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National Socialism and Blood-Sacrifice in Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain*

In Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939), Pharaoh establishes his new rule of law by penetrating the Hebrew womb with his "rod of state," which is intent upon genocide:

Pharaoh had entered the bedrooms of Israel. The birthing beds of the Hebrews were matters of state. The Hebrew womb had fallen under the heel of Pharaoh. A ruler great in his newness and new in his greatness had arisen in Egypt and he had said, "*This is law. Hebrew boys shall not be born.*" All offenders against this law shall suffer death by drowning." (1; italics added)

So ends the first paragraph of Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, establishing the novel as a meditation on the nature of the authoritarian state and of absolute political power. "Hardly less than Machiavelli in *The Prince*," Blyden Jackson observed in his 1984 Introduction to *Moses*, "she discusses power—the kind of power, political in its nature, which is the prime object of concern for the Florentine in his famous treatise on statesmanship" (152). Yet is it Machiavellian political power Hurston discusses, or, in 1939, Hitlerian? This essay shows that Hurston's Machiavellian turn serves to orient her analysis of absolute political power not toward Florence, but Berlin (Gilroy 234-35). *Moses'* Pharaoh presents Hurston's examination of the ideological content invested in the creation of the fascist state along the lines of the *Führerprinzip* (*Führer* principle, or principle of the male, charismatic, authoritarian guide or leader) at work in National Socialist Germany, and the role that ultranationalism plays as a religious faith in supporting fascist political power. Through not only the figure of Pharaoh, but of Moses himself, Hurston critiques the ideological premises of National Socialism while at the same time conceding the value of generic European fascism for a program of African American uplift via black cultural nationalism. Indeed, the black cultural nationalism that Hurston advocates with her appropriation of the Mosaic myth is achieved according to the dictates of "generic" fascist ideology.

By generic fascism and generic fascist ideology, I mean the operative terms of the current scholarly discourse in which characteristics of the various fascisms present before and during WWII are synthesized or discarded in order to create a working theory of fascism in general.¹ Indeed, in however diverse national manifestations it appeared or however contradictory its impulses and ideology within a single, national political milieu, the various European fascisms consistently propounded certain principles and ideological precepts. Historians and theorists of fascism gather these characteristics under the heading of "generic" fascism as

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a correlate to the study of any one given form of historical fascism, and as a field of study in its own right. In other words, "generic fascism" means no specific manifestation of the phenomenon, such as Italian Fascism, or, if one considers it a form of fascism, Nazism. There has been considerable debate in the field of the study of fascism as to whether Nazism can be considered a form of fascism, owing usually to the virulent racism central to Nazi ideology. I am of the mind that Nazism was a form of fascism; for, as Roger Griffin asserts, "[t]o treat Nazism as a form of fascism is not to deny its uniqueness, but to claim that some of its causal factors and empirical aspects are thrown into relief if it is seen as a permutation of a generic phenomenon called 'fascism' " (Griffin 96).²

Removing the national specificity and virulent racism of a general notion of fascism informed solely by Nazism, Stanley G. Payne lists six characteristics of generic fascist ideology under the heading "Style and Organization," five of which will be central to this book:

Emphasis on esthetic structure of meetings, symbols, and political choreography, stressing romantic and mystical aspects.

Attempted mass mobilization with militarization of political relationships and style and with the goal of mass party militia.

Positive evaluation and use of, or willingness to use, violence.

Extreme stress on the masculine principle and male dominance, while espousing the organic view of society.

...

Specific tendency toward an authoritarian, charismatic, personal style of command, whether or not the command is to some degree initially elective. (7)³

As shown in this essay's third part, each of these five characteristics will find its "Negro expression" in Hurston's *Moses*, with regard to the character's style of leadership and his alignment of the new nation in terms of a mystified cultural-biological conception of race. The first third of this essay

concerns Hurston's attitude toward fascism, and the body of scholarly work surrounding her novel. Part Two examines her *Pharaoh*, finding in the character both Hurston's trenchant criticisms of National Socialism and fascism in general, and the very fascist elements she appropriates for her *Moses*.

Killing Me Softly With His Snake

Dust Tracks On a Road (1942) finds Hurston speculating as to the viability and desirability of race purity:

There will have to be something harder to get across than an ocean to keep East and West from meeting. But maybe Old Maker will have a remedy. Maybe even He has given up. Perhaps in a moment of discouragement He turned the job over to Adolph Hitler and went on about His business of making more beetles. (192)

Hurston asserts that maintaining racial purity cannot be done; this does not mean, however, that she denies an originary state of racial purity, but that the vicissitudes of sexual license prohibit a lasting lineage of racial integrity without compromise. The joke targets Hitler as a would-be god who knows no better than to believe that human sexuality can be contained and directed, and that racial purity, obliterated by the very instinct Hitler denies free reign, can still be found.

Thus Hurston tacitly assumes in her autobiography that the sexual admixture of race brings with it a corruption and then reformulation of culture, which, in itself, carries an obsolete but traceable kernel of racial purity. Informing her anthropological work, she carried this assumption with her to Haiti: "All over Haiti it is well established that Damballah is identified as Moses, whose symbol was the serpent. This worship of Moses recalls the hard-to-explain fact that wherever the Negro is found, there are traditional tales of

Moses and his supernatural powers that are not in the Bible; nor can they be found in any written life of Moses. The rod of Moses is said to have been a subtle serpent and hence came his great powers" (TMH 116). As he appears in Haiti and in a mythological and cultural nexus of racial identity and certification, Moses cannot function as a measure of racial purity but signifies a hybrid iconographic genealogy that manifests itself as the locus of a new pantheon apart from Voodoo or Christian churches. A collage of Voodoo, Christianity and Judaism, the image of Moses surpasses the sum of its cultural parts. For Hurston, culture, like blood, makes no claim to a functional racial purity, but carries within it an all but forgotten originary instance of its constitutive, undifferentiated elements. Moses, as a cultural artifact, assembles within him the specific people he represents at the moment of his appearance. He embodies the signifier (understanding "race" here to be a product of a hybrid, yet unified culture) par excellence that marks the racial integrity of a Volk. To the extent that Moses inhabits a protean body of mythological discourse, he displays the ability to suit himself to the needs of a people by conditioning them as their most effective, powerful leader and, more important, their undeniably masculine redeemer, to obey the dictates of his will. Moses represents the beliefs, values, and communal bond of a racially coded Volk while creating the very aspects of a people he represents.

In this respect, Moses presents an absolutely singular (yet hybrid) cultural figure; he takes the place of an originary event that demands continued racial purity by raising miscegenation to the apex of cultural production. As an absolutely singular creative force, Moses gives birth to a racially coded and culturally bound nation informed by the power of his inevitably masculine rod of power. He kills whatever divisiveness may have existed within the Volk in its material existence and its aporetic moments in its philosophical

constitution. Thus, in Hurston's short story and rehearsal for *Moses*, titled "Fire and the Cloud" (1934), we find a Moses near death who has constructed his own tomb, mistaken by a talking lizard to be Moses' love nest:

From the top of a low bush near the left foot of Moses the lizard studied the work. "It is good. But you have been a long time in the building of your nest. Your female must be near death from retaining her eggs."

"No fecund female awaits this labor."

"A man alone!"

"A man alone." (CS 117)

"A man alone" has no need of a "fecund female": his sex exercises in his solitary use of his rod of power, which he draws out as a measure for how far he has been "drawn-out" by the practice of nation-building:

"How do you say that you are alone if of your kind such hosts of multitudes be at hand?"

"I am that I am and so I am alone. I am Moses, The-drawn-out. It is given me to call God by his power-compelling names. I bear his rod. The blind and the mute have companionship, but I am a leader." (CS 118)

His claim to a brood limited to those influenced by his productive act of creating a Volk, Moses transmits his legacy not by blood but by the transferal of masculinist power. "A man alone" nevertheless keeps the company of another man, to whom he gives his rod of power at the moment of his death in order that the nation may be born: " 'But wait, O Moses!' the lizard squeaked after him. 'You have left your rod behind.' 'Oh, Joshua will pick it up,' he called back and strode on" (CS 121).

