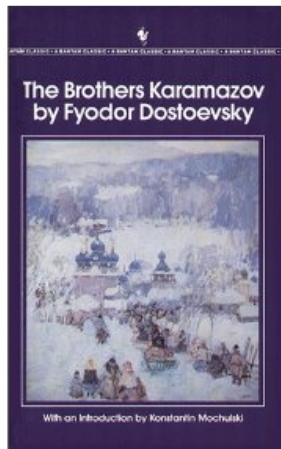


I. WESTERN CIVILIZATION AND THE NIGHTMARE OF SCHISM

THE QUESTION YOU'VE GOT TO ASK YOURSELF, THE WHITE POPULATION OF THIS COUNTRY, HAS GOT TO ASK ITSELF, NORTH AND SOUTH, IS WHY YOU INVENTED [THE "N" WORD]. I'M NOT [THE "N" WORD]. YOU INVENTED HIM. YOU THE WHITE PEOPLE INVENTED HIM. AND YOU HAVE TO FIND OUT WHY.
—James Baldwin, from a 1963 interview with Kenneth Clark

WHAT IS OFTEN CALLED THE BLACK SOUL IS A WHITE MAN'S ARTEFACT.
—Frantz Fanon, *The Fact of Blackness*



Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952)

Note: The great novels of Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881) address the theme of a rupture in modern Western life, a rupture that is acutely felt in Russia being a country that straddles the East and the West. The East for Dostoyevsky (and for the Slavophile philosophers with whom Dostoyevsky identified) is symbolized by the wholeness and harmony of Mother Russia and the peasant farmers' connection to the soil and to nature. The West is symbolized for Dostoyevsky by the separation of heaven from earth in Catholicism, a separation that results in alienation from nature and God, not to mention oneself, and that afflicts many of Dostoyevsky's characters—from Golydadkin in *The Double* to Stavrogin in *The Possessed*, Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, and Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov*—with a self-destructive, inner war that wreaks havoc on the outside world.

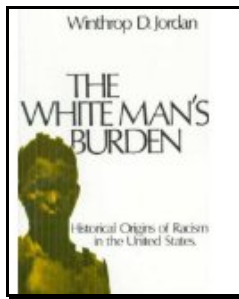
The following excerpt from *The Brothers Karamazov* recounts the birth of Smerdyakov, who becomes Ivan Karamazov's alter-ego (or "darker," demonic self). It's a scene where impregnation is the result of rape (of force rather than love) at night, and the dawn of a new day opens with the death of the mother and the birth of a parasitic, incomplete, and hallucinatory character who will eventually commit suicide.

Excerpt

It happened one clear, warm moonlight night in September (many years ago) five or six drunken revelers were returning from the club at a very late hour, according to our provincial notions. They passed through the “backway,” which led between the back gardens of the houses, with hurdles on either side. This way leads out on to the bridge over the long, stinking pool which we were accustomed to call a river. Among the nettles and burdocks under the hurdle our revelers saw Lizaveta asleep. They stopped to look at her, laughing, and began jesting with unbridled licentiousness. It occurred to one young gentleman to make the whimsical inquiry whether anyone could possibly look upon such an animal as a woman, and so forth.... They all pronounced with lofty repugnance that it was impossible. But Fyodor Pavlovitch, who was among them, sprang forward and declared that it was by no means impossible, and that, indeed, there was a certain piquancy about it, and so on.... The revelers, of course, laughed at this unexpected opinion; and one of them even began challenging him to act upon it. The others repelled the idea even more emphatically, although still with the utmost hilarity, and at last they went on their way. Later on, Fyodor Pavlovitch swore that he had gone with them, and perhaps it was so, no one knows for certain, and no one ever knew. But five or six months later, all the town was talking, with intense and sincere indignation, of Lizaveta’s condition, and trying to find out who was the miscreant who had wronged her. Then suddenly a terrible rumor was all over the town that this miscreant was no other than Fyodor Pavlovitch.... But this affair and all the talk about it did not estrange popular sympathy from the poor idiot. She was better looked after than ever. A well-to-do merchant’s widow named Kondratyev arranged to take her into her house at the end of April, meaning to let her go out until after the confinement. They kept a constant watch over her, but in spite of their vigilance she escaped on the very last day, and made her way into Fyodor Pavlovitch’s garden. How, in her condition, she managed to climb over the high, strong fence remained a mystery. Some maintained that she must have been lifted over by somebody; others hinted at something more uncanny. The most likely explanation is that it happened naturally—that Lizaveta, accustomed to clambering over hurdles to sleep in gardens, had somehow managed to climb this fence, in spite of her condition, and had leapt down, injuring herself.

Grigory rushed to Marfa and sent her to Lizaveta, while he ran to fetch an old midwife, who lived close by. They saved the baby, but Lizaveta died at dawn. Grigory took the baby, brought it home, and making his wife sit down, put it on her lap. ‘A child of God—an orphan is akin to all,’ he said, ‘and to us above others. Our little lost one has sent us this, who has come from the devil’s son and a holy innocent. Nurse him and weep no more.

