

Tam Donner
**Homeland
Security
Stylesheet:
Incest Font**

01/07

Consider Eric Gill, the English stone carver, typographer, sculptor – and progenitor of the typeface Gill Sans. A different Gill typeface, Joanna Nova, is the official font of the United States Department of Homeland Security, named after the only daughter (of three) that Gill did not sexually assault. Despite selecting the typeface dedicated to Gill’s only untouched daughter, the Department of Homeland Security is befouled by association – befouled because all of Gill’s typefaces feel impure after one reads excerpts from the typographer’s diaries, where Gill makes fastidious record of molesting his servants, his sister, some children, the family dog.¹

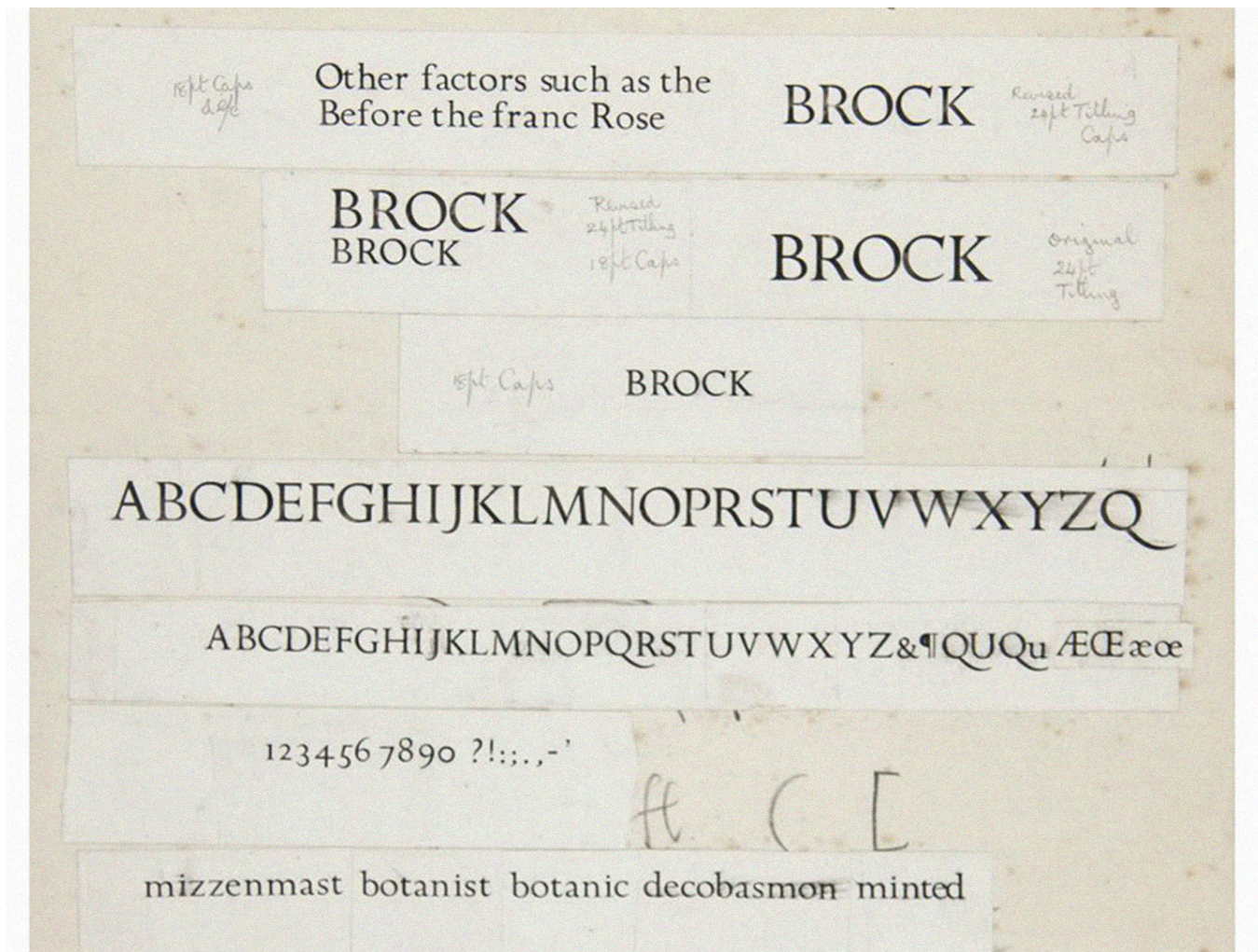
Yet Gill’s typefaces persist in public:

Saab Automobile deploys Gill Sans.
Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, for sure.
The US Department of Homeland Security,
natch.
Save the Children, ditto.
Tommy Hilfiger also.

