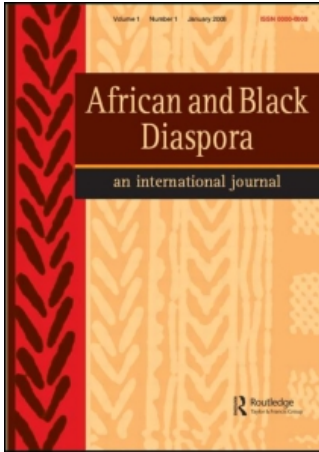


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Trafficking in pain: genealogies of witnessing slavery in Francesco Bartolozzi and concluding with Lalla Essaydi

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This paper examines the ways that slave bodies have been rendered visible in visual representation. I argue that African diasporic slave bodies are firmly located in a history of viewing imbued with a sentimental erotics of pain. Through a careful examination of the engravings by Francesco Bartolozzi that accompany John Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, I argue that even abolitionist images of slaves traffic in pain, exploiting the wounded captive body through a sexualized identification that reinscribes black subjugation. I suggest that contemporary African diasporic artists such as Lalla Essaydi can navigate this genealogy of viewing by strategically moving through hurtful images in order to resituate and recite them. Such a re-citation as Essaydi accomplishes in her painting *Duty Free* allows for an ethical viewership that does not simply ignore or repress a painful legacy of visual representation but that rethinks it in the name of redress.

Keywords: slavery; erotics of pain; visual representation; Lalla Essaydi; sentimentalism; suffering

[T]he query about the subjective reactions of slaves . . . is perilous. But the question must be asked. Only then can we begin to probe a 'memory' that demolishes such straightjacket pairs as victim and victimizer, colonized and colonizer, master and slave. (Dayan 1995, xix)

Historian Saidiya Hartman (1997) begins *Scenes of Subjection* with a brilliant reading of the abolitionist Rankin's witnessing of the slave coffle. Via her discussion of what she terms the 'precarious politics of empathy', she raises the questions that form the backbone of her work. What is the relationship between the objectification and the liberal humanization of slaves? How do these discourses function together to further the subjugation of slaves via a politics of looking at black performances of suffering and of pleasure? Hartman makes a decision early on not to reproduce the spectacular character of black suffering or to immure us to pain through a generated familiarity with scenes of violence. She, thus, turns away from 'horrible exhibitions' of suffering, most specifically Frederick Douglas's account of the beating of his Aunt Hester, focusing instead on 'illuminating the terror of the mundane and the quotidian' (Hartman 1997, p. 4). However, as Fred Moten (2003) argues, Hartman's

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turning away from the scene of spectacular violence proves chimerical. Instead of Aunt Hester's screams disappearing, they erupt continually throughout the text, disturbing us even as we read about more mundane scenes of violence, such as those that occur on the minstrel stage. The repressed primal performance, rather than simply lying quietly, haunts the text in its reproduction created both by Hartman's refusal of it and by the nature of the performance itself (Moten 2003, pp. 4–5). For performance, as Joseph Roach (1996) and Diana Taylor (2003) argue, involves a process of surrogation whereby the performance is incompletely forgotten and replaced by another performance that bears its spectral traces. Instead of Pheggy Phelan's notion of an ontology of performance, where performance functions outside of systems of reproduction, we are left with a 'hauntology' of performance (Derrida 1994, p. 51, 161), where the preceding performance spectrally resonates throughout the transatlantic world. Thus, despite Hartman's refusal to repeat spectacular scenes of brutality, these scenes haunt every corner of her book due to the inherent spectral quality of performance and of repression itself that results not in disappearance, but rather in continual reappearance in various guises. Given that these scenes reappear everywhere, I find myself compelled not to look away, but to ask how we can construct a radical politics of gazing, and, thus, participate in scenes of black suffering that do not reproduce the subjugation of the black people. We cannot operate wholly outside the discourses that produce these scenes, yet it is imperative to restage our encounter with spectacular scenes of black suffering in order to fashion some kind of resistant politics of the gaze. Such a politics would move us closer to recognizing the subjectivity of the injured slave body on display without resorting to liberal sentimental discourses that reproduce mechanisms of racial subjugation.

I wish to theorize the traditions that rendered slave bodies for sale legible for the slave body is firmly located in a very long history of viewing. Slave bodies, particularly those on auction, constitute not 'a collection of images, but a social relation among people mediated by images' (Debord in Taylor 2003, p. 145). This social relation is at once created through the capitalist processes of consumption and through representations of slave bodies that speak to the crisis of witnessing subjectivity. How does one look upon the slave body and recognize it as something other than property with reproducing liberal sentimental discourses that perpetuate mechanisms of racial subjugation? In my lingering on the bared bodies of men and women for sale, do I not run the risk of voyeurism and of the eroticized recirculation of spectacular black bodies that Hartman warns us against? To look away is to uncannily repress those black bodies that return to haunt us; to look upon them results in us being haunted by the mechanisms of social control that disciplined the black body in the first place. One of the ways I wish to suggest that we navigate these difficulties is by a strategic replacing of past images 'into a contemporary context [that results in] both a temporal disjuncture and a tangible through-line of embodied representation . . . This critical incorporation can become a means to haul out, critique, [tweak] and purge these images to make room for something new. The focus, then, is not on moving *away* from hurtful images but moving *through* them' in order to re-situate and re-cite them (Roberts 2006, pp. 1–2).