Sovereignty passes between men without women, men with no other love than the State. The rule of law that defines the race is not passed from one ruler to the next by blood lineage, but by the cultural inheritance of sovereign masculinity. Blood plays no part in Hurston's thinking on racial purity. She construes it instead as a cultural bond between people who construct a

Volk, a bond uniting discrete racial and cultural entities into a hybrid formation that nevertheless transcends its status as a hybrid to become a protean purity without origin and transmitted via the homosocial rather than the hetero- or homosexual. Moses, in other words, bequeaths his rod as a means of maintaining racial

purity found not in the blood, but in "pure" cultural products — an insight to which Hitler, according to Hurston, remains blind. Hurston's interest in fascist dictators went beyond speculation as to what Hitler could and could not see. As we have seen, Hurston's fascination with fascist authoritarians is evident in her sexual attraction to a Haitian colonel during one of her 1936-37 stays on the island.⁴ What she finds attractive is, of course, not *any* man in uniform, but one who embodies the promise of a strong masculine, militaristic, authoritarian hand setting to the task of transforming a "moribund political system" into the mechanism of Haitian progress. Hurston's enthusiasm for the promise presented by the quasi-fascistic image of the colonel was one she apparently did not feel for U.S.-based Black Nationalist political programs, especially the Garveyite movement, despite the fact that Marcus Mosiah Garvey shared with Hurston an attraction to fascism.

Despite their shared affinity for fascism, in Hurston's *Moses* there is no understanding of the new nation in terms of a biological conception of race, and therefore there is no positive evaluation of the Garveyite movement. The black cultural nationalism Hurston describes in the novel disavows that of Garveyism, which is, biologically speaking, race-specific. Although "Garvey acknowledges . . . that racial purity is a project not a condition" ("Black Fascism" 72-73), as Gilroy

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points out this does not mean that for Garvey the biology of race eluded the extreme limit and originary moment of the idea of "racial purity," an idea that Hurston found worthy of scathing sarcasm. Tony Martin reminds us that Hurston "benefited from early exposure in the *Negro World*;" but he is

quick and correct to note that Hurston's essay "The Emperor Effaces Himself" (1928; unpublished) was a "scurilous" attack upon Garvey. "As the article progressed," Martin relates, "the satire became more

vicious. Hurston accused Garvey of fraud and poked fun at his very reasonable campaign to have African peoples portray God in their own color" (Martin 76). Reasonably or not, Hurston took issue with Garvey for his color-based program of uplift for reasons beyond her desire to ingratiate herself with Carl Van Vechten and others. In opposition to Garvey, Hurston does not consider race to be first, but instead places culture disembodied from a biological imperative in the lead position. Hurston, gainsaying the primacy of the natural science of race, submits to the notion of cultural production as productive of the race.

Indeed, Hurston's turn toward fascism is the turn away from Garveyism (whether or not it deployed some fascist strategies) as the ideological basis of African American nationhood understood first and foremost as the instruction of heredity and not heritage. Instead of a biological mysticism at the center of nationalist sentiment, Hurston's *Moses* offers a radicalization of commonplace readings of the Harlem Renaissance's cultural aesthetic of an authentic African American being that permits racial détente. The negation of the *primacy* of biological determinism as the measure of racial faculty thus presents in *Moses* a read-

able text through which intra- and inter-racial understanding is mediated by the apotheosis of culture.

Although it can be said that Hurston turns to a conservative civil rights politics later in life, the fascist underpinnings of the apotheosis of culture found in *Moses* by no means support a conservative political program.⁵ Generic fascism, to echo Zeev Sternhell, is neither right, left, nor centrist; it is a radical, revolutionary politics that borrows from across the political spectrum and denies traditional political categorization. It is this misreading of the radical, revolutionary nature of the novel's political orientation that has led critics to view *Moses* as "flawed" because, if seen through the prism of a conservative, centrist, or liberal politics, the various threads Hurston seeks to weave into a single textual tapestry interrupt each other without reconciliation. The overdetermination of Hurston's images (Moses included), instead of enhancing the strength of a unified thematic line stretching throughout the novel, breaks the narrative totality into sequestered vignettes that relate to each other by the sole virtue of the authority of the Mosaic myth itself.

Yet this is not so much a "flaw" as a method of textual production by which Hurston enables herself to layer an already overdetermined myth with what appears on the surface to be incompatible political phenomena — those of African Americans, Jews under National Socialism, and generic European fascism itself. The Mosaic myth lets Hurston transcend the specific historical situations of oppressed and oppressor, while maintaining a folkloric understanding of the historical specificity that grants her leave to combine them. With the Mosaic myth, Hurston empties history of its specific content, only to reappropriate history for the sake of a comparative analysis of the plight of the Jews in Europe in the face of National Socialism, of African Americans in the Jim Crow South, and with the viability of ideo-

logical premises of fascism for African American leadership. The shadow of Nazism, in other words, extends far enough to darken the pages to *Moses*.

"The shadow of Nazism," Deborah McDowell asserts, "is cast from the beginning of *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, which opens on the process of marking Hebrew male babies for extinction" (xv).⁶ McDowell does not mean to imply that *Moses* consciously predestines the Holocaust, or that the situation of European Jews in 1939 mirrors that of African Americans during the same year, but that National Socialism's rhetoric of "blood-and-soil" provided Hurston with a general framework with which to examine race relations in the United States. Barbara Johnson points out that "[a]t a time when Hitler had cornered the market on blood-and-soil nationalism, it is not surprising to find Hurston questioning the grounding of nationhood on racial identity" (21). So, it is not surprising to find Hurston mediating her discussion on the grounding of nationhood with an implicit examination of the general premises of National Socialist authoritarian rule and racial origins. The fact that Hurston's Moses cannot be said with certainty to be a Hebrew does not discount a reading of black cultural nationalism in the text, but instead reinforces it. Johnson argues that "Hurston's Egyptian Moses stands for the culturally dead father or mother: Africa, the source of the repressed tradition carried to the Americas by the slaves" (20). The figure of Moses, in other words, possesses a long history of interpretation and revision within African American folk tradition such that Moses represents a past, a history, a tradition, and a nation as an emblem of freedom from bondage and racial oppression and as a locus for a traumatized and disparate people.⁷

In Hurston's hands, the signifier Moses goes a step beyond folk tradition and, as Maria Diedrich understands it, "radically transcends the mere folk-in-literature approach . . . it is Hurston's courageous endeavor to

aesthetically re-create and document the complex theological, philosophical, and political potentials inherent in the Moses interpretation as it had developed in black folk religion since slavery times" (177). That Hurston allows for a strong reading in favor of Moses' racial heritage as Egyptian and not Hebrew, echoes her belief that, as Johnson puts it, "[t]here are no 'pure' races, no unmixed origins, and this may be another reason for the choice both Freud and Hurston make to turn Moses into an Egyptian" (24).⁸ McDowell concurs with Johnson: "Hurston is not so much intent on establishing the patriarch's origins beyond dispute, but rather on casting doubts about Moses' 'pure' origins and, by extension, on the very idea of 'racial purity'" (xiv). By challenging "the very idea of 'racial purity,'" Hurston follows her Columbia University mentor Franz Boas, and removes it to the realm of biological mysticism, while at the same time stipulating that any belief in the supremacy of one race over another on the grounds of biological determinism necessarily finds its validity in a kind of religious fervor or blind faith (Boas, "Human Faculty," 226).⁹ Indeed, McDowell tells us that, "[t]he novel identifies concerns with racial origins—and perhaps origins more generally—as the genesis of many of the world's evils. Hurston could not have chosen a timelier year in which to launch these concerns" (xiii).