So Marfa brought up the child. He was christened Pavel, to which people were not slow in adding Fyodorovitch (son of Fyodor). Fyodor Pavlovitch did not object to any of this, and thought it amusing, though he persisted vigorously in denying his responsibility. The townspeople were pleased at this adopting the foundling. Later on, Fyodor Pavlovitch invented a surname for the child, calling him Smerdyakov, after his mother’s nickname.” **Part I, Book 3, Pages 49-50**



Jordan, Winthrop D., *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974)

But to say, as many have done, that racism is merely the rationalizing ideology of the oppressor, is to advance a grievous error. To rest the analysis there is to close one's eyes to the complexity of human oppression. **Page ix**

In England perhaps more than in southern Europe, the concept of blackness was loaded with intense meaning. Long before they found that some men were black, Englishmen found in the idea of blackness a way of expressing some of their most ingrained values. No other color except white conveyed so much emotional impact. As described by the *Oxford English Dictionary* the meaning of *black* before the sixteenth century included, "Deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul.... Having dark or deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister.... Foul, iniquitous, atrocious, horrible, wicked.... Indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment, etc." Black was an emotionally partisan color, the handmaid and symbol of baseness and evil, a sign of danger and repulsion.

Embedded in the concept of blackness was its direct opposite—whiteness. No other colors so clearly implied opposition, "beinge colours utterlye contrary": Everye white will have its blacke, And everye sweete its sowre." White and black connoted purity and filthiness, virginity and sin, virtue and baseness, beauty and ugliness, beneficence and evil, God and the devil. **Pages 5-6**

The sexual association of apes with Negroes had an inner logic which kept it alive: sexual union seemed to prove a certain affinity without going so far as to indicate actual identity—which was what Englishmen really thought was the case. By forging a sexual link between Negroes and apes, furthermore, Englishmen were able to give vent to their feeling that Negroes were a lewd, lascivious, and wanton people. **Page 18**

The Protestant Reformation in England was a complex development, but certainly it may be said that during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century the content and tone of English Christianity were altered in the direction of Biblicism, personal piety, individual judgment, and more intense self-scrutiny and internalized control. Many pious Englishmen, not all of them "Puritans," came to approach Scripture as if peering in a mirror. As a result, their inner energies were brought unusually close to the surface, more frequently than before into the almost rational world of legend, myth, and literature. The taut Puritan and the bawdy Elizabethan were not so much enemies as partners in this adventure which we usually think of in terms of great literature—of Milton and Shakespeare—and social conflict—of Saints and Cavaliers. The age was driven

by the twin spirits of adventure and control, and while “adventurous Elizabethans” embarked upon voyages of discovery overseas, many others embarked upon inward voyages of discovery. Some men, like William Bradford and John Winthrop, were to do both. Given this charged atmosphere of (self-)discovery, it is scarcely surprising that Englishmen should have used people overseas as social mirrors and that they were especially inclined to discover attributes in savages which they found first, but could not speak of, in themselves. **Pages 22-23**

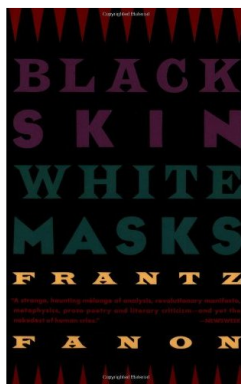
The inner themes running throughout this extraordinary exegesis testify eloquently to the completeness with which English perceptions could integrate sexuality with blackness, the devil, and the judgment of a God who had originally created man not only “Angelike” but “white.” These running equations lay embedded at a deep and almost inaccessible level of Elizabethan culture; only occasionally did they appear in complete clarity, as when evil dreams

... hale me from my sleepe like forked Devils, Midnight, thou AEthiope,
Empresse of Black Soules, Thou general Bawde to the whole world.

But what is still more arresting about George Best’s discourse is the shaft of light it throws upon the dark mood of strain and control in Elizabethan culture. In an important sense, Best’s remarks are not about Negroes; rather they play upon a theme of external discipline exercised upon the man who fails to discipline himself. The linkages he established—“disobedience” with “carnall copulation” with something “black and lothsome”—were not his alone. The term *dirt* first began to acquire its meaning of moral impurity, of smuttiness, at the very end of the sixteenth century. Perhaps the key term, though, is “disobedience”—to God and parents—and perhaps therefore, the passage echoes one of the central concerns of Englishmen of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Tudor England was undergoing social ferment, caused in large part by an increasingly commercialized economy and reflected in such legislative monuments as the Statute of Apprentices and the Elizabethan vagrancy and poor laws. Overseas mercantile expansion brought profits and adventure but also a sense, in some men, of disquietude. One commentator declared that the merchants, “whose number is so increased in these our daies,” had “in times past” traded chiefly with European countries but “now... as men not contented with these journies, they have sought out the east and west Indies, and made now and then suspicious voyages.” Literate Englishmen generally (again not merely the Puritans) were concerned with the apparent disintegration of social and moral controls at home; they fretted endlessly over the “masterless men” who had once had a proper place in the social order but who were now wandering about, begging, robbing, raping. They fretted also about the absence of a spirit of due subordination—of children to parents and servants to masters. They assailed what seemed a growing spirit of avariciousness, a spirit which one social critic described revealingly as “a barbarous or slavish desire to turne the [penny].” They denounced the laborers who demanded too high wages, the masters who squeezed their servants, and the landed gentlemen who valued sheep more than men—in short, the spirit of George Best’s Cham, who aimed to have his son “inherit and possesse all the dominions of the earth.”