It is just such a moving through of images that the painting *Duty Free* by a contemporary Moroccan-born artist, Lalla Essaydi, enacts. Essaydi's painting is part of a series called 'Transgressions: Lalla Essaydi Confronts Jean-Léon Gérôme', that does just that: allows for a visual exchange between an African diasporic female

painter based in the United States and a French salon painter (1824–1904), who after traveling to Turkey and Egypt, introduced orientalist themes into his work. Through its citational quality, *Duty Free* enacts, in much the same manner as repression, a genealogy and a temporal disruption that leads us closer to transforming the spectacle of the pained black body into a gesture towards agency. The spectacle informs us not only about what we can see, but also about what we do not see. It concerns the traces that erupt at the site of performance which continue to act politically in the cultural imaginary in ways that always exceed the present, live moment. Essaydi's work, as I will argue, insists on the political work of the spectacle, by directly reworking Gerome's famous *The Slave Market*. Yet in the social world created by images as a network of relations, Essaydi's *Duty Free* conjures up yet another famous representation that predates Gerome, namely Francesco Bartolozzi's 'Frontispiece' (1796). In order to re-situate and re-cite Essaydi's work, it is necessary to begin elsewhere, at a beginning that is not a beginning but merely another spectral moment when the ghost of Bartolozzi's and Gerome's image steps through the door that gapes 'off its hinges' (Derrida 1994, p. 19). As Homi Bhabha (1994) argues, for emergent political identities, 'the passage of time produces . . . the past as projective. The time lag of postcolonial modernity moves forward, erasing the compliant past tethered to the myth of progress, ordered in binarisms of its cultural logic: past/present, inside/outside . . . It is the function of the lag to slow down the linear progressive time of modernity to reveal its "gesture" . . . "the pauses and stresses of the whole performance" . . . This slowing down, or lagging *impels* the "past", projects it, gives its "dead" symbols the circulatory life of the "sign" of the present . . .' (Bhabha 1994, pp. 253–254). The past image and the present image thus are re-temporalized as the slave body erupts from the lag, insisting that the time of slavery is now. By insisting on the reanimation of the dead that haunts the present, we need to ask of the political present what 'kinds of political claims . . . can be mobilized on behalf of the slave (the stateless, the socially dead, and the disposable) . . . [W]hat is the story about the slave that we ought to tell out of the present we ourselves inhabit – a present in which torture isn't really torture, a present in which persons have been stripped of rights heretofore deemed inalienable' (Best and Hartman 2005, p. 5). How does a moving through of images of tortured slaves allow us to denaturalize our gaze at transatlantic bodies in pain and undertake a more ethically responsible viewership?

Bartolozzi's 'Sentimental Wounds'

Bartolozzi's copper engraving 'Frontispiece' opens John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* [1796]. Stedman, a professional Scottish soldier, joined a military expedition on behalf of the Dutch government to fight against maroon communities of slaves in Surinam, most specifically the Saramakas and the Djukas.¹ Stedman kept a log of his four and a half year stay in Surinam which was eventually published in 1796 with eighty one illustrations by prominent engravers including William Blake and Francesco Bartolozzi.² Stedman's narrative, with its descriptions of flora and fauna and military excursions, would have been indistinguishable from most travel narratives of the day, were it not for its graphic scenes of slave torture, utilized by abolitionists in

their characterization of slavery as a social evil and Stedman's articulation of 'love' for his mulatto concubine, Joanna.

Francesco Bartolozzi was one of the first engravers to be nominated as a member of the Royal Academy, though this recognition came from his work as a history painter. The Royal Academy regarded engraving as mere mechanical production, and, therefore, overlooked Bartolozzi's exquisite engravings that utilized a grain stipple technique to create some of the most delicately nuanced work of the period. It was, therefore, no accident that Stedman's *Narrative* opens with Bartolozzi's copper engraving of a sensitive-looking barefoot, white soldier at whose feet lies a dying but well-proportioned, almost naked slave. Tall trees and lush vegetation frame the couple who do not touch but who are connected by a rifle and bayonet that leans against the slave's thigh and rises to rest against the soldier's elbow. At a quick glance, it would be easy to overlook the black body prostrate on the ground, as the brightness of the soldier's white face and trousers fixes the viewer's attention.³ The slave lies on his back with knees raised and his right arm which loosely holds a rifle, outstretched on the ground. His left arm is draped across the body and pressed to his side as if to staunch the flow of blood from a wound on his side. As in Essaydi's *Duty Free*, the slave's face is tilted away from the viewer. The soldier speaks directly to the viewer via his centrality, by means of the gaze and by the politics of the spectacle.