The deeply encoded nature of the meditation on National Socialism and American racism presented in *Moses*, however, might lead one to believe that the book's appearance in 1939 was more of a coincidence than "timely," a belief that, if not lost upon Hurston's contemporaries, caused them to view the work as something less than it was, as "light" and inconsequential. Alain Locke, in a 1940 review of *Moses for Opportunity*, insisted that Hurston's Moses is "caricature instead of portraiture. Gay anecdotes there are aplenty, but somehow black Moses is neither

reverent nor epic, two things . . . that any Moses, Hebrew, Negroid, or Nordic, ought to be" (7). In his 1941 essay "Recent Negro Fiction," Ralph Ellison proclaimed that "for Negro fiction [*Moses*] did nothing" (24). Hurston herself doubted, for different reasons, the book's ultimate success, admitting that "I have the feeling of disappointment about it. I don't think that I achieved all that I set out to do. I thought that in this book I would achieve my ideal, it seems that I have not yet reached it" (Howard 39; Morris 308).¹⁰

But perhaps the book's ambiguous merit lies in the very double move that makes it a work of intense power as well as a comical romp through the Bible. Christine Levecq argues that "By juxtaposing not only two different historical and cultural contexts but also two different social classes, Hurston creates a socially, politically, and culturally charged heteroglossia" (437). Yet Levecq's Bakhtinian analysis identifies only "two different historical and cultural contexts," when clearly there are at least three. The first two, understood by Levecq, consist of African American history and culture, and those of German Jews. As we have seen, the third is present from the opening lines of the novel: namely, National Socialism, and, abstracting to the limits as Hurston herself does in the novel, generic European fascism. Still, Hurston's *Moses* does not attempt to analyze rigorously National Socialism, but instead engages in a "heteroglossia" of European fascisms, including National Socialism as the dominant textual referent *because* of its virulent racism. That Hurston was able to intertwine at least these three historical and cultural contexts speaks to the novel's intensity and success, but it also underscores the difficulty she had in combining different social contexts within a single work that attempts to create a unified narrative field. Where one cultural context begins, the other does not so much end as become effaced by its successor. With this in

mind, my reading of *Moses* is divided into two parts, the first dealing with Hurston's understanding of National Socialist ideology as a racial "blind faith" displaced to the state as the engendering agent of the charismatic, authoritarian ruler; the second identifying fascist rhetoric in the novel's black cultural nationalism.

Pharaoh Führer

"The province of Goshen was living under the New Egypt and the New Egyptian and they were made to know it in many ways. The sign of the new order towered over places of preference. It shadowed over work, and fear was given body and wings" (1-2). In the "New Egypt" and Rameses' brutal rod of state, Hurston presents the *Führerprinzip* as one of the political manifestations of the ideological myth of national rebirth as the recapturing of the nonrational being of the nation by means of masculine vitality and health. The "New Egyptian," discerned by a concept of racial contamination, personifies Egypt's return to racial purity. For Hurston, fascist rhetorical power relies upon the insistence that the alien, the cultural and racial outsider, compromised the health of the nation, and that the nation became effeminate and corrupted by its inclusion of a people living outside of its manifest destiny. Indeed, the "Hebrews had already been driven out of their well-built homes and shoved further back in Goshen. . . . Hebrews were disarmed and prevented from becoming citizens of Egypt, they found out that they were aliens, and from one decree to the next they sank lower and lower" (Hurston 2). So harsh were Pharaoh's new laws that "Hebrew women shuddered with terror at the indifference of their wombs to the Egyptian law" (1).

The subjugation and subsequent surgical removal of this cancer will in

turn revitalize the diseased body of the nation. Rameses' recent rise to power, an allusion to Hitler's 1933 seizure of power and the ascendance of fascism as the dominant political ideology in Europe, is played out along cultural lines as the demonization of the cultural other as an inherently corrupt race. Rameses, "[a] ruler great in his newness and new in his greatness," legitimates his new, great power through the murder of first-born Hebrew males. By forcing the Hebrews out of Egyptian society, invading the Hebrew bedrooms, and violating the Hebrew women, Rameses distinguishes himself as the new ruler of Egypt. His actions, mandates of the state, are reflections of his sovereign power and desire to become an entity distinct from the traditional representation of the sun-god on earth, figuring him instead as a serial rapist/killer, a ruler beyond the law because he has the authority to create not simply the law, but its legitimating originary moment.¹¹

In exercising his execrable absolute authority over the Hebrews, the form of this new authority takes on the countenances of father and murderer of all newborn male Hebrews. The "rod of state," the ornamental articulation of the sun-god's power, forces its entrance into the Hebrew womb with the goal of preventing the conception of male offspring. The law refutes the claim to life of the newborn Hebrew males with a preemptive strike. To insist that male children shall not be *born* is tantamount to insisting that Hebrew males shall not be conceived—an impossible stricture to obey. Thus, Pharaoh manifests his power as the impossibility of the law.¹² The ability to render the womb incapable of producing a male child dictates that Pharaoh's power extend itself beyond the womb with the ability to render the inevitable impossible.

The excuse Rameses uses to justify the institution of the impossible as law is history itself, in that Pharaoh reconfigures history to portray the Hebrews as both the cause of Egypt's previous

sufferings and the reason that Egypt cannot fully recover:

All that he [Rameses] had required of them was that they work and build him a few cities [and monuments] here and there to pay back in a small way for all the great benefits they had received in their long residence in Egypt and also to give back some of the wealth they had so ruthlessly raped from the helpless body of Egypt when she was in no position to defend herself. . . . His piercing eyes and all-hearing ears had discovered a well-organized plot to swindle Egypt out of her just amount of work out of them, by slowing up their work—a most reprehensible and low-down trick worthy of Hyksos and Hebrews! But he had a remedy for this. (19-20)

The Hebrew is diseased with the plague of criminality, and so his existence within the body of the authoritarian state corrupts the law. Indeed, Rameses decries the Hebrews as rapists, insisting that they “give back some of the wealth they had so ruthlessly raped from the helpless body of Egypt when she was in no position to defend herself.” As Hurston names the character of National Socialism’s demonization of the Jews, she also alludes to the economic and cultural crises Germany faced after defeat in WWI and the Allied imposition of crippling war reparations. For Rameses, national economic failure and humiliation sanctions the oppression of the Hebrews and provides him with a rallying point for extreme nationalist sentiment and the denunciation of a perceived cancer within the body politic of the nation.

Hurston thus presents the National Socialist doctrine of the state as an organic vessel superior in nature to other national-cultural bodies through the figures of Rameses and his authoritarian Egypt (Hitler 284-329). She also asserts that if the rhetorical thrust of national rebirth in fascist ideology is to retain its potency, the illness plaguing the national body is necessary for the nation’s rebirth into health.¹³ That there is an illness—specifically embod-

ied in the Hebrews—posits that the figurative body of the nation is sick, and it has been ill during the decades preceding Rameses’ ascension to power. It signifies that this time before Rameses, identified politically and culturally, is indeed a *history* of national weakness and decadence, and that the body can be healed by recapturing a time before the history of illness, a time steeped in myth and pregnant with the true destiny of the nation.¹⁴ The elimination, or sacrifice, of the cultural other will accomplish this regeneration of the previously degenerate nation, because the perceived cause and symptom of the illness will have been removed (Girard 39-67).¹⁵

The extermination of newborn Hebrew males punishes a crime other than that of the “impossible” living presence of the victims. In the eyes of Rameses, criminal activity, indeed treason and rape, exemplifies the Hebrews’ racial character and enacts itself in the unavoidable conception of male children, committing a moral offense against a sacred order. Male children are conceived against the will of the gods and the state, and so perform the impossible negation of divine law. The infant male indicts Pharaoh’s power over the Hebrew womb as impotent, diminishing his rod of state as nothing other than a showpiece. By law, Pharaoh engenders gender. The crime of the male child is committed at the moment of conception. In other words, the crime is not that male children exist, *but that they are conceived in the first place*. This crime amounts, insanelly, to an act of treason, an undermining of the sexual prowess of Pharaoh, insofar as his violent sexuality expresses itself as the desire for absolute political authority. To insult Pharaoh’s performance in Hebrew beds, then, is to soften his rod of state. By birthing boys, the Hebrew mothers eclipse the power of the sun. This insult denies the authority of Ra and denigrates the eye of Horus, the “golden god! Lord of both horizons. The weaver of the beginning of things” (3).

