

# Illness as Metaphor

## Donald Rodney's X-ray Photographs

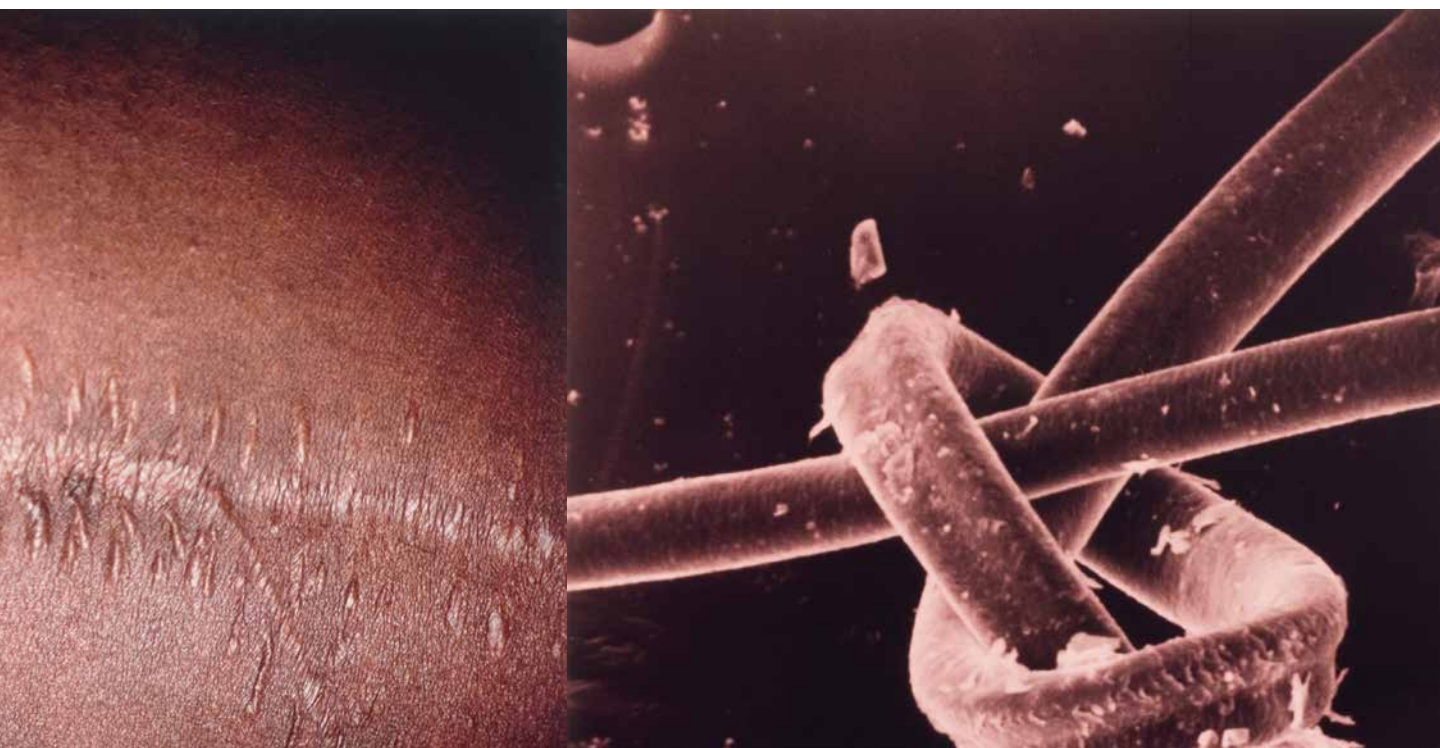
Jareh Das



*In The Mask of the Beggar, a nameless artist seeks mutualities between cultures. He seeks cross-cultural realities that would reverse a dominant code exercised now, or to be exercised in the future, by an individual state whose values are universal. He senses great dangers for humanity in this determined and one-sided notion of universality. He senses unconscious pressures within neglected areas of the Imagination that may erupt into violence. The roots of consciousness are his pursuit in a quantum cross-cultural art that brings challenges and unexpected far-reaching, subtly fruitful consequences.*

