

# A GRAND PANORAMA: ISAAC JULIEN, FREDERICK DOUGLASS, AND *LESSONS OF THE HOUR*

Kass Banning and Warren Crichlow

Rightly viewed, the whole soul of man is a sort of picture gallery, a grand panorama, in which all great things of the universe, in tracing of things of time, and things of eternity, are painted.

—Frederick Douglass (1818–95)

The exacting visual sumptuousness and intricate complexity with which renowned British artist and filmmaker Isaac Julien envisions the nineteenth-century fugitive slave philosopher, freedman, orator extraordinaire, fierce antislavery abolitionist, and American statesman Frederick Douglass in his twenty-eight-minute, ten-screen installation *Lessons of the Hour: Frederick Douglass* (2019) cannot be overstated.<sup>1</sup> Julien's *Lessons of the Hour* is inspired by a combination of Douglass's own genre-breaking autobiographical writing, personal letters, and published lectures that mobilized tropes of visibility for his own unique rhetorical ends.<sup>2</sup> It is equally conversant with recent scholarship that brings to light Douglass's obsession with the then-emergent medium of photography.<sup>3</sup> In his own words, "[T]he love of pictures stands first among our passionate inclinations."<sup>4</sup>

With its sculptural multiscreen architecture, lush color palette, and immersive affordances and soundscape, Julien's *Lessons* is less concerned with rendering a hagiographic portrait of Douglass than in reactivating, through decidedly haptic and expanded kinesthetic cinematic means, his visionary thought as a continued force for human rights in the twenty-first century. Further, *Lessons* advances the complexity of Douglass's inner life, as well as his personal and public contradictions, both internal and external, and notably includes salutations to those women who made this remarkable life possible: his successive wives—the black freeborn Anna Murray Douglass and the white abolitionist Helen Pitts Douglass—and others, such as Susan B. Anthony.<sup>5</sup>

*Lessons* privileges Douglass's insistent rhetorical rethinking of "picture making" as a democratizing instrument and its potential for full citizenship, and thereby underscores that the nascent technology of photography and the renewed struggle for liberation from chattel slavery emerged simultaneously in the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, this confluence fosters Douglass's lifelong personal and theoretical inquiry into what both truth and sovereignty—and visibility—might entail.

Julien masterfully crafts fragments of Douglass's biography and published thought into a shifting optical gestalt of self. Realized not on a single screen but through the architecture of his uniquely rendered exhibition space, he fashions *tableaux vivants* that narrativize screen space through multi-screen montage. Julien's distillation of Douglass's complex intersections of thought and action into a fluid assemblage of ten salon-hung screens of varying scale is nothing short of a monumental achievement. Perhaps Douglass's rhetorical expression "Pictures as Progress," the title of a lecture he delivered circa 1864–65, prompted Julien to expand his conceptual and aesthetic retooling of the measures and modalities—the timeliness, in fact—of the image.<sup>6</sup>

In an even earlier speech, "Lectures on Pictures" (1861), Douglass had intuited an ethical promise for photography—particularly the portrait—as a catalyst for the future of the "freedman" envisioned for the period following the Civil War. However inchoate, this pioneering visual theory recognized the centrality of the image in future struggles over representation. For Douglass, photography alone could not subvert the habits of racist viewing so engrained by nineteenth-century ethnology and the archaic cultural darkness imbued by slavery. Nevertheless, believing it could have a propitious role in rendering the African American's subjectivity and consciousness as visibly and decidedly human, Douglass advocated that human dignity depended upon recognition, thus conjoining ideals of justice, racial uplift, and photography. In Douglass's own coming-of-age, literacy and rhetorical acumen had proved crucial to self-understanding and freedom. Now the photographic

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Frederick Douglass (Ray Fearon) with his first wife, Anna Murray Douglass (Sharlene Whyte). Courtesy of the artist.

arts (versus ethnography) were a crucial critical means to illuminate such recognition in an Enlightenment world that denied black humanity—and further, to dismantle the institution of slavery and the power of American proslavery thought.<sup>7</sup>

It would be an understatement to claim Douglass as a canonical figure: he was the nineteenth century's most photographed American personage, bar none.<sup>8</sup> Douglass sat for 160 original portraits in numerous photographic processes of the period, including daguerreotypes and ambrotypes, which were subsequently mass-reproduced across "platforms" via cartes de visite, postcards, and other formats. To complement his Herculean personal and public fights to combat slavery, Douglass politically engaged with nine American presidents, from Abraham Lincoln (1861–65) to Grover Cleveland (1893–97); was nominated marshal of Washington, D.C.; and was appointed as consul general to Haiti, among innumerable other boundless acts of statesmanship and social reform activism.<sup>9</sup> Douglass's life has prompted a veritable industry of historical and critical cultural scholarship

over the past century.<sup>10</sup> Yet in the spheres of cinema and art, attention to this formidable figure remains surprisingly underwhelming.<sup>11</sup>

Remarkably, in spite of Douglass's iconic stature, *Lessons* simultaneously nods to and challenges the "great man" theory of history, comprising a double movement of sorts in relation to biography that skirts the traps of hagiography. Julien's multifaceted portrait is made possible in part by his side-stepping what Stephen Best has termed a "redemptive discourse," citing the prevailing analytic by which some black authors and scholars fathom the horrific slave past through the trope of melancholic retrieval.<sup>12</sup> Eschewing any singular recuperation of "the vortex of lost lives" or originary source of racial identity, Julien pays homage to and complicates Frederick Douglass through the many tenses with which he conjugates this astonishing figure. By conjoining the multiscreen lens to Douglass's own words, Julien places this epic figure amid his own process of self-realization: of becoming "Frederick Douglass," in effect.

