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Leigh Raiford

When Ida B. Wells and the NAACP embarked on the sustained and highly visible antilynching campaigns that would help define their respective careers, they each chose to arm themselves with photographs as weapons in their arsenals of evidence. Photographs, celebrated for their veridical capacity, as documents of “truly existing things,” could stand side by side with other forms of “proof”—statistics, dominant press accounts, investigative reports—utilized by these antilynching activists to offer testimony to lynching’s antidemocratic barbarism. Wells and the NAACP augmented their literature primarily with professionally made photographs of lynchings. Widely circulated and relatively easy to obtain, these images were readily available for public consumption.

It is necessary to ask: what is the process by which activists transformed lynching photographs, advertisements for and consolidators of white supremacy, into antilynching photographs, testaments to black endangerment? How exactly were photographs that celebrated the triumph of “civilization” made to herald civilization’s demise? What was at stake in such a transformation, its possibilities and limitations, a century ago? And what are the legacies and implications—for racial subjectivities, for national identities, for visual representation—in our contemporary moment?

We can begin to answer these questions by interrogating lynching photography as a site of threefold struggle over the meaning, possession, representa-

tion, and memorialization of the black body from the late nineteenth century into the early twenty-first. First, through an examination of lynching and antilynching photography in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we can understand these images to be sites of struggle over the meaning and possession of the black body between white and black Americans, about the ability to make and unmake racial identity. In the hands of whites, photographs of lynchings, circulated as postcards in this period, served to extend and redefine the boundaries of white community beyond the localities in which lynchings occurred to a larger “imagined community.” In the hands of blacks during the same time period, these photographs were recast as a call to arms against a seeming never-ending tide of violent coercion, and transformed into tools for the making of a new African American national identity. Similar, if not the same, images of tortured black bodies were used to articulate—to join up and express—specifically racialized identities in the Progressive Era, a period marked by the expansion of corporate capitalism, the rise of the middle class, and the birth of consumer culture.¹

By uncovering and pulling apart the threads of white supremacy and black resistance invested in these photographs, we can also begin to understand

*Lynching of two unidentified African American males
white man squatting, hides face as he stiffs corpses*
Signed in negative: “Pruitt Photo.”
Original photograph circa 1910
Lithographed poster circa 1965. 10 1/4 x 16 1/4



FRUIT
PHOTO

MISSISSIPPI

how lynching photography unmakes racial identity. Indeed, the very need to use photographs in campaigns for racial domination or racial justice points to cracks and fissures in these identities. Exposed are the social, sexual, political, and class anxieties that the framing of these images attempt to deny. In their various contexts and incarnations, we can discern how lynching photographs create and coerce, magnify and diminish, the appearance of unified racial identities.

These disjunctures in racial epistemology come into sharp relief when we consider the crucial if unacknowledged place photographs of lynchings have occupied in the shadow archive of black representation. The photographer and theorist Allan Sekula describes a shadow archive as an all-inclusive corpus of images that situates individuals according to a socially proscribed hierarchy.² The second site of struggle finds the lynching archive in conflict and conversation with other photographic representations of African Americans. African Americans themselves sought to unmake the identity created for them in popular (or scientific or criminal or pornographic) derogatory depictions both by countering with their own carefully cultivated self-images and by reframing the cruelest and most sadistic of these portrayals, lynching images, as the shared shame of the entire nation. Photographs of lynchings as antilynching photography signify *in relation* to these other archives of images.³

The repeated invocations and juxtapositions of these images signal an antinomy embedded in the lynching archive. With multiple archives vying for prominence, variously summoned to “represent the race,” how then do we read or know the “facts” of blackness and the realities of black life? Can photography serve to construct new racial epistemologies or does it always edify dominant paradigms? That is, can the black body (photographed) as abject and discredited sign be made to signify differently? This antinomy is rooted, I believe, in the dialectics of photography and the discourses of its originary and early moments: photography as both science and art, as both document and artifice. Such a contradiction alerts us to the constraints of visual representation as a strategy for liberation.