At "the beginning of things," the beginning of history, Hurston identifies fascist political authority as bound to a single-minded mythological self-understanding of a people, causing national identity to be created by, and subsumed within, the progressive unfolding of history as Nazi myth.¹⁶ The crucial moment of this mytho-historiography is that of Egypt's freedom from bondage, its divine deliverance from Hebrew evil. "Here they were," Pharaoh tells us in a moment of indirect speech, "Hebrews, who had come down into Egypt as the allies and aides of those oppressors of the Egyptian people, and as such had trampled on the proud breast of Egyptian liberty for more than three hundred years. But the *gods* had used the magnificent courage of the *real* Egyptians to finally conquer and expel those sheep-herding interlopers whom the Hebrews had aided in every way they could to deprive the *real* Egyptians of their homes and their liberties" (Hurston 19; italics added). Capable of seeking out and marshaling Egyptian courage, the gods have decided Egypt's historical turn to glory. The gods endow the Egyptian Volk with a sacred communal tie—the defeat of the Hyksos and Hebrews—to be realized in the working of the state as a teleological movement towards a superior destiny. It is a new Egypt, and therefore a new national destiny. Hurston presents the authority of the fascist charismatic leader as irreproachable because to question his authority would place the questioner outside of the existing theological, cultural and racial order of the nation and thus identify the questioner as antagonistic to the sacred destiny of the nation. To challenge the authority of the charismatic leader on any level labels the party issuing the challenge as an enemy of the state. As Hurston presents it, the fascist state requires a sacred, mythologized history as the ideological condition of its absolute authority. This mytho-historiography expresses itself in nationalism as a religious principle. The charismatic leader

exerts his power through the force of the gods; he descends out of the clouds bringing the glory of his triumph of the will.¹⁷

With this great victory, Hurston establishes the content of Pharaoh's desire for absolute sovereignty as a myth of an absolute political authority granted to him by Horus at the beginning of things. Horus weaves the tapestry of history by representing the origin as a nascent form of historical unfolding. This origin gives rise to the narrative of Ra's chosen people. Pharaoh's divine authority rests on the determination, at the beginning and by means of an act of originary, divine violence, that Pharaohs are the keepers of the origin.¹⁸ The origin exists within Pharaohs, for Pharaohs exist as the divine presence of Ra on earth. In other words, a Pharaoh cannot be for himself, but for the sun-god. In this way, Pharaohs, including Rameses, guarantee the continuity of a history stretching back to an originary moment bathed in the "authentic" light of the "true" god. Pharaohs are historical truth, and as such the laws they create and uphold justify themselves within history as Nazi myth.

The mantle of Pharaoh thus exists eternally, secure at the beginning of things, even though the man representing the eternal entity "Pharaoh" finds himself exposed to death. Pharaoh by rights possesses two bodies, in the same sense as Kantorowicz's two bodies of the king in medieval political theology (Kantorowicz 7-23). One of the Pharaoh's two bodies is immortal and has as its supreme characteristic, outside of its immortality, a direct relation to the laws of the godhead; the other body is perishable and serves as a slave to the legislative will of the gods. Indeed, Hurston's Amram describes Rameses as a "flesh and blood man, just like you and me." Yet the Hebrews, before a meeting with Rameses called to air their grievances, are also given to understand "what a blessing it was for Pharaoh to not only let them [the Hebrews] see his sacred

body, he was actually going to let them listen to his voice. He was going to speak to them, using his sacred voice and lips" (19). As a result of this divine bureaucratic will, any new Pharaoh is an old Pharaoh. The power of the Pharaoh contains the rule of law as understood as the will of the sun-god from the beginning of things. The righteousness of these laws is established prior to their inception. Any new law created by a Pharaoh predates the establishment of this law because all Egyptian law is already included in the beginning of things. The very possibility of law precedes any one Pharaoh. Because the law exists prior to the office of the Pharaoh, the "new" law is an impossible law. It is this impossibility of law that Rameses uses against the Hebrews in order to distinguish himself from the office of Pharaoh, reinventing himself as "Rameses the god." As such, he exists prior and superior to the gods worshiped by his people, and so embodies the "new," true destiny of Egypt.

In Rameses, the "incarnation of the sun-god" that "intensified [Egyptian] nationalism," Hurston figures the fascist rhetoric of an essential being and destiny of the nation as over and against other nations. This being dwells temporally in advance of the period of decadence, of racial infection within the body of the Volk. As Hurston depicts it, the inscription of history into myth performed by the fascist State drains history of its content and invests it with the Nazi myth of a people unified in the person of the charismatic leader. As the religious, authoritarian principle of the fascist State, the charismatic leader acts as a touchstone for a unified national body born of myth. The rewriting of history thus allows for the creation of a legal apparatus that *has the moral authority to perform any task so long as the task falls within the best interests of the nation*, which it always does. The law is infused with an aestheticized political content such that the creation and enforcement of the law perform aes-

thetic acts; they exist, as actions, for themselves.¹⁹ Hurston asserts with *Moses, Man of the Mountain* that, in creating laws that call for the enslavement and mass slaughter of a disenfranchised "minority" population living within the national body, the charismatic leader heightens the sense of communal unity of a nation and reaffirms the rhetoric of the destiny of the people that endows the *Führerprinzip* with a religious character in the first place. Exactly as Benjamin contends, this aestheticization of legal and political power establishes along cultural and racial lines violence for the sake of the State, which, in this case, is violence for its own sake ("Theories"). This conception of political violence removes the new, charismatic leader from historical and legal precedence, and posits the authority of his power upon a state of exception.²⁰

If Rameses is to set himself apart as a Pharaoh, only in the state of exception can he create new laws; for, by law, one Pharaoh is indistinguishable from the other unless this logic of succession succumbs to a radical interruption. To establish a new law is actually to resurrect an old law, insofar as the law pertains to the Egyptians as *the* people of the sun. Rameses escapes this double-bind by expressing his absolute sovereignty over a non-Egyptian people. The origin from which Pharaoh derives this power acts as the articulation of the *new* ontological basis for the Egyptians as a people, effectively providing Pharaoh with his state of exception and so the opportunity to create the truly new law. Furthermore, for Rameses to create laws for a people who are not bound by the ontological assumptions of the beginning, but nonetheless recognize Pharaoh's divine authority, would be to create *new* laws for Egypt and so unify Pharaoh's two bodies as simply "Rameses."

This political theodicy investigated by Hurston stipulates a condition in which all legal authority concedes even the illusion of autonomy in favor of a rule of law guaranteed in its moral effi-

cacy solely by the authoritarian ruler. The very process by which the fascist dictator undermines the rule of law with the goal of rewriting its parameters within those of a mytho-historiography conducive to a revision of the ontological status of a nation is addressed by Amram when, in conversation with Caleb, he intuits Pharaoh's motivation:

"You all talk like somebody else made these laws and Pharaoh don't know nothing about 'em. He makes 'em his own self and he's glad when we come tell him they hurt. Why, that's a whole lot of pleasure to him, to be making up laws all the time and to have a crowd like us around handy to pass all his mean ones on. Why, he's got a law about everything under the sun! Next thing you know he'll be saying cats can't have kittens. He figures that it makes a big man out of him to be passing and passing laws and rules. He thinks that makes him look more like a king. Long time ago he done passed all the laws that could do anybody good. So now he sits up and studies up laws to do hurt and harm, and we're the only folks in Egypt he got the nerve to put 'em on. He aims to keep us down so he'll always have somebody to wipe his feet on. He brags that him and the Egyptian nation is eating high on the hog now." (5)

The laws of which Amram speaks are those that condemn the Hebrews to brutal slavery or death. The assumption Amram advances denies that someone other than Rameses designed the laws used to oppress the Hebrews. Amram is not wrong in his assumption; the law, in existence from the originary moment of the Egyptian people both as its own possibility and impossibility, sanctifies *a priori* the slaughter of *newly born* Hebrew males. But the divine Phallus of Rameses insists that no male Hebrew children shall be conceived. Pharaoh dictates the conditions that bind the Hebrews to slavery and murder, but Rameses writes the law that forbids the conception of males. The fascist rule of law that Hurston treats in *Moses* is positioned before the very moment that

inculcates the previous system of law into the body politic of the "chosen" people. The usurped rule of law does not exist prior to its origin; it does not account for the lawless terrain situated before its own mythological constitution. The empty space before the origin of the previous rule of law contains the negative realm invaded by the Führer in order to lay claim to a divine authority centered on his individual character. Because Hurston's Hitler/Pharaoh has staked his claim to the divine with Hebrew blood, Amram is correct in his censure of the cruelty of the *new* Pharaoh and not that of the eternal Pharaoh.