From the opening scene of *Lessons*, visual regimes of looking and modalities of perspective in particular become both the object of analysis and the motor for the work. A relatively young and stately Douglass walks toward the camera through a lush autumnal wood in long shot, solemn, poised, in thoughtful deliberation. Pastoral sounds of birds singing and brush creaking underfoot intermix with other summoned sound fragments—a foreboding orchestral score, a sudden crack of a whip, the creaking of a hanging rope—and then, two infamous shots are inserted from Oscar Micheaux’s film *Within Our Gates* (1919). The excerpts, which depict a lynching, both unsettle and heighten these sound fragments while reminding the viewer/listener of Douglass’s call to combat not only slavery but also lynching.<sup>13</sup>

While troubled memories of the tremendous human violence of slavery unfold across ten screens, Douglass’s voice-over concludes: “Thus early I learned that the point from which a thing is viewed is of some importance.”<sup>14</sup> Douglass’s linguistic recourse to the visual proves emblematic. His

epiphany regarding perspective’s relativism signals the key to his “picture theory” as a resource commensurate with pluralism as well as Julien’s overall strategy for this installation: to harness the effectivity of multiscreen spatiality and temporality and the architectonics of gallery space to foreground how an image’s appearance transforms according to a viewer’s relative position.<sup>15</sup>

Isaac Julien embraces Douglass’s definitive lambast against the horrors of lynching, his “Lessons of the Hour” speech of 1893, by taking it as the title of his installation. In spite of the title, Julien’s poetic license and contingency, his signature practices as an artist, structure this work. For example, Julien samples and mobilizes texts actually written a few decades after Douglass’s fugitive years in the United Kingdom, thus blurring time and space, that mark his lectures as deeply transhistorical, moving with rather shocking ease from Edinburgh 1845 to his “Lecture on Pictures” (delivered in the United States in 1861) to present-day Rochester, New York, where Julien’s installation first took place.



Frederick Douglass (Ray Fearon) in a pastoral scene. Courtesy of the artist.

Meditations (never, ever, biopics) on heralded black intellectuals and artists, initially evinced in his early acclaimed essay films, span Isaac Julien's practice of thirty-plus years.<sup>16</sup> From ruminations on the Harlem Renaissance and poet Langston Hughes (*Looking for Langston*, 1989) to his exploration of the Martinican theorist and revolutionary Frantz Fanon (*Black Skin/ White Masks: Frantz Fanon*, 1997) to the triple-screen video installation inspired by African American turn-of-the-century explorer Matthew Henson's struggle to reach the North Pole (*True North*, 2003), a lone black historic figure who is African American as well as diasporic populates Julien's imaginative repertoire. Yet Julien's solo portraits are never strictly "about" a celebrated figure who is linearly conveyed or nestled within the past; rather, they conjure associational threads that combine to suggest personhood and a conjunctural relationship to the present. *Lessons* offers a synthesis, even a culmination, of Julien's claim to disrupting the hagiographic impulse.

The subjective interiority, often laced with ambiguity and self-doubt, that informed Julien's early works on celebrated figures has become more complex as his film and art practice has evolved over the decades. The dominant focus of *Lessons* on Douglass's astonishing rhetorical prowess and commanding oration has a surprising intimacy, built through its first-person direct address that traces Douglass's coming to voice, which departs from Julien's earlier multiple-voiced editing strategies. With *Looking for Langston*, for example, Julien drew from a vast archival swath of past and contemporaneous black luminaries whom he placed into dialectical conversation: Langston Hughes, James Van Der Zee, Bessie Smith, Countee Cullen, Alain Locke, Essex Hemphill, Toni Morrison, Stuart Hall, and, of course, Julien himself.<sup>17</sup> With the three-screen installation *Baltimore* (2003), Julien initiated a multiple optic, suggesting how the entombment of famous black figures (prefigured by Melvin Van Peebles) renders them both ossified and haunting. At the same time, the work signals futurity through its Afro cyborg visitor, as had Julien's *The Attendant*, produced a decade earlier, through the figure of the museum conservator.

*Lessons* extends Julien's prescient explorations of the underlying affinities between the moving image and consciousness as encounters that are enabled by montage, extending his intuitive (and intellectual) understanding that the moving image itself constitutes a form of thought. While such discernment may appear to be a cliché at this particular juncture in the field of screen studies with its embrace of film philosophy, it's imperative to acknowledge that Isaac Julien's moving-image practice had anticipated discourses well in advance of their arrival in the

fields of postcolonial and queer thought, even in a work as early as *Territories* (1984).

With *Lessons of the Hour*, Julien's use of cross-temporality moves beyond montage proper into the space of mise-en-scène. In one set piece filmed in the Benjamin West Theatre located in London's Royal Academy of Arts, a temporal frisson pervades the setting, animating a history of privilege that undergirds the scene.<sup>18</sup> An array of formative Douglass "characters" take shape as audience members commingle in period attire. Anna Murray Douglass, Helen Pitts Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, and Ottilie Assing—all Douglass intimates—sit among such contemporary figures as Vanessa Myrie (Julien's collaborator since 2003), Mark Nash, Catherine Hall, and a range of academics and curators. Such an audience "arrangement" reads as a combined artful acknowledgement of Douglass's and Julien's significant life interlocutors.<sup>19</sup>

The logic of *Lessons* suggests that this particular lecture occurs in Edinburgh in 1846 during Douglass's grueling abolitionist lecture tour of Ireland and the United Kingdom.<sup>20</sup> Once the hub of Scottish Enlightenment, the city of Edinburgh and its university register the paradoxical entanglements of eighteenth-century rationalism and its economic validation of slavery—a subject hotly debated on this very site.<sup>21</sup> The audience's mesmerized gazes fix on fugitive slave Douglass at the podium stage as they catch every word of his address, culled by Julien from the texts of "Lectures on Pictures" and "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July" (1852). Scenes such as this one, with its historically mismatched spectators enthralled by Douglass's formidable entreaties in two speeches delivered a decade apart, are integrated across the entirety of *Lessons*. Such poetic license once again sustains Julien's principal refrain: that history is nonteleological and that the still-unrealized nature of Douglass's project continues across time and its geopolitical reach.

Throughout his corpus, Julien's imaginative activation of museum space (as in London's Royal Academy of Arts here) functions not as mere backdrop, nor simply to excavate historicism's omissions, nor solely to showcase his formidable aptitude for visually realizing the vicissitudes of looking relations. Rather, in Julien's hands, museum space as site and substance serves to upend the colonial contingencies of empire as fetish and display, while also excoriating the narrative of art history. The earliest instance of this strategy was in *The Attendant*, shot within the sanctified William Wilberforce House in Hull, U.K.—a museum that memorializes Britain's slave past.<sup>22</sup> Julien's two-screen *Vagabondia* (2000) was shot in the museum in the former home of the nineteenth-century architect Sir

John Soane, where mirrors used for refracting and reflecting his collection of the empire's remnants prompted Julien's rigorous multiscreen aesthetics.<sup>23</sup> *Baltimore* utilized the spaces of three of the city's museums—the Great Blacks in Wax Museum, the Peabody Library, and the Walters Art Museum—to suggest embalming or “waxification” and the haunting return of the honored black figure. Looking relations are foregrounded to critique and problematize a colonial, heteronormative, or racialized gaze. So, too, is the distinctive processional movement of the ambulatory museum walk, used by Julien to bring a new quality to cinema and museum spectatorship across *The Attendant*, *Vagabondia*, and *Baltimore*.

