

The 11th Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference at Yale University

# **John Brown, Slavery, and the Legacies of Revolutionary Violence in Our Own Time: A Conference Commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Harpers Ferry Raid**

October 29-31, 2009  
Yale University  
New Haven, Connecticut

*John Brown in the Visual Art of Hovenden, Lawrence and Pippin*

Robert Stepto, Yale University

Available online at <http://www.yale.edu/glc/john-brown/stepto-abstract.pdf>  
© Do not cite or circulate without the author's permission

## **Abstract**

I am looking specifically at painted visual images of John Brown with African Americans. The images by Thomas Hovenden and Horace Pippin recall (commemorate?) Brown on his way to his hanging. The Hovenden image offers the unlikely but compelling story that Brown kissed a black child on his way to the gallows. The Pippin image offers the black presence at the hanging, or en route to the hanging, in much different terms, perhaps because it is a mid-twentieth-century image.

I add to the discussion two Jacob Lawrence images of Brown and Douglass, and of Brown, Douglass, and Tubman. In each case, I will be developing my own ideas on the triangulation of black-white people and American subjects in American art which has already been addressed by Albert Biome, among other American art historians.