And yet lynching photographs (and lynching metaphors) proliferate.⁴ I believe that this powerful and troubling archive is a, if not *the*, constitutive element of black visibility—“how we are able, allowed,

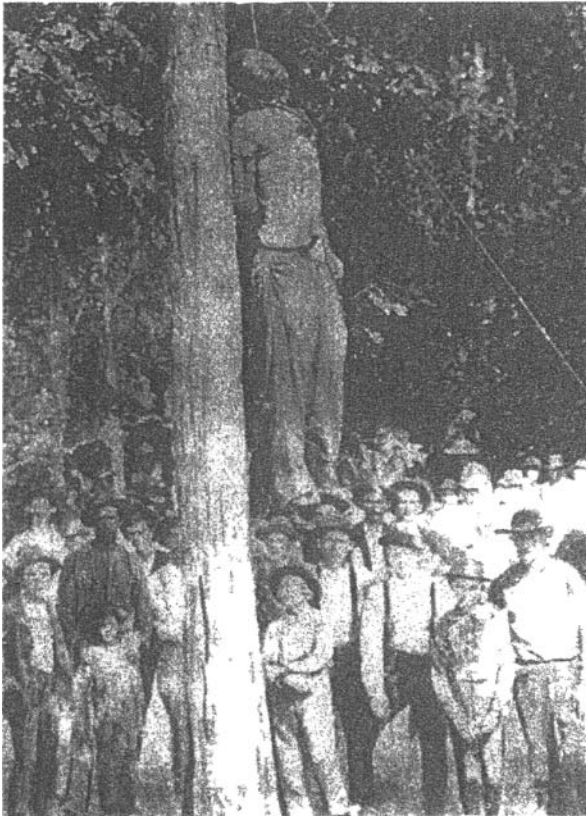
or made to see” blackness “and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein”—since the nineteenth century.⁵ Lynching photography functions as the third site of struggle over the question of memorializing past racial violence and terror, and also mobilizing against it in the twenty-first century.

The Making of Antilynching Photographs

Antilynching activists, black or white, would not always be frightened into submission by either the threat of lynching or the recounting of the tale as framed by lynchers, their proponents, or their apologists. Antilynching activists chose to tell the story in a different manner, indeed to invert and subvert the common tale of black bestiality resulting in swift white justice that culminated in, and forever echoed through the frozen black-and-white still photograph. Photographs of lynchings appeared in antilynching propaganda and pamphlets, as well as in reports of mob violence in the black press. In such contexts, these images reconceived the received narrative of black savagery as one of black vulnerability; white victimization was recast as white terrorization. Though actors and the fundamental story of crimes remained the same, in this new forum photography changed the roles and the ultimate moral. Animated within an activist political program, lynching photography became antilynching photography.

In using this term, *antilynching photography*, I mean to describe not simply the subject of the photograph, but its explicitly antiracist political project. I am concerned here with not only what the photograph documents but the kinds of cultural labor in which it is engaged. I employ antilynching photography to highlight the role of such images as part of organized social movement campaigns. An antilynching photograph always has at its literal and metaphoric center a photograph of a lynching. But what marks antilynching photography as distinct from lynching photography is the accumulation of the past in order to speak out against racial violence and terror. At stake then in the deployment of the term antilynching photography is a recognition of and attempt to catalog African Americans’ struggle to possess and represent brutalized black bodies in order to change the condition of black lives.

The transformation from lynching photography to antilynching photography was realized first by reframing the lynching photograph, enabling African Americans to “return the gaze” of the domi-



W.R. Martin, *lynching of unidentified man*,
Clanton, Alabama, 1891
Reproduced in Ida B. Wells, "A Red Record" (1895)

nant Other. Maurice Wallace alerts us to the power and persistence of "frames" in the construction of black masculinity specifically and in the hermeneutics of blackness more broadly. He offers us the term "enframing" to describe a means of imprisoning black men in the gaze of the dominant other, contained by the fears and fantasies of black men found therein, most especially in the lynching photograph.