Caleb and Amram continue and lodge the complaint that the Hebrews have no space in which to worship, and so are unable to sacrifice:

"And look what he done done! Passed a law we can't go in the temples no more. He says their gods ain't our gods."

"Like what other gods do we know anything about. It gives you a real empty feeling not to have no gods anymore. If we can't go to the temples in Thebes and Memphis and Luxor, we could build us one in Goshen and sacrifice, Amram. Maybe if we do that they might help us to get our rights back again." (5-6)

Sacrifice here takes on the quality of a political task; it falls in line with the logic that identifies the act of sacrifice as the offering of a gift to the godhead.²¹ This gift will in turn secure the favor of the godhead for the sacrificer-community within a political economy that circulates around divine authority. If sacrifice "might help us to get our rights back," then the Hebrews decry the loss of a political tool while being fundamentally aware that this very tool is being used against them. In the case of the drowning of Hebrew boys, the god for whom lives are taken is a secular god. Rameses' legal project is one designed to force the Hebrews, with their freedom and their lives, to build a dynasty based not on the glory of the gods, but on the political acumen

of a man.

For Rameses to achieve his political goals absolutely, he must expel the Hebrews from Egyptian religion, for Rameses can only generate truly new law if the Hebrews are exiled from Egyptian religion, from Egypt itself in an ontological sense. Indeed, Rameses cannot make a new law if the new law in question pertains to Egyptian subjects who accept him as the son of the sun-god. This is so because every law—past, present, and future—is contained within the origin of the law as the ontological precondition of the Egyptian people. If the Hebrews are allowed to practice Egyptian religion by their own volition, then they can only recognize the authority of the Pharaoh and not that of Rameses, regardless of their physical oppression. This realization, as well as the notion of building in his image a new Egypt through the labor of the Hebrews (Rameses, via Hebrew labor, has already erected the new city “Rameses”), is the fruit of Rameses’s long hours of legal study. Every law has already been passed; new legal statutes can only be written in the blood of the racialized other. But in order for this writing to take place, the racialized other must be racially homogenous with the ideal racial type of the fascist state, and also radically other than this ideal.²² In Hurston’s analysis of National Socialist racial doctrine, race is first and foremost delineated by religion. The victimization of the racialized other must therefore at once promulgate the new mythology of the state and the dictator, and at the same time be denied access to a positive valuation within the scheme of this biological mysticism.

The reason that Rameses is able to extend his rod of state, denuded of divine authority, into the Hebrew womb is not finally due to the crime of “rape” perceived by Rameses to have been committed by the Hebrews against Egypt. It is instead due to the fact that the Hebrews are classified under the law as partial Egyptians, by

virtue of the now racialized gods they once worshipped but are now denied. The worship of Egyptian gods places the Hebrews within the same theological-ontological context as the “authentic” Egyptians. Once there, Rameses has power over the Hebrews as the conduit of the sun-god’s power, insofar as the Egyptian rule of law has divine value for the people for whom it was crafted.²³ In Hurston’s estimation, this authority endows the authoritarian state with the ability to expunge the racialized other from its body *by any means necessary*, from the ontological condition that defines the National Socialist state, allowing the Führer to create new laws for a victimized people who, robbed of their being, are not human. Hence, the status of the Hebrews in Hurston’s text is paradoxically that of the hybrid. They are not Egyptians because they were Egyptians. But this past title of “Egyptian” was, for the Hebrews, always provisional at best. It was only a matter of time before “the dishonesty and general wickedness of the Hebrews had reached the gods in their remote retreats and the gods had cried out for cleansing. The gods had announced emphatically that they would visit no altars that Hebrews were allowed to approach. Hebrews must not approach a single temple in Egypt. Neither must they build temples to Egyptian gods in Goshen. The gods were forbidden the boundaries of Goshen” (*Moses* 20-21).

As Hurston develops her novel, the great distance between humans and the gods in their remote retreats contains a temporal component. It was simply a matter of *time* before the gods recognized the inherent dishonesty and wickedness of the Hebrews. In other words, the perception holds sway in the new mythology that a period of racial assimilation existed and infected the body politic with a degenerative cultural disorder until the time of the *divine* recognition of the ontological condition of the racialized other as *essentially* against the rule of law of the

fascist state. To be “essentially” Egyptian indicates that one acts in accordance with the laws of the Egyptian gods because of an ontological inheritance displayed by faith in and conformity to the law. Once the Hebrew ruse is uncovered, Hurston writes, the gods are “forbidden the boundaries of Goshen.” The question arises of who has the power to forbid the gods anything. Through the sacrifice of the racialized other, the man above the gods has created new laws to which even the gods are beholden. Rameses, through the sacrifice of the Hebrews to himself, consolidates his political power as the framework of an entirely new, fascist nation.

With a High Hand

It is this originary framework that will be challenged and co-opted by Hurston’s Moses as Hurston shifts the parameters of her meditation on the fascist authoritarian state to the realm of black cultural nationalism with the introduction of the young Moses into her text. Indeed, moments before Moses is “called” by Yahweh, he sits “up on the mountain passing nations through his mind” (125), in effect unwittingly preparing himself to accept Yahweh’s command, “‘Go down into Egypt, Moses, and lead my people to the place I have provided for them. I AM WHAT I AM’ ” (127).

By obeying Yahweh and championing the cause of the Hebrews, Moses becomes the nexus of interpretive models for the text, containing within his figure not only the manifestation of a general program for the emancipation of oppressed minorities within an authoritarian society, but also the identification of the specific location of an African American countermovement against slavery and Jim Crow. Within this context, however, Hurston can only formulate a very general plan for the empowerment of African

Americans; and indeed she offers no advice to the European Jew beyond a schematic representation of the construction of nationhood and cultural self-reliance. Yet both Hurston’s critique of fascist power and her model of black cultural nationalism maintain as a necessary structural element the demonization and murder of the racialized other.

Of course, for Hurston the two models of nationalism and the creation of the nation differ in that the fascist state depends upon a demonization of the *biologically* racialized other. In following Boas and placing an emphasis on the cultural nature of race, her black cultural nationalism upholds a doctrine of exclusivity only insofar as this principle of exclusion hinges upon the acceptance of a religious faith as the basis of African American cultural authenticity. Whereas Hurston’s Rameses forbade the Hebrews worship of Egyptian gods, the worship of the god of Moses is open to all who accept the Hebrew faith. With her retelling of the Mosaic myth, Hurston maintains with her mentor Franz Boas that race is a cultural phenomenon, and that the “quality” of a race is determined by its cultural products. Where Hurston breaks with Boas is at the point of her essentialization of a culturally inclusive conception of race.

Beyond cosmetic details thought by both Boas and Hurston to possess an illusory permanence, Hurston suggested that “race” itself is subject, through racial amalgamation, to physical evolution over time.²⁴ Racial identity can retain a measure of divisive permanence within a permeable yet ultimately historically stable notion of culture. However, an eternal epistemological guarantor outside of the realm of biology is still required by such a concept of race. A jargon of authenticity is still a jargon of authenticity, be it based upon biological “fact,” or theological and cultural mandates. That said, it is thus important to identify the manner in which Hurston presents the event leading directly to the Hebrew exodus.

It is this event that confounds the means of African American cultural and political emancipation with Pharaoh's gruesome oppression of the Hebrews. Moses's brutal masculinity is nearly identical to Pharaoh's.

