only proven revolutionary groups in the struggles for decolonization in the underdeveloped world. Although he ultimately believed that the peasantry was the more stable and reliable of the two, he reserved some of his most moving and poetic insights for the lumpen, wresting this group from their residual and despised position within the Marxist revolutionary canon. Victims of the Third World's scourge of urbanization without industrialization, the lumpen, in Fanon's formulation, were rootless city dwellers, frequently less than a generation removed from the land, comprising the society's most degraded, least hopeful elements: "the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed and the petty criminals." Yet it was "[t]hese workless less-than-men," Fanon writes, who in reality had the most to gain from a revolution, namely, the chance to be "rehabilitated in their own eyes, and in the eyes of humanity." "All the hopeless dregs of humanity, all who turn in circles between suicide and madness," Fanon exclaims, "will recover their balance."<sup>113</sup> It was in these images, David Hilliard remembers, that the Panthers found themselves.<sup>114</sup>

Specifically, the Panthers reasoned that police power exercised within the Black sections of the city (against the lumpen) operated in a manner similar to the uses of colonial power that Fanon had described. Policing within Black communities functioned as "a language of pure force" untempered by forms of ideological suasion or mediation in which the consent of the governed was sought out and gained without the use of violence.<sup>115</sup> In other words, in contrast to the forms of hegemonic power in which the modern state secures the terrains of civil society and its public spheres by the structuring of the population's moral reflexes, colonial power exercises control through violence and repression in the first instance. By staging confrontations with the police, Newton and Seale sought to dramatize how a form of colonial power was actually deployed against Black people in the urban areas of the U.S. under the auspices of policing. Flamboyantly displaying their own lawful and disciplined resistance to violent policing, the Panthers also showed how they were inured to the possibility of future hegemonic overtures by the state, because of their familiarity with the state as an instance of naked force and violence.

It was neither the simple fact of public disorder, nor the sheer power of al-  
lusion that allowed the urban presence of Black people to assume these new

meanings. Once the Civil Rights movement moved northwards by the mid-1960s, it no longer encountered racism as a legally enshrined system of segregation and voting restrictions. In fact, even as the legal edifice of segregation was being dismantled by government decree, a much more enduring structure of "spatial apartheid" had been made visible by its inscription into the urban landscape.<sup>116</sup> In this sense, the vision of the ghetto as an internal colony, or perhaps better, a neocolony, was not simply an analogy. As James Blaut argues, although ghettos clearly lack the ability to press for self-determination as "politico-geographic units," like actual neocolonies, the formal problem of self-determination does not actually define the relations of exploitation and oppression that govern relations with dominant power.<sup>117</sup> These relations, moreover, are defined in rigid, socio-spatial terms, because ghettoized/colonized areas are excluded from sharing in social/global surpluses. They are instead sites of superexploitation, underemployment, underdevelopment, and of concentrated official and unofficial social violence.

In developing a strategy commensurate with this insight, the Panthers engaged in their own attempts to "hegemonize" the people of the ghetto, the Black youth gangs, former convicts, and the growing populations of prisoners.<sup>118</sup> The Panthers approached these groups armed with their own counter-nationalist pedagogy, "evoking and erasing national boundaries—both actual and conceptual—and openly disturbing the ideological maneuvers through which the nation is constituted as an imagined community."<sup>119</sup> Most overtly, the Panthers did this simply by appropriating anticolonial internationalism, geopoliticizing Black American struggles, and repudiating the exceptionalist framework of national(ist) becoming. Less obviously, the Panthers skillfully pursued a highly localized, spatial politics addressed directly to the denizens of a myriad of subnational, institutional spaces—the housing project, the school, the community organization, and the prison—whose physical repetition and functional organization are central to what Barbara Harlow has called the nation-state's own "discourse of boundaries,"<sup>120</sup> and to its apparent "sociological solidity" and substance.<sup>121</sup> The Panthers effectively tore these spaces out of the nation-state and claimed them as their own by organizing their own schools, asserting the de facto autonomy of community organizations, and most importantly, embracing the prison—already a place of effective anti-citizenship—as the exemplary site and source of counter-nationalist theory and practice.<sup>122</sup>

All over the United States, Panther chapters emerged, drawing together community organizers, students, former convicts, juvenile delinquents, and would-be organic intellectuals into a tenuous and volatile coalition. In Los Angeles, one of the leaders of the Slausons, one of the most feared of the L.A. street gangs, Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter, along with John Huggins, formed the most important Party chapter outside of Oakland. In Chicago, one of the Party's most innovative organizers, Fred Hampton, established



the first ever “rainbow coalition,” among the Blackstone Rangers, the Young Patriots, and the Young Lords, the city’s largest Black, White, and Puerto Rican youth gangs.<sup>123</sup> In New York, a young former convict, Richard Moore (Dhoruba Bin Wahad), helped to build one of the most impressive Panther chapters, with well-organized breakfast programs, tenants rights projects, and other community-based organizations.<sup>124</sup> Finally, in Soledad, Attica, and several other major prisons, the Panthers developed a widespread following within existing prisoners’ organizations and especially within prisoners’ rights groups, attracting one of the most gifted and charismatic leaders of the prison movement, George Jackson.<sup>125</sup> As Mike Davis puts it, “For a time at least, it looked as if the Panthers might become the nation’s largest revolutionary gang.”<sup>126</sup>

It is not an accident that Los Angeles, Chicago, Soledad, and Attica were the scenes of the most infamous and bloody confrontations between Party members and sympathizers and the forces of the state. In Los Angeles, the FBI worked steadily to aggravate the already existing antagonism between the Panthers and Maulana Karenga’s Us organization, which led to the shoot-out on the UCLA campus where “Bunchy” Carter and John Huggins were killed on January 17, 1969. In a more clear-cut case of state murder, Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were executed in their apartment by a squad of Chicago detectives on December 4, 1969, while responding to an informant’s tip about a weapons cache on the premises. In New York City, the Panther 21 were framed on infamous conspiracy charges on April 12, 1969, and eventually acquitted after a costly series of trials. Meanwhile, Richard Moore (Dhoruba Bin Wahad), one of the initial 21, was rearrested on May 19, 1971, and later convicted for shooting two New York City police officers in a trial that eighteen years later was proved to have been built upon fabricated evidence. Finally, George Jackson was killed August 21, 1971, in Soledad prison, again under suspicious circumstances, a year after his brother Jonathan and two hostages died in a botched rescue attempt on August 7, 1970. Two weeks later forty-three men were massacred when Attica’s prison rebellion (partly inspired by George Jackson’s death) was crushed by state police forces sent in by Governor Nelson Rockefeller.<sup>127</sup> When retold by Panther loyalists, these incidents have an almost folkloric quality to them now. Like the 1968 killing of “Lil” Bobby Hutton by the Oakland police, the deaths of these men have come to define the death of a movement and to provide the surest evidence of widespread state repression and terror against the Party.

While understanding the depth of state-sanctioned violence against the Party is essential, we must also consider the significant complicity of the Panthers themselves in hastening their own demise at the hands of police forces across the country. Throughout the brief history of the Party, the Panther leaders were engaged in a constant struggle to ensure the self-discipline and accountability of their members and to curtail what they referred to as

their “jackanape” tendencies toward spontaneous, violent confrontation. Although the Panthers correctly understood criminality and violence as socially produced, even quasi-rebellious activities structured by conditions of oppression, in the end this insight became a rationalization for covert, market-driven, criminal activities in the name of politics and resistance. Finally, the Party was subject to enormous dissension and conflict within its own ranks that not only left it open to infiltration by police agents and provocateurs, but also destroyed the solidarity and cohesion that was absolutely necessary for survival. Perhaps most important of all, the Panthers failed utterly in the struggle to transform the criminal consciousness and workless, lumpen existence into a political organization capable of sustained struggle.<sup>128</sup> In the end, they lost even more than this in “saber rattling” brinkmanship and what Fred Hampton termed the “adventuristic, Custeristic” confrontations with the force and violence of the state.<sup>129</sup>

This, however, should not be the last word. The Panthers’ trademark actions of picking up the gun and patrolling the police were not initially conceived as preludes to an armed revolt. Rather, they were actually strategic choices and carefully posed challenges to the so-called legitimate forms of state violence that had become all too regularly used within Black communities. In particular, Newton and Seale understood how the police had become the principal agents of official, state-sanctioned racism that had largely receded from public view only to be brutally reasserted at the margins in the policing of the Black ghettos. As Erik Erikson suggested in his provocative discussion with Huey Newton, by arming themselves with guns and law books and observing police behavior, the Panthers actually enacted a profound transvaluation of conventional racist imagery by exposing the most visible representatives of the law and the crucial transmission belt of state power as the symbols of uniformed and armed lawlessness. Asserting their own right to organized violence, the Panthers began to police the police, while emphasizing their own “disciplined adherence to existing law.”<sup>130</sup> Invoking the United States Constitution, employing a logic of policing and the law against the police and the law, the Panthers thus posed a stunning challenge to the legitimacy of state power in Black communities.<sup>131</sup>