To become antilynching photographs, activists first dismantled piece by piece the racist beliefs about African Americans perpetuated in the dominant press especially. These components—beliefs in the innate criminality, essential barbarity, wanton lasciviousness, and meretricious aspirations of African Americans—were reassembled to reveal the fractures and flaws in the edifice of white supremacy. *White* criminality, barbarism, lasciviousness, and mendacity become visible. To borrow from Frantz Fanon's rethinking of Hegel's master-slave relationship figured in *Black Skin, White Masks*, here we are confronted with a moment in which the victim, "the object," and "mirror" for a society's practice of jus-

tice, looks back at his executioners, "the subject," and reflects back a "flawed" image. The subject suddenly stands "naked in the sight of the object." By returning the gaze of their executioners and those gathered to watch them die, the accused begin to challenge, disrupt and even dismantle the "corporeal . . . and historico-racial schema" of themselves constructed by "the white man, who had woven [them] out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories." The accused intervenes in their racial making and begins to undo the racial making of their executioners.⁶

Such a dismantling and reframing played and preyed upon a faith in "evidence," calling into question the truthfulness of white newspapers. Antilynching activists further reframed lynching images by placing them within alternative and sympathetic outlets such as pamphlets and the black press. This was the strategy pioneered to great effect by Ida B. Wells.

During Wells's two successful speaking trips to Great Britain in 1893 and 1894, she came to understand the power of photographs, along with other documents produced by whites, to corroborate her accounts of lynchings and to open an avenue for further discussion. As an outspoken black woman denouncing the American South, photographs functioned as passports that provided entry into progressive circles and the dominant public sphere. While the white press in the United States attempted to besmirch Wells's character, as the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* had sought to do beginning with Wells's first antilynching polemic, *Southern Horrors*, in 1892, Wells armed herself with facts—written, quantitative, as well as visual—gleaned mostly from the dominant press. As she declared, "All the vile epithets in the vocabulary nor reckless statements [could] not change the lynching record" that the press had so copiously reported in their own pages.⁷

Upon her return to the United States, Wells set to work on her second antilynching pamphlet, *A Red Record*, published in 1895. She drew on a variety of sources to buttress her most recent analysis of the proliferation and severity of lynching throughout the southern United States. Like *Southern Horrors*, *A Red Record* was supported by accounts of lynchings in the white press, editorials, and Wells's own investigations. For the first time, however, she included two images of lynchings. These are the first examples of the deployment of antilynching photography in the political fight against mob violence. Indeed, in all

ways, not least of which was the harnessing of images to her own analysis, Wells's pamphlets provided the political strategy for all subsequent antilynching efforts.⁸

In *A Red Record*, Wells reproduced two images, the first a drawing made from a photograph and the second a photographic postcard of a lynching in Clanton, Alabama, in 1891. The compositions are similar: a black male hangs lifeless from a wooden post while a multigendered, multiaged crowd of white onlookers poses behind the victim. The photograph is positioned in the pamphlet at the end of a discussion regarding the innocence of many lynching victims, several of whom whose guilt is questioned by their murderers even as they are hoisted to a tree or a match thrown at their feet. Here, image and text are juxtaposed in order to reinforce one other. As Roland Barthes suggests, "the text constitutes a parasitic message designed to connote the image, to 'quicken' it."⁹ Wells's juxtaposition extends the work of "naturalizing the cultural" reversal of the lynching narrative that the essays within *A Red Record* begin. By locating this corpse within a context of doubt and uncertainty, Wells effectively makes the reality and sureness of this man's death, "proven" by the irrefutable nature of the photograph, cause to question. If this person was innocent, why then are they dead before my eyes? Here, image and text are juxtaposed in order to create a disjuncture in our visual epistemology.