It was the case with English confrontations with Africans, then, that a society in a state of rapid flux, undergoing important changes in religious values, and comprised of men who were energetically on the make and acutely and often uncomfortably self-conscious of being so, came upon a people less technologically advanced, markedly different in appearance and culture. From the first, Englishmen tended to set Africans over against themselves, to stress what they conceived to be radically contrasting qualities of color, religion, and style of life, as well as animality and peculiarly potent sexuality. What Englishmen did not at first fully realize was that Africans were potentially subjects for a special kind of obedience and subordination which was to arise as adventurous Englishmen sought to possess for themselves and their children one of the most bountiful dominions of the earth. When they came to plant themselves in the New World, they were to find that they had not entirely left behind the spirit of avarice and insubordination. Nor does it appear, in light of attitudes that developed during their first two centuries in America, that they left behind all the impressions initially gathered of the *Negro* before he became pre-eminently the *slave*. **Pages 24-25**

Simply because most blacks were chattel slaves, racial amalgamation was stamped as irredeemably illicit; it was irretrievably associated with loss of control over the baser passions, with weakening of traditional family ties, and with breakdown of proper social ordering. **Page 74**



Fanon, Frantz, trans. by Richard Philcox, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008)

European civilization is characterized by the presence, at heart of what Jung calls the collective unconscious, of an archetype: an expression of bad instincts, of the darkness inherent in every ego, of the uncivilized savage and the black man who slumbers in every white man. **Page 164**

In Europe, evil is symbolized by the black man. We have to move slowly—that we know—but it's not easy. The perpetrator is the black man; Satan is black; one talks of darkness; when you are filthy you are dirty—and this goes for physical dirt as well as moral dirt. If you took the trouble to not them, you would be surprised at the number of expressions that equate black man with sin. In Europe, the black man, whether physically or symbolically, represents the dark side of the personality. As long as you haven't understood this statement,

discussing the “black problem” will get you nowhere. Darkness, obscurity, shadows, gloom, night, the labyrinth of the underworld, the murky depths, blackening someone’s reputation; and on the other side, the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical heavenly light. A beautiful blond child—how much peace there is in that comparison with a beautiful black child; the adjectives literally don’t go together. Nevertheless, I won’t go into the stories of black angels. In Europe, i.e., in all the civilized and civilizing countries, the black man symbolizes sin. The archetype of inferior values is represented by the black man. **Pages 165-166**

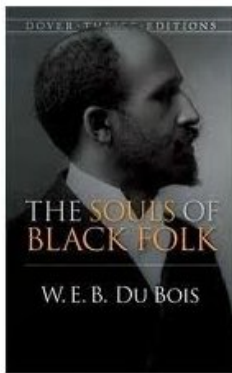
And since every man aspires to whiteness and light, the European has attempted to repudiate this primitive personality.... **Page 167**

In Europe, the black man has a function: to represent shameful feelings, base instincts, and the dark side of the soul. In the collective unconscious of *Homo occidentalis* the black man—or, if you prefer, the color black—symbolizes evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, and famine. Every bird of prey is black. **Page 167**

Everything that is the opposite of this black behavior is white. This must be seen as the origin of the Antillean’s Negrophobia. In the collective unconscious black = ugliness, sin, darkness, and immortality. In other words, he who is immoral is black. If I behave like a man with morals, I am not black. Hence the saying in Martinique that a wicked white man has the soul of a nigger. Color is nothing; I don’t even see it. The only thing I know is the purity of my conscience and the whiteness of my soul. “Me white as snow,” as the saying goes. **Page 169**

Moral consciousness implies a kind of split, a fracture of consciousness between a dark and a light side. Moral standards require the black, the dark, and the black man to be eliminated from this consciousness. A black man, therefore, is constantly struggling against his own image. **Page 170**

This collective guilt is borne by what is commonly called the scapegoat. However, the scapegoat for white society, which is based on the myths of progress, civilization, liberalism, education, enlightenment, and refinement, will be precisely the force that opposes the expansion and triumph of these myths. The oppositional brute force is provided by the black man. **Pages 170-171**



Du Bois, W.E.B., *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003)

From the double life every American Negro must live, as a Negro and as an American, as swept on by the current of the nineteenth while yet struggling in the eddies of the fifteenth century,—from this must arise a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence. The worlds within and without the Veil of Color are changing, and changing rapidly, but not at the same rate, not in the same way; and this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or to revolt, to hypocrisy or to radicalism. **Page 143**



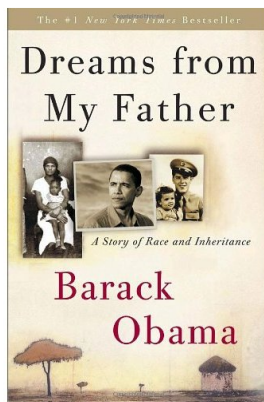
Jones, LeRoi, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1963)

The poor Negro always remembered himself as an ex-slave and used this as the basis of any dealing with the mainstream of American society. The middleclass black man bases his whole existence on the hopeless hypothesis that no one is supposed to remember that for almost three centuries there was slavery in America, that the white man was the master and black man the slave. This knowledge, however, is at the root of the legitimate black culture of this country. It is this knowledge, with its attendant muses of self-division, self-hatred, stoicism, and finally quixotic optimism, that informs the most meaningful of Afro-American music. **Page 136**

America, for Negroes, was always divided into black and white, master and slave, and as such, could not simply be called "America." And so there have been, since slavery, two Americas: A white America and a black America, both responsible to and for the other. One oppressed, the other the oppressor.