In *Lessons*, Julien's access to Douglass's house museum in Cedar Hill, Washington, D.C., allows him to harness the space's hauntological past in relation to its displayed objects in a distinctly mellow register. Julien's former sly ripostes to an artifact's derisory and deficient framing of the past yield in this instance to a more protracted tactile relation to the displayed objects that were once observed or touched by Douglass in his lifetime. It's as if the sensitively probing camera's ambulatory lens facilitates an experience of Douglass's things as being both external and internal, real and not, material and spiritual.

While the viewer strains to comprehend and identify traces of Douglass's remains in this encyclopedic collection of paintings and books, the interiority of his women, Anna and Helen, can also be glimpsed. By making viewers train their focus on a sewing machine or a writing table, Julien insists on the presence of the female labor that sustained Douglass's ceaseless strivings for “progress”—and, not incidentally, points to how the act of waiting itself constitutes work. Such domestic scenes within the home museum extend both time



**Helen Pitts Douglass, at her writing table.**

Courtesy of the artist.

and proprioceptive engagement to palpable effect, especially when set against other screens bursting with the kinetic rush of modernity signified by the trope of a moving train, approximating what Wolfgang Schivelbusch aptly names “panoramic vision.”<sup>24</sup> Screens depicting Edison-like actualities, shot from the front of trains or advancing through a tunnel, are conjoined with aerial shots of fast-moving trains to signal the forward propulsion of progress, mobility, and travel that gripped the nineteenth-century Western imaginary that Douglass so scrupulously interrogates and celebrates.

The tropes of perspective and spectatorship that were key to Douglass's philosophy and are integral to Julien's installation are foregrounded further by an unwavering attentiveness to the practice of framing, with portrait photography taking pride of place. In one touchstone scene, the photographic process itself is enacted when, in his lecture, Douglass begins to praise Louis Daguerre and his daguerreotype as an equalizing democratic art to his temporally mixed audience of listeners; the daguerreotype's singular and transformative materiality will go on to span several screens. As Douglass expounds upon the miracle of this early analog format, its indexical and provisional properties are laid bare: his face gradually materializes, taking shape in the tintype's watery emulsion bath.

Photography's status as both captured evidence and transformational liquidity is similarly deployed in another scene—one that takes place within a painstakingly opulent re-creation of a photograph of J. P. Ball's Great Daguerreian Gallery of the West.<sup>25</sup> In a series of *tableaux vivants* set within this sumptuously decorated salon adjacent to the studio, prior to sitting for J. P. Ball, one of very few prominent African American daguerreotypists, Anna and Frederick Douglass interact with secondary figures who include their daughter Rosetta Douglass and social reformer Susan B. Anthony. They adjust their eyes to antique hand-held stereographic-like viewers or similar apparatuses displayed on tables and show delight in the odd daguerreotype, suggesting photography's dimension of sociability, its proscribed invitation (given the exclusion of blacks from this new technology), its public reach, and, strikingly, its tactile properties.

Through their interaction with the bifocal properties of the stereoscope, its inherent decentering of the subject of vision, and the qualities of the other precinematic optical toys of the era, these figures enact the installation's theme of embodied perspective.<sup>26</sup> Through such scenes, as well as the very architecture of its screens (variously sized, horizontal, panoramic, with movement across them), *Lessons* disputes the commonplace that photography was the sole precursor to the moving image.<sup>27</sup>

From Douglass's invocation of the "grand panorama," one gets the sense that his chosen words are intended not as metaphoric flourish but rather as a conscious reference to the panorama phenomenon—an immersive mass entertainment spectacle of the time that was decisively pedagogical and ideological in its imperialist and nationalistic leanings. Further, Daguerre himself, whom Douglass so ardently admired, was the one who brought movement and light and shadow effects to the static panorama, resulting in the invention of the Daguerrean diorama, which in turn led to the moving panoramic revival of the late nineteenth century in Britain and the United States.<sup>28</sup> In the context of Douglass's relationship to panoramic aesthetics, it is significant that in 1855 J. P. Ball had produced his own interventionist panorama, with the assistance of Robert S. Duncanson and fellow African American painters: *Mammoth Pictorial Tour of the United States Comprising Views of the African Slave Trade*.<sup>29</sup> (Douglass's extended friendship with Ball, as well as the fact

that they moved in shared abolitionist circles, makes his exposure to the panorama very likely.)

Douglass's conceptualization of visibility was decidedly capacious, extending beyond the sole properties of the still photograph. Julien's gesture in highlighting Ball exceeds the merely inclusive. Far more than a nostalgic nod to outdated media forms or the construction of a composite figure would achieve, it expands the cultural and aesthetic context in which Douglass's ideas were formulated. While *Lessons* references the precinematic by postcinematic means, it differs from the many artists' projects that gratuitously include cinema's technological antecedents for the purpose of arch display. Indeed, Julien's incorporations of the daguerreotype, the stereoscope, and the panorama surpass any such nostalgic gesture, for they are integral to Douglass's insights into how changing visual forms anticipated changes in perception.

In Julien's hands, the reenacted *tableaux* segments are inexorably bound to his ongoing experimentation with the



J.P. Ball's salon, among the film's reenacted *tableaux*. Courtesy of the artist.

temporal modalities of the image that he initiated in *The Passion of Remembrance* (Isaac Julien and Maureen Blackwood, 1985) and extended to *Looking for Langston* and beyond. He uses the space of J. P. Ball's salon and the inherent properties of the *tableau* to accentuate, with renewed effect, figures temporally shifting in a play between the still and moving image; this capacity to suspend and extend time complements the installation's overall meditation on "progress," mobilizing and complicating history, time, and the image.<sup>30</sup>

Critical theorists, philosophers, and art critics, including Jean François Lyotard, Roland Barthes, and Jean-François Chevrier, have weighed in on the contradictory properties of the "still moving" *tableau vivant*.<sup>31</sup> Brigitte Peucker characterizes the translation of the *tableau vivant* to film as "a meeting point of several modes of representation constituting a palimpsest of textual overlay simultaneously evocative of painting, drama, and sculpture . . . moments especially focused on film's heterogeneity."<sup>32</sup> All maintain that the *tableau* is not a diegetic space, for it is devoid of causal relations between shots, but instead is constituted as a frozen segment of time.