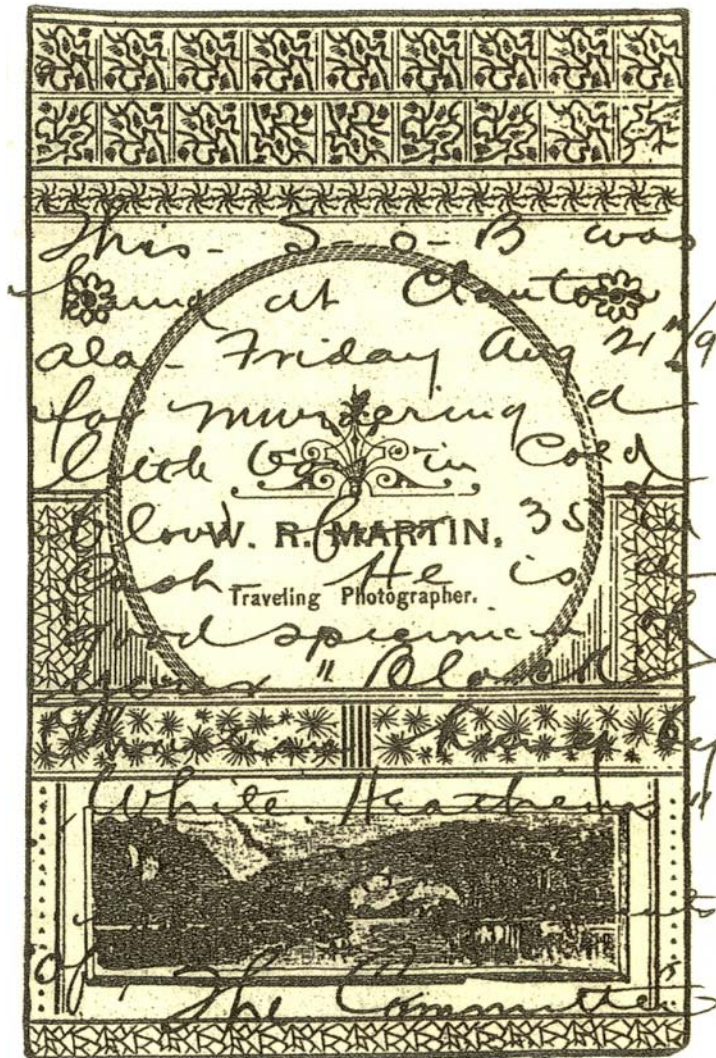
This disruption is underscored by a handwritten threat sent to Judge Albion W. Tourgee, a northern white writer and advocate for black civil and political rights, on the back of the image: "This S-O-B was hung in Clanton, Alabama, Friday August 21, 1891, for murdering a little white boy in cold-blood for 35-cents cash. He is a good specimen of your black Christians hung by white heathens". Is the man a murderous "S-O-B" or a victim punished "without any proof to his guilt"? Wells casts her own interpretation into the fray. Because the photograph's evidentiary weight is assumed and understood, Wells's reframing intervenes in the received and accepted narrative of lynching, competing for the meaning of the act, the meaning of the black body.¹⁰ Through reframing the photograph, Wells presented a competing way of "seeing" lynching, they reversed the gaze that coheres whiteness and fixes blackness.

Reinterpreting the Black Body

Antilynching photography makes available and makes discernible other ways of interpreting blackness in which the black body is read the "against the grain," in which alternative meanings of blackness are asserted. This effort to reinscribe the connotation of the lynched black body and its photographic representation is one born out of the "problems of identification" for black spectators.¹¹ Indeed, if lynching photographs were meant for white consumption, to reaffirm the authority and certainty of whiteness through an identification with powerful and empowered whites who surround the black body, what then did black looking affirm? What concept of the black self could emerge from an identification with the corpse in the picture? Can one refuse such identification, or is "the identification . . . irresistible"?¹²

African Americans both identify and don't identify. They engage in a form of "resistant spectatorship," Manthia Diawara's term to describe a practice of looking "in which Black spectators may circumvent identification and resist the persuasive elements" of the spectacle.¹³ Antilynching photography offers revised readings of black subjectivity enabling African Americans to transcend the frames to which they have been confined, to move beyond racial fixity.¹⁴ By juxtaposing the multiple visual representations of African Americans—as scientific object of study, as refined elite, as slave caricature, as criminal type, and as quieted savage—we can see clearly the interdependence of the various subordinate archives of the larger shadow archive articulating hierarchies on the social terrain of this period.

Photography's uniqueness as a medium, and its early and enduring appeal, lay in its ability to *record*, not merely depict, that which exists in the material world. Called a "mirror with a memory" by physician and inventor Oliver Wendell Holmes not long after its inception in this country in 1839, photography quickly surpassed painting in its imagined capacity to capture history and human experience *as it truly was*, unmediated by human hands. For now, in the words of an April 13, 1839, *New Yorker* magazine article, "All Nature Shall Paint herself!"¹⁵ The medium's magic rests in its function to offer an index, a sign of a "truly existing thing." In the same spirit in which emergent genetic technologies are heralded for their ability to deduce our unique biological essences, so too was photography lauded as a "guaranteed witness" offering evidence of our interior



W.R. Martin, lynching of unidentified man, Clanton, Alabama, 1891, back of postcard. Reproduced in Ida B. Wells, "A Red Record" (1895)

selves.¹⁶ Indeed, photography emerged (and continues to thrive) in an epoch of colonial and imperial conquest, in feverish desire to order, contain, and exploit the physical world.