Moses performs acts of extreme violence because he believes that Yahweh

"has got to prove himself before them all to make folks believe. They have heard of God by ear but they don't know. . . . So what would be a better chance to show his powers than for Pharaoh to refuse and for me to beat him down with my powers? That's what I am to do. I don't want his consent, really. It would spoil everything I planned. I mean to whip his head to the ground and then lead out with a high hand." (146-47)

Betraying a hint of pleasure at the prospect of whipping Pharaoh's head to the ground, Moses insists that he must defeat Pharaoh in order to instill into the Hebrews faith in Yahweh. He does so through the spectacle of violence, and repeatedly, for Moses does not have in mind a single battle, but a series of violent humiliations to be visited upon Pharaoh and Egypt. The decisive wonder, the act that brings Pharaoh to his knees, entails doing unto Egypt as Egypt has done unto Goshen. Moses commits the mass-slaughter of Egyptian children:

Darkness balanced up on midnight looking both ways for day. Then the great cry arose in Egypt. They cried and died in Egypt. *It was the great cry that had issued first from the throat of Israel years before and spread to the rim bones of the world and come back again. And now it poured through the mouth of the Egyptian nation. . . . Pharaoh looked upon his first-born and wept.* (178; italics added)

"Darkness" defeats the sun-god. Moses, practicing eye-for-an-eye justice and then some, visits upon Egypt the plague of murder and does so knowing, indeed intending, for this spectacle to be watched. Playing out his program for Hebrew emancipation through

actions designed for visual pleasure, Moses conflates politics with aesthetics, aesthetics with violence. Through extreme violence, "Goshen" becomes "Israel"; Moses surpasses the ultranationalist violence of the oppressor with one based on a de-racialized religious faith combined with a racialized cultural determinism, as opposed to biological mysticism.²⁵

In so doing, Moses implicates Hurston's text in the very fascist model she critiques, with the understanding that the fascism she instills and criticizes in Pharaoh has a virulent racial component common to National Socialism, but not necessarily to generic fascism. For this is also the moment that Israel becomes racially exclusive; though Hurston notes that the Hebrews themselves are composed of mixed racial elements, Moses, after the Exodus, asserts that racial amalgamation, the mixing of nations, "tak[ing] up too many habits from nations they come in contact with," should be avoided. For Hurston, Boas's doctrine of racial amalgamation loses its validity once the Hebrews leave Egypt.²⁶

Where Boas perceived a fluid understanding of racial development hindered only by racism, Hurston essentializes race along cultural lines. This essentializing entails replacing a violent mythology of nation with an equally violent folklore of and for the Volk. The extreme violence employed by Moses to achieve the cultural end of racial and political empowerment takes on the quality of violence for the sake of violence, in that Moses could simply raise his right hand and free the slaves.²⁷ Instead, the means Moses employs to deliver his people, and the rhetoric with which he does so, fall within the parameters of fascist political theology that begins and ends with the primacy of sacrifice.

Thus, the essential activity of the Egyptian gods in Hurston's text is to take the sun as their signified meaning, their ontological basis, consigning them to veneration committed in bad faith. To communicate with the gods of

Egypt through the "triple-formed messenger of men to the gods" is to receive false information from this messenger insofar as the being-in-darkness of the "true" origin of the authentic nation (God) is not considered.²⁸ Henri Hubert's and Marcel Mauss's tripartite mechanism of sacrifice, within an inauthentic understanding of national foundations, does not go far enough for Hurston. The three aspects of their triadic messenger consist of the god, the victim, and the one who sacrifices. If one of the sides of the sacrificial triangle is insufficient to the ceremony, all of the sides are corrupted; the unity of the nation rests on ideological assumptions and not on an authentic mode of national being. Sacrifice lacks the power to establish a rapport with the God essential to authentic nationhood. This lack on the part of sacrifice creates a faulty picture of the nothingness from which civil law gains its divine aspect. For, until the time of Moses, there has never been a victim adequate to the task of communicating with the one true God.²⁹

It takes a Moses to speak with and for the nameless God of the darkness, to lead African Americans from under the yoke of an oppressive, ideological understanding of African American history.³⁰ *Because* sacrifice does not go far enough, the Jim Crow South and white America in general can exploit sacrifice as a means by which to surmount the US democratic ideology of equality among men and create the essential, racially exclusive image of the "American" disencumbered of its inherent contradictions.³¹ The victim delivers this new, coherent totality, and so the Hebrews in Hurston's text deliver the message from Pharaoh to *Rameses*; the Egyptians convey the request from Moses to *God*.

In their respective quests for nationhood, both Pharaoh and Moses seek to interrupt and then rewrite history through acts of fascistic violence. Pharaoh maintains absolute political power (and bequeaths it to his son, Suten-Rech Ta-Phar) with an act of sex-

ual violence against the Hebrew women, insuring the eventual death of a "really old story" (history), the "truth" (myth) contained in the Book of Thoth. It is the Book of Thoth as Nazi myth that Moses will recuperate as the absolute truth of history. Moses first hears of the book in the recollections of Mentu, his childhood servant and mentor. The book exists, at first, in the form of an oral record, a distinctly "Hebrew" method of mnemonic transfer. Of the book, Mentu tells Moses:

"To tell you the truth, I don't know anything about it. All I know is what I have heard. It was told by the father of the father of my father to the father of my father and the father of my father has told it to me."

"It is a really old story then."

"Sure. And the cry of it is that there is a book which Thoth himself wrote with his own hand which, if you read it, will bring you to the gods. When you read only two pages of this book you will enchant the heavens, the earth, the abyss, the mountain, and the sea. You will know what the birds of the air and the creeping things are saying. You will know the secrets of the deep because the power is there to bring them to you. And when you read the second page, you can go into the world of ghosts and come back to the shape you were on earth. You will see the sun shining in the sky, with all the gods, and the full moon." (53)

Hurston here aligns the African American oral tradition with the "truth" and monuments, or written history, with a *revision* of history. The history of the truth is entrusted to male progenitors, identifying the truth-in-memory as belonging to the masculine. Unwritten history, the "true" history, is recorded by males; whereas the feminine, as in fascist ideology, acts as a medium between the perpetuation of "true" history and the constitutive, inauthentic mnemonic trace designed for the purposes of designating "human nature." Hence, the masculine quality so important for what amounts to the *recuperation* of national identity, as defined racially but as a function of

culture is *a priori* mediated by the feminine.

Aside from allowing Moses to assert the superiority of masculine authority via the feminine as vessel, the Book of Thoth in Hurston's novel is the Center itself insofar as the book is a tool with which men communicate with the eternal. The book is a *written* sacrifice; it performs the same function as the event of blood-sacrifice, but does so on a deeper, more profound level. Sacrifice as writing takes priority over bloodletting, for the book endows the reader with an avenue to the knowledge of darkness, or God. It imparts to the reader the possibility of knowing the unknowable, of experiencing the knowledge withheld from the ceremonies of Egyptian sacrifice and Rameses' slaughter of the Hebrews. God whispers the laws of nature in the pages of the book, gifting the reader with the possibility that Law itself is preordained by the God among gods. The book relates intimate knowledge of the power of Ra by allowing mortal eyes to look upon the sun and perceive that there exists a darkness beyond it.

The task that the Book of Thoth performs in Hurston's text consists of identifying this blind spot in US democratic ideology within which the truth of a forgotten history, that of African Americans, can make itself known. This truth is not a rewritten falsification of an immediate African cultural presence in African America but *an intuitive understanding of the cultural link between culturally rich Africa and African America*. It is another Nazi myth.

The word of God in this myth is also the unwritten word, or *aporia*, in the comparison between the legitimacy described in the Book of Thoth and that of Rameses's fascist regime. The book serves to recode history, to invest history with a Nazi mythology and cultural logic, a new chosen people. It is because of this that Moses must have the book:

"Where is this book, I ask you, Mentu? I mean to read it."