An examination of Bartolozzi's engraving leads us into a discussion of eighteenth century sentimental theories within which the piece is embedded. To provide a brief overview: sentimentalism can be broadly defined as 'a set of cultural practices designed to evoke a certain form of emotional response, usually empathy, in the reader or viewer' (Hendler 1999, p. 145). The seemingly transparent sharing of these emotional responses or the 'intersubjectivity of affect' (Hendler 1999, p. 145) implicitly defines community by establishing what appears to be common cultural and intellectual ground based on the fantasy of the equivalence of experiences. On the one hand, sentimentalism critiques 'abstract, disembodied notions of personhood' (Noble 1997, p. 296) by positing an intersubjective, embodied connection between individuals that moves us away from problematic notions of discrete, rational individuals proposed by universal humanism. Such a critique might explain the popularity of sentimentality among white feminists, for example. On the other hand, the emphasis on embodied emotional experiences serves to 'mystify slavery and colonialism . . . [by] dematerializ[ing] them and [removing them from] the realm of exploitative labor', as scholars such as Mary Louise Pratt (1992) have argued (Gwilliam 1998, p. 1). Thus, instead of countering the myth of self-contained, universal individuals via a communal politics that takes into accounts biopower's production of collective identities, sentimentality relegates social/political forces to the realm of an eroticized personal or 'private' sphere of a biologically reproductive heterosexual family erotic by erasing or negating difference. The radical critique of discrete, rational individual bodies is subsumed by the de-politicization of relations between slave master and slave, market agent and commodity. The violence of such erasure and subsuming of difference, even under the guise of the putative extension of an affective humanity to slaves, should not be underestimated.

The aspect of sentimental discourse to which I find myself returning over and over in the viewing of my three images is not the plot of 'transracial' love or 'cultural harmony through romance' (Pratt 1992, p. 96), but rather its exploitation of experiences of pain and suffering. Marianne Noble (1997), in another context, calls

this rhetorical effect the “‘sentimental wound’”, a bodily experience of anguish caused by identification with the pain of another’ (Noble 1997, p. 295). The empathic perception and vicarious experiencing of another’s pain formed the backbone of processes of sentimental collaboration that consolidated one’s place in racialized communal structures. Stedman’s accompanying lines of verse beneath Bartolozzi’s engraving illustrate this point: ‘From different Parents, different Climes we came, At different Periods; Fate still rules the same. Unhappy Youth while bleeding on the ground; ‘Twas *Yours* to fall – but *Mine* to feel the wound.’ These remarkable lines requires us to believe that while the slave lies dying on the ground, it is the white Stedman who feels the pain of death due to his empathic sensitivity. Within this paternalistic economy, the slave body may ‘have’ the pain, but the white mind claims and comprehends it, thereby truly experiencing it.

Far from a universal condition, pain is constantly shaped by history (Morris 1991). One important aspect of pain was the spectatorial nature of sympathy. Feelings of sympathy are activated by the sight of another’s suffering that drive the ensuing imaginary acts of identification, according to Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1976). Given the spectacular nature of blackness that becomes increasingly inscribed upon the body, the suffering black body provides the perfect vessel for the man of virtue to enter into the body of the slave and become ‘in some measure the same person with him’ (Smith 1976, p. 9). By the eighteenth century, the degree of response to the spectacle of pain became the truest indicator of a man or woman ‘of feeling’. His or her ability to empathize was constructed as the ultimate test of a civilized consciousness, a test that separated human from animal and savage. Wood (2003) goes on to argue that during Stedman’s time, pain was largely only communicable through empathetic fantasy. ‘[T]he only way of drawing near to the sufferer’s experience of pain is to mimic it, to fantasize it, using imagination’ (Wood 2003, p. 102). In the case of the enslaved, the argument becomes even more complicated. By Stedman ‘exploiting the vulnerability of the captive body as a vessel for the uses, thoughts, and feelings of others, the humanity extended to the slave inadvertently confirms the expectations and desires definitive of the relations of chattel slavery’ (Hartman 1997, p. 19). In other words, by an empathic replacement of the black slave with the white body as the true site of suffering, not only does Stedman reinforce dichotomies of civilized and savage, human and animal, but crucially of person and property. Stedman’s empathic suffering reinforces ideas of the fungibility of the black body by simultaneously exploiting the spectacle of the suffering slave even while denying his pain via his reduction to chattel. Thus, the abolitionist ‘call to subjectivity [must be] understood also as a call to subjection and subjugation . . .’ (Moten 2003, p. 2).

‘Excited to the highest degree’: the erotics of pain

The ‘scenario of suffering, which made ethics a matter of viewing the pain of another, from the outset lent itself to an aggressive kind of voyeurism in which the spectator identified not just with the sufferings of the virtuous victim but with the cruelty of her or his tormenter. Pleasure mixed with pain, and pain with pleasure, in an eighteenth-century culture of sensibility intensely preoccupied with both’ (Halttunen 1995, pp. 308–309). The erotics of pain are thus part and parcel of this empathic identification. Even the language used to describe (abolitionist) empathic

identification unintentionally reveals the sexual pleasure involved in suffering – for example, Smith talks of ‘trembling’ and ‘shuddering’ (Smith in Wood 2003, p. 102), and the abolitionist Rankin speaks of every principle being ‘excited to the highest degree’ by imagining his wife and children being beaten (Rankin in Hartman 1997, p. 18). Both Freud and sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing,⁴ draw attention to what we might call a Foucauldian linkage between violence and sex in case studies where patients describe their sexual fantasies as they revolve around *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. The body of the tortured slave appears repeatedly in the patients’ spectacular fantasies and imaginary re-enactments of pain. It is no coincidence that for Freud’s and von Krafft-Ebing’s patients, and indeed for von Krafft-Ebing himself, the body of the flagellated slave becomes one of the primary sites of desire. Krafft-Ebing admits that the ‘thought of slavery had something exciting in it for me, alike whether from the standpoint of master or servant. That one man could possess, sell or whip another, caused me intense excitement; and in reading *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* . . . I had erections’ (Krafft-Ebing; cited in Noble 1997, p. 297). He goes on to coin the term ‘masochism’, defining its ends and aims in Case #57 as the ‘unlimited power of life and death, as exercised over slaves and domestic animals’. Thus, the scenario of the slave auction and scenes of whipping or torture are intimately linked not only through capitalistic networks of procuring and extracting labor, but through the constituting of slaves as erotic objects of sympathy. While empathic identification secured a moral authority for the (abolitionist) viewer based on the professed aim of extending humanity to the slave, it also stripped away this humanity by an eroticized gaze at the black body now reduced to a sentimental wound. Sexual impulses thus fueled the imaginative recreation of scenes of slave brutality with oneself either participating as master and/or slave or watching from the wings. To return to our initial pair of images: the politics of empathy insist that we examine the viewer’s fantasies of torture as he or she gazes upon Bartolozzi’s engraving and Gerome’s and Essaydi’s paintings.