Julien harnesses the oxymoronic nature of *tableaux vivants* to accentuate his installation's lessons beyond the "capturing" logic of photography, for its spatiotemporal openings block the forward momentum of time and forestall movement itself, subtly impeding Douglass's coveted notion of linear progress. For Barthes, the *tableau* privileges a particular visual field as "a pure cut-out segment with clearly defined edges, irreversible and incorruptible; everything that surrounds it is banished into nothingness, remains unnamed, while everything that it admits within its field is promoted into essence, into light, into view."<sup>33</sup> The defined edges of these "cut-out segments" of Douglass and company embellish Julien's acts of enframing throughout and are suggestive of the broader theme of perspective. His orchestration of Ball's salon and studio sequence illuminate Douglass's steadfast belief in the potential of "picture making" as both a democratic and self-fashioning tool.

Once ushered inside Ball's studio space, Douglass (and Anna) enact poses for the camera, meticulously aided by Ball, in *tableaux* that demonstrate Douglass's infamous command over the construction of his image and show how integral collaboration was to his assiduous presentation of self.<sup>34</sup> Douglass's characteristic propless backdrop and three-quarter side-view pose combine to accentuate a focused prominence that is performed here in all its exactitude through Julien's balletic execution. Douglass famously favored the photograph over other mimetic forms like painting and etching. His vigorous attempts to prevent the circulation

of his unapproved likeness were a product of his faith in photography's indexical trace.

Ball's camera lens reenacts yet another inherent optical component of the photographic process: each sitter's image appears inverted in the lens of the camera obscura.<sup>35</sup> This nod to the antiquated media operating in Douglass's era is suggestive of the rhetorical strategy of inversion, which Henry Louis Gates Jr. identifies as the trope of chiasmus, as marshaled by Douglass through his written and spoken works.<sup>36</sup> As Gates explains, Douglass attempted to nullify the nefarious caricatures of blacks that dominated the nineteenth century's popular imaginary through a skilled political exercise of chiasmic reversal that employed reversed associations, binary oppositions, and raucous humor to undermine the ideological purposes of psychogenesis and turn upside down the racist psychology, promulgated by American "scientific" ethnologists, that Africans were a different species from whites.<sup>37</sup> With a sense of wrath toward human bondage, he adamantly demanded emancipation and black equality.

Into these scenes Julien brings the seemingly opposing tendencies of Douglass's abstract philosophical orations on photography. On the one hand, Douglass has a fervent belief in the objective indexicality of the image as trace and imprint, physical evidence that fixes and mummifies "truth." On the other, he contends that the act of studying an "objective" image creates a mental space of disclosure that encourages imaginative, expansive insights.<sup>38</sup> In Douglass's lexicon, one's "progress" can be derived from reading one's "true" self through the photographic image, leading to consciousness: a decisively human trait as well as a recurring motif in Douglass's ceaseless argument to claim equal ontological status for blacks—and for all humanity, for that matter.<sup>39</sup>

While Douglass's belief in photography's objectivity might seem antiquated according to current critiques of realism, his elucidations of the function of pictures and photography in relation to truth, encounter, and appearance are presciently similar to those of such thinkers as Siegfried Kracauer, André Bazin, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Kracauer and Bazin echo Douglass with their claims that experiencing a realist image paradoxically leads to enlightened consciousness and is a means to commune with self and the objective world through the revelatory power of contemplating images.

The kaleidoscopic and kinetic effects of Julien's multi-screen installation engage Douglass's revelation that "the point from which a thing is viewed is of some importance."<sup>41</sup> The experience of entering the space of *Lessons* makes it apparent that it is impossible to take in all of its ten screens from any one position—a humbling "lesson" in and of itself



Anna Murray Douglass (Sharlene Whyte) in J.P. Ball's studio. Courtesy of the artist.

that viscerally decenters the exhibition visitor's Cartesian sense of self. Futile attempts to forge a totality culled from a fragmented field of vision underline the exhibition space of the gallery as a site of both projection and reception.

Julien's experiments with scale, architectural space, and multiscreen spatiality may have seemed to reach an apex with his monumental moving-image installation *Ten Thousand Waves* (2013), but they are no less present here, if in somewhat more modest form.<sup>42</sup> As with all his prior multiscreen works, Julien scaffolds a unique environmental design in minute detail to match a specific subject or theme on which he trains his eye and ear. With *Lessons*, Julien not only re-creates J. P. Ball's salon, but ensures that the space of exhibition (at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, for which it was initially designed) approximates a mood of Daguerrean sensibility and display. The ten screens of variously sized dimensions, hung salon-style and complemented by a red velvet-textured backdrop, accentuate the slightly curved panoramic feel of the display.

*Lessons of the Hour* offers a penultimate final scene that unleashes the unique capacity of parallel montage to conjure conceptual relativities across layers of temporality. Royal Shakespeare Company actor Ray Fearon intensely channels Douglass throughout *Lessons*, but it is here that Douglass's ferocity is truly magnified. Immaculately attired in a period costume consisting of a high-collared blue frock coat and vested suit, with his large mane of hair carefully parted, Fearon as Frederick Douglass begins speaking in the jeremiad style of oratory favored by nineteenth-century abolitionists. He initially addresses an audience of affectless faces with modest deference, then begins to cajole them into action with uncompromising details of slavery's horrific scars, both material and psychic.

An interval comprising ten black screens follows Douglass's lament regarding the inexorable psychic demands unleashed by slavery: "I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Anything, no matter what, to get rid of thinking!"—a line

that itself reprises his earlier insight into the double-edged cost of literacy and self-consciousness, that “learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing.”<sup>43</sup> Although ominous, the break indicates the weight of what follows: a cacophony of sonic intensity with electronic sounds, computer blips, a helicopter’s whirring rotors, and a drone’s low-pitched buzz. “What,” Douglass rhetorically intones, “to the American slave is your Fourth of July?” His emphatic and widely cited response: “Just another day of gross injustice and cruelty . . . [of] hollow mockery!”