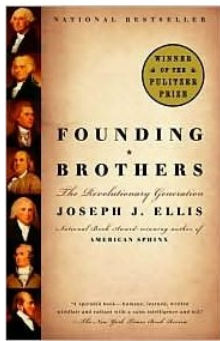
Page 137

Primitive jazz, like most Afro-American music that preceded it, was a communal, collective music. The famous primitive ensemble styles of earlier jazz allowed only of "breaks," or small solo-like statements by individual players, but the form and intent of these breaks were still dominated by the form and intent of the ensemble. **Page 155-156**



Obama, Barack, *Dreams from My Father* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995)

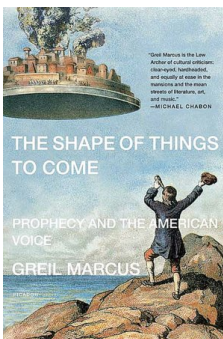
We took a cab to the revival theater where the movie [*Black Orpheus*] was playing. The film, a groundbreaker of sorts due to its mostly black, Brazilian cast, had been made in the fifties. The story line was simple: the myth of the ill-fated lovers Orpheus and Eurydice set in the favelas of Rio during Carnival. In Technicolor splendor, set against scenic green hills, the black and brown Brazilians sang and danced and strummed guitars like carefree birds in colorful plumage. About halfway through the movie, I decided that I'd seen enough, and turned to my mother to see if she might be ready to go. But her face, lit by the blue glow of the screen, was set in a wistful gaze. At that moment, I felt as if I were being given a window into her heart, the unreflective heart of her youth. I suddenly realized that the depiction of childlike blacks I was now seeing on the screen, the reverse image of Conrad's dark savages, was what my mother had carried with her to Hawaii all those years before, a reflection of the simple fantasies that had been forbidden to a white middle-class girl from Kansas, the promise of another life: warm, sensual, exotic, different.... The emotions between the races could never be pure; even love was tarnished by the desire to find in the other some element that was missing in ourselves. Whether we sought out our demons or salvation, the other race would always remain just that: menacing, alien, and apart. **Page 124**



Ellis, Joseph, *Founding Brothers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000)

Whether they were living a paradox or a lie is an interesting question. What is undeniably clear is that the Virginia leadership found itself in the peculiar position of acknowledging that slavery was an evil and then proceeding to insist that there was nothing the federal government could do about it. **Page 96**

Antislavery idealists might prefer to live in some better world, which like all such places was too good to be true. The American nation in 1790, however, was a real world, laden with legacies like slavery, and therefore too true to be good. Jackson did not go so far as to argue, as did southern apologists two or three generations later, that slavery was “a positive good.” But he did insist, in nonnegotiable language, that it was “a necessary evil.” **Page 99**



Marcus, Greil, *The Shape of Things to Come: Prophecy and the American Voice* (New York: Picador, 2007)

From an interview by Mark Molero with Greil Marcus about his book, *The Shape of Things to Come: Prophecy and the American Voice*

One of the really fundamental aspects of American identity, one of the elements of American identity that if you took it away the whole notion of American identity might dissolve or collapse, is this idea of prophecy. And by prophecy I mean the Old Testament sense of judgment where Jeremiah or Isaiah or Amos comes forth and says, “You the children of Israel have made a covenant with God to live by his laws and to praise his glory and you’ve betrayed that covenant and because of that betrayal ruin is going to fall on you.”

There’s this tremendously suggestive passage in Amos which goes to the heart of the American idea that it is a special place, that it is God’s country... [In] this passage in Amos, God is speaking to the children of Israel, “You alone of all the families of this earth have I known, therefore I will punish you for your

iniquities.” In other words, you’re the favored people, which means just as you get the blessings you get the punishments that nobody else gets.... You have this country invented, starting with the Puritans, John Winthrop, 1630, saying that we are making a covenant with God and if we live by his laws we will prosper and if we break those laws, if we betray our covenant, and he uses just those words, then ruin will fall upon us and deservedly so. This is where the great image of a city on a hill comes from, which is Winthrop’s image, although it comes from the bible too, and he meant it not as we will be this beacon of light that all people will look to for inspiration. He says, if you are a city on a hill you can’t hide. Everything that you do will be seen by everyone. And if you violate any trust, everyone will know.