The violent demise of the Panthers, I would suggest, is still best understood when viewed within the context of these initial acts of subversion, namely, the threats they posed to the legitimate power of the state. Those who wield state power prefer unorganized “criminal” violence to the exemplary, potentially organized violence of political militants. In this sense, police hounding, infiltration, and provocation of the Panthers sought out and exposed their weakest tendency, namely, their familiarity with and expectation of violent confrontation with the force of law. As holders of the monopoly on the legitimate uses of violence, the state in effect set out to prove that the Panthers were nothing more than street thugs and criminals and that



their politics was nothing more than sham and pretense. Although many contemporary scholars seem to take this for granted, J. Edgar Hoover himself knew better when he labeled the Party "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country" and directed his COINTELPRO agents to "destroy what the BPP stands for."<sup>132</sup> [Emphasis added] This would only be accomplished when the status quo was restored, in other words, when the "legitimate" violence of the state was once again pitted against the disorganized, opportunistic, and self-destructive violence of the street.

#### IV. Conclusion: Shadow States and Insurgent Visibility

*After I came out in 1968 with "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud," it was all over. The dark-skinned man had all of a sudden become cosmopolitan.*  
—James Brown, *James Brown: The Godfather of Soul*

The brief ascendancy of the Black Panther Party between 1968 and the early 1970s is consonant with the emergence of a broader set of social, cultural, and political transformations that historians and theorists have attempted to define under the rubric of postmodernism.<sup>133</sup> Despite their stridently anticapitalist pronouncements, revolutionary vanguardism, and consistent appeals for socialism, as I have already suggested, the primary determinations of Panther politics actually lay elsewhere. In the end, the Panther's style of political discursivity was neither Marxist, nor universalist, but was instead predicated on a dialectical projection of local/global liberation narrated in terms of a more primary antagonism toward the principles of American nationality and the state. It is in this sense that there is actually a more subtle dimension to the Panthers' challenge to state authority, one that may even explain why it engendered the massive retaliatory response it did from federal and local police authorities. Clearly, with only a few shotguns and a handful of members in many Party chapters across the country, the Panthers were no match and no "real" threat to the organized violence of the state. Yet, by the end of the decade up to twenty-eight Panthers had been killed by police, and hundreds were jailed in the nationwide campaign to destroy the Party.<sup>134</sup> I have already shown how Panther tactics worked to expose the ideological limits of state power. The language of exposure, however, does not go far enough in capturing what might be termed the postmodern dimensions of the Panthers' subversion. Similar to the "prefigurative" politics that Wini Breines suggests characterizes 1960s movements more generally, the Panthers' own political experiment was in many respects primarily performative.<sup>135</sup> Ultimately, their performance was one that did not simply challenge the legitimacy of the nation-state, but in effect, prophesied and enacted its dissolution.

As Jean Genet, one of the most astute observers of the Panthers during the 1960s puts it, "Wherever they went, the Americans were the masters, so the Panthers would do their best to terrorize the masters by the only means available to them. Spectacle."<sup>136</sup> For Genet, although the Panthers may have embraced the Maoist slogan "All political power comes from the barrel of a

gun," they also knew that sometimes "power is at the end of the shadow or image of a gun."<sup>137</sup> The "shadow of the gun," moreover, was far more important for the Panthers than actual guns could ever be. This is nowhere better demonstrated than in their famous Sacramento action where a group of armed Panthers marched on the state legislature to protest the pending passage of a bill that would have outlawed the open carrying of firearms—a bill explicitly aimed at stopping the Panthers' armed patrols. This action, perhaps more than any other, put the Party in the national spotlight with headlines reading, "Armed Panthers in the State Capital." Yet, rather than fleeing in terror or running for cover, the reporters and spectators stopped, looked, and asked questions. The question on everyone's lips was, "Are those guns real? and If so, then are they loaded?"<sup>138</sup>

Rather than seeing the Panthers as the vanguard of a visible insurgency in the country, we should understand them as being the practitioners of an insurgent form of visibility, a literal-minded and deadly serious guerrilla theatre in which militant sloganeering, bodily display, and spectacular actions simultaneously signified their possession and real lack of power. The Panthers emphasis upon self-presentation, in this sense, provided a visual vocabulary that was a key component of their politics. The leather, the clothing, the celebration of Black skin and "natural" hair, and above all the obtrusively displayed guns were all part of a repertoire of styles, gestures, and rhetorical equations like "Black is Beautiful," and "Power to the People" that revealed Black visibility as the defining antithesis of national subjectivity in the United States. In the end, the Panther spectacle was one arrayed both against and within the realm of what Harold Cruse called "America's race psychosis," and it is here where it may have registered its deepest, most lasting, and most confusing effects. Given the fact that Black skin has historically demarcated and condensed all that lies outside the protection of the nation-state and its cultures of citizenship and civility, the Panther's ability to capture the imagination of a broad radical coalition during the late 1960s was crucially dependent upon the ways they at once resignified Blackness as a positivity, while at the same time drawing upon its threatening powers of nonidentity in the eyes of the state and the normative citizen-subject.

The immediate power of the Panthers' spectacle was that, for a time at least, it revealed the state's own spectacular and performative dimensions. Indeed, one way to understand the Panther's performance is to recognize how they literally made a spectacle of the state. Within the logic of this spectacle, the excess and escalation of the rhetoric and imagery that the Panthers invented or popularized ("Off the pig," "The sky's the limit," "Fuck Reagan," "Two, three, many Vietnams") worked to continually heighten the anxiety of those charged with the duty of securing the state. In this regard, the police agencies, once they had been verbally attacked and legally outmaneuvered, found as their only recourse the demonstration that their own power was backed by more than words and empty guns. The bind the Pan-

thers presented to the forces of the state was that if their threats were to go unanswered, they would potentially be proved right. The emperor would be shown to have no clothes, and America would be revealed as little more than a mask of power—Mao's proverbial paper tiger.

It is precisely this point that New Left historians such as Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin disclaim (implying their disdain for the Panthers), suggesting that the 1960s went awry when it became captive to "increasingly outrageous and opaque language . . . rhetoric, composed of equal parts Maoist jargon and Black street rap, that communicated little but the angry alienation of its practitioners."<sup>139</sup> The fact is, however, that the Panthers' "rhetoric" communicated a great deal more than this and was significantly more consequential. If the nation, as Benedict Anderson, Homi Bhabha, and others suggest, is secured through forms of representation, then the definitional struggle waged over its contours by Black militants was a deadly serious undertaking grounded in the historic sense of the separateness of Black life in America and a plausible reading of the contemporary world situation. Most importantly, by challenging the police and aligning themselves with the Vietnamese, the Panther's exercised what Pierre Bourdieu calls "symbolic violence" against the state itself, disrupting the state's own power to nominate and designate normative, national subjects, in other words, usurping the state's own "monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence."<sup>140</sup>

If we consider the more specific instances of the state—the police, border control agencies, diplomatic corps, the military, the public schools, and the other state agencies that in effect act as "proof" of the existence of the state, all depend in the first instance upon the fiction of the state in order to perform their functions.<sup>141</sup> The performativity of the state then is in no way contradicted by its supposedly material functions. On the contrary, the very sense that the state is something that actually exists requires the more or less continuous activity of heterogeneous institutions and discourses of state in order to assure us, in Gertrude Stein's words, that "there is a there."<sup>142</sup> This formulation also helps to explain why violence is at once liminal to the state and at the same time, its most important form of discourse. The constantly reiterated threat of violence—from within and from without—is ultimately what institutes the state as a social relation and form of social meaning we inhabit. Violence threatens to undo the state, but it is also its very condition of possibility.

The Panthers, then, were a threat to the state not simply because they were violent but because they abused the state's own reality principle, including its monopoly on the legitimate uses of violence. Patrolling the police armed with guns and law books was in this sense a form of mimicry in which Panthers undermined the very notion of policing itself by performing, and in effect deforming, it themselves. Here, we must grasp the fact that the police themselves are among the most important of the state's "actors." The continued, repeated performance of the police function is crucial to the

institution of the everyday fantasy of being subject to a national, social state. By misrecognizing the status of policing as it operated within Black communities, the Panthers effectively nullified this fantasy and substituted a radical alternative. By policing the police, in other words, the Panthers signaled something far more dangerous than is generally acknowledged: the eruption of a nonstate identity into the everyday life of the state. That such a small and relatively poorly equipped band of urban Black youth could demand so much attention from federal and local police only attests to the tenuousness of the state itself and the degree to which it depends upon controlling and even silencing those who would take its name in vain.