But some British designers, by way of internet declarations, have sworn off Gill Sans. They will not stuff (commercial) content into a contaminating form. Currently, the name of the font doesn’t reflect its mutating brand identity. I want the font to molt; let’s rechristen MS Gill Sans. At this moment, my fingers are typing in what I will now dub “Digital DaddyCock Sans.” But long after I’ve read the internet declarations from the British designers, the contrails of the incesting father persist; filthy crystals are the speech bubbles of quiet daughters. Homogenitus as declaritive human genitals.²

Once established, the history of the font is embedded, and designers cannot simply excise it in hopes of miraculously restoring their pleasure at the control and spaciousness of DaddyCock Sans. The original events surrounding the typeface’s crafting become the substance of the font; this substance crowds and confuses the intended linguistic meaning of words encased in the font. Can a person – me, you – selectively refuse, as an act of resistance, to cognitively process a text executed in a specific font? DaddyCock Sans is the Spanish government’s official typeface on all public signage. Say a woman is driving through the mountains of Asturias, an area that long provided shelter to anarchist guerilla forces, and she suddenly finds herself psychologically incapable of reading all official signage in Spanish. She blows through a stop sign. At this point, she, the refuser, finds “ALTO” (Spanish for “HALT”) unintelligible in DaddyCock Sans. She misses road signs marked “Galicia” – where US nuclear submarines used to roost. She can’t read “Policia” either, as it too is encased in Daddycock Sans. This happens

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Eric Gill, *Smoke Proof*, date unknown. To test the punch, the punchcutter makes an imprint on a piece of paper after coating the punch with soot from an open flame. The soot left by the flame acts like ink to create an image on the paper (a smoke proof). Photo: Clark Library, UCLA

because she has totalized an ethos of resistance. Perhaps emergency illiteracy might be a temporary tactic for refusing the state melding of form and male authority.

James C. Scott, political scientist and anthropologist, suggests that certain forms of elective nonliteracy, when practiced collectively, can function as a “positive medium of cultural life as opposed to a deficiency.”³ He asserts that historically, marginalized peoples retreated from farming and written language in order to flee emerging nation-states. He focuses on Zomia, the name for a series of alpine terrains stretching across southeast Asia defined by “runaway, fugitive, maroon communities who have, over the course of two millennia, been fleeing the oppressions of state-making projects in the valleys – slavery, conscription, taxes, corvée labor, epidemics, and warfare.”⁴ Considered alongside the productive nonliteracy of Zomia, the abolition of select typefaces is an action for those who choose to remain within the nation-state.

Gill’s typefaces are so habitual and spare as to make them seem invisible; they sheath the moral decay of the maker and the corruption of the user. MS Joanna Nova, operating as an official font, provides a stylized interface with the US Department of Homeland Security – an entity that also mishandles human bodies, but on a institutional scale. Some instructional materials on design urge government officials to select a typeface that “achieves a level of harmony and *legibility* in print.”⁵ “Legibility” here pertains only to the kerning, layout, or thickness of the font – obviously it does not include making legible the fact that institutional bodies hold up and hole up specific human bodies. The web page is bright and simple, its whiteness internally lit by a digital sun; it suggests that the government’s hold on detainees is light, temporary, unremarkable. Additionally, some web visitors will have internalized the commercial history of the typeface – including the cover of the 1965 Penguin Modern Classics edition of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*.⁶ They might experientially slide between categories: reader and witness, citizen and suspect. This is the design surface of US fascism.

See dhs.gov. Nested within the site is the home page of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), responsible for the forced deportation of undocumented immigrants. When I logged on to the ICE home page in October 2017, a phrase in MS Joanna Nova floated above each image in the “Photos” section.