And so then this country is invented again in 1776, 1787, the declaration of Independence, the constitution, and here are these pledges, life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, equal justice under the law for all people. We all know that when those documents were issued and promulgated, that meant, footnote, for white men with property, nobody else. But once you’ve put those words into the air you’ve let the genie out of the bottle, and there’s just no way you can put it back in. When the first feminist convention is held in Seneca Falls, they issue a declaration of sentiments, and it said, we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women.... And so American history becomes this story of struggles of all different sorts of people to claim those promises for themselves, while other people are fighting to keep them solely for themselves and to exclude other people. And so it’s one battle after another. But every time there is a lynching, every time someone is sentenced to prison unjustly, every time someone is denied the right to vote, every time someone is not allowed to live in a certain area, turned away from a job because of how he or she looks, what his or her background is, every time that happens the covenant of equal justice under the law, of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, is violated and betrayed.

And so this enormous tension is set up between the promise that everybody knows about, and that everybody thinks deep in their hearts ought to apply to them, and some day will if it doesn’t now, and the betrayal of those promises, which just becomes ordinary life. The betrayal makes the promise almost more vivid, and the promise makes the betrayal that much harder to bear, can make you sick at heart.

We’re never going to know when we’ve gone too far, when the betrayal has become so complete, so rampant, that the promise will never come back to life. And god knows there have been periods in our history when that seemed to be so. Lincoln articulates this more powerfully than anybody before or after him over the issue of slavery, because obviously this is the ultimate betrayal, and the betrayal is right there in the Founding documents, in the Declaration of Independence signed by coveys of slave holders, and the constitution with the notorious, “slaves will count as three-fifths of a person in the national census,” all of that. That’s all right there. So that’s the ultimate betrayal. That’s what reveals the entire country as both a promise and a lie, as a truth and a falsehood.

And so Lincoln says in his second inaugural address, in 1865, he says things that if they were said today by a president of the United States, either the whole country would go deaf in order not to hear what was being said, or calls for that person’s impeachment would be heard the very next day. He said, “If the Civil

War has to continue until every drop of blood drawn by the slave owner's lash is repaid by another drawn by the soldier's sword, thus it will be." In other words, Civil War. He's setting up a scale of moral justice, and that scale is something you and I are both on today. We don't know if the debt has yet been paid, and the debt accumulates because every time there is a racial injustice—slavery may be over, racial injustice is still part of the fabric of our lives—every time there is an act of racial injustice, the scale tips a little bit farther and is going to have to be balanced in some other way, we don't know what that is. That's frightening. That's terrifying.

In [Martin Luther King, Jr.'s] extraordinary "I Have a Dream" speech, yes he is focused on the betrayal, but to me anyway the sense of promise is far greater. No one has ever traced the arc, found the beauty of the American Promise, more powerfully than he did on that day. At the end of the speech when he is going from Stone Mountain in Georgia to the Rockies in Colorado to the Alleghenies in Pennsylvania, every mountain range, and he's like an eagle flying across the whole country, touching down on one mountain top after another, he's bringing everything together. And when he says at the end, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last," he's not just talking about Black people. He's saying no one in America can be free until everyone is. And if the promise of the Civil Rights Movement is realized then White Americans, Brown Americans, Jews, as he says, "Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants, Black men and White men," everyone will find what Lincoln called, the new birth of freedom. Everyone will find the freedom they never knew before, freedom from their own prisons, the prisons of their own biases, their own racism, their own prejudice, their own superiority, their own sense of *inferiority* and *worthlessness*.

[In the] Dos Passos *USA* trilogy, [America is] a country tearing itself to pieces. America emerges as a world power, as a country made only of power. The constitution is a rumor, the Declaration of Independence is a fairy tale. All of this is complete nonsense. It's all about power, and it's all about repression, and it's all about taking and taking back. It is America as gangsterism really, but gangsterism that's completely legitimate, where business and government are the gangsters, and everybody else are the victims, or maybe if they're lucky they're playing along. And there are social revolutionaries who are trying to discover, to reveal, to announce, that there is a different country hiding inside of all of this. There's another country that people have been trying to build from the very beginning. This is the clash.

[In the movie, *Twin Peaks*,] it is framed as an elemental drama. This is what happens in a country where everybody believes that he or she has the right to pursue happiness in his or her own way and damn the consequences and get the hell out of my way. I'll do it in the way that I choose, and if that means that other people get buried under my steamroller that's the promise that was made to me. Because you see, inside this notion of equal justice under the law, and governments are instituted to protect our rights, not to grant them, and all of that, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is a prescription for anarchy. It is a prescription not for a commonality, not for a country, not for a community, but for a war of all against all, in Hobbes's words.

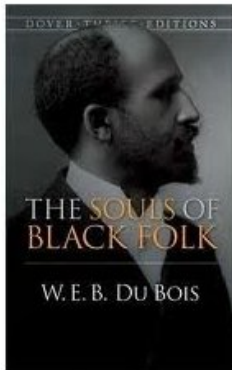
So there is this bomb that is continually going off throughout our history in each of us all of the time. Yes, I know that this is the way we behave to show our respect for each other. Yes, there are limits in our actions. No, we don't have a revolution every time the presidential election turns out the way we don't like. We accept it. But there is also a greater drama going on... that's why people go into schools with guns, that's why Timothy McVeigh blew up the federal building in Oklahoma City, that's why the Unabomber felt that the only way he could get his manifesto heard, the only way that he could make people listen to his declaration of independence was to go around killing people.