And yet such technologies are tools whose status, John Tagg reminds us, "varies in the power relations that invest it."¹⁷ So perhaps there is no better technology than photography to document—to fix and to archive—the so-called fact of race. "Rather than recording the existence of race," artist, curator and cultural critic Coco Fusco asserts, "photography produced race as a visualizable fact."¹⁸ Through emphasis of physical characteristics, enframement of and by text, through formalization of pose and iconization of dress and gesture, race from the nineteenth century onward became visible and identifiable,

common sense confirmed by scientific apparatus. Visual signifiers captured by the camera become proof, signs of difference, excavations of interiority.¹⁹ In portraits and pornography, snapshots and mugshots, we know race to be true because we see it, touch it, circulate it, desire it, abhor it, by way of the photograph.

Since its inception in 1839, photography has been both a cultural site of subjugation and a technology of liberation. Antilynching photographs then, are always in a productive direct or indirect dialogue with cultural representations of African Americans, both portraits of uplift and images of degradation. African Americans used photography to reconstruct their image, in part, against the humiliation of minstrel icons and against the vulner-



African American woman, head-and-shoulders portrait, (LC-USZ62-124798).

This is an image made most likely by Georgia photographer Thomas Askew, which appeared in W.E.B. Du Bois' *American Negro Exhibit* at the 1900 Paris exhibition. It is held by the Library of Congress. See also Deborah Willis, *A Small Nation of People: WEB Du Bois and African American Portraits of Progress* (New York: Amistad, 2003).

ability of lynched black bodies. Blacks chose to represent themselves not only as cultured and refined, but also as thriving and self-possessed, as the embodiment of bourgeois ideals. Utilizing the affirming and often liberating genre of portraiture, in particular, signified a conscious and public choice meant to counter the repressive functions of lynching images. The use of lynching images was likewise a performance, an attempt to affect public opinion and envision freedom through the specific dramaturgy, or staging, of black death at the hands of white Americans.²⁰

Photography has been used to express a freedom to define and represent oneself as one chooses and a freedom from the ideological and material consequences of dehumanizing depictions. These portraits of uplift, self-possession, often of middle-class patriarchal respectability, are inextricable from the shadow archive of black representation. More than merely “the reconstruction of the image of the black” or a “decolonizing of the eye,” photography has also enabled a confrontation with, a staging of, alternative futures.²¹ For marginalized groups especially, bearing on their shoulders the burden of representation, photography can establish intimacy with its subject and articulate distance. As self-crafted, though always negotiated and forming a dialectic with dominant cultural depictions, these images are neither the thingly Other nor the thing itself, but reside in the interstices. Photography mapped on to but not ontologically of the black body enables a space of transfiguration in the disaggregation of blackness as “an abject and degraded condition,” from the humanity of actual black people.²² I believe this is as true (though differently true) of antilynching photographs as of carefully composed portraits.

While offering up the black corpse in the antilynching photograph might also be seen as a giving away. To show and to claim the lynching photograph as one’s own is to be able to articulate distance. “To survive . . . is to immerse oneself in photographic representation,” writes David Marriott, to distinguish between the (black) hands that hold the photograph and the (black) body that hangs dead within the photograph’s frame. “Re-presentation is what brings the spectacle of injury and death to an end.”²³ We may see this most clearly in a later use of antilynching photography.

In 1965, SNCC reproduced a lynching photograph by Mississippian O. N. Pruitt, adding to the

original image the statement and accusation: “MISSISSIPPI”. The year before this poster was produced, 1964, was Freedom Summer. More than eight hundred young volunteers—black, white, Latino and Latina, Asian American, many from Northern liberal colleges—made their way to Mississippi to help disfranchised blacks register to vote. In the charged post-*Brown v. Board of Education* climate, this was dangerous work, to say the least. At the beginning of Freedom Summer, the SNCC workers Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney disappeared in the middle of the night. Two months later their bodies were found. All three had been shot in the head and, in the case of James Chaney, the African American of the group, beaten until his bones shattered. Unlike the more carnivalesque lynchings in the earlier part of the century, lynchings that perhaps felt more like a county fair with folks arriving by specially chartered excursion trains, with food and gossip passed around, and clicking cameras, Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney were lynched unannounced under cover of night.

