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Could Not Sing in the Dead Heat: Liner Notes Under the Sun

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COULD NOT SING IN THE DEAD HEAT: LINER NOTES UNDER THE SUN

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July 2022

Department of Political Studies, University of the Witwatersrand



Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Candidate: Molemo Ramphalile

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Signature:



Date:

30/07/2022

For

Gomolemo Ka'eo Thamae

and

Oarabile Vuyiswa Sathima

Acknowledgments

My family, my first and most consistent teachers, who never lost patience with a child that constantly questioned and that stubbornly argued about things, many times out of turn. The continued nurturing and unwavering offering of support, care, and strong sense of home is what keeps me together. I remain forever your student. Ka teboho, hlompho le lerato Bakoena.

My friends, with whom I have the honour of building family and community with, who are there even if I'm not always the most communicative and available; it's an incredible pleasure to learn and live with you. Gregory Maxaulane, Thabang Manyike, Lwazi Lushaba, Gabriel Letsoalo, and Modise Thompson, who, specifically, have provided me with familiarity, mentorship, camaraderie, education, respite and fun in this mostly aggressive and unaccommodating South African academy. The game won't be the same after you lot have ran through it. Bennita, whose presence at crucial times in this journey has been affirming, engaging, patient and elegantly understated, and whose tenderness, understanding, and humility reveal a style and flair I admire greatly. I look forward to sharing many more significant and non-significant life moments with you. Going half on things with you has been one of the best things I could have done for myself.

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I use the pronoun “we” instead of “I” throughout this study mostly to try capture the level of influence that many of the special people referred to above have had on my critical, intellectual and scholarly outlook, as well as saying to them that I do not consider myself an exception or apart from them and that all that is good and of value in this study is because of them. If I misrepresent anyone in this group, it is not done intentionally and with malice.

Abstract

On the one hand we place blackness as a historical if inconsistent category inextricable with morbidity, disfavour, depravity, mystery, wretchedness, penumbra, opacity or absence of light, and the abyssal – in both secular and religious metaphysical symbolism. On the other hand we place space as a historical and physical category denoting area, range, clearance, scope, volume, expanse, lacunae, aperture, margin, and in its instance as verb – opening, arranging, ordering, placing, separating, and locating; which in cosmography, geography and cartography finds its varied imaginative and applied interpretation. We coalesce what is in both hands in order to envisage how blackness persistently becomes and comes to be the extractable property of sub-Saharan Africans. Through various ontological-cosmographic-geographic designations such as Torrid Zone, 'land of the blacks' or even terra nullius, we encounter visualisations of a territory and expanse that is always either completely devoid of people or inadequately peopled, that is, the territory whence blackness as inextricably embodied (or fleshened) exists and is cultivated. Blackness: not only does it determine our modes of being, or non-being, in this world, but for us in this study, it is also an experiential, experimental and analytical lens permitting the suggestion and scribing of historical narratives and discourses that centre the inveterate decentring of blacks. In the tradition of liner notes, this study is written in a performative relation to the subject or object at hand; there under the sun, in the dead heat.

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Introduction

“But you know we’re black right?” As if it is possible to forget. Particularly at that moment. Perhaps the tragedy that occasioned this reminder, this rhetorical gesture, this extension of consolation, this political mobilisation, could offer a kind of shelter from the sense that it resulted from something specifically anti-black. It could’ve happened to anyone after all. Anyway, isn’t the severance from one’s kin, the paradigmatic ‘natal alienation,’ said to be at the foundation of a particular non-relation, dependant on some kind of momentary experience and tangible promise of a relation in this material world, prior to a violent separation? Does not a touch, a glimpse, a whiff, a slight kindling of tenderness proffer an inevitable rupture its profuse consequence? Or is the very nonexperience of natal contact in actual fact reflective of what is actually at stake; imminent dispossession is not dissimilar to the transitory non-possession that it initiates. In other words, for something to be taken it has to be had, but in order for it to be had in a way that it can be taken there has to be generated the idea in the one that it is taken from that it can be had and will be taken, which at the time it is not yet had, might as well be a taking.