I think Grisham's novels in a lot of ways... they are among the most cynical and nihilistic and politically dead novels imaginable. They are all about America as an inner-locked system of corruption, where the game is absolutely fixed from top to bottom. In some ways they're real comic book versions of Dos Passos's novels. Dos Passos was making the same arguments in the thirties, about the first part of the twentieth century. Grisham is saying the system is fixed, the game is fixed. The only thing an honest person can do is steal from thieves and get the hell out. Go to the Bahamas. Go to Bermuda... Of course, it's even more corrupt than it is here. It's even more of a gangster state than it is here, but at least nobody pretends that it's any different. There's no illusion. There's no, Oh, my God, this country was founded on the highest ideals of mankind and to serve the human spirit. None of that nonsense at all. You just take your fortune, stick it in your Swiss bank account, and you lie on the beach sipping Pina Coladas for the rest of your life. That's the way his books work. And they are a way of saying that America is the biggest fraud ever perpetrated on an unsuspecting world.... I still believe within the arena of the notion of prophecy, of a nation called to judgment, a nation called to judge itself—we all of us as citizens are called on every single day to judge our country and our role in it. That is what America is about. I really do believe, and that's what the notion of prophecy inflicts on us and gives to us.

II. WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BLACK

SLAVERY AND OPPRESSION MAY WELL HAVE MADE BLACK PEOPLE MORE HUMANE AND MORE AMERICAN WHILE IT HAS MADE WHITE PEOPLE LESS HUMANE AND LESS AMERICAN.

—Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans*



Du Bois, W.E.B., *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003)

From the very circumstances of its beginning, the church was confined to the plantation, and consisted primarily of a series of disconnected units; although, later on, some freedom of movement was allowed, still this geographical limitation was always important and was one cause of the spread of the decentralized and democratic Baptist faith among the slaves... This church was not at first by any means Christian nor definitely organized; rather it was an adaptation and mingling of heathen rites among members of each plantation, and roughly designated as Voodooism. Association with the masters, missionary effort and motives of expediency gave these rites an early veneer of Christianity, and after the lapse of many generations the Negro church became Christian... His religion was nature-worship, with profound belief in invisible surrounding influences, good and bad, and his worship was through incantation.

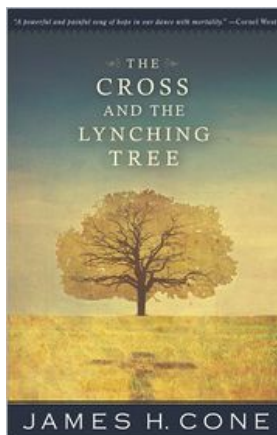
Pages 138-139

The Negro has already been pointed out many times as a religious animal,—a being of that deep emotional nature which turns instinctively toward the supernatural. Endowed with a rich tropical imagination and a keen, delicate appreciation of Nature, the transplanted African lived in a world animate with gods and devils, elves and witches; full of strange influences,—of Good to be implored, of Evil to be propitiated. Slavery, then, was to him the dark triumph of Evil over him. All the hateful powers of the Under-world were striving against him, and a spirit of revolt and revenge filled his heart. He called up all the resources of heathenism to aid,—exorcism and witchcraft, the mysterious Obi worship with its barbarous rites, spells, and blood-sacrifice even, now and then, of human victims. Weird midnight orgies and mystic conjurations were invoked, the witch-woman and the voodoo priest became the centre of Negro group life, and that vein of vague superstition which characterizes the unlettered Negro even to-day was deepened and strengthened.

In spite, however, of such success as that of the fierce Maroons, the Danish blacks, and others, the spirit of revolt gradually died away under the untiring energy and superior strength of the slave masters. By the middle of the eighteenth century the black slave had sunk, with hushed murmurs, to his place at the bottom of a new economic system, and was unconsciously ripe for a new philosophy of life. Nothing suited his condition then better than the doctrines of passive submission embodied in the newly learned Christianity. Slave masters early realized this, and cheerfully aided repression and degradation of the Negro tended to emphasize the elements in his character which made him a valuable chattel: courtesy became humility, moral strength degenerated into submission, and the exquisite native appreciation of the beautiful became an infinite capacity for dumb suffering. The Negro, losing the joy of this world, eagerly seized upon the offered conceptions of the next; the avenging Spirit of the Lord enjoining patience in this world, under sorrow and tribulation until the Great Day when He should lead His dark children home,—this became his comforting dream. His preacher repeated the prophecy, and his bards sang.—

“Children, we all shall be free
When the Lord shall appear!”