Rather than preemptively repudiating the rhetorical and performative nature of the Panthers' politics then, it might be worth actually interrogating it further. How, for example, should we understand all the pseudo-titles (Chairman, Minister of Defense, Chief of Staff, etc.) of a government in waiting or the regalia (Black berets, leather jackets, boots and guns) of a standing army or paramilitary force? What I would suggest is that the Panthers were actually engaged in a broad series of acts that were aimed at subverting the state's official performance of itself, which went well beyond shadowing the police. Enabled by the multiplication of revolutionary centers around the world, the Panthers even pursued their own foreign relations, challenging the state in what is perhaps the most sacred of its constitutive monopolies. Thus, Minister of Defense Huey Newton boasted that the Panthers were the only Americans who actually had a foreign policy toward Vietnam and concluded his autobiography by describing how he visited China before Nixon (the world's master of affairs of state), managing thereby to rebuke the American President publicly in front of the Chinese.<sup>143</sup> Pursuing a political strategy made famous by Robert Williams and Malcolm X, the Panthers made journeys to China, Algeria, Mozambique, Guinée-Bissau, Cuba, and North Korea, seeking the authenticity of revolutionaries with states through the internationalist rituals of delegation and diplomacy.

Black power in its revolutionary instance then was ultimately an oppositional discourse that exposed the hegemony of Americanism as incomplete, challenged its universality, and imagined carving up its spaces differently. This, finally, is where the use of the "analogy" of the internal colony becomes important (the precise sociological definition of "nation" notwithstanding),<sup>144</sup> not for its analytical accuracy, but for its figurative potential and contestatory power. The use of the idioms of nationalism and anticolonialism by Black power militants, in other words, must be understood more as practical and ideational deconstructions of the pretensions of nationality and state power (policing, waging war, schooling, diplomacy, etc.). Indeed, in their dramatic performance of their own noncitizenship and even anticitizenship, the Panthers necessarily implied a wholly different region of identification.

Most importantly, the Panthers were effective in projecting themselves as an outside force that was also inside the nation because they refused the terms of Black inclusion and citizenship in the American polity at precisely the point of African Americans' greatest augmentation and reform since the Civil War and Reconstruction as a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Johnson's War on Poverty programs. Indeed, it may be the case that it was the offer of state-aided integration and assimilation into civil society and the public sphere that gave such a powerful charge to the Panthers' refusals and contestations.<sup>145</sup> More than anything else, the Panthers resignified Blackness in all its geopolitical and intrapsychic density. Their much discussed and oft-repudiated emphasis on violence may actually have more to do with their repudiation of the "violence" that came with the imperative of Black assimilation itself, namely, the internalization of the frontiers of the nation and the "inhabiting of the space of the state" as a place where Black people "have always been—and will always be at home."<sup>146</sup> The Panthers saw assimilation posed in these terms as a ruse and a trap and repudiated its internally hegemonizing logic by remapping the frontiers of their own subjectivity in local and global terms.

Jean Genet, who spent several madcap weeks with the Panthers in 1970, was especially attuned to this dimension of Panther politics. Genet writes that in spite of their posture as the progressive vanguard in America, the Panthers' specular-rhetorical politics neither privileged strictly American political traditions nor drew primarily upon a common fund of American democratic imagery. As Genet puts it, the Panthers "built themselves upon a White America that was splitting."<sup>147</sup> Insofar as they invoked the American Constitution (for example, in support of their right to carry guns), they did so not as preservationists of American radical or legal traditions but as destroyers of the normative ties binding Black people and radical White youth to the American nation-state and its public cultures of liberal civility. The characteristic disdain that many intellectuals show for Panther-style politics, then, may have less to do with its outrageously "rhetorical" cast than with its specific rhetorical contents and imagined reality-effects. Seemingly progressive revisionist accounts of the 1960s are, in this sense, often more nationalist than left in their impetus. The anxieties about fragmentation and dispersion, identity politics, and excessive rhetoric that they express, I would suggest, are really anxieties about the nation-state itself and, in particular, about the status of (White, male) national subjectivity at the tail end of the bloody American century. In other words, exactly the kinds of anxieties the Panthers evoked. The glibness with which the Panthers are now invoked, for example, as a precedent for the White patriot and militia movements, or as an explanation for the violent turn in Black public culture exemplified in contemporary gangsta rap, only testifies to the lingering power of their performance. These spurious political connections, however, mystify much more than they reveal by ignoring the liberatory, radical,

and other less semantically available aspects of the Panthers' experiment. Most damaging, this ersatz history blocks a more complete account of the historical trauma that the Panthers exemplified, namely, the legitimization anxiety and fragility of the postmodern nation-state.

Other sorts of revisions have been somewhat careless. The fact that an "avowed homosexual" like Genet would be, as he puts it, "invited in" by the Panthers should, for example, make us reconsider the characteristic indictments of their sexism and misogyny, from Michelle Wallace's celebrated critique of "Black Macho" in 1978 to Alice Walker's recent assertions that the Panthers were little more than psychologically damaged Black men afraid of being called "punks" and "sissies."<sup>148</sup> Although there is no question that there was sexism in the Panther Party, several of the Panthers also made what Edmund White describes as "an astonishing leap, given the period," by coming out and explicitly identifying gay liberation and women's liberation as causes that needed to be supported and embraced as a part of a broad revolutionary struggle.<sup>149</sup> At Genet's prompting, Newton himself undertook a self-critical appraisal of his own sexism and homophobia, producing a pamphlet in 1970 entitled "The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements," where he observed that homosexuals might actually be the most oppressed, and the most revolutionary participants in a coalition of oppressed peoples.<sup>150</sup>

This pamphlet was born out of an article in *The Black Panther* that was written on the occasion of the Panther-sponsored Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention, which was attended by a diverse array of cultural and political radicals including radical women's groups, members of the Gay Liberation Front, representatives of the American Indian Movement, and others. Though Hilliard remembers the convention as a failure, the enactment of a Constitutional Convention under the auspices of the Panthers and in celebration of radical "minorities", excluded in the initial formulation of the great document, was an astonishing attempt to imagine alternative forms of kinship and community to the one organized around a conception of a unitary and universal, national subject. Ultimately, what this signaled was the existence of a spectrum of liberatory practices and "revolutionary peoples," all searching for a way in—and a way out. Liberation politics, as inaugurated and exemplified by the Panthers, in other words, was based less upon the defense of reified notions of identity than upon the desire to fracture a singular, hegemonic space by imagining the liberation of manifold symbolic spaces within the (national) territory, from the body, to the streets, a section of the city, the mind itself. Within the (im)possibly "heterotopian" impulses of this kind of politics, the multiplication of rhetorics of "liberation" and "autonomy" was uneasily met by a language of rights, inclusion, and participation—perhaps the necessary paradox of any liberatory practice that contends with the legacies of exclusion and marginalization within the ambit of a national security state.<sup>151</sup>

In terms of constructing a genealogy of the 1960s and its forms of identity politics in our own time, it is important that we understand how and why it was that the American Black movement in general, and the Panthers in particular, gained such centrality, especially when it came to supplying the ideological resources, the fund of metaphor, imagery, and symbolism that in crucial respects defined the radical potentialities of this moment. According to Kobena Mercer, "[T]he political positions of the Black Panthers had an empowering effect in extending the chain of radical democratic equivalences to more and more social groups precisely through their dramatic visibility in the public sphere."<sup>152</sup> Thus, in the imaginary constructs of the radical counterculture, for example—a "Woodstock Nation," a "youth colony," or a "White Panther Party"—the sign of "youth" reappropriated the sign of "race," and declared that "White middle-class kids are exploited and oppressed," that "long-hair is Black skin," and that "the student is a nigger."<sup>153</sup> Or as the gay liberationist delegation to the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention put it, "queer = chick = nigger," and imagined what it would take to transform San Francisco from "a ghetto policed by straights" to a "free territory."<sup>154</sup> In Mercer's terms, the Black struggles of 1968 exerted profound "metonymic leverage," acting as the "trigger struggle" and switch point for other minority and identity discourses, and serving as the central relay station for the absorption and appropriation of the liberatory impulses of decolonization from within the global media scape.<sup>155</sup>