ENFORCEMENT AND REMOVAL – when in MS Joanna Nova – is easily received by the user’s eye. It is emblazoned above an image of an

alleged child rapist, flanked by ICE officers, on a set of airstairs. Since this appears on a web page, the eye consolidates the inflammatory title and caption and the dull photograph into a unified image; this amalgam contains data without analysis, and competing traumas (rape and deportation) severed from context. The inherent banality of institutional websites paired with the evident boredom of the ICE cameraman eliminates the uncanny as a category of experience for this image. By March 2018, I don’t remember the shapes of the heads of the people in the image or the color of their clothing, so much as the casualness of the shot: a composition that could not locate its register (photojournalism or archival document or...).

Above the next image: ENFORCEMENT AND REMOVAL. In bright sunlight, a figure, bald and with glasses, enters a white van; he is charged with the sex trafficking of minors. Again, MS Joanna Nova. Under the snapshot, the caption reads: “Phoenix, Arizona,” in MS Joanna Nova. The sophisticated typeface is in tension with the artlessness of the composition. This half-hearted attention to style while documenting state power is its own style. Let’s dub it “American Bro,” because American violence, formal and informal, has often aimed to appear casual, effortless, masculine, normal, naturalized. I’m supposed to forget that power could ever be any other way.

Each user of the DHS website – grade-school teachers, businesswomen, DREAMers, cyberattack victims, job seekers, and me – is anonymous to one another. But together we users use in MS Joanna Nova; I use it to determine how the intentions of the state are visualized. In the ICE section, I note thick hands and holsters acting out narratives of white chivalry⁷ upon a collateral body of characters specified as rapists and pimps. A border economy based on captives and captors is dependent on feminine victims, actual or conjured. The feminine victim as political commodity also articulates itself in other contemporary ways, oblique and direct, ranging from the reproduction and circulation of images of physically-wasted children as a fundraising tool, to more recent instrumentalizations of conflict-related sexual violence to justify invasions.⁸

For centuries, novelists and artists have recycled images of the female victim. See *Beatrice* (1866), for example, by Julia Margaret Cameron. For this photograph, Cameron worked with a thirteen-year-old model, May Prinsep. May has been instructed to channel sixteenth-century Beatrice Cenci, in the period after Beatrice’s rape at the hands of her father but before her beheading as

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ordered by the court. Beatrice and her brothers were executed for hiring assassins to kill their father in Florence, Italy. The sculptor Harriet Hosmer offered her own portrayal of Cenci in 1857. Cameron and Hosmer were attracted to the task of depicting a female victim who suffers twice over: once in the privacy of the home, and once at the hands of the state. Perhaps Hosmer – who, as a lesbian, was subject to a certain kind of erasure by the state – was hoping her prone marble Beatrice was covertly instructing: “You too can kill the father.”

Joanna Gill, the font’s muse, unofficially operates as ICE’s muse – an unmolested Anglo daughter. The use of a font created by Eric Gill, when Gill was never punished for his own crimes, feels ironic. Do my fella users *feel* that too? Feelings about Petra Gill, molested daughter ... Indeterminate feelings about *Petra’s Jersey* (1922) by Eric Gill, a light sketch of a “clothed partial torso and arm.” The image floats on the surface of the viewer’s mind. It’s a relief not to see the face or skin of Petra, the middle daughter, just the slump of fabric. Human escaped. It is my fantasy that Petra unfurls the jersey like the Invisible Man’s bandages and vanishes into the air, reaching the edge of the exosphere, four hundred miles above the earth’s

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crust. Spare but prurient wood engravings by Gill – titled *Girl in Bath I* (1922), *Girl in Bath II* (1923), and *Hair Combing* (1922) – do not name teenage Petra as their subject. The totality of Gill’s personal papers were not acquired by UCLA until the 1950s. It is only decades later that the details of Gill’s abuses, as recorded in his archived diaries, are published in mainstream biographies. Petra’s image is only then transformed from the artist’s daughter to an actual victim of the artist. My daydream that Petra gets free persists, her perp stranded on the continental crust.