The photograph itself dates from around 1910. According to the SNCC photographer Tamio Wakayama, he and another SNCC photographer, Danny Lyon, “scored” this photo in a little town in Mississippi in 1964, the colloquial language suggesting the illicit nature of the item procured. Like Ida B. Wells-Barnett, the NAACP, and other antilynching activists before them, SNCC reclaimed the image of degradation and brutality as a means of effecting change. This poster is about the visible and the invisible. This poster is also about the past and the present. The unidentified black men who hang in the tree, their bodies steadied for the camera by the white man who kneels before them, stand in for the unphotographed bodies of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney, for the three other lynched black men whose bodies were found that summer, for another Freedom Summer worker who was also killed, for the terror and violence that pervaded Mississippi, especially, and the rest of the South in general, that year.

By entering into “the space of death” (“a threshold,” in the words of Michael Taussig, “that allows for illumination as well as extinction”²⁴) framed by the original lynching photograph, these activists could stage their own demise, as individual and collective black bodies. In doing so, they could achieve distance from their own degraded black skin while simultane-

ously offering proximity to the past. By using an image from the past, the SNCC also acknowledges and remembers the history and legacy of lynching in Mississippi. They have “seized hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger . . . at the instant when it can be recognized . . . as one of its own,” to invoke Walter Benjamin.²⁵ The victims of 1910 are linked to civil rights workers of 1964 and in the words of sociologist Avery Gordon, are “offered a hospitable memory out of concern for justice.” Through this poster we see that SNCC is fighting for the past as well as for the future.

Contemporary Circulation of Antilynching Photography

Lynching itself as a “regime of racial terror,” has played a formative role in “configuring modern black political cultures.”²⁶ Anti/lynching photography has been central to the recounting and reconstitution of black political cultures throughout the twentieth century. From the usage of lynching photography in pamphlets by turn of the century antilynching activists, to posters created by midcentury civil rights organizations, to their deployment in contemporary art and popular culture, we can see how this archive has been a constitutive element of black visibility more broadly. One need only consider the powerful galvanizing effect the photographs of Emmett Till had (and continues to have) on antiracist activists.²⁷ Artists as varied as Pat Ward Williams, Dread Scott, Renee Scott, and Public Enemy have utilized photographs of lynchings as both backdrops and centerpieces for their dialogues about police brutality, the persistent rise of the prison industrial complex, about national amnesia with regards to past racial violence, about mass consumer culture and the politics of looking at the black body. Lynching photography is transformed into antilynching photography for new generations of viewers. Antilynching photography continues to remake, reclaim, and recontextualize lynching’s meaning.

Most recently, antilynching photography, as a site of historical memory and memorialization, has offered for some a shared visual language through which to speak about the photographs of torture emerging from the Abu Ghraib. This language explicitly recognizes in the images from the U.S. occupation of Iraq the terror, white supremacy, and sexual domination through which empire and impe-

rialism constituted itself one hundred years ago, “how integral,” as Hazel Carby reminds us, “the torture of brown bodies has been to the building of the land of the free.”²⁸ As Susan Willis has written about such a connection between these archives, “If we read history back into the sign, we are in a position to grasp the image as an icon that conflates the history we repress (lynching) with the history we disavow (torture) . . . all the photos should be read as documents of lynching.”²⁹ Reading these archives in conjunction, then, potentially renders both archives legible in our present moment. Such an interpretation might further offer another reading of blackness, a broader reading in which the black skin in and on which meaning has been fixed like a dye becomes a possible site of redress.