—Wilson Harris, “Prologue” to *The Mask of the Beggar*

During the 1980s in Britain, particularly in the earlier periods, works produced by black British artists centered on responses to social narratives commenting on invisibility, personal histories (as related to the British slave trade and its abolition), societal injustices, and identity politics. Prominent artists of this era included members of the BLK Art Group—Donald Rodney, Keith Piper, Marlene Smith, and Eddie Chambers—all initially based in the Midlands, studying at Trent Polytechnic in Nottingham. These artists reflected on their place within society, and as artist/scholar Chambers observes, “amongst some black people, their black skins bequeathed them a wretched birth right of discrimination, marginalisation, depression and what one sociologist termed *endless pressure*.”<sup>1</sup> This “endless pressure” of being a black man in 1980s Britain was at the forefront of Rodney’s concerns, framed against the backdrop of events that included the



Donald Rodney, *Flesh of My Flesh*, 1996. Color photographic triptych on aluminum, 5.5 x 1.2 m; each panel 183 x 122 cm. © Estate of Donald Rodney



*Doublethink*, 1992. Sporting trophies and inscribed plaques. Installation view of exhibition *Trophies of Empire*, Arnolfini Gallery Bristol, UK, 1992–93.  
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*Black People are predisposed to violent tantrums*

*Black people have a deep hatred of other blacks*

*Black people are second class citizens*

*Black women are accustomed to degradation*

*Black men are always on the defensive*

*Black homes are full of tears and fighting*

*Black people have small IQ's*

—Donald Rodney, wall text from *Doublethink*

New Cross Massacre, a heavily contested tragedy some believe was a racist arson attack that claimed the lives of thirteen young black partygoers, followed by the Brixton Riots.<sup>2</sup> Both of these events occurred months apart in 1981, at a time of recession, high unemployment and crime rates, and poor housing that particularly affected immigrant communities who were repeatedly subjected to racism and other forms of discrimination. Outside of the United Kingdom, demonstrations and resistant movements, including the South African state's vicious attempts to suppress Black South Africans' demonstrations against apartheid sparked by school children protesting against being taught in Afrikaans, a language they perceived to be that of their oppressors, and the Black Panther's opposition to the treatment of black Americans, were pivotal moments for engaging with wider black

solidary struggles in both Rodney's mind and artists of his generation. This renewed transatlantic solidarity, which centered on discussions about oppression and strategies of resistance, one can argue, presented shared but contrasting understandings of black suffering, with artists across the globe mediating divergent ways of imagining race beyond the barriers of nation states, borders, and languages. In a keynote lecture entitled "Perforations," delivered by Kobena Mercer at the Reframing the Moment: Legacies of the 1982 BLK Art Group Conference, held at the University of Wolverhampton, UK, on October 27, 2012, Mercer argues:

In fact, if we were to take 1982 as the turning point in the story of Black Britain as a process of becoming, we have a clear-cut frontier between the five years after that point from 1987 onwards in which Britishness increasingly, or be it reluctantly, comes to accept its multicultural character, and the five years prior to that, i.e. from 1977–82, in which it's virtually impossible to conjoin Black and British in the same sentence. That is because they are separated by a frontier—a political and ideological frontier that is made exceedingly brittle by the resurgence of fascism as a result of the decline of industrial capital.<sup>3</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that black British artists at the time began to look back to shared histories as a way to unravel the formations of their African diasporic experience and identities as second-generation British citizens, whose parents arrived from Caribbean and African countries. Diaspora offers pathways that retrace layerings of difference in the aftermath of colonialism and slavery, as well as the effects of other forms of migration and displacement. Thus, diaspora enables the desedimentation of the nation from the "interior" by taking into account the groups that fail to comply with the reigning definition of the people as a cohesive political subject that shares one culture, one race, one language, one religion, and so on, and from the "exterior" by drawing attention to movements that cannot be contained by the nation's administrative and ideological borders.