Perhaps this is what the words “but you know we’re black right” meant; that because you’re black you should have, in some way, expected that this or something like this will happen, that the tragic is always palpably lurking, metres and seconds away from pouncing. That is, as a black you live to be taken, taken away from, and have taken away from. These were not harsh words, they were words intended to soothe and offer solidarity, and that they did. That is if this was what was meant by them. For the imploration that followed not so long after these words suggested another meaning; that because we are black, and a death has occurred, there are certain traditional rituals that have to be performed and observed when the circumstances are such as they are. That my mind didn’t immediately assume that this is what was meant is perhaps attributable to the too instinctive rush to find solace, respite and ameliorative consanguinity in the very blackness that was implied to be the inevitable cause. It is also likely that one has grown accustomed to the South African discursive positioning

of blackness as a fundamentally historical, political, public, socio-economic experience. This is demonstrated, for example, in how the 'Black' in Black Consciousness thought and politics is said to be a 'political blackness,' that is, a political identity not necessarily racial and definitely not biological or essential, intended to rally those disparate groupings who bear the brunt of white supremacy under the banner of radical and substantive liberation from the strictures and violence of race and racism.

This instance of blackness, or its kind, is not often interchangeable with what is insinuated by the phrase "as an African" or would be insinuated by the question "you know we're African right?" Had he said this I would have known what was meant immediately, because we've generally come to understand the 'African' qualifier as alluding to a kind of preserved interiority (an eroded yet resilient spiritual and cosmological reservoir that that goes underground or into the bush when necessary but is never not there), a traditional heritage that at the very least, and mostly, is enacted and observed in a private world. Blackness therefore is what happens and comes from out there, constantly intruding and affecting what's in here. And Africanness is what determines and protects what's in here, and battles for relevance and traction out there. So, being reminded "you know we're black right" as an opening to share the inescapable importance and necessity of a cleansing, of an 'African traditional ritual' that when read historically and politically (which of course may be a violent undertaking, or, takes place in the context of colonial violence) is also a defiant gesture of preservation, was both initially confusing and subsequently compelling. It makes one think and consider the extent to which these two terms delineate two different experiences.

There is certainly a sense of interchangeability when one considers the plethora of terms, local and diasporic, that categorise a certain kind of dark body, and render equivalent a racial identity and a continental lineage and identity: African, Black, Black African, sub-Saharan African, Bantu, Black Atlantic, African American, Afro-Latina, Black British etc. But there's also widespread sense that one comes into blackness, depending on where one is, and also that one comes into different kinds of blackness depending on the particular locale. On the continent, there certainly exists sentiments

that are not only resistant to the applicability of blackness to local contexts, but also see it as a very specific identity emerging from North America and maybe the Caribbean. African, here, is considered more relevant as explanatory frame of an interior and exterior world of most of those who come from and reside on the continent. So even upon cursory inspection we begin to see that especially in Africa, African and black can really mean different things. Under what circumstances then does black and African come to be undifferentiated in the way a good friend suggested to me? Mbembe clarifies this for us:

> Clearly, not all Blacks are Africans, and not all Africans are Blacks. But it matters little where they are located. As objects of discourse and objects of knowledge, Africa and blackness have, since the beginning of the modern age, plunged the theory of the name as well as status and function of the sign and of representation into deep crisis. The same was true of the relation between being and appearance, truth and falsehood, reason and unreason, even language and life. Every time it confronted the question of Blacks and Africa, reason found itself ruined and emptied, turning constantly in on itself, shipwrecked in a seemingly inaccessible place where language was destroyed and words themselves no longer had memory (2017: 12-13).

Mbembe continues:

> "Africa" and "Blackness": these two notions took shape together. To speak of one is to invoke the other. Each consecrates the other's value. As we have noted, not all Africans are Blacks. But *if Africa has a body, and if it is a body, a thing, it gets it from the Black Man* – no matter where he finds himself in the world. And *if the term "Black" is a nickname, if it is that thing, it is because of Africa*. Both of these – the thing and that thing – refer to the purest and most radical difference and the law of separation. They mix with and burden each other as a sticky weight, at once shadow and matter. As this chapter demonstrates, both are the result of a long historical process that aimed at producing racial subjects (2017: 38, emphasis added).