"The cry of it is that it is in the mid-

dle of the river at Koptos, in an iron box; in the iron box is a bronze box; in the bronze box is a sycamore box; in the sycamore box is an ivory and ebony box and in the ebony box is a silver box; in the silver box is a golden box and in that is the book. And there is a deathless snake by the box to guard it. That is all that they told me so I don't know anymore." (54)

Moses will wrestle with this snake, and the snake will be overcome. In defeating the deathless snake, Moses gains the right to a new rod of state, one infinitely more powerful than that of Pharaoh's. Moses measures this rod against Pharaoh's in a violent, aestheticized spectacle played out in and for the Egyptian and Hebrew publics; it is a protracted political event that eventually sees the slaughter of hundreds of Egyptians. In essence, this contest reverses the roles of the Hebrews and the Egyptians in the ceremony of blood-sacrifice, as Moses, the *sine qua non* of the *Führerprinzip*, unleashes his plagues for the purpose of creating a new nation, and in so doing sets African American culture(s) free.

The basis of Moses's new nation will be a religious principle more powerful than the one upon which Pharaoh established his fascist State. Indeed, as the charismatic leader, Moses demands submission to his right hand not only from the Egyptians, but from the Hebrews as well. Both Miriam and Aaron lose their lives—moments eerily suggestive of political assassination—because they question Moses's authority (265, 275). And because the "Voice had said [to Moses] to take a *nation* across the Jordan" (260; italics added), the Hebrews' enforced 40 years in the desert see a time not only of hunger and warfare, but of the consolidation of a nation *through* hunger and warfare: "The years went on doing their slow drag over Israel and left it fat and strong. When Joshua marched out against a people he won" (267). (Joshua's military prowess cannot obscure the fact that he takes his orders from Moses, the greatest general that both Egypt and Israel ever produced,

one who literally defeated enemies single-handedly.) For the new yet struggling nation, war gives character, solidifies community, and awakens in the blood the historical mission. Indeed, the Promised Land itself must be invaded.

Moses thus forms his fascist State on the basis of a political theology centered on the charismatic leader; the principle of cultural reinvigoration through a glorification of the masculine and the relegation of the feminine to the roles of incubator of the new man and woman warrior in the service of the nation; racial and cultural exclusiv-

ity; a valorization of warfare as the site of a nation's revelation to itself of its manifest destiny; a credo of violence for its own sake, which in turn informs the aestheticization of politics; and a rigorous foreign policy of aggression and isolationism.³² In *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, sacrifice, as the spectacle for kindling and ideologically buttressing ultranationalist sentiment, sets itself the task of building nations by destroying others. In Hurston's hands, sacrifice functions as the weapon that Moses exploits in greatest measure, and one that is thoroughly fascist.

1. Studies instrumental to my understanding of generic fascism are those by Payne and Sternhell; and the collections *Fascism: A Reader's Guide: Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography*, ed. Walter Laqueur (Berkeley: U of California P, 1976) and *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus*, ed. Roger Griffin (New York: Oxford UP, 1998).

2. For those who do not read Nazism as a form of fascism, see Sternhell and De Felice. For those who do read Nazism as a form of fascism, see: Griffin's *The Nature of Fascism* and Nolte.

3. The sixth characteristic Payne enumerates reads: "Exaltation of youth above other phases of life, emphasizing the conflict of generations, at least in effecting the initial political transformation."

4. Hurston describes the colonel as "a tall, and slender black man around forty with the most beautiful hands and feet that I have ever beheld on a man. He is truly loved and honored by the three thousand men under him. . . . There is no doubt that the military love their chief. . . . Anyway, there is Colonel Calix with his long tapering fingers and his beautiful slender feet, very honest and conscientious and doing a beautiful job keeping order in Haiti . . . he is a man of arms and wishes no other job than the one he has. In fact we have a standing joke between us that when I become president of Haiti, he is going to be my chief of the army and I am going to allow him to establish state farms in all the departments . . . a thing he has wanted to do in order to eliminate the beggars from the streets of Port Au Prince, and provide food for hospitals, jails and other state institutions. . . . He is pathetically eager to clear the streets of Haiti of beggars and petty thieves . . . what a beautifully polished Sam Brown belt on his perfect figure and what lovely, gold looking buckles on his belt!" Qtd. in Gilroy's *Against Race* (234); chronicled in Hurston's *Tell My Horse* (89).

5. On Hurston's politics, see Headon, Maxwell, Trefzer, and Carby.

6. Though Hurston's engagement with discourses of eugenics certainly informs any discussion of the genocidal bent of not only her Rameses, but her Moses, the task of this essay will be to establish the terms of Hurston's one-sided dialogue with National Socialism along the lines of the charismatic, authoritarian ruler. On Hurston's reaction to theories of eugenics, see Chuck Jackson.

7. For a charting of Moses in African American folk tradition, see Thomas.

8. Johnson reads Hurston side-by-side with Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*. That Freud and Hurston both published works on Moses during the same year, as Johnson reminds us, does not mean, though and as Johnson is aware, that we can ascertain the direct influence of Freud's Moses on Hurston's, or vice versa. This is not to say that such an influence on Hurston was not possible—the first two sections of Freud's text appeared, in *Imago* and in German, in 1937—but that there is no evidence that Hurston had read Freud's text before the publication of *Moses*.

9. Boas attempted to undermine the notion of racial purity by shifting emphasis from a notion of divergent racial origins to racial mixture for the production of a superior civilization, thus supporting his claim for the possibility of contemporary racial equality in terms of innate ability. Boas may or may not have put forth the supposition that the white race operates at the highest overall level of human achievement, but the ability to do so is not restricted to the white race. Indeed, European civilization, and civilizations in general, are cultivated by means of racial amalgamation. Hence, Boas presented a theory of the rise and development of cultural history as a progressive, rational enterprise consisting of a dialectical confrontation between races that concludes in a dialectical synthesis in favor of the conquering, or culturally dominant race. Where this process has been retarded, a people will remain at a low level of civilization. But this disruption of the teleological dialectic of civilization is due to socio-cultural factors, and not biological faculty. Indeed, Boas wrote, when "we consider the inferior position held by the Negro race of the United States, who are in the closest contact with modern

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civilization, we must not forget that the old race-feeling of the inferiority of the colored race is as potent as ever and is a formidable obstacle to its advance and progress, notwithstanding that schools and universities are open to them. We might rather wonder how much has been accomplished in a short period against heavy odds. It is hardly possible to say what would become of the Negro if he were able to live with the whites on absolutely equal terms."

Boas's inability to say, to know what would become of the Negro if he were able to live under conditions of equality with whites, indicates that Boas identified the foregone conclusions of biological determinism as biological mysticism. For Boas, white supremacist doctrine depended and depends upon a type of religious fervor, on blind faith.

10. Zora Neale Hurston, qtd. from "an unpublished letter in the James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library of Yale University," Morris (308, fn14).

11. The context in which I am speaking of the Mosaic myth is always that of Hurston's novel, rather than that of the Old Testament.

12. I say the law here, as opposed to simply one law, because Pharaoh acts as the epistemological guarantor for all law; therefore, if the office of Pharaoh finds itself legally undermined in even one case, the entirety of the law falls into question in terms of its validity.

13. Following Griffin's definition of generic fascism cited above.

14. Pharaoh's analysis of Egyptian history and national health echoes the proto-fascist cultural despair Fritz Stern has identified in the works of Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, and Moeller van den Bruck. See Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1961).

15. "Contagion" here refers to Rene Girard's reading of the term in his *Violence and the Sacred*, in which he posits the primacy of "mimetic desire" (the desire not only to be the other, but to possess what the other possesses) as a form of contagion perpetuating the cycle of violence that characterizes any given society and that can only be brought under control by the sacrifice of a scapegoat. The scapegoat substitutes for the object of revenge, introducing a disinterested interest into the cycle of retribution and so ending the cycle. (Otherwise, one would have to take revenge for the revenge taken upon him.)

16. This would be exactly the analysis of the relation between Nazism and myth that Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, following Hannah Arendt's critique of Nazi ideology, bring to bear on their "The Nazi Myth."