Be it rape victim, victimized worker, raped worker, or worker raped while traversing the desert towards work, I wish to dodge the narrative orbit that places assault, née human sacrifice, as the whole of representation and the totality of a person’s end. Likewise, the bodies held by the Department of Homeland Security often get fed into a sentimental framework (a liberal reflex) that generates such volumes of emotion that emotion becomes the end experience of the witness as opposed to sparking actual structural change. The MS Joanna Nova typeface circuitously participates in the detention of force-fed bodies,⁹ restrained bodies in our private prisons, because it

Grid Example 11" x 17" — Newsletter Interior Spread

Example of an 11" x 17" newsletter interior spread using 4- and 1-column grids.

Header (left page)
Joanna MT
Regular 32pt

Caption
Joanna MT
Italic 9pt
leading 10.5pt

Copy Heads
ITC Franklin
Gothic Medium 11pt
leading 15pt

Copy
Joanna MT
Regular 11pt in preferred color
DHS Dark Gray
leading 15pt

Large Callout (right page)
Joanna MT
Regular 18pt
leading 58pt

organizes the forward-facing end of the entity and thus conceals assault; it is designed to communicate that the organization is clean and “free of fancy business” (Gill). Do you suspect that I’m advocating for the DHS to replace MS Joanna Nova with MS Antiqua, a font celebrated by the Nazi Party? That I’m urging the adaptation of a font that provides a truer reflection of the DHS’s aims and feelings? I’m not. I only aim to expose unwitting alliances ... and to dissolve phallic technique. Duh.

Is there a spell that can do that? What font is it in?

If I restricted myself to other typefaces roughly coeval with Gill’s, I would choose Doves Press font. Although Gill’s typefaces and Doves Press both emerged from the Arts and Crafts Movement, the social origins and physical end of Doves Press font differ from Gill’s typefaces. While Doves Press was financed by a militant suffragette, Anne Cobden-Sanderson, Gill’s best-remembered public engagement with women’s suffrage was his 1910 sculpture *Votes For Women, I Don’t Think*, purchased by economist John Maynard Keynes. Doves Press font predates Gill’s typography (1926) by twenty-seven years. But by 1919, the entirety of Doves Press font was sunk. In his diary, T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, the husband of Anne, records that the alphabet was “bequeathed to the sea.” T. J. wrapped the punches and matrices in paper parcels and over 105 visits threw the typeface over the Hammersmith, a suspension bridge spanning the Thames. One hundred fifty-one of its metal sorts were recovered from by the Port of London Authority’s diving team in November 2014. Some were moved along by the current and dredging; others were possibly destroyed in two IRA bombings of the bridge. It is not just T. J. Cobden-Sanderson’s suturing of his wife’s name to his own or the feminist bankrolling of the initial endeavor that makes Doves Press font the right typeface for a radical spell; it is that T. J.’s gesture was a furious and poetic hex on his former business partner, Emery Walker. What is a hex? The witches of the Susan B. Anthony coven once wrote that they were not circling in order to bake cupcakes. Their work was to curse. To not lament sexual assault but to extinguish its henchman’s momentum, because they rape so frequently and viciously. With what was this font imbued by being drowned, bombed, dredged, and resurrected? Maybe it can be repurposed to refuse abusive literacy, or to destroy it in kind.

But a typeface with a history of wizardly erasure is not casually purchased at Michaels craft emporium. Online, I make contact with a stencil service, which says I can special order Doves Press font at a price. Also online, former colleagues write to inquire about sexual

harassment in one of the many art schools I have taught at; female students are confiding; male faculty members have made sexual overtures. The students decline to file reports. Surfing, I notice that a nontraditional undergraduate that I reported for sexually harassing students is now an adjunct professor at the same school. A secretly shared MS spreadsheet lists perpetrators working in the art field. I mentally note who has been listed and who has not. Three days later, the file disappears. Another Gchat window opens up; a friend talks about the article she is writing on sexual predators in the art world. Offline, my partner and I coolly discuss the named perpetrators while doing chores. Run faucet. “Dickie’s name was on it.” Wipe counter. “Not surprised.” Offline, outside of my home, is an abandoned black BMW. It isn’t mine. It belongs to a former resident of the building we live in. He, a pediatrician, is now in prison for possessing the largest stash of child pornography the cops have ever uncovered in the area. When we walk by the Beamer, my kid occasionally asks, “Why it is that car here?” “Oh, it’s a junker,” I say. “It’s for parts.” Next, I quip to the leaf blowers, who may also be in the know: “Can you please bury that in leaves?”