This deep religious fatalism, painted so beautifully in “Uncle Tom,” came soon to breed, as all fatalistic faiths will, the sensualist side by side with the martyr. Under the lax moral life of the plantation, where marriage was a farce, laziness a virtue, and property a theft, a religion of resignation and submission degenerated easily, in less strenuous minds, into a philosophy of indulgence and crime. Many of the worst characteristics of the Negro masses of to-day has their seed in this period of the slave’s ethical growth. Here it was that the Home was ruined under the very shadow of the Church, white and black; here habits of shiftlessness took root, and sullen hopelessness replaced hopeful strife. **Pages 140-142**



Cone, James, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (New York: Orbis Books, 2011)

The cross is a paradoxical religious symbol because it *inverts* the world’s value system with the news that hope comes by way of defeat, that suffering and death do not have the last word, that the last shall be first and the first last.... That God

could “make a way out of no way” in Jesus’ cross was truly absurd to the intellect, yet profoundly real in the souls of black folk... There was no place for the proud and the mighty, for people who think that God called them to rule over others. The cross was God’s critique of power—white power—with powerless love, snatching victory out of defeat. **Page 2**

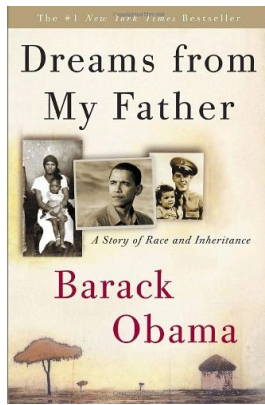
No matter what trouble they encountered, they kept on believing and hoping that “a change is gonna come.” They did not transcend “hard living” but faced it head-on, refusing to be silent in the midst of adversity. **Page 20**

In considering the subject of God and the problem of race in America, [Martin Luther] King reflected that God’s love created blacks and whites and other human beings for each other in community (thesis). White supremacy was the sin that separated them in America and in much of the world (antithesis). God reconciled humanity through Jesus’ cross, and thereby white supremacy could never have “the final and ultimate word” on human relationships (synthesis). God’s reconciling love in the cross empowered human beings to love one another—bearing witness with “our whole being in the struggle against evil, whatever the cost.” Thus, blacks and whites together were free to create the American Dream in society and the Beloved Community in our religious life.

Like Reinhold Niebuhr, King believed that love in society is named justice. King came to see early that “the Christian doctrine of love operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence was one of the most potent weapons available to the Negro in his struggle for freedom.” Hate and white supremacy lead to violence and alienation, while love and the cross lead to nonviolence and reconciliation. **Pages 70-71**

The cross of Jesus is the key to King’s willingness to sacrifice his life, not only for the freedom of black people (“I will die standing up for the freedom of my people”) but also for the souls of whites and the redemption of America. “If physical death is the price I must pay to free my white brothers and sisters from the permanent death of the spirit, then nothing could be more redemptive.” “To redeem the soul of America” was the motto of SCLC, which meant creating the American Dream and the Beloved Community.” **Page 82**

“My personal trials have... taught me the value of unmerited suffering.” Suffering could create bitterness and hate or one could “seek to transform the suffering into a creative force.” When King thought about Jesus hanging on the shameful cross, he also saw God transform a tragic situation into something redemptive.... History has proven over and over again that unmerited suffering is redemptive.” He contended that their “innocent blood” could “serve as a redemptive force” to transform “our whole Southland from the low road of man’s inhumanity to man to the high road of peace and brotherhood.” **Page 86-87**



Obama, Barack, *Dreams from My Father* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995)

We were always playing on the white man's court, Ray had told me, by the white man's rules. If the principal, or the coach, or a teacher, or Kurt, wanted to spit in your face, he could, because he had the power and you didn't. If he decided not to, if he treated you like a man or came to your defense, it was because he knew that the words you spoke, the clothes you wore, the books you read, your ambitions and desires, were already his... any distinction between good and bad whites held negligible meaning. In fact, you couldn't even be sure that everything you had assumed to be an expression of your black, unfettered self—the humor, the sordid, the behind-the-back pass—had been freely chosen by you. At best, these things were a refuge; at worst, a trap. Following this maddening logic, the only thing you could choose as your own was withdrawal into a smaller and smaller coil of rage, until being black meant only the knowledge of your own powerlessness, of your own defeat. And the final irony: Should you refuse this defeat and lash out at your captors, they would have a name for that, too, a name that could cage you just as good. Paranoid. Militant. Violent. Nigger. **Page 85**

What had Frank called college? *An advanced degree in compromise...* the people who are old enough to know better, who fought all those years for your right to go to college—they're just so happy to see you in there that they won't tell you the truth. The real price of admission.

"And what's that?"

"Leaving your race at the door," he said. "Leaving your people behind." He studied me over the top of his reading glasses. "understand something, boy. You're not going to college to get educated. You're going there to get *trained*. They'll train you to want what you don't need. They'll train you to manipulate words so they don't mean anything anymore. They'll train you to forget what it is that you already know. They'll train you so good, you'll start believing what they tell you about equal opportunity and the American way and all that shit. They'll give you a corner office and invite you to fancy dinners, and tell you you're a credit to your race. Until you want to actually start running things, and then they'll yank on your chain and let you know that you may be a well-trained, well-paid nigger, but you're a nigger just the same."

"So what is it you're telling me—that I shouldn't be going to college?"