One of the most visible legacies of the empire in Britain was immigration—the rise in the number of people who previously lived in one or another of the colonies who now came to live in Britain. The reality of the United Kingdom, however was something

else. It remained a racist country that placed white British people above so-called races, including citizens of its former colonies. As scholar Sonya Rose observes:

It was really in the Second World War that, for the first time, a key contradiction to do with British attitudes towards race was brought out into the open, which on the one hand, had always maintained that there was no colour bar in Britain unlike there was in South Africa. . . . British governments paraded this idea as proof of their liberal imperialist credentials.<sup>4</sup>

It is outside the scope of this article to fully grapple with the complexities of race, postcolonial theories, and histories of slavery and its abolition in the United Kingdom, but it is important to highlight that Rodney's biography as an Afro-Caribbean of Jamaican descent places his work within postcolonial debates of the 1980s, a time when he and other black British artists were interrogating their place, or lack thereof, in society. Artists who questioned the effect of colonization on their everyday experiences recalled the aftermath of the Atlantic slave trade; its forced displacement of people of African heritage still resonated then, as it does today. *How might the legacy of artists working with illness create visibilities for others who live with a life-limiting illness without a voice?* In other words, how can Rodney's work do what Gayatri Spivak describes as the ethical stance of making discursive room for the Other to exist so that "ethics are not just a problem of knowledge but a call to a relationship," the ideal relationship that is individual and intimate.<sup>5</sup> *How does Rodney's work explore the care, or rather lack of care, and racial ideologies directed at caring for black bodies—a system of care, as Christina Sharpe identifies, that has historically perpetuated how "people assume that, relative to whites, blacks feel less pain because they have faced more hardship. . . . Because they are believed to be less sensitive to pain, black people are forced to endure more pain"?*<sup>6</sup> *How does the presentation of the black sick body confront normative ideas that inform masculinity?* In posing these questions, this article intends to open up conversations on the sick (black) body as a form of personal activism toward illness, intending to raise an awareness of sickle cell disease in order to show alternative ways for considering what it might mean to live with and combat illness through art as life and life as art.

## Life as Art and Art as Life

Donald Rodney was born in 1968 in Birmingham to Jamaican parents who initially arrived in the United Kingdom as economic migrants. In an interview with Carol Chapman on BBC Radio in 1997, Rodney reflects on his father's generation:

The people from my father's generation, when they came to Britain, they had this thought that it was going to be a land of milk and honey, and how everything was going to be so much better now. *Land of Milk and Honey II* is about this because I made glass cases and filled them with milk and honey, and money as well. . . . You are right to say that they were only economic exiles. They just wanted to be here to earn some money, make things better for themselves and their family, then go back to Jamaica or do whatever, and they didn't intend to stay. It's just how the situation happened, and they ended up having to stay.

This journeying across the Atlantic represented a future of promise, an adventuring into the "promised land," a land of "milk and honey," which Rodney speaks of in the quote above and articulates in the artwork of the same name—a land surely destined to provide and secure a stable financial future for returning home one day. This promised future still serves as motivation for a continual "semiotics of the slave ship," to cite Sharpe, "from the forced movements of the enslaved to the forced movements of the migrant and the refugee, to the regulation of Black people in North American streets and neighborhoods, to those ongoing crossings of and drownings in the Mediterranean Sea, to the brutal colonial reimaginings of the slave ship and the ark; to the reappearances of the slave ship in everyday life in the form of the prison, the camp, and the school."<sup>7</sup>

*Land of Milk and Honey II* (1987) takes on formal qualities resembling a Wunderkammer, a cabinet of curiosities also known as a wonder room, which emerged in the sixteenth century. These small collections of extraordinary and curious objects attempted to categorize and tell stories about the wonders and oddities of the natural world. As predecessors of freak shows, these categorizations contributed to a spectacularization of nonnormative bodies, including black and disabled bodies as "other/abnormal," in order to establish notions that have informed healthy, heteronormative, and "normal" bodies.<sup>8</sup>

In *Land of Milk and Honey II*, Rodney replaces the curio objects with familiar everyday constituents: milk and honey, alluding to the biblical interpretation of prosperity, and money, a more contemporary reading of success.<sup>9</sup> This installation, one can imagine, would have looked pristine when it was first installed before gradually rotting over time as the milk, honey, and copper pence coins reacted together in a visible process of contamination. The pure (white) milk becomes murky brown and green, and the coins descend—a metaphor for decay and, more specific to Rodney, how illnesses inhabit the body from within, without immediately visible makers.