Tonight, I run the mouse over the Wi-Fi icon.

Router names pop up, including the pedophile’s router. I read his surname in MS Helvetica, and MS Helvetica transmogrifies – a default font for child molesters.

Helvetica, initially Neue Haas Grotesk, was designed by Swiss typographer Max Miedinger in 1957. Miedinger explains: “We designers are sellers of subliminal details that the average viewer does not see, but they do feel.”

Dear Viewer, I felt DaddyCock Sans; now we feel Helvetica. The local pedophile is scheduled to be released this year. He will come to fetch his mail, his Beamer, his router.

Recall again that Miedinger said: “We designers are sellers of subliminal details that the average viewer does not see, but they do feel. The message is somehow warmer, more memorable.”

Wi-Fi Router first accessed 09/01/2016, 12:12 p.m. Wi-Fi Router list last accessed 01/03/2018, 6:07 p.m.

I scroll past the pedophile’s router name in Helvetica. It *is* memorable, but not warmer. I feel it. My self as a cultural isolate ... as if the violence of the state and the violent sentimentality of capitalism both fall away from me and the ghost-router. This is not possible. My feelings have produced a political bio-fiction: a pedophile as autotroph, producing his own nutrients, operating within a closed system where he climaxes only to photographs of his

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child self.

01/05/2018, p.m.: After the dog shits and I bag it, I photograph the pedophile's abandoned Beamer in our shared driveway because the snow plows have further buried it. The snow lips the window. The car cannot back out. I'm afraid the neighbors are watching me photograph the disappearing car. As a cover, I snap a picture of the abandoned basketball hoop ... the clear blue sky ... when to stop? ... a beheaded lantern with a duct-taped nub ... the copper beech with a sawn-off limb.

To daydream a law based on pedophiles as autotrophs.

(I realize I'm dreaming of punishment.)

A disassembled homeland security. A rudderless rapist. A self-cannibalized pedophile. A dead fascist?

To sleepwalk around the riot?

White supremacists run free here. The Southern Poverty Law Center lists 724 US hate groups with some ideological stake in white supremacy. Some casual protesters fear that a physical confrontation with white supremacists will result in their own death. All summer there was white hand-wringing: Could a white one who chooses personal safety over resistance still regard itself as a moral being? *Our whelp!!!* was many Family Unit's public justification, their tender excuse. Was it also mine? There seemed to be scant middle class identification with the Bread and Roses Strike (1912) and the ways in which strikers' children were mobilized. There was little mainstream knowledge of the Battle of Hayes Pond (1958), where members of the indigenous Lumbee tribe – including fathers, uncles, and cousins – disrupted a Klu Klux Klan rally. Outnumbering the Klan, the Lumbee cut off the Klan's light source, absconded with their sound system, and stomped on their abandoned banners while the Klan fled. The Lumbee provide an alternative family model. In these times, can middle-class family reunions be organized as marches against white supremacy?

By winter, the energy of resistance seemed to be redirected. Neo-Nazis swapped for Hollywood sexual predators and ivory-tower sexual predators and politician sexual predators. It is plausible that some pursue and pursued (longstanding) sexual predators in the workplace, at this juncture, because they have equated the pursuit of white supremacists with their own personal unrecoverable harm. The piggie Alabaman with a stiff "pinkie" (or his Hollywood counterpart or his NYC cosmopolitan brethren) are not perceived as murderous, despite public policies that prove otherwise (see their votes on policing, health, foreign policy).

It is possible that the majority of white people claiming to be anti-racist will never

physically confront white supremacy because they can only imagine defeat. Perhaps some of their reluctance stems from a failure to imagine victory; they have little sense of what an anti-racist land feels like.