Now it may be the case that the generalization and metaphorization of decolonization or, for that matter, racial oppression are what is most illegitimate about the recent history of liberation politics in America. The invocation of "decolonized sensibilities," "the inner colonized," or "the third world within" might not only be an example of sloppy analogical reasoning, it might also serve to erase the consequences of uneven development across the globe. It also may serve to efface and even trivialize the significant specificity of exceedingly different historic struggles.<sup>156</sup> Yet, rather than cavalierly dismissing any use of this language as illegitimate appropriation or as a product of romantic fascination and indulgence, it may be worth considering in more detail the profound relationship between 1960s social movements in the United States and the history of decolonization and neocolonialism. In the end, contemporary explorations of "the other question" and "cultural difference" are unthinkable apart from a consideration of this history and, in particular, of struggles against imperialism and racism that have "produced forms of politics that neither conform to traditional political categories, nor uphold their standards of coherence."<sup>157</sup>

Indeed, what may be most significant about 1968 was that it was marked by a series of attempts to break with or subvert the dominant staging of "race" within American culture which gave impetus to the broad reinvention of political radicalism in this country. The extension of the metaphorical valences of Black struggles beyond the United States, moreover,

strained the nation-form, undermining normative, national self-identity. For a time at least, and this was certainly true of the Panthers, it seemed as though Black-people-in-struggle had seized control of "racial" assets, the fund of metaphor, symbolism, and imagery that have always been central to the construction of hegemonic "citizenship" in the United States by wrenching the self-perpetuating logic of America's "dilemma" and rupturing the self-assured dialectic of the "American Century." From James Brown's "Say it Loud, I'm Black and Proud" to the redolent phrase "Black is Beautiful," to the startling imagery of barefeet and Black fists raised in protest at the Mexico Olympic Games, to the oxymoronic saliency of the "Black Power" concept itself, the cultural politics of 1968 were centered on a series of dramatic and potentially liberatory transvaluations of the signifying content of Blackness. In the end, it is this uniquely subversive, insistently traumatizing legacy that has been least understood and most devalued in the official revisionist accounts. At the same time, this legacy remains to a greater and lesser degree most alive in the "racial" politics of cultural performance and in the critical reworking of antiracist theory and practice today.

Of course, the story of the Black Panthers is not without its own tortured ironies. If the logic of the "American Century" was in some sense predicated upon the promise of universal nationality for a decolonizing humanity and for Black people within the United States, its eclipse, as the Panthers understood it, had revealed the hollowness of the initial promise. In the wake of 1968, we have been subject to the explicit reconstruction of neocolonial and neoracist domination within the world-system and in the United States. Rigorously puncturing and exploding the historical basis and pretensions of American power, the Panthers more than any other group foresaw this. Indeed, this is the primary reason why they are now so readily blamed for the fact that the "dream" is still "deferred." Yet, in a sense, the Panthers, especially in their slide into drugs and crime in the 1970s, merely reflected a process by which neocolonialism and uneven development were being more ruthlessly internalized within the United States itself. Under the new regime, the state has increasingly stopped even attempting to secure its legitimation in the eyes of its Black people. Instead, what we have is the reconstitution of forms of repressive, racial alterity in the figures of contemporary, Black anticitizenry—criminals, drug users, wild youth, and welfare "queens"—all those for whom the Panthers held out such promise. Perhaps the greatest irony of the post-1968 period, now that the market appears as the global horizon of all human sociality, is that Black aesthetic commodities—"Black performativity," if you will—is that much more prominent within the public sphere, even as Black "citizenship" is increasingly devalued.<sup>158</sup>

To conclude, what C. L. R. James said of Marcus Garvey might also be said of the Panthers, "When you bear in mind the slenderness . . . [of his]



resources and the vast material forces and the pervading social conceptions which automatically sought to destroy him, his achievement remains one of the propagandistic miracles of this century."<sup>159</sup> Taking the Garvey movement somewhat as a precedent, it is perhaps not insignificant that so many anticolonial thinkers, including Fanon and Genet, and their American contemporaries like Harold Cruse and James Baldwin, took the "stage" and the "mirror" to be the metaphors that best explained the revolt of the colonized, and racialized subaltern. Indeed, it may be that the revolts of powerless people are always at first "theatrical," self-inflating, and bombastic. Lacking a significant purchase upon the "real," they inevitably appear unanchored, self-referential, and unintelligible to those who witness them for the first time. In retrospect, this may appear as weakness and even failure, though it is always impossible to fully calculate these effects, or what might happen within more favorable conjunctures. For the colonized and racial "other," who for so long stood holding up the mirror in which the "West" contemplated itself, the revolt against colonization briefly constituted its own referents and mirrors, shattering the calm, reflective surface of universal history into a thousand tiny fragments in which many began to see their own reflection for the first time. It is Fanon who best captured the ambiguities attendant on this moment, offering what might serve here as a final word on the Black Panthers:

To tell the truth, there is a glaring divergence between what these men claim to be and what they have behind them. These countries without tramways, without troops, and without money have no justification for the bravado that they display in broad daylight. Undoubtedly they are impostors. . . . These men at the head of empty countries, who talk too loud are most irritating. You'd like to shut them up. But on the contrary, they are in great demand. They are given bouquets; they are invited to dinner. In fact, we quarrel over who shall have them. . . . They are 98% illiterate, but they are the subject of a huge body of literature. They travel a great deal. . . gold mines for airline companies. . . Perhaps we shall see that this, which caricatures itself often in facile internationalism is one of the most fundamental characteristics of underdeveloped countries.<sup>160</sup>

## NOTES

**Acknowledgments:** I am indebted to many people who commented on this chapter, especially the participants in the 1992 American Studies Association Conference in Costa Mesa, Calif., and the 1993 Yale American Studies Graduate Conference in New Haven, Conn. I'd like to thank everyone who read an early version of this chapter, including Karam Singh, Michael Denning, David Waldstreicher, Carlo Rotella, Gunther Peck, Pamela Haag, Jean-Christophe Agnew, Lewis Gordon, David Scobey, Judith Smith, Eric Lott, Colleen Lye, and Rebecca McLennan. I am also grateful to Henry Abelove, Ashley Dawson, Matt Jacobson, Herman Lebovics, Tim Brennan, Nancy Cott, and Charles E. Jones for their comments on the final draft, and especially to Alys Weinbaum and Adam Green who helped me to see this through from start to finish.

1. This composite is drawn from several important historical works on the 1960s: Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987); George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis* (Boston: South End Press, 1987); Ronald Fraser et al., *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1988); Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Eric Cummins, *The Rise and Fall of California's Radical Prison Movement* (Stanford: University of California Press, 1994). The notion of "revolutionary suicide" is from Huey P. Newton's (recently reprinted), *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc., 1995 [1973]).

2. Alice Echols, "We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Notes Toward a Remapping of the Sixties," *Socialist Review* 92:2 (1992): 15.

3. For useful works that in very different ways complicate the dichotomizing narrative see Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, and Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America, and the Making of a New Left* (New York: Verso, 1993). Gosse, in particular, affirms principles crucial to this chapter, namely, what he calls the "polycentric" nature of 1960s radicalism and, more importantly, the centrality of antiimperialism to the origins of a broad New Left (10-12).

4. The term "subaltern counterpublic" is coined by Nancy Fraser in her useful essay, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80. The notion of subaltern counterpublics corrects the tendency to reify the bourgeois public sphere as unitary and universal (when it is in fact produced through a series of constitutive exclusions), and simultaneously recognizes the (civic-republican) "public sphere," as a realm of civil, communal discourse within the ambit of the nation-state and as a realm of "intrapublic" conflict in which "members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs (67)." What remains unclarified in Fraser's essay is the specific historico-political relationship between the public sphere, as "a theater of political participation," "discursive relations" and conflicts (57), and the nation-state, which remains invested as the ultimate arbiter of the "common good" and the boundaries of the "we," and retains a monopoly on certain forms of public discourse, in particular



the discourse of "violence," something I will have occasion to discuss later in the chapter.

5. Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988), 419; Echols, "We Gotta Get Out of This Place," 14.

6. Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, 348; Todd Gitlin, "From Universality to Difference: Notes on the Fragmentation of the Idea of the Left," *Contention* 2:2 (Winter 1993): 31.

7. By "American universalism," I mean the essential yoking together of Enlightenment notions of human universality and formal freedom with a vision of the American nation as a single great community. As I argue elsewhere this vision receives its most forceful articulation in the post-WWII period by Gunnar Myrdal in *The American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 2 vols. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962 (1944)). Nikhil P. Singh, *Race and Reason*, vol. 3, Fall 1997: 62–70. According to John Higham, a contemporary proponent of this view, American universalism is "our egalitarian ideology. . . . molded by the Enlightenment and forged in the revolution. . . . [It is] simultaneously a civic credo, a social vision, and a definition of nationhood." From John Higham, "Multiculturalism and Universalism: a History and Critique," *American Quarterly* 44/2: 197 (my emphasis). For a similar statement of principles, see Gitlin, who calls the United States "the place where the Enlightenment first came down to earth" and defends the utopian possibilities inherent in Myrdal's conception of America as "embryonic humanity itself;" Gitlin, "From Universality to Difference," 24.