As Douglass’s voice builds, archival images stagger across the ten screens: fireworks exploding in a night sky, dark harbor waters, negative aerial surveillance footage, an ominous spotlight that sweeps the urban streets. As he narrates his bondage in Baltimore, images of a full-masted schooner migrate slowly across the ten screens from right to left while he recalls his younger self gazing at slave ships anchored in Chesapeake Bay.<sup>44</sup> Scenes of a July 4 parade circa the 1960s then appear, showing a young black child wearing a cowboy

outfit at the margins of a moving throng, with a melancholy visage in sharp contrast to his fellow celebrants.<sup>45</sup> These bodies in turn collide with FBI aerial drone surveillance from 2017, shown in negative reversal, detailing barely discernable protesters advancing in defiance of the “zero conviction” of Baltimore police officers for the death of Freddie Grey. Douglass’s fiery crescendo projects across centuries, his hand loudly pounding the podium, condemning “bombast, deception, impiety and hypocrisy. . . . There is not a nation on this earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody, than are the people in these United States, in this very hour.”<sup>46</sup>

Douglass’s final refrain in the work’s finale is a characteristic riposte. The granting of the papers that freed him from slavery prompts a paradoxical reflection: “I have now my manumission papers in my possession. . . . There is nothing that will sting the Americans more than the fact. I left *republican* America a slave; I returned from *monarchial* England a *freeman*.”<sup>47</sup> A solitary figure, Douglass slowly leads a majestic-looking stallion through the brush toward Edinburgh’s



Frederick Douglass (Ray Fearon) leads a stallion through the Scottish brush. Courtesy of the artist.

Arthur's Seat, extending yet another key Julien trope. Similar to the museum walk, the processional path of a sole ambulatory figure in a landscape recurs throughout Julien's career-long meditations on chosen renowned subjects. Such pronounced, protracted peripatetic "moments" extend across his practice. *Looking for Langston's* banner-toting Beauty's drawn-out wandering through an empty landscape, Frantz Fanon's slowly waving the Algerian flag in a sandy desert terrain, and Matthew Henson's trepid attempts to secure footing while trudging across a shifting horizonless expanse of white ice are all moments that remain stand-alone, unforgettable, and cinephilic.

The striding figure's placement within sublimely suggestive landscapes may indicate a diegetic space of fantasy, imagination, or the revelatory, whether enriching interiority or dramatically underscoring a "character"'s solitary relationship to the external world. Particularly noteworthy in *Lessons* is how the renewed ambulatory ritual suggests, once again, the conjugation of time's pulse to a messianic register.<sup>48</sup> When Douglass reaches the peak and peers out at the sprawling city of Edinburgh below, the wandering figure once again adopts the *tableau vivant's* arrested stance. As shown in Julien's characteristic *Rückenfigur* pictorial composition (depicting a figure seen viewed from the back), Douglass presents an elegant, meditative figure-in-the-landscape, one that references the lone figure in the landscapes of the Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich, as in *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (c. 1817).<sup>49</sup>

However sublime the moment, the untranslatable abominations of slavery still hover. Ten screens unfold and gradually are extinguished, transformed to black from right to left, leaving Douglass and his stallion receding gradually to the left, into the installation's farthest and final screen, until they vanish entirely to black, into a futurity that off-screen space affords. It's as if Douglass is staring into the coming gloom of Jim Crow and the ever more visceral forms of violence that the ensuing decades will bring. Yet Douglass's willful attempts to expand "perspective," displayed so visually and compellingly in Julien's lush "grand panorama," endure as a consummate referent for ongoing struggles to oppose the racial hierarchies that delimit citizenship and constrict conceptions of the human up to the inconsolable present.

Ironically, the cringeworthy bombast of Donald Trump rang true when he stated, "Frederick Douglass is an example of somebody who's done an amazing job and is getting recognized more and more, I notice."<sup>50</sup> To place Frederick Douglass erroneously, inadvertently, and undeniably in the present tense radically underscores the lesson that his legacy is not yet finished. It is this "not-yet-ness" that Isaac Julien's *Lessons of the Hour* conveys so wondrously—to use a term

that Sara Ahmed has endowed with new meaning appropriate to this task: "Wonder is an encounter with an object that one does not recognize. . . . [W]onder expands our field of vision and touch. . . . [W]onder allows us to see the surfaces of the world as made, and as such wonder opens up rather than suspends historicity."<sup>51</sup>

## Notes

1. *Lessons of the Hour: Frederick Douglass* was commissioned by the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, New York, as part of the city's "Reflections on Place" series to commemorate the bicentenary of Douglass's birth, simultaneously premiering there and at Metro Pictures in New York City in spring 2019, traveling in autumn 2019 to Savannah's SCAD Museum of Art.
2. Across seventy years of a writing life, Douglass published three iterations of his autobiography, reams of speeches, journalism, pamphlets, and a novel. See Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*, ed. John R. McKivigan, Peter P. Hinks, and Heather L. Kaufman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016); Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, introd. and notes by David W. Blight (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014); and Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History* (from 1892 revised edition), introd. by Rayford W. Logan (New York: Collier Books, 1962).
3. In particular, see John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, and Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American* (New York and London: Norton, 2015). Three of Douglass's four essays on photography are collected here, along with an introduction by the authors and an epilogue by Henry Louis Gates Jr. Another significant volume is Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith, eds., *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), particularly the essays by Laura Wexler and Ginger Hill, respectively, on Douglass's psychic enthrallment with photography: see Laura Wexler, "'A More Perfect Likeness': Frederick Douglass and the Image of the Nation," in Wallace and Smith, *Pictures and Progress*, 18–40; and Ginger Hill, "'Rightly Viewed': Theorizations of Self in Frederick Douglass's Lectures on Pictures," in Wallace and Smith, *Pictures and Progress*, 41–82. For recent key texts on Douglass and photography, and on nineteenth-century African American photographers more generally, see Deborah Willis and Barbara Krauthamer, *Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012); Deborah Willis, *Black Photographers, 1840–1940: An Illustrated Bio-bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985); and Celeste-Marie Bernier and Bill E. Lawson, eds., *Pictures and Power: Imaging and Imagining Frederick Douglass, 1818–2018* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017).