Sickle cell disease is an inherited disease that affects people of African, Caribbean, Eastern Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Asian ancestry. The pain experienced is a result of abnormal hemoglobin causing distorted (sickled) red blood cells, which are fragile and prone to rupturing as a result of their distorted "sickle" shape. These cells are harder and less flexible than normal red blood cells and get stuck in small blood vessels in bones and block them, causing the pain known as a sickle cell crisis. In between episodes of illness people living with the disease feel and look well, but this debilitating disease still causes high mortality rates in children and short life expectancy in adults. It continues to affect up to three percent of births in sub-Saharan Africa, yet its eradication still remains a low priority for many health ministries. It is an emblematically "black" disease, resulting in increasing pain, immobility, hospitalization, and isolation. Sickle cell disease, according to Chambers, has become "a solid and righteous signifier of blackness and black people":

All Black people might not develop sickle cell, but only Black people will develop sickle cell. And, according to the culture of victimology, because only Black people are affected by it, the government, the medical profession and the nation at large accord sickle cell scant recognition. So those who suffer from sickle cell become justifiably aggrieved and abused barometers of racial injustice, particularly at a time of 'the level playing field' in which Black people are widely perceived as having had their equal rights and their equal opportunities.<sup>10</sup>

Rodney's deeply personal reflections on making work that was about himself stemmed from his



*Land of Milk and Honey II*, 1987. Installation view, Birmingham Museums, Waterhall Gallery. © Estate of Donald Rodney



*The House That Jack Built*, 1987. Mixed-media, including X-rays, 2440 x 2440 mm. Installation view of exhibition *The Place Is Here*, Nottingham Contemporary, UK, 2017, Courtesy Nottingham Contemporary. © Estate of Donald Rodney. Photo: Andy Keate

reflections on his black Britishness alongside his lifelong experiences of sickle cell disease. His work not only brought this illness visibility within contemporary art through creating artworks related to his hospital experiences, but it also demonstrated a conceptual, radical, and intellectual approach in using and appropriating the extensive medical data that accumulated over the treatment of his illness, such as discarded photographs, X-ray scans, DNA sequencing data, blood, hair, and skin, as material

in his works. Rodney was able to develop an individualized vocabulary that was full of wit and seriousness. In this way, his autobiographical approach enabled him to explore wider questions pertaining to identity politics and the social and political operating in society. He used his illness as a metaphor through which a wider set of societal interrogations take place. His use of X-rays was not just to draw attention to the blood disorder that was slowly corroding his body, but also to operate as a metaphor

that represented the “disease” of apartheid, the “disease” of police brutality, and the “disease” of racism that lay, and that still lies, at the core of society today as we approach two decades after his death.<sup>11</sup>

In using tropes from and interrogating the very discourse that labels his body as weak, vulnerable, and lacking, Rodney was able both to challenge the limitations of his illness and to make visible the ways in which medical treatment rooted in care and healing discriminates against the most vulnerable, in his case, by directing violence toward his body on the false and institutionalized belief that black skin is tougher than others. As Chambers aptly observes:

Rodney himself was always careful to maintain an intelligent and critical distance between himself and his illness; his work was not just “about” Black people, or “about” sickle-cell; the work was about much wider constituencies and it broadly and specifically implicated all of its viewers in a variety of ways. By using X-rays within his work, Rodney attempted to show “disease” in the human body as a metaphor to represent political or societal “disease” in assorted local, national and international contexts.<sup>12</sup>

In much of Rodney’s later works, which made it evident how the disorder restricted his ability to do a lot of things as a result of his frequent hospitalizations, the works do not stop at immediate reference. Rodney was not solely focused on making work about being black and inhabiting a sick body; rather, he used his personal narrative—black sick male body—metaphorically to express, or extend, something personal (and private) to the world beyond his confinement by using discarded X-rays as a medium.