8. This analysis is the outgrowth of a few former New Left and liberal-democratic thinkers' attempts to come to terms with the popularity and political success of Reaganism. The conclusion that emerges from this line of reasoning, however—that forms of cultural radicalism and identity politics inherited from the 1960s have helped to undermine the left, by alienating White working men and opening the door to a right-wing populism—has actually been a self-conscious Republican strategy since 1968. This strategy was first formulated by Nixon advisor Kevin Phillips and elaborated in his book *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New York: Doubleday, 1970). For contemporary, left-democratic variations on the Phillips thesis, see Jim Sleeper, *The Closest of Strangers* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); Stephen Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order: 1930–1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction* (New York: Norton, 1991); Harry Ashmore, *Civil Rights and Wrongs* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994); and Gitlin, "From Universality to Difference." Also, see the provocative debate between Maurice Isserman and Alexander Cockburn about the so-called excesses of 1960s radicalism, "Letters: An Exchange," *The Nation*, 31 October 1994: 507–8.

9. Indeed, the degree to which the architects of the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton presidential victories staked their campaigns on a kind of anti-antiracism, taking-for-granted, and forwarding "common sense" linkages between the politics of racial redress, national fragmentation, the political extremism of the 1960s, and the "pathologies" of Black socialization, has become increasingly clear. The putatively left counterargument that calls for the reinvigoration of an alternative, left-wing populism invariably fails to account for the fact that populism (which Ellen Willis aptly labels "the cultural nationalism of ordinary people"), in large measure names the problem that minority discourses around race (as well as those around gender and sexuality) have always had to confront in the first place. Ellen Willis, "Let's Get Radical," *Village Voice*, 19 December 1994, 33. Thus, for example, the argument that the rightward turn in American politics is the product of a backlash against the excesses of antiracist politics since the 1960s, actually

has it backwards. Rising Black militancy in the 1960s registered in such a profound and disturbing way because it was in itself a direct response to the racist "frontlashing" that has been an implicit or explicit feature of almost every American populism. For a useful analysis and critique of the backlash thesis, see Shiela Collins, *The Rainbow Challenge: The Jackson Campaign and the Future of American Politics* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986), 69.

10. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

11. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1986), 145.

12. *Ibid.*, 139.

13. Tom Wolfe, *Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1970).

14. The revisionist work on the 1960s that most exemplifies this is Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the 1960s* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1990). Also see Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 350.

15. Many otherwise admirable accounts of Black liberation politics during the 1960s have this tendency, including Fraser et al. 1968; Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left*; Churchill and Wall, *Agents of Repression*, and Eugene Victor Wolfenstein, *Victims of Democracy: Malcolm X and the Black Revolution* (London: Free Association Books, 1989).

16. An analysis of Black liberation politics during the 1960s that scrupulously avoids these pitfalls is significantly not about the Panthers but about the movement that was the most credible Black revolutionary alternative to the Panthers, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM). See Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975). Recent criticism of the so-called White left and the Panthers that nonetheless continues to treat the Panthers as little more than an emblem, includes Adolph Reed, "Tokens of the White Left," *The Progressive* 57.12:18–26. I thank Gordon Lafer for pointing out Reed's essay.

17. For example, see Doug McAdam's brief discussion of the Black Panther Party in his otherwise useful book, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 182. For a much more egregious example of this phenomenon, see Hugh Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey P. Newton and the Price of Black Power in America* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1994).

18. Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992); David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1993). More recently, the writings of Huey P. Newton and other Panther leaders have been reprinted. Of particular importance and interest are Phillip F. Foner's collection, *The Black Panthers Speak* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995 [1970]), and Huey P. Newton, *To Die for the People: Selected Writings and Speeches* (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc., 1995 [1972]).

19. Collier and Horowitz, *Destructive Generation*; Pearson, *Shadow of the Panther*; also Alice Walker, "Black Panthers or Black Punks," *New York Times*, 5 May 1993, A 23.

20. William Gardner Smith, *Return to Black America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Publishers, 1970), 173.

21. Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978), 387. The discussion that follows is heavily

indebted to Hall's illuminating comments on the meaning of Panther politics from the vantage point of Blacks in Britain.

22. Manning Marable, *Black American Politics: From the Washington Marches to Jesse Jackson* (New York: Verso, 1985), 57.

23. Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991 [1970]), 80.

24. *Ibid.*, 83.

25. Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 232.

26. The writings of the central Black revolutionary figures during the 1960s, in addition to the main Panther leaders, are indispensable sources for reconstructing a sense of the politics of the period. The most important are Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York: Dell Publishing, Inc., 1970); Eldridge Cleaver, *Post-Prison Writings and Speeches* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970); James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: Open Hand Publishing, Inc., 1985); Angela Davis, *With My Mind on Freedom: An Autobiography* (New York: Bantam Books, 1974); George Jackson, *Soledad Brother* (London: Penguin Books, 1970). For a discussion of the ill-fated Panther-SNCC alliance, see Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 541. For the BPP and DRUM see Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, 61, 143. For brief discussions of the BPP and the Young Lords, see Foner, *The Black Panther Leaders Speak*, 229–45; and Hilliard, *This Side of Glory*, 229; for the American Indian Movement, see Churchill, *Agents of Repression*; for the Brown Berets, see Carlos Munoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity and Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso, 1989), 86; for the Prison Movement, see Cummins, *The Rise and Fall of California's Radical Prison Movement*, ch. 5–8; Angela Davis, *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance* (San Francisco: The National United Committee to Free Angela Davis (NUCFAD), 1971); for Women's and Gay Liberation, see Newton, *To Die For the People*, 152; Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 222–23; Karla Jay and Allen Young, *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation* (New York: New York University Press, 1992 [1972]); for the BPP and SDS, see Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 348–350; Fraser et al., 1968, 309–311; Echols, *Daring to be Bad*, 127–28; Andrew Kopkind, "The Real SDS Stands Up (1969)," in *The Thirty Years Wars: Dispatches and Diversions of a Radical Journalist, 1965–1994* (New York: Verso, 1995), 166. Finally, on the centrality of anti-imperialism and internationalism for the Panthers, see Cornel West, "The Paradoxes of the Afro-American Rebellion," in *The Sixties Without Apology*, ed. Sonya Sahres et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 53; Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 247, 278; Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 386–88.

27. Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Theory, Culture and Society* 7:295–310. Appadurai's important essay outlines protocols for thinking about global cultural flows in terms of the movement of populations, media images, ideologies, technologies, and capital. The various "scapes" corresponding to each instance of movement are unevenly integrated and coordinated across the vast spaces of the global cultural economy.

28. These are the words of scholar-pundit and presidential advisor Daniel Patrick Moynihan, quoted in Collins, *The Rainbow Challenge*, 57.

29. Henry Louis Gates, "Critical Fanonism," *Critical Inquiry*, (Spring 1991).

30. Newton, *To Die for the People*, 92; Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 121.

31. Here I am paraphrasing Stuart Hall who writes that the Panthers forged "a form of Black revolutionary politics alternative to the worlds of low wage work,

hustling, the middle-class politics of Civil Rights and the separatism of cultural nationalism." Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 387.

32. The notion that a Maoist-inflected opposition between "bourgeois" and "revolutionary" becomes the most salient one for radicals during the 1960s (displacing the more orthodox Marxist opposition between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat), is from Frederic Jameson's provocative and important essay "Periodizing the Sixties," in *The Sixties Without Apology*, ed. Sonya Sahres et al., 189.

33. C. L. R. James, "The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Question in the United States (1948)," in *The C. L. R. James Reader* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1992).

34. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 32.

35. Huey P. Newton, "We Are Nationalists and Internationalists," in *The Coming of the New International*, ed. John Gerassi (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1971), 575.

36. Essentially, the Panther leaders viewed their local Black nationalist rivals as ineffectual poseurs and political reactionaries. Bobby Seale offered one of the most complete, early statements of the Panther position in 1967: "We're nationalists because we see ourselves as a nation within a nation. But we're revolutionary nationalists. We don't see ourselves as a national unit for racist reasons but as a necessity for us to progress as human beings. We don't fight exploitative capitalism with Black capitalism. We fight capitalism with revolutionary socialism. All of us are laboring people—employed or unemployed, and our unity has got to be based on the practical necessities of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It's got to be based on the practical things like the survival of people and people's right to self-determination, to iron out their problems by themselves without the interference of the police or CIA or armed forces of the USA. We don't care about changing what we wear; we want power—later for what we wear. Dashikis don't free nobody and pork chops don't oppress nobody." Quoted in Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 122.