4. Douglass, "Lecture on Pictures" (1861), reproduced in Stauffer, Trodd, and Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, 121. See, too, Sarah Lewis, ed., "Vision & Justice," special issue, *Aperture*, no. 223 (Summer 2016), for its passionate consideration of Douglass's thoughts on photography for contemporary black cultural production. Also see Sandra Stevenson, "Celebrating Black Culture with a Careful Eye," *New York Times*, June 27, 2016, [www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/arts/design/sarah-lewis-aperture-vision-justice-celebrating-black-culture.html/](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/arts/design/sarah-lewis-aperture-vision-justice-celebrating-black-culture.html/). Finally, with sadness, see, Maurice Berger, "Using Photography to Tell Stories about Race," *Lens: Photography, Video and Visual Journalism*, December 6, 2017, <https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2017/12/06/using-photography-to-tell-stories-about-race/>.
5. The repeated presence of Susan B. Anthony suggests that her friendship with Douglass endured despite his contentious relationship with the suffragist movement. Though he was originally fervently supportive of universal suffrage, Douglass's pragmatism caused a lasting schism with Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and other prominent white feminist activists in the political struggle for equal voting rights when he accepted the exclusion of women from the vote to win the extension of suffrage to black males. Anthony appears in the *tableau* in the Ball salon scene with Douglass and Anna Murray Douglass wherein a daguerreotype portrait of her image matches her pose in profile; she is also seen in the Royal Academy of Arts lecture hall attending to Douglass's speech. British Quakers Ellen Richardson and her sister-in-law Anna Richardson, who raised funds to purchase Douglass's freedom, appear here also and again in the installation's "Send Back the Money" beach scene. The scene historically references an 1846 seaside beach meeting the Richardsons had with Douglass where they hatched their plan to purchase his freedom from Douglass's slaveholder (and possible father), Hugh Auld. For a full discussion of the "Send Back the Money" event, see David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (Toronto and New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018), 156–77. Otilie Assing, a German-Jewish radical journalist, also appears. Assing met Douglass in 1856 and translated his *My Bondage, My Freedom* into German (published in 1860 with her own introduction); she became an American citizen and for twenty-four years was an opinionated intellectual interlocutor with romantic designs on Douglass. See Maria Diedrich, *Love Across Color Lines: Otilie Assing and Frederick Douglass* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999). Such gendered presences visually animate Douglass's complex rootedness in nineteenth-century patriarchy, signaled by both the turbulence of his domestic life with Anna Murray Douglass (who aided his escape from slavery in 1938 and made his home life possible until her death in 1882), and a host of white women with whom he was inextricably connected, both politically and socially. See Leigh Fought, *Women in the World of Frederick Douglass* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
6. To complement the moving-image installation, an array of photographs and tintype portraits are displayed on an adjacent gallery wall. The tintype portraits of actors playing Douglass,

- Anna Murray Douglass, and African American daguerreotypist J. P. Ball, a Douglass collaborator, were produced by contemporary British photographer Rob Ball, coincidentally invoking a particular hauntological resonance. These works are displayed against a velvet blue curtain, again conjuring the tactile sensuousness of the exhibition in its totality. Embedded between them are a series of large, unframed black-and-white photographs drawn from Julien's early *Who Killed Colin Roach?* (1982), a film meditation on the police killing of Colin Roach, a young black British man who, like Freddie Grey, perished in police custody, and its aftermath of protest. In both cases, the courts ruled the men's deaths as, respectively, acts of "suicide" and "accident," resulting in protests from black communities that were met with brutal force and subsequent surveillance by police. Placing these contemporary acts of injustice in juxtaposition to Douglass's project of "progress" is a strategy present throughout the two-part exhibition.
7. It is imperative to note that Douglass's visual theory envisioned the coming of a new African American viewer who could "improve" through studying one's visage as an objectified image. However, Douglass cautiously recognized that with Daguerre, "picture-making was flung out into the world . . . [and therefore] subject to the wild scramble between contending interests and forces . . . and the side to which it goes has achieved a wondrous conquest." Douglass, "Lecture on Pictures," 128.
  8. See, again, Stauffer, Trodd, and Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass*.
  9. A fierce critic as well as adviser to Abraham Lincoln, Douglass relentlessly pressed the reluctant president to abolish slavery—eventually, through the Thirteenth Amendment, on February 3, 1865—and he advocated for the recruitment of black soldiers for the Civil War effort, arguing: "We are fighting the Rebels . . . with our white hand, while our black one is chained behind us. We are catching slaves instead of arming them." Stauffer, Trodd, and Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, 126. Post-Civil War, however, Douglass experienced repeated disappointment with federal policies that gradually returned power to white-supremacist Southern oligarchy. He was a vocal opponent of Andrew Jackson (1865–1869), and he remained resistant to Lincoln's colonization schemes to relocate black slaves to Sierra Leone and Liberia; nevertheless, he later politically supported Ulysses S. Grant and his annexation of the Dominican Republic.
- By 1877, congress had abandoned enforcement of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, effectively ending postwar Reconstruction and violently reversing Douglass's lifelong cause to attain full citizenship and human rights for black Americans. By 1893, two years before Douglass's death, President Grover Cleveland steered America back into the racist politics of the Southern Democratic Party. In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* made racial segregation the law of the land.
- On June 8, 1899, four years after his death, Frederick Douglass was honored with the first public statue in the country to memorialize an African American citizen. The eight-foot-tall bronze figure was unveiled in Rochester,

New York, in a ceremony attended by then-governor Theodore Roosevelt. After 122 years, the statue remains visible in Rochester's newly reconfigured Frederick Douglass Memorial Plaza.