Frank's shoulders slumped, and he fell back in his chair with a sigh. "No, I didn't say that. You've got to go. I'm just telling you to keep your eyes open. Stay awake." **Page 97**



Jones, LeRoi, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1963)

There should be no cause for wonder that the trumpets of Bix Beiderbecke and Louis Armstrong were so dissimilar. The white middle-class boy from Iowa was the product of a culture which could *place* Louis Armstrong, but could never understand him. Beiderbecke was also the product of a subculture that most nearly emulates the “official” or formal culture of North America. He was an instinctive intellectual who had a musical taste that included Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Debussy, and had an emotional life that, as it turned out, was based on his conscious or unconscious disapproval of most of the sacraments of his culture. On the other hand, Armstrong was, in terms of emotional archetypes, an honest priest of his culture—one of the most impressive products of his society. Armstrong was not *rebell*ing against anything with his music... the music the two made was as dissimilar as is possible within jazz. Beiderbecke’s slight, reflective tone and impressionistic lyricism was the most impressive example of “the artifact given expression” in jazz. He played “white jazz” in the sense I am trying to convey, that is, as a music that is the product of attitudes expressive of a peculiar culture. Armstrong, of course, played jazz that was securely within the traditions of Afro-American music. His tone was brassy, broad, and aggressively dramatic. He also relied heavily on the vocal blues tradition in his playing to amplify the expressiveness of his instrumental technique. **Page 154**

III. THE DREAM AND REDEMPTION

WE FELT THAT... OUT OF A COMING TOGETHER OF ALL OF THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF A PEOPLE WE WOULD CREATE A NEW SOCIAL ORDER.

—Andrew Young in an interview for *Legacy: Being Black in America*

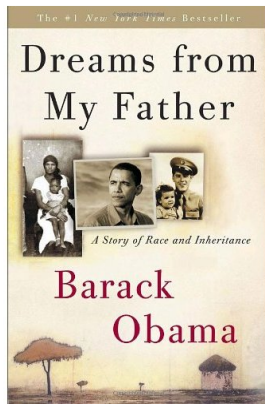
UNEARNED SUFFERING IS REDEMPTIVE.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.



Jones, LeRoi, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1963)

The idea of the Negro's having “roots” and that they are a valuable possession, rather than the source of ineradicable shame, is perhaps the profoundest change within the Negro consciousness since the early part of the century. It is a re-evaluation that could only be made possible by the conclusions and redress of attitude that took place in the forties. The feelings of inferiority which most Negroes had and still have to a certain extent were brought to their lowest valence up until the present time in the forties. The emergence then of a psychological stance based on the emotional concept of “equality of means” meant that finally all the “barriers” against useful existence within the American society could be looked at by Negroes as being only the inventions of white Americans. The form and content of Negro music in the forties re-created, or reinforced, the social and historical alienation of the Negro in America, but in the Negro's terms. The Negro jazz musician of the forties was *weird*. And the myth of this weirdness, this alienation, was sufficiently important to white America for it to re-create the myth in a term that connoted not merely Negroes as the aliens but a general alienation in which even white men could be included. **Pages 218-219**

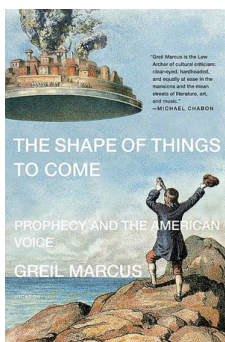


Obama, Barack, *Dreams from My Father* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995)

For the next hour, the women took turns telling their stories, singing their songs. They sang about lost time and discarded fantasies and what might have been. They sang of the men who loved them, betrayed them, raped them, embraced them; they sang of the hurt inside these men, hurt that was understood and sometimes forgiven. They showed each other their stretch marks and the calluses on their feet; they revealed their beauty in the lilt of their voice, the flutter of a hand, beauty waning, ascendant, elusive. They wept over the aborted children, the murdered children, the children they once were. And through all of their songs, violent, angry, sweet, unflinching, the women danced, each of them, double-dutch and rhumba and bump and solitary waltz; sweat breaking, heart-breaking dances. They danced until they all seemed one spirit. At the end of the play, that spirit began to sing a single, simple verse:

*I found god in myself
And I loved her / I loved her fiercely*

Page 206



Marcus, Greil, *The Shape of Things to Come: Prophecy and the American Voice* (New York: Picador, 2007)

What John Winthrop and fellow members of the Massachusetts Bay Company had set out to found was nothing so grand or permanent as a country. They meant to found a community, which might endure only so long as it took for that community to shine forth, in Winthrop's phrase, as a "model" for the rest of the world.... In calm and direct language that at once affirmed the authority of the

speaker and the speaker's respect for his listeners, Winthrop spoke of salvation and delight, of ruin and damnation. He described the free founding of a society under the greatest authority: of their own free will. Winthrop told the men and women gathered before him, they had joined in a covenant with God and with themselves to create a new society according to God's laws. The first of these laws was that of inequality, of "the variety and difference of the Creatures": the men and women who were to make up the new society. According to God's wisdom, Winthrop said, "in all times some must be rich some poore, some highe and eminent in power and dignitie; others meane and in subjeccion." God had created difference, Winthrop said, "That every man might have need of other, and from hence they might be all knit more nearly together in the Bond of brotherly affection." The glory of honor or wealth was not that of whoever was wealthy, or judged a figure of honor. Wealth and honor belonged only to God; they were present or absent among men and women for the common good, so that no individual could stand except as part of a whole: "for it is a true rule that perticuler estates cannot subsist in the ruine of the publique." **Pages 22-23**