37. Kobena Mercer, "1968: Periodizing Politics and Identity," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg et al. (London: Routledge, 1992), 433.

38. Erik Erikson and Huey P. Newton, *In Search of Common Ground* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973), 133.

39. "Resistance literature" is Barbara Harlow's term, see her *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

40. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 147. Fanon completed this work in 1961, right before he died.

41. Manning Marable, *Blackwater: Historical Studies in Race, Class Consciousness and Revolution* (Dayton: Black Praxis Press, 1981), 193. The idea of the Panther's "counter nationalism", (or in Nancy Fraser's more modest term, their "counter publicity"), is useful because it successfully subverts the false opposition between assimilationism and separatism as the only meaningful political choices for a minority discourse. When understood as "counter discourses," minority discourses can be understood in their "dual character," namely, "as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment," and "as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics." Fraser, "Re-thinking the Public Sphere," 68.

42. Jameson, "Periodizing the 1960s," 182.

43. Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 387.

44. Seale, *Seize the Time*, 25; Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 120, 183; Newton, *To Die for the People*, 17.

45. Gates, "Critical Fanonism"; also see Cedric Robinson's scathing critique of the uptake of Fanon by contemporary literary critics in "The Appropriation of Frantz Fanon," *Race and Class* 35(1) 1993: 79-91.

46. Eugene Genovese, "The Legacy of Slavery and the Roots of Black Nationalism," in *For a New America: Essays in History and Politics from Studies on the Left, 1959-1967*, ed. James Weinstein and David Eakins (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 415.

47. Wilson Moses, "Ambivalent Maybe," in *Lure and Loathing: Essays on Race, Identity and the Ambivalence of Assimilation*, ed. Gerald Early (New York: Penguin, 1993), 193.

48. Harold Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1968), 23.

49. *Ibid.*, 95. Or, as Cruse puts it still more pointedly, in another context: "The Negro . . . [is] the American problem of underdevelopment (74)."

50. For example, see Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1967).

51. Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution*, 95. This goes to the heart of Cruse's entire project, namely, the need to "theorize" Black political struggles: "The crisis of Black and White is also a crisis in social theory. (27)"

52. Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 120-22.

53. This is the book Eldridge Cleaver dubbed "the Black bible," in *Post-Prison Writings and Speeches*, 18.

54. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 80.

55. *Ibid.*, 216, 234.

56. *Ibid.*, 75.

57. Prasnejit Duara, "The Displacement of Tension to the Tension of Displacement," *Radical History Review* 57, (Fall 1993), 63.

58. This phrase was first coined by the great American liberal historian William Appleman Williams; also see Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 66.

59. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 98-99.

60. Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 319.

61. Erikson and Newton, *In Search of Common Ground*, 31.

62. I would suggest that Newton's theory was a provocative effort to conceive the lineaments of what Bruce Cummings calls the "post-1945 American realm of action in the world," or the redefinition of a logic of empire without colonies. Bruce Cummings, "Global Realm With No Limit, Global Realm With No Name," *Radical History Review* (1993) 57:46-59. Intercommunalism, then, might be seen as an attempt to name the other face of an imperialism no longer reliant upon territorial possessions, or a "deterritorialized" conception of "national liberation," in which small groups like the Panthers could participate, along with other oppressed communities, like the Cubans, or the Vietnamese. Following Cummings, we might understand the basis of the post-1945 American empire in the following way: (1) in military and territorial terms, it is "an archipelago of military bases" and complexes; (2) in economic terms, it is a disproportionate financial and political influence within the global sphere of multilateral commodity-relations and international state-system—the old U.S. dream of an "open-door empire (51)." To call this an "empire," as Cummings suggests, is clearly something of a misnomer, especially when it comes to defining a world

that was beginning to be decolonized after 1945. During this time "the world-system," as Cummings writes, "did not necessarily need an American empire . . . [though it] did need a hegemon[ist] (53)." This might also help to explain the "ideal" character of American global power (that is, the degree to which it has not always been driven by obvious material interests, but rather by the need to set an example—"empire as a way of life"). Finally, another useful way to describe American global hegemony is through a notion of "ultraimperialism," which implies the end of nationalist autarky, along with the broad cooperation, as opposed to conflict and (imperial) competition of the world's dominant powers. Ultraimperialism was first coined by Karl Kautsky in 1914, at the beginning of WWI. However, it was not until the onset of the so-called American Century and the imposition of the Bretton Woods agreement governing international trade and monetary policy in 1942 that something like ultraimperialism became a reality. Carl Parrini, "The Age of Ultraimperialism," *Radical History Review* (1993) 57:7-20.

63. Clearly Newton's theory possesses its share of wishful thinking, myopia, and, above all, self-importance, since the Vietnamese were in fact struggling for a nation-state of their own. Moreover, the constant refrain that the U.S. was "not a nation, but an empire," and that "the Black people of the empire's heartland" (that is, the Panthers) were "at the center of revolutionary action" in the world, elides the fact that the Panthers' (and the Vietnamese's) primary antagonist was still the American state. Nation-states, in this sense, are hardly "things of the past," but are ordered in specific, functional and hierarchical relations within the world system, relations that have not simply been swept away by forces of capitalist globalization. See Frantz Schurmann's introduction to Newton, *To Die for the People*, xx. Still, I would argue that Newton's thinking is important for three reasons: (1) it acknowledges the "world-ordering" power of the U.S. during this period; (2) it attempts to theorize a relationship between intra- and international conflict and struggle; and (3) it argues that an effective "anti-imperialism" must be based on the understanding that the global power and domestic hegemony of the American state are integrally linked. Also see Michael Geyer, "Concerning the Question: Is Imperialism a Useful Category of Historical Analysis?" *Radical History Review* (1993) 57:68.

64. L. S. Stavrianos, *Global Rift: The Third World Comes of Age* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1981). My periodization of decolonization is taken from Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations and Literatures* (New York: Verso, 1992), who "designates . . . the years between 1945 and 1975 the high period of decolonization (39)." During this time, Ahmad argues, 1965-75 is especially important for giving rise to revolutionary nationalist struggles with "a distinctly socialist trajectory (30)." On the crisis of U.S. hegemony over the world market by the early 1970s, see Giovanni Arrighi, "Marxist Century, American Century: The Making and Remaking of the World Labor Movement," *New Left Review* 179:45.

65. Richard J. Barnet, and Ronald Muller, *Global Reach: The Power of Multinational Corporations* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 334.

66. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (New York: Verso, 1991), 44.

67. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 98.

68. What Jameson calls "the Fanonian model of struggle," is actually an attempt to replace the proletariat with the "colonized" as the new Subject of History, a move first heralded by Jean-Paul Sartre in his famous essay "Orphee Noir" (1949). Ernesto Laclau emphasizes the populist dimension of successful counter-hegemonic, anticapitalist struggles that effectively articulate

heterogeneous struggles and antagonisms into a single antithetical structure: "the people" vs. "the power bloc," in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London: Verso, 1977), 135. On the Panthers' counter-hegemonic articulations, see Mercer, "1968: Periodizing Politics and Identity," 435. Contemporary criticisms, notwithstanding, the Panther's rhetoric was indeed populist in the sense that Laclau suggests, in particular, in their effort to weld contemporary, anticolonial and anticapitalist ideologies together with the revolutionary, democratic demands of The Declaration of Independence and The United States Constitution. See the last paragraph of the Panthers' famous 10-point program, which begins, "We hold these truths to be self-evident. . . ." Newton, *To Die for the People*, 5.

69. Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1966), (the book that purportedly made Lyndon Johnson furious). Stephen Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy, 1938-1980* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 403.

70. Henri Lefebvre, *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Upheaval* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969), 93.

71. Jameson, "Periodizing the 1960s"; Van Gosse arrives at this same fundamental view, by way of a very different route. See Gosse, *Where the Boys Are*.

72. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 80.

73. "Malcolm X: Make It Plain," dir. Orlando Bagwell, Blackside, Inc., 1994.

74. By this account the so-called Congo crisis of 1960 is as important as the Cuban revolution in defining U.S. policy of containing and undermining revolutionary nationalist struggles, as well as crystallizing forms of anti-imperialist opposition within the U.S. itself. Malcolm X, for one, referred frequently to the events in the Congo. It is Bruce Perry who refers to Malcolm X as "America's Lumumba." Bruce Perry, *Malcolm: Life of a Man Who Changed Black America* (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Press, 1991).