X-rays were discovered accidentally at the end of the nineteenth century by German physicist Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen. The highly energetic electromagnetic radiation rays, Röntgen found out, were capable of penetrating most solid objects, enabling one to look beneath the surface of the skin to see what the structure of things really are. The discovery transformed medicine almost overnight. The images produced by X-rays are due to the different absorption rates of various tissues. Calcium in bones absorbs X-rays the most, so bones look white on a film recording of the X-ray image, called a radiograph. Fat and other soft tissues absorb less and look grey. Air is absorbed the least, so lungs

look black on a radiograph. The vivid reds, pinks, yellows, whites, blues, et cetera, of fleshy bodies are rendered black, white, and grey by this medical instrument and preventive technology.

Societal stereotypes are challenged by the artist who takes ownership of his body as it is inhabited by illness, the X-rays serving as a metaphor for looking below the surface to discover how overarching power systems operate. Rodney entwines both art and life, continually bringing his identity as a black man and tropes of his illness into his artworks in order to represent his illness as a metaphor that extends beyond his body to represent the wider ills of society, including discrimination, police brutality, and apartheid, all of which are rooted in racism and its ideologies. The figure in *The House That Jack Built* is a self-portrait of the artist, and the X-rays of his spine and nails refer to the increasing pain that sickle cell anemia was causing him. Influenced by the Black Power Movement and black struggles in America and identifying with independent and antiapartheid movements on the African continents, particularly the June 16, 1976, Soweto Youth Uprising, Rodney’s work also refers to black history and the oppression of people of African descent that has occurred over the time.<sup>13</sup>

Representations of the “sick body” are particularly prominent in scholarship dealing with cultures of pain and its theories. In her book *Illness as Metaphor*, Susan Sontag highlights the disparities between healthy and sick bodies that center on victim blaming, which becomes evident in an analysis of the language used to describe disease:

Illness is the night side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place.”

More recent scholarly research considers how diseases are used in artworks to express and meditate on the human condition, furthering Sontag’s analysis of societal relations to the sick body.<sup>14</sup> The sick body—its categorization, representation, and articulation—then, provides an entry point to consider attitudes about how black bodies are perceived, cared for, and framed when viewed through



the lens of medicine. The history of clinical medicine came into being around the same time as imperialism, both of which changed the ways in which the body was discussed and categorized. As Harriet A. Washington argues, “The edifice of modern medicine, as we know of it today, is built upon the bodies of the lower class, and even more so of persons of color, specifically black bodies.” She continues, “One cannot conceive of a history of medicine in the Western world without examining the widespread exploitation and misuse of black bodies.”<sup>15</sup>

In Rodney’s work, illness is entangled with treatment. His use of X-rays as artistic material, one can argue, presents viewers with a layering of meaning that exists at the core of understanding and experiencing his work. This is especially evident in *The House That Jack Built* (1987), a mixed-media installation composed of a large collage motif of a house made up of X-rays, mostly of various images of the artist’s chest. The house also has a chimney and is marked by a white outline, conjuring up the chalk outlines found in a crime scene. In parts of the work’s surface scissor shapes are applied alongside text, some of which read:

Whispers fill each room in my ancestral home  
Chanting down jerk walls. I sit here  
With the hollow men waiting for the shadow  
To fall inside I can hear the  
Drums beat out S.O.S.  
Save our shit  
Save our souls  
Save our struggle

In front of this two-dimensional collage with its poignant words is the effigy of a man, or, rather, a tree trunk dressed in men’s clothing, symbolizing both self-portrait and the individual as part of the larger context of the family tree. This installation, like other works made of X-rays during this period, articulates a (visual) language far beyond the framework of the hospital in which they originated. They are experimental in that materiality and meaning are being questioned through the artist’s determination not to succumb to the limitations and immobility brought on by the disease. Racism, care, the body, pain, and oppression are prevalent themes in Rodney’s work, but no one area dominates, and he is careful to avoid the language of the black male

victim or the black male martyr who shoulders the burden of collective oppression. Rodney was more interested in revealing and deconstructing the stereotype of “black male as the other,” which today continues to label the black man as public enemy number one within the body politic.