17. See Susan Sontag's discussion of the Leni Riefenstahl film in "Fascinating Fascism."

18. "Divine violence" means, in this context, the foundational deed for a system of law, divine or secular, is premised upon a violent act that leads to the creation, as an exculpatory measure, the godhead, as both Nietzsche and Freud would have it. To be more specific, "divine violence" in the context of this reading of Hurston's text refers to Benjamin's "Critique of Violence," in which he posits the possibility of an unreadable act of violence which, due to its refusal of the instrumental reason of means/ends logic presents a violence of pure means and so a momentary illegibility to established legal discourse (which functions within a general economy of means/ends instrumentality), realigning the terms and understanding of said discourse such that the unreadable act of violence is deciphered and made not only intelligible but, as an affront to the law, punishable. Reading Benjamin's essay, Jacques Derrida offers that divine violence, "does not lend itself to any human determination, to any knowledge or decidable 'certainty' on our part. It is never known in itself, 'as such,' but only in its 'effects' and its effects are 'incomparable,' they do not lend themselves to any conceptual generalization. There is no certainty (*Gewissheit*) or determinant knowledge except in the realm of mythic violence, that is, of *droit*, that is, of the historical undecidable." Cf. Derrida 1033.

19. This would be commensurate with Benjamin's critique of the fascist State as aesthetic spectacle premised upon violence for the sake of violence in his "Theories of German Fascism"; also, for Jünger's canonical Statement on the primacy of war and violence for the formation of the National "being" of a folk, see his "Total Mobilization," in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, trans. Joel Golb and Richard Wolin, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge: MIT P, 1985) 122-39.

20. For the state of exception as the site at which secular law reveals its authority as premised upon a theological semantic structure, see Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, to which Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" and notion of divine violence as absolute means, or means without ends, was a response and an alternative.

21. For foundational discussions of the nature and function of sacrifice, see Tylor, in which he defines sacrifice as a gift made to the godhead with the hope of the fulfillment of a wish; building upon Tylor's work, Robertson-Smith's theory that sacrifice establishes a momentary link between the godhead and the community of worshipers, such that the community itself, and not the individual, is not only at stake but unified by the rite of sacrifice; and, of course, Frazer's theory of the sacrificial victim as "dying god," or stand-in or double of the godhead itself, who dies for the community in order to expiate the community's sins. One should also see Durkheim, in which he maintains that ritual sacrifice is a means by which communal being affirms itself, by proxy of the victim and the godhead, as divine. Hurston by turn suggests virtually all of these theories, as well as, as we shall see, Hubert and Mauss's tripartite structure of sacrificial victimization.

22. Mauss and Hubert insist that the sacrificial victim has no definite character other than a con-

glomeration of the godhead, the sacrificer and the *sacrifier*. "Sacrifier" is the term they use to denote the community engaged in the sacrifice.

23. Rameses gains his secular authority by surmounting a sacred order. This accomplishment must be recognized as an act of rising above gods. The necessary recognition of this feat cannot take place if the community to be sacrificed does not recognize the authority of the surmounted gods. Thus, conquered peoples whose systems of belief differ from those of the Egyptians are not adequate for Rameses's purposes.

24. For Hurston's attitude toward the idea of race, biological and otherwise, see "My People, My People" and "Seeing the World as It Is," *Dust Tracks On a Road*, 235-46; 247-66.

25. For readings on the creation of whiteness through exclusion and violence, as well as lynching as blood-sacrifice in the US south during the Jim Crow era, see Patterson and Harris.

26. As McDowell writes: "in passing the mantle to Joshua [Moses] explains the 'chosen people must not take up too many habits from the nations they come in contact with' " (xi). This claim is in direct contradiction to Boas's proposal regarding the method by which nations and races achieve a high level of civilization.

27. In this sense, one could see Moses as a trickster figure, but only before the Exodus out of Egypt. As Gates represents it, the authority of African American trickster figures depends upon their public positioning as displaced and oppressed within a master discourse; otherwise they are not trickster figures, but instead law makers, legally recognized judges. Once Moses defeats Pharaoh, Moses claims absolute power over Pharaoh, and thereby power to decide the semantical and grammatical structure of the master tongue. See Gates.

28. Hurston here calls on the figure of Hermes Trismagistus (thrice great), echoing both Hubert and Mauss's tripartite structure of sacrifice, and the Egyptian god Thoth, with whom Hermes is associated and who will make an appearance in Hurston's text in the form of a text. Thoth, it should be noted, is the Egyptian symbol of the moon and god of wisdom; he is the messenger of the gods (and so associated with sacrifice, as sacrifice is, ultimately, a form of communication between mortals and gods), born from *language* through an act of his own will, and the *inventor of writing*.

29. Moses is Hurston's Frazerian "dying god," both in *Moses* and in Hurston's prefatory meditation on the Mosaic myth and sovereignty, "The Fire and the Cloud."

30. For a reading of the falsity of the notions of the Negro as existing outside of history before his forcible entrance into the New World, see Hurston's other Barnard advisor, Herscovits. He argues against limited notions of Negro historicity in favor of following the timeline beyond or before the New World to Africa.

31. Here echoing Ralph Ellison's analysis of the suppression of a three-dimensional image of the Negro in 20th-century American fiction, which would, if present, challenge the basic tenets of American democracy and so the image of the "American." See Ellison, "Twentieth-Century Fiction."

32. Blyden Jackson writes: "If there was meant to be a lesson for the black leadership of Hurston's day in *Moses*, it is difficult to say of what that lesson was intended to consist. Hurston was no social visionary" (153). Agreeing with Jackson, I would simply add that though Hurston was "no social visionary," her contribution to the "lesson of the day" was less systematic than it was derivative of a radical rethinking of race along lines of anti-essentialism and impurity. The word to black leadership would signify not a vacant racial signified, but a cultural heteroglossia brought to the extreme of totalization such that the racial signifier stands for a concept of cultural racial identity and not biological determinism.

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Call For Papers

African American Review is soliciting essays for a special issue on the Post-Soul aesthetic to be published in 2007. Greg Tate calls the Post-Soul "the African American equivalent of postmodernism," and a working definition of the Post-Soul aesthetic could include, but not be limited to, this quotation from Thelma Golden, curator of the Studio Museum in Harlem (who prefers the term "post-black"): "For me, to approach a conversation about 'black art' ultimately meant embracing and rejecting the notion of such a thing at the very same time. . . . [The Post-Soul] was characterized by artists who were adamant about not being labeled as 'black' artists, though their work was steeped, in fact deeply interested, in redefining complex notions of blackness."

Recognized nearly 20 years ago primarily by Trey Ellis ("The New Black Aesthetic," 1989), Greg Tate ("Cult Nats Meet Freaky-Deke," 1986) and Nelson George (*Buppies, B-Boys, Baps and BoHos: Notes on Post-Soul Black Culture*, 1992), the Post-Soul aesthetic could be used to describe the work of Paul Beatty, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Danzy Senna, Mos-Def, Dave Chappelle, Me'Shell Ndege-Ocello, Colson Whitehead, Aaron McGruder, Ellen Gallagher, The Roots, Spike Lee, Saul Williams, Kara Walker, Living Colour, and Darius James, to name only a few.

In addition to these artists and provocateurs, prospective article topics include theorizing the Post-Soul as critical praxis; postmodernism and the Post-Soul aesthetic; observations, commentary, and critiques of the Post-Soul aesthetic and/or scholarship on the Post-Soul; critical readings of Post-Soul novelists, artists, filmmakers, musicians, et al.; critical readings of individual Post-Soul novels, art, film, music, etc.; gender and the post-soul aesthetic; social class and the Post-Soul aesthetic; hip-hop and the Post-Soul aesthetic; essentialized blackness and the Post-Soul aesthetic; naming the Post-Soul aesthetic—identifications and identity crises; mass marketing and/or mass communication and the Post-Soul aesthetic; the Post-Soul aesthetic and the African American vernacular traditions; satire and the Post-Soul aesthetic; the Black Arts Movement and the Post-Soul aesthetic; Ralph Ellison and/or Albert Murray and the Post-Soul aesthetic; the "cultural mulatto" archetype in Post-Soul texts; redefining blackness in Post-Soul texts; signifyin(g) and the Post-Soul aesthetic; politics and the Post-Soul aesthetic; Double consciousness and the Post-Soul aesthetic; the Post-Soul in the college classroom; Pre-Soul and Post-Soul; and Post-Sex(ualities) and the Post-Soul.

Completed papers are due December 31, 2005. Send queries, proposals, or papers to:

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