75. Gosse, *Where the Boys Are*, 153-54.

76. Robert F. Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (New York: Mariani and Munsell, 1962), 103.

77. *Ibid.*, 109.

78. This is the basis of Harold Cruse's critique of Williams as a revolutionary without program or substance. See Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 351; also Gosse, *Where the Boys Are*, 154.

79. Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 174.

80. Nikhil P. Singh, "Pluralism, Decolonization and Postimperial America," Organization of American Historians, Atlanta, April 1994 (unpublished manuscript).

81. Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983 [1955]). Also see Singh, "Toward an Effective Anti-Racism" (forthcoming).

82. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, vol. II, 1021.

83. Van Gosse's fine work offers a wealth of insight into the resurgence of left anti-imperialism by the late 1950s. Gosse argues that support for the Cuban revolution in the face of increasing official hostility was the touchstone for the renewal of activist energies across a spectrum of political commitments. Not only were the most celebrated proto-New Left figures, such as C. Wright Mills, in the forefront of the defense of Cuba, but so were some of the most important African American radicals of the early 1960s, including William Worthy, LeRoi Jones, Malcolm X, James Baldwin, and Robert Williams. The significance of

anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism has been terribly obscured in accounts of Black politics since WW II. Yet the opposition to what Du Bois in *Color and Democracy* (1945) called "imperial-colonialism" may actually be the most reliable and enduring strain of Black radicalism in the twentieth century. By the 1960s, its complex manifestations were visible across a range of activities and events, from Castro's 1960 trip to Harlem and meeting with Malcolm X, to LeRoi Jones's celebrated political "coming-out" in "Cuba Libre" (1960), to Robert Williams' flight and exile, to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s belated opposition to the Vietnam War, and, of course, to the emergence of the Panthers. Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are*, 147-49. Also, Martin Luther King, Jr., *Trumpet of Conscience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967). An important recent corrective is Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-Colonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

84. Kobena Mercer, "1968: Periodizing Politics and Identity," 433; Malcolm X, *By Any Means Necessary* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970); Williams, *Negroes with Guns*, 124.

85. For the importance of "routes" (as opposed to "roots"), as the governing metaphor for Black radical thinking, see Paul Gilroy, "It Aint' Where You're From, It's Where You're At' . . . The Dialectics of Diasporic Identification," reprinted in *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures* (London: Serpent's Tale, 1993), 120.

86. Seale, *Seize the Time*, 4; also Paul Gilroy, "A Dialogue with bell hooks," in *Small Acts*, 226.

87. My use of the metaphor of "domestication" is of course deliberately polyvalent, if insufficiently elaborated. The Panthers not only resisted domestication to a narrative of nation, but also to conservative, racist narratives of family and kinship advanced in the seemingly opposed but ultimately symbiotic discourses of Black cultural nationalism and the Moynihan report. Also see Paul Gilroy, "It's a Family Affair," *Small Acts*, 205.

88. Harold Isaacs, *The New World of American Negroes* (London: Phoenix House, 1963).

89. James Baldwin, "Fifth Avenue Uptown: A Letter from Harlem," in *Nobody Knows My Name* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1961), 79. In 1960, for example, *Ebony* devoted an entire issue to documenting the splendors of Ghanain independence. As Baldwin said at the time, "The image of Nkrumah getting off his plane has an effect on all the other images. . . . tak[ing] a certain sting out of those pictures of the African savage." Quoted in Isaacs, *The New World of American Negroes*, 276.

90. James Baldwin, "An Open Letter to My Sister Angela Davis," in Angela Davis, *If They Come in the Morning*, 19-23; James Baldwin, *No Name in the Street* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1972).

91. James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Pages from a Black Worker's Notebook* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 29.

92. Isaacs, *The New World of American Negroes*, 11.

93. *Ibid.*, 13.

94. George Jackson, *Blood in My Eye* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1990), 47.

95. James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1963); Mercer, "1968: Periodizing Politics and Identity."

96. Here Panther imagery and language were translated immediately into popular idioms and metaphors. Newton suggested that coining the term pig was meant to



dispel the fear image attached to the police in the minds of Black people. Those that think this sort of thing doesn't count in struggles should take note of the fact that the FBI in their attempts to combat the Panther's inventive and effective labeling of the police, circulated an anonymous cartoon lamely deriding the panther as "an animal with a small head." Churchill, *Agents of Repression*, 44. More ambiguously, this moment marks the beginning of the profound, commercial crossover of an explicitly "Black" aesthetic (via "Blaxploitation" genre films and novels) into the mainstream of American and global popular culture. This raises immensely complicated political and theoretical questions that I partially address in the final section of the chapter. I would suggest that in the end there isn't that much that separates the strategic revolutionary vision of George Jackson in *Blood in My Eye* from the literary inventions of Sam Greenlee (*The Spook Who Sat by the Door*) or perhaps even Donald Goines (Al C. Clark, the *Kenyatta* series). For the Panthers' own reflections on popular culture, see Huey Newton's and Bobby Seale's "revolutionary analysis" of Melvin Van Peeble's *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*—the pioneering Blaxploitation film—as well as Newton's and Cleaver's admiring references to Gilles Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers*, a film that was popular and influential for the entire New Left. Newton, *To Die for the People*, 112–47.

97. Genovese, "The Legacy of Slavery," 415.

98. Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 18.

99. This is Max Weber's famous axiom for defining the modern state. See *Economy and Society*, vol. II, Ch. IX (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Also see Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 77–78.

100. Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, 185.

101. Quoted in Emmanuel Hansen, *The Political Thought of Frantz Fanon* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 6.

102. Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, 27.

103. Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 115.

104. Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle*, 39.

105. Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978).

106. Quoted in Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle*, 41.

107. Newton, *To Die for the People*, 36.

108. In contrast to the Panthers, the Boggs were committed to a project of rewriting a Marxist and historicist theory of class struggle and the state in terms that retained allusions to the struggles of the 1930s and an allegiance to the primacy of the point of production.

109. Homi Babha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Babha (New York: Routledge, 1990), 300. Babha's essay, however, hardly accounts for the kind of active and oppositional spatial determinations represented by groups like the Panthers.

110. If the founding ethos of the post-WW II Civil Rights movement was said to be America's fulfillment of "the main trend in its history," or "the gradual realization of the American Creed," the self-assertion of the ghetto deconstructed the imaginary space of the nation—state as a place of historicist becoming for Black people and as an integral territorial and ideological unit to which they belonged. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 3. Cleaver cleverly disparaged "the American Creed" as so many failed attempts "to citizenize the Negro." Cleaver, *Post-Prison Writings and Speeches*, 61. For the general reconceptualization of "space" in social

theory and politics, see Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989); Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1984.)

111. Indeed, it may have been with American Black liberation in mind that Lefebvre offered his own rewriting of Marxist historicism in terms of *la revolution urbaine*, or urban, spatial revolution. Neil Smith, *Uneven Development*, 92.

112. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 130.

113. *Ibid.*, 129–30.

114. Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 180. The theory of organizing those defined as workless or as Black unemployables should be viewed as the Panther's flexible adaptation of a Marxian emphasis upon the primacy of class struggle. Many radicals (White and Black) during the 1960s had grown entirely skeptical about the militant potential of the organized (predominantly White) working class. Yet despite their reputation as the most anti-White radical group, the Panthers were openly sympathetic to a conception of workers' struggles and viewed themselves in a loose sense as part of a working-class struggle toward socialism. (Recall Bobby Seale, "All of us are laboring people—employed or unemployed," note 38). Yet by giving even greater primacy to the uniquely Black condition of "worklessness" (structural underemployment and ghettoization), the Panthers also tended to embrace a more utopian strand of thinking critical of the idea of labor *tout court*. As Stuart Hall et al. put it, "Those who cannot work also discover that they don't want to under conditions of alienation and exploitation." Stuart Hall, et al. *Policing the Crisis*, 356; Also Paul Gilroy, "Diaspora, Utopia and the Critique of Capitalism," *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and Peter Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 70–72.

115. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 38.

116. This term was coined by Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Escavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), ch. 3. Also see Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

117. James N. Blaut, *The National Question: Decolonizing the Theory of Nationalism* (London: Zed Books, 1987), 165.

118. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 298.

119. Babha, "DissemiNation," 300.

120. Barbara Harlow, "Sites of Struggle: Immigration, Deportation, Prison and Exile," in *Criticism in the Borderlands*, ed. Calderon and Saldivar (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 150.