Rodney’s works can be further contextualized as critiquing the ways in which medicine, and its treatment of his illness, reveal the lack of care and violence subjected to his body, a body whose skin is repeatedly wrongly categorized as tougher than others and, therefore, able to be subjected to more forceful procedures such as the operations that resulted in the brutal scarring depicted in *Flesh of My Flesh* (1996). The phrase “flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood” is a biblical expression used to recognize the other as the same; human flesh, skin, and blood are the same when broken down to scientific hard facts. In this photographic triptych, the outer panels represent electron microscopic images of two hair strands knotted together. The central panel is a close-up of a tightly stitched scar on the leg of the artist after an operation. *Flesh of My Flesh* brings together microscopic images of hairs from people of different races (one black and one white), magnifying and rendering them as the same by fact of science. Under the microscope skin structure is roughly the same in all races, even though morphological differences exist, particularly within the epidermis, with potential practical consequences. In comparison with white skin, the black skin stratum corneum is equal in thickness but more compact: about twenty cell layers are observed in blacks versus sixteen layers in whites.

“When I went to Trent [Polytechnic] I’d been brought up in the tradition of painting,” Rodney admitted in conversation with Lubaina Himid. “I knew how to paint. I knew the history of painting. I knew my Picassos, my everything.”<sup>16</sup> Rodney intended not so much to make work that stood outside of this history; instead, he sought to make work that critiqued that history (in terms of its partiality and bias), while simultaneously demanding for himself a credible place within a more equitable and textured history of art.<sup>17</sup> In presenting his personal encounters through an artist’s practice that crossed the boundaries of race, medicine, and activism, Rodney demonstrated, or rather revealed, how



*In the House of My Father*, 1996–97. Photograph, C-print on paper, mounted on aluminum, 1220 x 1530 mm. © Estate of Donald Rodney

society establishes both formal and informal guidelines that influence the behavior of its members. The behavior of an individual with a chronic condition, in his case sickle cell disease, is shaped by societal influences beyond one's control into who and what he or she is to be in society. On the one hand, the individual who fully recovers from an illness can return to prior behaviors and roles. However, when there is partial recovery or continuing illness, the individual is forced to modify or adapt previous behavior and roles to accommodate societal expectations, at the expense of his or her own expectations, as governed by the individual's health status.

Through his use of illness as metaphor, the acts of personal creativity, intimacy, and activism evident in the life and work of Rodney produced artworks that moved through hardships to elicit a public catharsis.

In a way, the legacy of Rodney's work exists today as executions of how intimate rituals might add to a vocabulary of collective memory that extends beyond his immediate position as a black British artist into the wider, shared experiences of black suffering. While no one knows the body better than the individual whose body is inhabited by pain, the sick body in Rodney's work is not one that has lost its self or its body. Rodney reclaims the self through his artworks, regardless of how vulnerable that self may be. *In the House of My Father* (1996–97), made a year before his death and exhibited in his final solo show *9 Night in Eldorado* at South London Gallery, Rodney's open hand holds a sculpture made from sections of his own skin, an icon of pain and a metaphor for having to live within a system that could fall apart at the smallest upheaval.

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## Notes

1 Eddie Chambers, "Remembering the Crack of the Whip: African-Caribbean Artists in the UK Visualise Slavery," *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 34, no. 2 (2013): 294.

2 Widely referred to as a day South London went up in flames, the New Cross massacre was a blaze that killed thirteen young black people at a London party in January 1981. It is still regarded by many as the greatest tragedy to affect Britain's black community. It led to twenty thousand people taking part in a mass protest and was seen as a catalyst for the notorious Brixton Riots between black British youth and white British police in April of the same year.

3 Kobena Mercer, "Perforations," (keynote address presented at the conference Reframing the Moment: Legacies of the 1982 BLK Art Group Conference, University of Wolverhampton, UK, October 27, 2012), [www.blkartgroup.info/kmercerarchive.html](http://www.blkartgroup.info/kmercerarchive.html).

4 See Sonya O. Rose, "Sex, Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 4 (1998): 1147–76, doi:10.2307/2651201.

5 Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, eds., "Introduction," in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 2–13.

6 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 10.

7 Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 21.