Marcus Wood (2003) and Mario Klarer (2005) persuasively argue that the emphasis on agony as the ultimate authentic signifier in the graphic scenes of slave abuse chronicled and illustrated in Stedman’s *Narrative* link the narrative to eighteenth-century pornography. English erotica traditionally had been dominated by bawdy, humorous and scatological writing that focused on themes of cuckoldry. However, by the latter part of the seventeenth century, pornography showed French and Italian influences as the writing changed to encourage sexual fantasies around the violation of social taboos. It was not until the eighteenth century that the infliction of pain becomes a significant part of those sexual fantasies. By the early nineteenth century, scenarios of suffering were the dominant convention (Halttunen 1995, p. 317). This shift, just as spectacles of tortured slave bodies began to be widely circulated by abolitionists in the eighteenth century, cannot be seen as accidental. Rather, we see the development of a network of intelligibility where spectacles of sex, violence and blackness enable the subjugation of black people and render the link between wounded slave body and eroticized gaze inseparable. Just as abolitionists used images of suffering slaves to authenticate their humanitarian efforts, pornographers also saw pain as the most truthful kind of sexual pleasure. The Marquis de Sade, therefore, writes⁵ that there ‘is no more lively sensation than that of pain; its impressions are certain and dependable, they never deceive as those of the pleasure women perpetually feign and almost never experience’ (Sade; cited in Klarer 2005,

Footnote 4). Suffering functioned as the conduit of authentic identification, supposedly moral in the case of the abolitionists and erotic in the case of pornography. Given what Freud (1963) and Krafft-Ebing (1965) suggest about the relationship between masochism and scenes of slaves for sale or being tortured, the separation between abolitionism and pornography begins to dissolve. The moral extension of humanity to the slave rests on the eroticized gaze of the abolitionist as he gazes with feeling upon the wounded slave body. Thus, in Stedman's claim that he 'feels the wound', one sees not only an indifference to black pain (under the guise of care), but also a keen *sexual* investment in black suffering. The pleasures engendered by masochistic fantasies of a bleeding slave or the sadistic enjoyment of that slave as spectacle point to the continued denial and appropriation of black sentience that arises from the crisis of bearing witness to subjugation.

The mutual imbrication of the pornography industry and abolitionist spectacles of slave suffering has traditionally been overlooked. For a third-wave feminist, it is also a dangerous argument. It would be too easy, in showing the close links between the two, to condemn pornography based on the unequivocal malignance of slavery. Wood (2003), using the work of Gloria Steinem, Andrea Dworkin and Catherine A. McKinnon arrives at three working definitions of pornography as (1) depictions with sexual elements clustered around coercion or dominance, (2) depictions where victims are represented as commodities, body parts, sexually submissive, injured, tortured etc., and (3) depictions that endorse degrading sexual behavior. Such definitions fail to adequately theorize that pornography, in the interest of pleasure, might parody or disrupt stereotypes of violence and technologies of control. Rather than seeing pornography as a single regime of representation, we should think about it as 'a contradictory area of signification rather than as a regime of signification with a strong internal coherence' (John Ellis; cited in Prince 1998, p. 31). One needs to be wary of the pathologization of non-productive and non-normative sexuality in forms of representation and in play, even while the use of these types of sexuality by the state to discipline racialized bodies remains obscured. Thus, for example, in imagining an S/M scene with the dominatrix who, clothed in the old uniform of the South African Police, uses the original desk lamps and other stage machinery, John Noyes states that while he finds it intolerable to imagine victims such as Steve Biko killed in similar scenarios, 'wasn't this an infinitely better use of the uniforms and whips than the SAP and the SADF had found for them' (Noyes 1997, p. 2). The purpose of drawing links between abolitionism and the pornography industry is not to simply dismiss the radical claims enacted by some forms of pornography, but rather to draw attention to the inextricable relationship between the commodification of sex and the sexual commodification of black subjects.