121. This is Benedict Anderson's term, quoted in Babha, "DissemiNation," 305.

122. On the historical resonance of Black anticitizenship or the notion of Black people "as enemies rather than members of the social compact," see David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), 57. In this vein, Rubin Hurricane Carter, the unjustly imprisoned Black middleweight, described the nation—state for Black people as a little more than a "penitentiary with a flag." Quoted in Bruce Franklin, *Prison Literature in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 242.

123. Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 238.

124. *Passing it On: A Story of A Black Panther's Search for Justice*, videotape (Dhoruba Bin Wahad), John Valadez, dir., (New York: First Run Features, 1993).



125. Cummins, *The Rise and Fall of California's Radical Prison Movement*, 151–86.

126. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 297.

127. Franklin, *Prison Literature in America*, 273.

128. As Hall et al. put it, criminality is a form of “quasi-political” resistance that is ultimately complicit with existing structures of oppression. Despite their immense struggles around this issue, it is important to acknowledge the failure of groups like the Panthers to transform the criminal consciousness into a fully political one. Nonetheless, as Hall et al., put it, “Not to defend that sector of the class which is being systematically driven into crime is to abandon it to the ranks of those who have been permanently criminalised.” The Panthers, in other words, were attempting something that remains of the utmost political importance today as more and more Blacks and Latinos (and even Whites) are consigned to a permanently criminalized, anticitizenry, namely, to embrace the possibility of the active politicization of prisoners. Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 398.

129. Stanley Crouch, “The Nationalism of Fools,” in *Notes of a Hanging Judge: Essays and Reviews, 1979–1989* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 166; Hilliard and Cole, *This Side of Glory*, 258. David Hilliard is perhaps most eloquent on the Panthers’ slide into undisciplined violence and criminal activities by the early 1970s: “Before we’ve used Cuba, Algeria, and China as examples of revolutionary struggle. Now, Mario Puzo’s *Godfather* provides the organization map, a patriarchal family divided into military and political wings (339).”

130. Erikson and Newton, *In Search of Common Ground*, 44.

131. The Panthers were of course famous for carrying guns and law books in their celebrated encounters with the police and in using California law (which at the time allowed for the open carrying of firearms) to justify their activity. This, along with their tendency to quote liberally the *Declaration of Independence* and other founding national texts, makes the Panthers’ brand of counternationalism highly ironic, arrayed both within and against-the-grain of American political traditions.

132. Quoted in Churchill and Wall, *Agents of Repression*, 77, 68.

133. A useful way to think of postmodernism is a name for the culturally dominant form of political discursivity in the contemporary, overdeveloped world. Postmodernity might be viewed as a corresponding term defining a social condition, one best characterized by the tremendous flexibility and global mobility of capital increasingly liberated from the congealed boundaries of nation-states, and the constraints of socially empowered, organized labor. The concepts of postmodernism/postmodernity have obviously constituted a highly charged and politically ambiguous terrain of intellectual debate. In terms of left politics, some have argued that the politics of the new social movements is one salutary aspect of a postmodern condition, which has permitted the liberation of a range of political subjects, identities, desires and possibilities from the shackles of dour, Marxian theoretical predeterminations around the universal primacy of (a highly limited notion of) working-class struggles. By contrast, others have suggested that the characteristic postmodern emphasis upon the fracturing of political subjects, and upon the heterogeneous, local, and contingent nature of contemporary political struggles paradoxically mirrors a world in which the universality of capitalism itself precisely appears as the fragmentation of a global or universal oppositional imaginary (that is, the dream of socialism), and as the generalization of the world-capitalist market, freed from the requirements of any larger legitimating narrative or public principles outside the domain of its own (highly differentiating and privatizing) logic. Frederic Jameson offers a critical Marxian reading of

postmodernism as a new “cultural dominant,” in “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” *New Left Review* 146:53–92. For a highly problematic, though influential, theory that attempts to replace purportedly outdated master narratives of Marxism with a form of political discursivity suitable to new social movements, see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985). The most effective “mapping” of the socioeconomic infrastructure of postmodernity is David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989). In Harvey’s periodization, the dominance of a postmodern form of capitalism coincides with the serious and irreversible weakening of American hegemony in the world market and state-system, beginning around 1973. This period is also marked by a severe crisis of domestic, American hegemony, not only as a consequence of the upheavals of 1968, but also (by the 1970s) as a result of the “fiscal crisis of the state,” marked by the unravelling of the “virtuous circle” of intensive accumulation (“Fordism”), which had produced unparalleled, domestic economic growth, prosperity and working class political quiescence, or the dominant features of the official American Century. See also Arrighi, “Marxist Century: American Century.” Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: The U.S. Experience* (New York: Verso, 1979).

134. These numbers have been the subject of intense scrutiny and debate, see Fraser, 1968, 238.

135. Wini Breines, *Community Organizing and the Left* (New York: Praeger, 1982). Judith Butler, in *Bodies that Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), has given one of the most useful and accessible accounts of the complicated notion of “performativity.” Performativity pertains to the specific power of discourse itself, the power of naming and ex-nomination, or the ways “terms act rhetorically to produce the phenomenon they enunciate (208).” The power of any performative utterance derives from its “citationality,” or its location “within the context of a (pre-existing) chain of binding conventions (225).” The success or realization of any performative act, then, is always provisional, fragile, and revisable. If it gains the power of the “real,” it does so because it “echoes prior actions, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices (227).” In the work of Butler and politicized postmodernists, the “performative” has become the preferred (liberal) zone of cultural combat—in which “one is implicated in that which one opposes,” fighting the power of nominative convention through a process of “resignifying dominant discourses (241).” This, of course, begs the question of historical determination.

136. Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1992), 85.

137. *Ibid.*, 84.

138. See *Eyes on the Prize II: A Nation of Law 1968–1971*, (Boston: Blackside, Inc., 1991).

139. Michael Kazin and Maurice Isserman, “The Failure and Success of the New Radicalism,” in Gerstle and Fraser, ed. *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 226.

140. Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” in *In Other Words*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 138. In this sense we must also understand that the state is always performative. As Philip Abrams puts it in slightly different terms, “[The state is] a public reification that acquires an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practice as an illusory account of practice.” Quoted in Michael Taussig, “Malfecium: State Fetishism,” in *Fetishism as a Cultural Discourse*, ed. Apter and Peitz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 220. In other words, if the nation is thought of as an “imagined community”

secured on the terrains of invented traditions and national history, then the state is the just as imaginary site of social reproduction and social security, constituted through the authoritative repetition of that which is deemed to be a proper function of state (that is, policing, diplomacy, social security, waging war, etc.). The collective mobilization of individuals as national subjects then is in crucial ways dependent upon their identification as people subject to a national-state, or the product of a history of phantasmic investments in which the state is the symbolic guarantor of nationality, safety, and social cohesion.

141. Taussig, "Malfecium," 238.

142. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 208–9.

143. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 322.

144. Omi and Winant, for example, critique models of internal colonization because they do not correspond to a stable sense of "territory" that could supply an alternative basis for some form of Black nationhood. They argue further that none of the "national" aspects of oppression presumed by internal colonization models (that is, separate geography, culture, external political rule, extra-economic coercion, etc.) apply to American Blacks. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 145.

145. Davis, *City of Quartz*, ch. 5.

146. Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 95.

147. Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, 47.

148. Michelle Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Dial Press, 1978); Walker, "Black Panthers or Black Punks?" See also Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power*, and Brown's rejoinder to Walker, "Attack Racism, Not Black Men," *New York Times*, 5 May 1993: A 23.

149. Edmund White, *Genet: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 530.

150. Newton, *To Die for the People*, 152–55.

151. See Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* for an explanation of "heterotopia."

152. Mercer, "1968: Periodizing Politics and Identity," 433.

153. Jerry Faber, *The Student as Nigger* (New York: Pocket Books, 1969); John Sinclair, *Guitar Army: Prison Writings* (New York: Douglas Book, Co., 1972).

154. In Jay and Young, *Out of the Closets*, 346.

155. Mercer, "1968: Periodizing Politics and Identity," 434. It is Jesse Jackson who refers to Black struggles in America as "trigger struggles." See R. Radhakrishnan, "Toward an Effective Intellectual: Foucault or Gramsci," in *Intellectuals, Aesthetics, Politics and Culture*, ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 59.

156. For example, see Cornel West, "The New Cultural Politics of Difference," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (New York: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990).

157. Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), 4.

158. See Arjun Appadurai et al. "Editorial Comment: On Thinking the Black Public Sphere," *Public Culture* 7.1 (Fall 1994): xii. For the "devaluation" of the citizenship of people of color, see Mike Davis, "Who Killed L.A.: Political Autopsy," *New Left Review* 1993:25.

159. Quoted in Marable, *Black American Politics*, 68.

160. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 83.