8 In *Queer Art: A Freak Theory*, Renate Lorenz traces how freak shows had their high point in the nineteenth century, specifically in the period between 1840 and 1940. In the United States, P. T. Barnum was one of their most prominent agents and profiteers, and along with the famous Barnum Circus, he also ran the American Museum in New York. Freak shows, according to Lorenz, "put people on display, specifically those who in some particularly distinctive way did not correspond to what was considered 'normal.'" For more on the origins of freak shows and how they ran parallel with racist segregation and persecution of African Americans, see Renate Lorenz, *Queer Art: A Freak Theory* (Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag, 2012), 25–27.

9 There are several biblical references to the land of milk and honey but most notably in Exodus 3:8, which states: "So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite," "Exodus 3:8," *Knowing Jesus*, [bible.knowing-jesus.com/Exodus/3/8](http://bible.knowing-jesus.com/Exodus/3/8) (accessed April 12, 2017)

10 Eddie Chambers, "His Catechism: The Art of Donald Rodney," *Third Text* 12, no. 44 (1988): 50.

11 Donald Rodney's biography and timeline is available at [www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/donald-rodney-display/donald-rodney-display-biography-and-timeline-0](http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/donald-rodney-display/donald-rodney-display-biography-and-timeline-0) (accessed May 22, 2019).

12 Chambers, "His Catechism," 49.

13 The Soweto uprising was the series of clashes in Soweto that began in mid-June 1976 between black youths and the South African authorities. The black youth—predominantly school children—were protesting being taught in Afrikaans. The protest grew into a pronounced antiapartheid declaration, against which the South African government reacted with great violence. The Soweto uprising represented, at the time, the latest bloody and violent

episode in the antiapartheid struggle. Over a period of some several months, "Police and soldiers shot dead more than a thousand young people, wounding or maiming thousands of others as the uprising spread throughout South Africa." See *Unity in Action: A Photographic History of the African National Congress, South Africa, 1912–82* (London: African National Congress, n.d., ca. 1982), 122–23, cited in Chambers, "Remembering the Crack of the Whip."

14 For representations and reflections on the sick body, see Dodie Bellamy, *When the Sick Rule the World* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2015); Petra Kuppers, *Studying Disability Arts and Culture: An Introduction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Kuppers, *The Scar of Visibility: Medical Performances and Contemporary Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Martin O'Brien, "Performing Chronic: Chronic Illness and Endurance Art," *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts* 19, no. 4, (2014): 54–63; and Lucy Panthaky, "On the Evolving Cultural Relevance of the Sick Body in Contemporary Art Forms," [www.academia.edu/7291458/On\\_the\\_Evolving\\_Cultural\\_Relevance\\_of\\_the\\_Sick\\_Body\\_in\\_Contemporary\\_Art\\_Forms](http://www.academia.edu/7291458/On_the_Evolving_Cultural_Relevance_of_the_Sick_Body_in_Contemporary_Art_Forms) (accessed January 12, 2017).

15 Medical ethicist and journalist Harriet A. Washington begins her historical survey with the colonial period, when slave owners would hire out or sell their slaves to physicians for use as guinea pigs in medical experiments. Into the nineteenth century, black cadavers were routinely exploited for profit by whites, who shipped them to medical schools for dissection and to museums and traveling shows for casual public display. The most notorious case here may be the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, in which about six hundred syphilitic men were left untreated by the US Public Health Service so it could study the progression of the disease, but Washington asserts that it was the forerunner to a host of similar medical abuses. See Harriet A. Washington, "Introduction," in *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 8–10.

16 Donald Rodney in conversation with Lubaina Himid, *State of the Art: Ideas and Images in the 1980s*, television series, directed by Geoff Dunlop (London: Channel 4 Television, 1987), [bufvc.ac.uk/dvdfind/index.php/title/20335](http://bufvc.ac.uk/dvdfind/index.php/title/20335) (accessed May 22, 2019).

17 Eddie Chambers, "Who'd a Thought It? Exploring the Interplay between the Work of Frida Kahlo and Donald Rodney," *Wasafiri* 27, no. 3 (2012): 22–33, doi.org:10.1080/02690055.2012.690552.