But I want to conclude by asking what is gained and what is lost in the transformation of these images into icons? We must consider that reading Abu Ghraib through lynching (and vice versa) potentially ignores or in fact erases the specificity of both the present and the past. Do the lynched and the tortured become “universal equivalents”? In foregrounding the black body as sign, do we lose the black subject? Is the Arab subject lost as well in this configuration?³⁰

Indeed, possessing this archive is like the old saying about holding a tiger by the tail: you can’t hold on to it but you can’t let it go. And my divided conclusion—full of questions, confusions and disease—is a product of this paradox. Does this archive limit our possibilities for transcending the “intense embodiedness” of black life? As Saidiya Hartman asks, “Beyond evidence . . . what does this exposure of the suffering body yield? . . . Does it not reproduce the hyperembodiedness of the powerless?”³¹ What are the costs of resituating political discourse within or on the black body? What are the costs of “having to drag all those lynchings around?”³²

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Notes

¹ See Stuart Hall, “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” *Black British Cultural Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

² Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, Richard Bolton,

ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

³ See especially Shawn Michelle Smith's important works *American Archives* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999) and *Photography on the Color Line* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁴ See Jonathan Markowitz, *Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Harvey Young, "The Black Body as Souvenir in American Lynching" *Theatre Journal* 57 (2005): pp. 639–657; and Christine Harold and Kevin Michael DeLuca, "Behold the Corpse: Violent Images and the Case of Emmett Till," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* Vol. 8, No. 2 (2005): pp. 263–286.

⁵ Hal Foster, "Preface," *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), p. ix.

⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967 [1952]), pp. 212, 111.

⁷ Wells, *Crusade For Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 186.

⁸ Ida B. Wells, "A Red Record," [1895] in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892–1900*, Jacqueline Jones Royster, ed. (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), p. 82. See also Mary Jane Brown, *Eradicating This Evil: Women in the American Anti-Lynching Movement 1892–1940*. (New York and London: Garland, 2000).

⁹ Roland Barthes, *Image—Music—Text* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1977), pp. 25, 26. For further discussions of the relationship between image and text, see Jefferson Hunter, *Image and Word: The Interaction of Twentieth-Century Photographs and Texts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); and W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

¹⁰ Wells, "A Red Record," p. 117, 119.

¹¹ Manthia Diawara, "Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance," in *Black American Cinema*, Manthia Diawara, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1993).

¹² David Marriott, *On Black Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 5.

¹³ Diawara, "Black Spectatorship," p. 211.

¹⁴ Homi K. Bhabha defines fixity "as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, [that] is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and demonic repetition." Bhabha, "The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse," reprinted in *Visual Culture*, Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, eds. (London: Sage Publications, 1999), p. 370.

¹⁵ Quoted in Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Shadow and the Substance: Race, Photography and the Index," in *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis, eds. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003) p. 114.

¹⁶ John Tagg, "The Currency of the Photograph," in *Thinking Photography*, Victor Burgin, ed. (Hampshire, U.K., and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982), p. 117.

¹⁷ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 63.

¹⁸ Coco Fusco, "Racial Times, Racial Marks, Racial Metaphors," in *Only Skin Deep*, p. 60.

¹⁹ See especially Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

²⁰ For discussions of the relationship between African American identity and photographic portraiture, see Willis, *Reflections in Black*; and Camara Dia Holloway, *Portraiture and the Harlem Renaissance: The Photographs of James L. Allen* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Art Gallery, 1999). See also Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," *Representations* 24 (Fall 1988).

²¹ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Trope of the New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," *Representations*, no. 24 Fall (1988); bell hooks, *Black Looks: race and representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992).

²² Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 22.

²³ David Marriott, *On Black Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 3.

²⁴ Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wildman: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 5.

²⁵ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, p. 255.

²⁶ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 118.

²⁷ See especially Elizabeth Alexander, "'Can you be BLACK and look at this?': Reading the Rodney King Video(s)" in Thelma Golden, ed., *Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1994); Jacqueline Goldsby, "The High and Low Tech of It: The Meaning of Lynching and the Death of Emmett Till" *Yale Journal of Criticism* vol. 9, no. 2 (1996): 245–282; Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); and Courtney Baker, "Emmett Till, Justice, and the Task of Recognition," *The Journal of American Culture* vol. 29, no. 2 (June 2006): 111–124.

²⁸ Hazel Carby, "A Strange and Bitter Crop: the Spectacle of Torture," www.openDemocracy.net, November 10, 2004. See also Carby in the present volume.

²⁹ Susan Willis, *Portents of the Real: A Primer for Post-9/11 America* (New York: Verso, 2005), p. 120.

³⁰ I am grateful to conversations with Zeynep Gursel for pushing my thinking.

³¹ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, p. 19.

³² Hilton Als, "GWTW," in James Allen, et al., eds., *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Twin Palms, 2000).