10. See David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (Toronto and New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018); Celeste-Marie Bernier and Andrew Taylor, *If I Survive: Frederick Douglass and Family in the Walter O. Evans Collection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018); and Christine Kinealy, ed., *Frederick Douglass and Ireland: In His Own Words*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 2018). Pioneering historical studies include Benjamin Quarles, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Atheneum, 1968); William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Norton, 1991); and Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Slave and Citizen: The Life of Frederick Douglass* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980). Also see the unique and powerful introductions, by Angela Y. Davis and Deborah McDowell, respectively, to two critical editions of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2009; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Both editors critique Douglass's patriarchal assumptions equating "manhood" with "freedom," but also foreground his important role in nascent suffragist movements.
11. Douglass's fleeting representation in the feature film *Glory* (Edward Zwick, 1989) and William Greave's flat-footed televisual portrait *Frederick Douglass: An American Life* (1985) are two cases in point. Artist Glenn Ligon's painting *Malcolm X, Sun, Frederick Douglass, Boy with Bubbles #2* (2001) irreverently unsettles the socially determined readings of historical icons like Douglass, as does the artist Rachid Johnson's photographic series *Self-Portrait with My Hair Parted Like Frederick Douglass* (2003). But they are exceptions.
12. Stephen Best, *None Like Us: Blackness, Belonging, Aesthetic Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018). Best's category of the workings of redemption would include such films as Haile Gerima's *Sankofa* (1994), John J. Doherty's *Frederick Douglass and the White Negro* (2008), and Steve McQueen's *Ten Years a Slave* (2013), as well as the miniseries blockbuster *Roots* (ABC, 1997). For a reading of *Sankofa* that anticipates Best's position, see Sylvie Kandé, "Look Homeward, Angel: Maroons and Mulattos," in *African Cinema and Postcolonial Readings*, ed. Keith Harrow (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 1999), 89–114. For a superbly informative reading of *Sankofa*, framed in a contemporary black studies philosophical optic, see Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 97–108.
13. "Lessons of the Hour" is Douglass's definitive lambast against the horrors of lynching, first delivered in the fall of 1893 and circulated widely in print in the three years before his death on February 20, 1895. Douglass considered "Lessons" his most significant work of "the violent and depression ridden 1890s" (Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 748). Ida B. Wells, fierce antilynching activist, sold print pamphlets of Douglass's text during her lecture tour of the United Kingdom (1893–94). Julien's adoption of the title indicates the degree to which poetic license and contingency—signature practices—also structure this work. For example, Julien samples and mobilizes texts written a few decades after the U.K. visit, a blurring of space and time that reinscribe Douglass's lectures as transhistorical.
14. These lines derive from a childhood incident Douglass recorded in which he misinterprets a tree and its branches as a terrifying monstrous apparition, as related in *Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855).
15. Douglass's focus on perspective seems somewhat aligned with the theory of perspectivism then developing in Europe; it was initiated by Gottfried Leibniz in the eighteenth century and popularized by Friedrich Nietzsche.
16. While his installations might bear the marks of the essayistic, Julien insists that they are not essays. Julien, conversation with authors, August 23, 2017.
17. This temporal crosshatching, such as Julien's queering of the Harlem Renaissance through poeticized responses to the AIDS pandemic of the 1980s, attests to Julien's early adoption of the recursive mode.
18. No doubt, Julien's choice of locale offers another sly riposte. Choosing to shoot in a space chosen to represent this "august" and outlandishly exclusive institution, dating back to the eighteenth century, invites further speculation. Two of J. M. W. Turner's painterly studies of whaling, *The Whalers* and *The Whale Ship*, were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1845, coinciding with Douglass's arrival in the United Kingdom. Turner's haunting depictions of atrocious hardships and the unceasing destruction of whales, sailors, and ships echo his earlier paintings that decried the cruelty of slavery at sea. Painted after the abolition of slavery in Britain, they include the infamous *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)* (1840). The Royal Academy's newly renovated horseshoe-shaped theater harks back to the grand nineteenth-century lecture halls where Douglass delivered his historic speeches in both the United Kingdom and the United States. Also, it is surely not incidental that Julien himself was inducted into the Royal Academy in 2017.
19. Pertinently, key members of Julien's former production team reassembled to make *Lessons*, including cinematographer Nina Kellgren, who also shot *Looking for Langston* and other early Julien projects; art director Derek Brown, returning after *Young Soul Rebels* (1991); and longtime collaborators composer Paul Gladstone-Reid and editor Adam Finch.
20. See Hannah-Rose Murry, "With Almost Electric Speed: Mapping African American Abolitionists in Britain and Ireland, 1838–1846," *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 40, no. 3 (2019): 522–42, for an exacting account of Douglass's exhausting lecture schedule in the United Kingdom and Ireland, complete with digital mapping techniques. Also see Kinealy, *Frederick Douglass and Ireland*.
21. For more on this subject, see Susan Thorne, "Religion and Empire at Home," in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya

- O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 143–65.
22. See Isaac Julien, “Confessions of a Snow Queen: Director’s Notes on the Making of *The Attendant*,” *CineACTION*, no. 32 (Fall 1993): 5–9.
  23. See Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).
  24. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986).
  25. J. P. Ball functions as a composite of nineteenth-century African American photographers who photographed Douglass, but he is individualized through Julien’s exquisite opulent re-creation of Ball’s studio, inspired by an extant photograph. Douglas sat for Ball several times, and their friendship and frequent collaboration were well known. For a historical account of the life and practice of J. P. Ball, see Deborah Willis, ed., *J. P. Ball: Daguerrean and Studio Photographer* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993).
  26. See the revisionist argument regarding an emergent modern nineteenth-century regime of decentered vision in Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1990).
  27. For a study that puts this argument to rest after Crary, see Alison Griffiths, *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). For an earlier account that explores the parallels between moving panorama and cinema spectatorship from a historical perspective, see Angela L. Miller, “The Panorama, the Spectator and the Emergence of the Spectacular,” *Wide Angle* 18, no. 2 (April 1996): 35–60. Interestingly, Miller concludes her article by invoking Ball’s sole panoramic experiment as an intervention into the dominant nationalist narratives of the era.
  28. Miller, “Panorama,” 41.
  29. For a detailed discussion of Ball and his network of black artists and daguerreotypists engaged in various forms of abolitionist activism and art making, see Joseph E. Ketner, *The Emergence of the African-American Artist: Robert S. Duncanson, 1821–1872* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993).
  30. For an account that prioritizes the role of queer “tableauing” in the work of Julien, Derek Jarman, and John Greyson, and its potential promise for queer futurities in minor moving-image practice at large, see Kass Banning, “Strike a Pose: Tableau and Temporality in the Work of John Greyson,” in *The Perils of Pedagogy: The Work of John Greyson*, ed. Brenda Longfellow, Scott MacKenzie, and Tom Waugh (Montreal and London: McGill University Press, 2012), 196–208.
  31. In particular, see Jean-François Chevrier, “The Adventures of the Picture Form in the History of Photography,” in *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography, 1960–1982*, ed. Douglas Fogle (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2004), 113–28; Roland Barthes, “Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein,” in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 69–78; Jean François Lyotard, “Acinema,” in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press), 349–59; Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993); and Laura Mulvey, *Death 24X a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 17–32, 197–98.
  32. Brigitte Peucker, “Filmic Tableau Vivant: Vermeer, Intermediality, and the Real,” in *Rites of Realism: Essays in Corporeal Cinema*, ed. Ivone Margulies (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 295–96.
  33. Barthes, “Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein,” 70. Similarly, Susan Stewart contends that the tableau affords “the simultaneous particularization and generalization of the moment . . . [and] effectively speaks to the distance between the context at hand and the narrated context; it is only possible through representation, since it offers a complete closure of text framed off from the ongoing reality that surrounds it.” Stewart, *On Longing*, 48.
  34. Julien’s staging of Douglass’s repeated efforts to assume the correct pose echoes what several photography scholars have described. Several accounts trace the evolution of Douglass’s pose over decades, contingent upon his level of comfort with the new medium (and his own fugitivity) and discern how often his sartorial choices remarkably dictated the fashion of the day. See Stauffer, Trodd, and Bernier’s introduction to *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, xvi–xxvii; and Wexler, “A More Perfect Likeness.”
  35. The mobilization of the camera obscura in cinema studies in the 1970s may need no introduction to an *FQ* readership. Emerging from art school just after the heyday of apparatus theory, Julien was well schooled in the ideological models espoused by Louis Althusser, Jean-Louis Baudry, Jean-Louis Comolli, and others.
  36. In four essays, Henry Louis Gates Jr. draws attention to how the role of the rhetorical trope of the chiasma serves as a key discursive interventionist strategy for Douglass throughout his various speech acts: “Binary Opposition in Chapter One of Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave Written by Himself,” in *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the “Racial” Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 80–96; “Epilogue: Frederick Douglass’s Camera Obscura: Representing the Anti-Slave ‘Clothed in Their Own Form,’” in Stauffer, Trodd, and Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, 232–57; “Frederick Douglass’s Camera Obscura: Representing the Anti-Slave ‘Clothed in Their Own Form,’” *Critical Inquiry*, no. 42 (Autumn 2015): 31–69; and “Frederick Douglass’s Camera Obscura,” *Aperture*, no. 223 (Summer 2016): 25–29.
  37. Douglass alludes to the Italian-American Harvard biologist Louis Agassiz, who traveled to Columbia, South Carolina, in 1856 to commission daguerreotypist J. T. Zealy to capture images of fifteen enslaved women and men. These pernicious slave daguerreotypes (discovered and first publicly displayed at Harvard’s Peabody Museum in 1975) were expected to demonstrate the lack of human attributes in the bonded slave’s visage, but backfired. Viewing these photographs today