This relationship is brilliantly developed in Joan Dayan's (1995) discussion of *Manuel theorique et pratique de la flagellation des femmes esclaves*, catalogued in the library of the Haitian bibliophile Edmond Mangones by Drexel Woodson and Ira Lowenthal in 1974. Published anonymously without a date by Librairie Franco-Anglaise in Paris, the manual appears at first to be a translation of an unpublished eighteenth-century manuscript by a Spanish planter in Cuba. The writer moves quickly from thanking God to the nuts and bolts of correcting slave insubordination via (physical) punishment in order to 'uphold divine morals and public good' (*Manuel Theorique*; cited in Dayan 1995, p. 218). The text focuses on women slaves, detailing places and positions for whipping, which whips should be used for which

anatomical part of the body and other information necessary for ensuring ‘absolute submission . . . to all [the planter’s] wishes’ (*Manuel Theorique*; cited in Dayan 1995, pp. 218–219). The manual, however, is a fake – ‘the language of this text is that of the nineteenth century, as if someone wrote for a French pornography series at a time when the government was cracking down on dangerous fictions, even stories like Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*’ (Dayan 1995, p. 219). In order to avoid the fate of the Marquis de Sade and others like him imprisoned for their work, the pornographer hid his work in plain view as a history of disciplining slaves for humanitarian reasons. The pornography of black (female) bodies prodded, whipped and torn was enabled by the fiction of pornographic text as a disciplinary slave manual. Just as Stedman appropriates the authenticity of slave suffering, so too does this forgery make currency of the authenticity of the slave manual in order to legitimate itself.

Another example of this slippage between ‘well-intentioned’ texts on slaves and pornography is the Marquis de Sade’s *The Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* (2007) which uncannily mocks and echoes Jean-Baptiste Colbert’s *Code Noir* or *Edict Regarding the Government and the Administration of the French Islands of America, and the Discipline and the Commerce of Blacks and Slaves in the Said Countries* (1685). The sixty articles of the heinous *Black Code*, under the guise of protecting slaves, provided planters with a legal vocabulary that enabled the torture, mutilation and dehumanization of slaves to unprecedented degrees. Sade (2007) parodies the various articles of the *Black Code* with his listings of ‘The 150 Complex Passions’, ‘The 150 Criminal Passions’, and ‘The 150 Complex Passions’. The erotic will to absolute power over another detailed by Sade is matched by the articles of the *Black Code* that prescribe branding, roasting, whipping and various other forms of torture to ensure the slave’s absolute obedience, ostensibly to prevent the violent excesses of planters. Sade ‘literalizes’ the *Black Code*, fleshing out those disciplinary ‘exercises in coercion and coition’ that Colbert did not dare to articulate. Sade relocates the sexual disciplinary practices of the plantation to the French imaginary, showing them to be integral to both aristocratic treatment of the French peasants and crucially to bedroom practices. Thus, it is not only Sade’s sexual acts or pornography that make him so threatening and that lead to his imprisonment, but also his explicit linking of sex, violence, submission and slavery as it was relayed from plantation to metropole and back again. Sade de-cloaks slavery from sentimentalism, showing rather the very modern sexualized forces that reduce humans to manipulated things. Thus, the list of tortures Sade chronicles in his *The Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* (stolen from him while imprisoned in the Bastille), while scandalous to his readers, were remarkably similar to disciplinary practices on the plantation facilitated by the *Black Code* that those same readers would have condoned and/or practiced in Saint-Domingue (Haiti). The power of Sade’s work lies in its exposure of despotism’s rootedness in an absolutely political sexuality.

Fragmented body parts: narrative workings of pleasure

Let us gaze again at the Bartolozzi’s engraving. A rich tension arises from the interplay between Stedman’s and the prostrate slave’s body: ‘the black all vanquished, supine, feminized and available nudity, the white clothed and full of points, and pointing’ (Wood 2003, p. 105). The slave body is muscular, with knees

drawn up and falling apart. Though covered with what appears to be a loincloth, the genital area is exposed to the tip of Stedman's sword that hangs behind him. Despite the fact that Stedman stands in the triangle created by the slave's outstretched arm and splayed leg, the two men do not touch. Stedman's white bare feet are precisely placed to avoid this. The only point of contact is the phallic symbol of a rifle and bayonet propped against the slave's thigh and knee and rising into the air to rest against Stedman's elbow. Two rising trees on the left of the engraving emphasize the thrusting rifle as well as Stedman's verticality. The horizontal slave body lies vulnerable and exposed, providing a perfect contrast for the aggressive masculinity of Stedman. Indeed, Stedman's imperial masculinity becomes defined via its contrast with the decentralized slave body that lies vulnerable to phallic, violent penetration. Bartolozzi's engraving demonstrates the eroticization of disciplinary technologies in order to construct and privilege an imperial masculinity that revolves around the character's (sexual) access to a vulnerable (feminized) slave body.

It might be useful here to refer to Laura Mulvey's (1989) essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. In her reading of Hollywood melodrama, Mulvey suggests that a patriarchal Freudian scopophilia (the look as a source of pleasure with the active form being voyeurism and the passive form exhibitionism) provides the impetus for the act of gazing at women. This scopophilic gaze reduces women to passive fetishized objects that 'freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation' (Mulvey 1989, p. 19). If we apply to Bartolozzi's engraving Mulvey's theorization of (filmic) images as the ideological drama of 'cultural struggle between men and women . . . [that foreground] narrative coercions' (Chow 2001, p. 1390), the image assumes additional meaning. The narrative pools and crystallizes around this spectacle of fragmented body parts – the splayed legs, the outstretched arm and the open mouth. The passive, fragmented slave body is reduced to the sexual object of gaze in order to consolidate the authority and bodily integrity of the white male viewer threatened by castration via the image of the female.