Firstly, perhaps Mbembe uses the gendered qualification Black *Man* unwittingly, or maybe it is intentional; either way it has to be pointed out that we will provide a critical elaboration of gendered blackness and its possibility later in the study. Secondly, Mbembe notes, not all Africans are blacks and not all blacks are African. But this elucidation is moot when considering those to whom the distinction can possibly be confused or interchanged. In other words, we believe that not all Africans are black only because there are people on the African continent who consider themselves

African but are not black. For these people, Africanness, in the most part, does not take shape with blackness and is almost always, if not violently, separated from blackness. But of course, these are not people who we think of, and not the kind of distinction in question that interests us: we are thinking of those people to whom Africa and blackness are categories that are accessible not only in the forms of an interiority/political identity binary, but also those to whom from without this distinction is not thinkable, perceptible, or even necessary. Put differently, whilst many Africans can make a distinction between their Africannes and their blackness, it is not the case for all Africans (or even all blacks) that their Africanness and their blackness "mix with and burden each other as a sticky weight, at once shadow and matter" (Mbembe, 2017: 38).

The black in African, and the African in black, insofar as each is determinably present in the other, certainly contributes an ineradicable mark that even when these Africans distance themselves from blackness, and these blacks distance themselves from Africanness, from the gaze without this distinction is easily collapsible. What, from this gaze, at its base, is encountered, is a "lively human of a strange shape, roasted by the rays of the celestial fire, endowed with an excessive petulance, captive to the empire of joy, and abandoned by intelligence, the Black Man is above all a body – gigantic and fantastic – member, organs, color, a smell, flesh, and meat, an extraordinary accumulation of sensations (Mbembe, 2017: 38-39). Prior to its fabrication as a *racial* category or property, blackness is fundamentally seen indistinguishably from a geographic reality; it is the land of the blacks in the same register as it is Africa proper, that is, sub-Saharan Africa. If in pre-modern periods what we consider as sub-Saharan Africa was mapped as torrid zones, regions thought so hot as to not be inhabited and if anything to be incubators of non-life, then the sight of unsightly black skin formed a logical extension between extreme climate and geography and extreme physical appearance. Harry Garuba makes the point that

> Colonial conceptions of space and people, and thus colonial mapping, were premised on a Cartesian logic which foregrounded the fantasy of an autonomous subject with a privileged view casting his [sic.] eye over transparent space. This Master Subject-often European and

> male-supposedly inhabiting an Archimedean position outside of discourse with a supposedly unmediated access to transparent space-created what Mary Louise Pratt (1992:201) describes as the 'monarch of all I survey' mode of Victorian exploration and travel writing. The positional authority of this Master Subject was constituted, first, by a division of the world into subject and object with all the dualisms involved in this process (e.g. mind/matter; nurture/nature; civilised/savage) and then by a configuration or mapping of space to consolidate this *visual authority* (2002: 87-88, emphasis added).

Garuba continues:

> But as land is never just transparently there but is culturally constituted, so also is the body never just naturally there. Perhaps even more than land, the body is always already contaminated by signification. The body as a visual sign has often functioned as a site for the cultural coding of a multitude of ideas, of beauty and ugliness, the normal and abnormal, self and other, the familiar and the exotic, and so on. In racist and sexist discourses, it has mainly served as the site for the *visual coding of naturalised difference* (2002: 105, emphasis added).

The abject environment that is sub-Saharan Africa and the abject blackness that is the form of the sub-Saharan African are thus comprehensible within a visual trajectory such that stubbornly sustains even when the black or African body is extracted from that specific environment. We are beginning to comprehend then, from the guidance of Mbembe and Garuba, the extensive profundity and critique encompassed by the question “but you know we’re black right?” To think of Africanness and blackness as fundamentally interchangeable is to take a position and to uptake a provocation. It calls upon an investigation into a historical encounter of world making capacity, the critical exploration of which at the very least disrupts the assumed validity of a historical public violation in the most obvious and known form of colonialism (including its ‘neo’ or ‘post’ guise) and slavery, and a private preservation in the form of African cultures and traditions. We of course make sweeping generalisations in suggesting that there exists a unanimous cognizance of a difference between being African and being black. In South Africa for example you do not have to wonder or pontificate or search too much to obtain the sense that black people do feel strongly that the particular colonial apartheid history was destructive of both an exterior and interior life, as well as the sense that what tends to the interior is as much a blackness

as it is an Africanness. This may not be the case in other African countries without a history of settler colonialism and apartheid.