- underscores instead Agassiz's own ideologically and sexually driven obsessive biases. See Brian Wallis, "Black Bodies, White Sciences: Louis Agassiz's Slave Narratives," *Art in America*, 9, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 38–61; Molly Rogers, *Delia's Tears: Race, Science, and Photography in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); and Suzanne Schneider, "Louis Agassiz and the American School of Ethnoeroticism: Polygenesis, Pornography, and other 'Perfidious Influences,'" in Wallace and Smith, *Pictures and Progress*, 211–43.
38. For a rigorous reevaluation of classical theories of photography's function beyond the realm of capture and representation, see Kaja Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy, or the History of Photography* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014). She writes that photography is "an ontological calling card. It helps us to see that each of us is a node in a vast constellation of analogies" (11).
  39. Wallace and Smith, *Pictures and Progress*, 161.
  40. See Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962). For the now definitive extension of phenomenology to the cinema, see Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).
  41. In Francesco Casetti's terms, this particular contemporary variant of "the relocation of cinema" into gallery space begins circa 1990, yet analysis by screen and media scholars seemed to lag by two decades, with contributions by Mark Nash and Oliver Grau perhaps the exception. Noteworthy contributions on the historical and philosophical significance of moving images in the art museum include Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013); and Giuliana Bruno, *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).
  42. See Laura Mulvey, *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women, and Changing Times* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019), 211–24.
  43. See any of the editions of Douglass's first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*.
  44. Douglas writes, "I lived on Philpot Street, Fells Point, Baltimore, and have watched from the wharves, the slave ships in the basin, anchored from the shore, with its cargoes full of human flesh, waiting for favourable winds to waft them down the Chesapeake" (*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, 65). Douglass also perceives these ships as "freedom's swift-winged angels," perhaps anticipating his escape from bondage from the same wharves in 1838 (65).
  45. The image of the morose young black child in the cowboy outfit recalls an observation that James Baldwin once made: "It comes as a great shock around the age of 6-7 that when Gary Cooper is killing off the American Indians, when you were rooting for Gary Cooper, the Indians are you. It comes as a great shock to discover that the country, which is your birthplace, and to which you owe your life and your identity has not in its whole system of reality involved any place for you." James Baldwin, "The American Dream and the American Negro," *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948–1985* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 404.
  46. Douglass, "Oration, Delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester, by Frederick Douglass, July 5th, 1852," Frederick Douglass Project: Writings, University of Rochester, <https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/2945/>.
  47. Douglass here reprises his letter to Anna Richardson upon his return to the United States. Manumission ran counter to the abolitionist opposition to the very idea of buying and selling human beings as property, even to free them, contending that it enforced the evil of slavery. For a discussion of this controversy, see, e.g., Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 171–73.
  48. Walter Benjamin's conceptualization of "messianic time," a nondiachronic concept of history dialectically attuned to the singularity of the past in its distinctive complexity in the present, rings true here. See Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1968).
  49. See Julian Jason Haladyn, "Friedrich's Wanderer: Paradox of the Modern Subject," *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 41, no. 1 (2016): 47–61. Haladyn describes the *Rückenfigur*'s function: "The *Rückenfigur* stands as an embodiment of humanity's abstraction from the world that paradoxically is encountered as if at a distance from behind this wandering subject: the figure functions as an intervening medium that separates us from a direct experience of the sublimity of the mountainous scene" (49).
  50. Cleve R. Wootson Jr., "Trump Implied Frederick Douglass Was Alive. The Abolitionist's Family Offered a 'History Lesson,'" *Washington Post*, February 2, 2017. Ironically, as Paul Gilroy had observed in his Tanner Lectures on Human Values delivered at Yale University in February 2014, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) was on a list of books prohibited to prisoners at the U.S. military prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Paul Gilroy, "The Black Atlantic and the Re-enchantment of Humanism," lecture 1, "Suffering and Infrahumanity"; lecture 2, "Humanities and a New Humanism," in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 34, ed. Mark Matheson (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016), 19–77, <https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/Gilroy%20manuscript%20PDF.pdf>.
  51. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 179–80.