Klarer (2005) argues that many of the eighty images in Stedman's *Narrative* function similarly to freeze Stedman's sentimental tale into eroticized moments of black *female* subjugation, as slaves are whipped across their breasts and hung by their wrists. However, his insistence on the erotics of the spectacle only as its concerns black women represents a fundamental (heterosexist) shortcoming that pervades much of the criticism on Stedman's *Narrative*. Klarer remains unable to see the scopophilic feminization of black masculinity that reduces the male body to a fungible object, arguing instead that 'male victims of punishment bring forward the narrative while female images tend to . . . freeze the action' (Klarer 2005, p. 5, 20). Close attention to race fundamentally alters his use of Mulvey's argument,⁶ so that our readings of the various scenes of black subjugation enact a more complex gender politics. Consider the scene early in the narrative where a 'masculine young Negro woman' 'forces' a sexual encounter with Stedman, almost squashing his nose 'as flat as her own' with the force of her kiss (Stedman 1992, pp. 18–19). Appealing to his reader's sensibility, Stedman 'begs leave to draw a sable curtain over [the incident], only observing from this small sample the general character of the Negro girls' (Stedman 1992, p. 19). The 'sable curtain' over the so-called seduction/rape mocks and degrades the experiences of slave women who in their own narratives were unable to bear witness to the sexual violation that constituted their experiences. For example, Elizabeth Keckley's writes in her narrative: 'Suffice it to say, that he

prosecuted me for four years, and I-I- became a mother' (Keckley in Hartman 1997, p. 108). The hyphens here signal the sexual violation that cannot be named in a sentimental narrative; they represent a cut or break that veils the spectacle of sexual violation. By Stedman's grotesque appropriation of the narrative technique where former slaves were unable to name the sexual injuries that they were subjected to, Stedman feminizes himself as the true victim of masculinist sexual violence, while the supposed sexual aggression of the slave woman masculinizes her. Stedman's gendered pain, the authentic marker of his humanity, once again results in the disappearance of the slave woman. Such re-gendering also operates in the instance of Bartolozzi's black male body, lying on the ground, vulnerable to phallic penetration by Stedman's sharp sword. Stedman here claims the virile power of imperial masculinity *and* via his substitution for the feminized body in pain, the pleasurable moral ground of the slave's suffering. Both powerful in his masculinity and beautiful in his feminized suffering, Stedman's sentimental trafficking in pain destabilizes biological meanings of gender. Thus, the male slave body of Bartolozzi's 'Frontispiece' and the female slave body in Essaydi's 'Duty Free' both carry (slightly different) erotic charges that shift conventional understandings of sex.

Territories that converge: Lalla Essaydi's Working Through

I am going beyond simple critique to a more active, even subversive, engagement with cultural patterns, in order to get beyond stereotypes and convey my own experience as an Arab woman. (Essaydi 2005)

Lalla Essaydi's experience is truly diasporic. Growing up in Morocco, spending many years in Saudi Arabia and now living in the United States, she is acutely aware of the multiple artistic, cultural and historical genealogies around her. Working in a variety of media, she moves with dexterity between photography, oil painting, mixed media, calligraphy, henna tattoos and video in an attempt to reclaim a 'multivalent space of [her] own imagination and making' (Essaydi 2005). As such her art resituates and re-cites the various painful genealogies of witnessing black female bodies that I have described, as she critically incorporates the artistic traditions that haunt her work as a diasporic African artist. While 'Converging Territories' is the name of Essaydi's latest series of portraits of Moroccan women and children 'veiled' by an exquisite Arabic calligraphy that covers them and their surroundings, it is also a useful term to think of her earlier work that forces territories to collide and create new genealogies of witnessing the slave body.

For the exhibit at Williams College (2006), curated by Holly Edwards and Richard Rand, the museum borrowed Gerome's exquisitely executed and iconic painting, *The Slave Market* (1867) and placed Essaydi's much larger *Duty Free* (2005) beside it to provide museum goers with a disturbing and immediate comparison or converging of territories. The focal point of Gerome's infamous *The Slave Market* is the glowing, naked body of a humiliated slave woman, surrounded by her buyers and seller. The dark pile of clothes on the floor of the courtyard and the white cloth over the arm of the seller, both removed to reveal her body, highlight her nakedness, as does the voluminous clothing of the men and the fully veiled bodies of other slave women as they wait their turn to be sold. The head of the slave woman is tilted to one side by the pressure of the buyer's hand as

he inspects her teeth.⁷ His partners watch his inspection of the slave woman closely. The obvious suggestion of sexual penetration evoked by the merchant's fingers in the slave woman's mouth, along with her slightly bent leg, draw the viewer's eye both down and up towards her shaved pubic area in an explicit assertion of her sexual availability as commodity.

The fully clothed seller and buyers frame the slave women's naked body. The viewer pays little attention to their bodies as they are wearing loose gowns that largely obscures them – indeed the primary buyer is veiled with his head wrapped and only his eyes and hands visible. The men are intent on the performance of the sale – their attention is focused on the task at hand of correctly assessing value, on the complex alchemical process of transforming flesh into commodity and into profit, on the homoerotic competition between them as they implicitly compete for this naked woman. For in the 'staging of [...] slave auctions, there is a fiercely laminating adhesion of bodies and objects, the individual desire for pleasure and the collective desire to compete for possession' (Roach 1996, p. 215). The men do not look away from the scene of sale and the viewer, as he/she gazes at the fleshy display, automatically becomes implicit in this eroticized capitalist circulation of black female body as spectacle. Auctions, as a form of economic life, continually reproduce social communities. We, thus, become part of this masculinist community by virtue of our privileged vantage point as we gaze, clothed and invisible, at proof that everything and anything can be bought and sold. To paraphrase Diana Taylor, the spectacle of the slave woman 'reaffirms the cultural supremacy and authority of the viewing subject, the one who is free to come and go (while the native stays fixed in place and time), the one who sees, interprets, and records . . . We, those viewers who look through the eyes of the . . . [buyers], are (like the [buyer]) positioned safely outside the frame, free to define, theorize, and debate their (never our)' fungibility (Taylor 2003, p. 64).