Towards *a sort of sanity*, I look backward online.¹⁰ I'm seeking an image to reassure me that fascism ends. The image: a dead fascist woman dangles from a meat hook. Her feet are bare and she is upside down. Attached to her corpse is a placard with her name. Ghoulishly, I ask: What font? Bathetically, I ask: Is this what the end of an ideology looks like? But this public desecration didn't stop the form; the dismembered parts of this far-right belief system have reassembled. When our current iteration of fascism goes dormant again, will the beginning of its hibernation include its governing bodies being strung up ... on a slowed internet? I am asking if a gory documentation of the political cycle will load sluggishly. To my own grotesque debasement *and* relief.

I nightdream, awake in the dark, of people dismantling a fascist state, couple by couple, decoupled, bone by bone, my bone. But my problem is compiling a workable to-do list of actions that will allow me to cross over the shape of the family unit. Guy Hocquenghem refers to this unit as "The Couple," which includes both heterosexual and homosexual couples; as a form, The Couple has been produced by a millenium of patriarchy and centuries of capitalism. In my nightdream, there are millions of households that go beyond The Couple, that enfold not only mommies, dormies, unckies, but also junkies, roomies, furries, hubbies ... generating and sustaining a structure suspended between where we shelter and where we love and rage with strangers. We sleep walkers are also sleep talkers – incoherence is our cover and our pleasure. This nocturnal orality happens in lieu of the waking texts recorded by security forces, We, woozily, operate outside of a passion for hierarchy; exterior reality as it exists today buckles under the flow of beings that cannot meet its passions.

Then I nightmare that you and I are belated, the Capitolocene being the end of our human time.

x

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1
The Gill papers are housed at UCLA's Clark Library, thousands of miles away from England, where Gill, as a cultural product, means so much more. Why the distance?

2
In November 2017, an EA-18G Growler jet, part of Electronic Attack Squadron 130, rendered a phallus in the air in north-central Washington State, on the western edge of the Colville Indian Reservation. The area lies under the expansive Okanogan Military Operating Area (MOA). See <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2017/11/17/navy-grounds-two-aviators-behind-penis-skydrawing/> and <http://www.krem.com/mobile/article/news/local/okanogan-county/graphic-navy-admits-to-being-involved-in-obscene-skydrawings-spotted-in-okanogan-co/293-492496113>. In September 2017, a Royal Air Force pilot drew a thirty-five-mile-long penis over Lincolnshire. See <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/4445994/raf-pilot-draws-penis-lincolnshire-raf-corning-sby/>. In November 2014, the Royal Air Force denied that a fighter's contrails floating over Moray, Scotland were an intentional skydrawing of a penis, claiming: "People sometimes look into the sky and see all sorts of things." See <http://metro.co.uk/2014/11/08/rude-arrows-raf-pilot-denies-leaving-giant-penis-vapor-trail-in-sky-4940461/?ito=cbshare>.

3
James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (Yale University Press, 2009), 221.

4
Ibid., ix.

5
Tom F. Richardson, *Public Relations in Local Government* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 1988). Emphasis added.

6
The cover of this edition employs Joanna Nova font. See <https://fontsinuse.com/uses/3462/brave-new-world-1965-penguin-edition>.

7
For recent scholarship on "white chivalry," see Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Harvard University Press, 2009). For the "purity movement," the white slave campaign of 1906, and the white "southern rape complex," see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (Columbia University Press, 1993). In the preface, Hall writes: "The 'false chivalry' of lynching cast (white) women as

Christ-like symbols of racial purity and regional identity and translated every sign of black self-assertion into a metaphor for rape" (xxi).

8
"The process of securitization produces fetishization in relation to the issue of conflict-related sexual violence." See Sara Meger, *Rape Loot Pillage: The Political Economy of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 20.

9
In April 2014, the ACLU of Washington State sued ICE for putting hunger strikers in solitary confinement at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington. Last year, a federal court authorized officials at the Stewart Detention Center, run by private prison company Corrections Corporation of America/CoreCivic, to restrain and force-feed a hunger-striking immigration detainee. According to reports, the hunger striker is Vitaly Novikov, a refugee from the former Soviet Union who is protesting ICE's plans to deport him to the Ukraine. See <https://www.aclu.org/news/aclu-sues-expose-treatment-hunger-strikers-ice-detention>.

10
To April 29, 1945, Piazzale Loreto, Milan.

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