While it could be argued that *The Slave Market* critiques slavery by exposing the horrors of the slave trade through the suggested violation of a pure (fair) virgin by North African men, it achieves this not only by the erasure of the West's essential participation, but also crucially via the erotic tension evoked by the spectacle of the slave woman for sale that I developed earlier. Thus, even liberal humanitarian or abolitionist identification with the body on display operates via the suggestion of an accessible racialized sexuality. Gerome's viewers, by their position within a circle of men gazing upon the spectacle of the slave body, participate in the economy of the painting as it circulates the pernicious coupling of black female body and spectacularized commodity.

Essaydi's *Duty Free* does not confront Gerome's *The Slave Market* by painting a slave woman who gazes back to reassert a recuperated African agency. Rather, she understands the difficulty of uncovering agency at the site of the spectacle, the difficulty of exhuming subjectivity. Therefore, she reproduces the slave woman's body unchanged – the unnamed woman appears in the same pose, naked, leg bent, head forced to the side and mouth open. She places historical images within a contemporary context, working through a genealogy of representations of suffering slave bodies to illustrate the overdetermination of viewing suffering slave bodies when territories converge. Wading through a dense network of spectral images (Bartolozzi and Gerome to name two), cultural moments (postcolonialism, slavery, neo-liberalism), she works through rather than beyond the ways of seeing that we

have inherited. She supplements our ways of looking at scenarios of slave suffering by resituating, reviewing and replacing. The crowded courtyard with waiting slaves and sleeping dog, the group of buyers and the North African seller are replaced by the lavishly decorated orientalist architecture of what resembles a bathhouse and a single buyer, who while dressed in a similar robe as in *The Slave Market*, now appears larger and brighter, with disproportionately large hands. While Gerome's buyer's race is uncertain, Essaydi's buyer is marked as white by his short blond hair and vivid blue eyes. Essaydi also introduces a third character, an idealized light skinned male figure, clad only in a tight bathing suit whose back is to the viewer. The words 'Sea World' are emblazoned across his buttocks, signifying on tourism and on 'see world' where black bodies are reduced to visual spectacles for consumption.

While the overall effect of Essaydi's cutting, sampling and reinventing is complex, the most significant change lies in the buyer's replacement of the slave woman as the focal point of the painting. The viewer's eyes are drawn to the buyer's revealed face as he stares at the viewer, as if we have startled him in his inspection of the female slave. The man's race and his central position in the painting lead me to suspect that he metonymically stands in for Gerome. Essaydi draws attention to the fact that *The Slave Market* is not from the point of view of the slave. Rather, Gerome paints from the position of the purveyor of the slave body, the man who creates and consumes his fantasy of the racialized female spectacle – another buyer and seller, if you will. Essaydi's buyer also represents the white male viewer, the racialized and gendered audience of Gerome's paintings who are always already complicit. Essaydi's decision to foreground the white man (the subject) and leave unchanged the object of his gaze, the female body suggests the continued circulation of racialized spectacles in the contemporary imaginary. Given the 'non-event' of emancipation and redress, and the process of surrogation whereby the subjugation of black peoples springs anew from the time lag of modernity that Bhabha articulates, Essaydi insists on the continued urgency of Gerome's slave market.

In other words, she shows that Gerome in his exploitative use of the racialized spectacle is not dead. Indeed, his oversized fingers are still inserted in the slave woman's mouth some hundred and thirty eight years later, showing not only the pernicious endurance of the coupling of black body and commodity/spectacle, but the viewer's complicity in the continued production and consumption of these links. Herein lies the significance of the title of the painting *Duty Free* and the bikini-clad Sea World tourist. For by insisting that the commodification of the racialized body is far from over, Essaydi asserts that the globalization of capital that underpinned slavery endures in (sex) tourism.⁸ She traces the genealogy of the Western tourist's consumption of packaged and displayed Otherness to slavery's consumption of racialized, gendered spectacles. While Essaydi's bikini-clad man is one of the least successful aesthetic elements of the painting, his presence reminds us that men also are rendered as erotic spectacles for imperialist consumption. She reveals the sexual exploitation of men that occurred during slavery and its continuation with the practice of Western travelers seeking sexual encounters with (feminized) Arab men.⁹ She puns on the words 'duty free', using 'duty' to mean both taxation and moral obligation. She shows imperialism to be free of any kind of moral obligation towards subjugated peoples. She also demonstrates the meaninglessness of the word 'free' in our political present, where there has been little remedying of the injuries of slavery. The

only thing that has been ‘free’, she suggests, has been imperialist access to gendered bodies.

Essaydi’s assertion of (black) female agency does not come from an unmediated reclamation of the slave woman for sale. Essaydi does not ‘confront’ Gerome with a slave woman who stares back. Rather, as a Moroccan born artist who could be the descendent of the slave woman in Gerome’s slave market, she paints back a biting commentary on the spectacle of the black commodity. She palimpsestically re-works Gerome (and Bartolozzi), painting the ultimate site of slavery’s performance in ways that acknowledge the complicity of imperial aesthetics, whiteness and capitalism in the continuing exploitation of racialized bodies. By centering the act of authorship, Essaydi insists that the agency of black female subjectivity cannot lie in a nostalgic recovery of lost voices from the past, but rather in the transformative possibilities of re-working the past for ourselves and for those (slave women) who came before us.

In both Essaydi and Bartolozzi, the politics of the image and the crisis of witnessing slavery assume center stage. In both, the erotic spectacle of the (feminized) black body is represented as subject to penetration by the imperial masculinized white male who derives his authenticity from the ventriloquism and erasure of black injury. In Essaydi, one sees the attempt to re-appropriate the spectacle of the black body both by ‘dislodge[ing] the ... visual field ... as it was mimetically (re)produced on the basis of the phallogocentric gaze [and] ... by saturating it from within with an alternative set of gazes, histories and purposes’ (Chow 2001, p. 1392). Despite her recreation of a white masculinity defined via its eroticized access to a female slave body, Essaydi’s work denaturalizes the sentimental circuits within which Bartolozzi’s ‘Frontispiece’ is embedded. Through the cut-and-paste quality of her work with its uneven execution of form, she refuses the task of simply replacing one set of violating images with another set that more properly represent black agency. Her work recycles Gerome, it restages Bartolozzi – she reminds us of the politics of the spectacle and re-performs the crisis of witnessing slave subjectivity. To quote Seyla Benhabib in another context: her work ‘break[s] the chain of narrative continuity, ... shatter[s] chronology as [a] natural structure ... stress[ing] fragmentariness, historical dead ends, failures and ruptures. Not only does this method of fragmentary historiography do justice to the memory of the [socially] dead by telling the story of history in terms of their ... hopes and efforts, but it is also a way of preserving the past without being ... stifled by arguments of “historical necessity”’ (Benhabib 1994, p. 121), where the past gets reduced to a universal chronological process that has traditionally excluded slave voices. *Duty Free* moves us away from the kind of representation that claims to operate outside the politics of spectacular black injury, or that facilitates sentimental identifications that revolve around the eroticism of another’s suffering. Rather, she forces us to rethink Bartolozzi’s work (and others like him) in order to theorize the relation between global flows of capital (with the slave being a commodity form par excellence) and fantasy and desire on the other. How do visual and textual performances, in the name of humanization and redress, deny black peoples the very agency that they are supposed to facilitate? How, under the guise of love, does the violation of black injured bodies become cemented into the very fabric of our societies?

Notes

1. These communities engaged in violent struggle in the hope of leading Surinam's population of 50,000 slaves to overthrow its 4,000 European inhabitants. Despite their relatively small size, the maroon communities' guerilla tactics, that took advantage of the Surinamese terrain, alongside a plantation structure weakened by high absenteeism and overextended mortgages, made them a serious threat to the Dutch. When the campaign ended in 1778 in a European pyrrhic victory, European losses amounted to over 80 percent of their soldiers. Few maroons were recovered with some disappearing into French Guiana. Many maroons still live in the region today, retaining and adapting their resistant understandings of what it means to be Saramaka.
2. Originally published in two quartos by Joseph Johnson, a radical London publisher, the most definitive form of the narrative that exists today is *Narrative of a five years expedition against the revolted Negroes of Surinam: Transcribed for the first time from the original 1790 manuscript*, edited by Richard Price and Sally Price (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1988). Price and Price also issued an abridged version of the *Narrative* (see Stedman 1992). All references are from the 1992 version.
3. A similar brightness cloaks the white buyer in Essaydi's piece.
4. See Freud (1963) and von Krafft-Ebing (1965).
5. See De Sade (1964).
6. Rey Chow calls for similar theoretical subtlety. '[O]ther critics, equipped with other types of social queries, would complicate that differential between gaze and image in terms of class, race, ethnicity, nation, and sexual preference to expose the repressive effects of dominant modes of visuality and identification. (Think, for instance, of the numerous critiques in postcolonial studies of orientalist representations)' (Chow 2001, p. 1391).
7. This is in keeping with Fanon who asserts that 'the rape of the [North African] woman in the dream of a European is always preceded by a rending of the veil. We here witness a double deflowering. Likewise, the woman's conduct is never one of consent or acceptance, but of abject humility' (Fanon 1965, p. 45). The implied removal of the veil that is now over the seller's arm, alongside the slave woman's posture that while it does not suggest consent, does not actively assert resistance, sets up a Fanonian scene of sexual violation.
8. There has been considerable debate around sex tourism in the so-called Third World and whether this work is forced or voluntary (see Kempadoo and Doezema 1998). While I agree with the authors that law enforcement needs to focus on questions of coercion, consent and worker's rights and not on the moral policing of sexual activity itself, Essaydi's focus lies elsewhere. She does not comment per se on whether sex workers are enslaved tragic victims, courageous agents redefining their sexuality as resistant to state-imposed morality or something in-between. The similarities of the feminist debates around sex workers, coercion and consent to my discussion of Baartman's performance are striking.
9. See Schmitt and Sofer (1992) for disturbing personal accounts by Western travelers with Arab men.

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