But the objective that this study takes to be central is not necessarily a polemic or focused investigation of the differences and similarities between Africanness and blackness. We point out the distinction between being African and being black, for one, not only because it provoked a moment and more of analytical contemplation within a personal exchange, but also because it highlights the personal exchange that itself is such an appropriate example of the ways that a conception of blackness allows a broaching of tragedy, colonial history, tradition, culture etc., in the minutiae of the everyday. We are also fascinated by the idea suggested in the question and reminder "but you know we're black right" and its positioning of blackness not only as interchangeable with Africanness, but as that under which both dispossession and conservation can take place. Put otherwise, what we can conclude from the equation of Africanness and blackness is that those spheres considered the place for a surviving and protected Africanness are the same as those spheres considered the place for a surviving and protected blackness.

Blackness as a mode, measure, site or clearing, and metaphor for both dispossession as well as recovery is one of the central investigatory and investigated concepts of this study. We think of recovery not only as an attempt at a repossession or retrieval of something taken, lost or destroyed by continued colonial violence in the sense of an African or black personhood or world that existed before the 1400 and 1500s when external inquisitions and aggressions began and/or intensified in earnest, but also as entailing a recuperation, rallying, and betterment. That blackness is able to carry and intimate absolute violence as well as some kind of shelter from it speaks to its elasticity; this also exemplified in how blackness is constituted as, and constitutes, excess and extremity as well as deficiency and emptiness. Therefore, we aim to specifically explore the ways in which blackness is constituted as superfluity and void, as severity, threshold, and shortfall. The contention we make is that we come to understand blackness in these ways by way of a spatial dynamic, or inextricably from a spatial dynamic, that places and makes logical the connection between the

mysterious, unknown, unbearably hot, uninhabitable, non-existent, extraordinary, uncultivated, undomesticated, and liminal expanse that is sub-Saharan Africa, and the darkly, feral, debauched, impure, inane and primitive character and appearance of the people from it. In other words, the argument we intend to pursue is that, and to return to Mbembe's words, there are ways in which *that thing* (blacks/blackness) which comes from *the thing* (Africa/sub-Saharan Africa/land of the blacks/torrid zones) has been historically conceived and produced from the outside that has thus been generative of an ontology that has structured Africa/black related realities such as slavery, colonialism, dispossession, neo-colonialism, capitalist extraction and exploitation, poverty, underprivilege, discrimination, chronic instability, and violence as endemic, inevitable, always-already, and anticipated. The sheer and sublime inseparability of that thing from the thing, is what for this study requires not quite an interrogation of the socio-political and economic histories of contact between the inhabitants of the region known as sub-Saharan Africa and those from without, but more so the ways in which the geographic, cartographic, climatological, and mythical have built long-lasting and structuring ideas of the place called Africa and those who emerge from it. Indeed, much conventional thought about Africa (and blacks/Africans) from those without the place is constructed through the narrative, the discursive, the poetic, and the representational. So too, however, is the tradition of thought from those within the matrix of the thing/that thing. This study in seeking to understand how knowledge about Africa has invariably been constructed and understood also situates itself within this matrix of that thing/the thing, that is, within traditions of thought about blackness and Africa that centralises the poetic and mythic.

The first part of the title of this study "could not sing in the dead heat" is taken from a poem titled *Musa* by poet Kamau Brathwaite. As will be evident the role of the sun and the sun's heat is a central component in prefacing the region we call sub-Saharan Africa in the imagination of those from without this region. We argue that what is considered the curious, divergent, wearisome if insufferable, and severe climate introducing this geographical area persists in its inhabitant's curious, divergent, languid, and severe skin and nature. We can't but think of Wilson Harris's brief

reflection (in conversation with unacknowledged but supposedly well-known excerpts and quotes by American poets) on the representation of the sun in American writing:

> Yet energy, while essential for change or creation or art, may be self-destructive. It may be –
> a wish to be again
> threatened alive, in agonies of decision,
> part of our nation, of a fanatic sun.
>
> This reminds me that there is a school of West Indian art which idealizes the sun. And it has always struck me that this is an American attitude, American idealism. I have lived for long periods in savannahs so much exposed to heat and fire, that the sun has become an adversary – one of two antagonistic principles – night and day – and only an association of these two principles provides release. Which would bring the forms that are bound in a principle of subjection, genuinely into the light of day, without cruel suffering, must find truly that the sun has no stationary hold over its subjects like a feudal lord over his serfs. The sun is indeed a great reality in the West Indian world in a more terrible sense than the poet realizes when he exclaims: Sun's in my blood. (1973: 10).

Harris' contemplation about the sun being depicted as creative source of energy, whilst also existing as destructive or extractive of vitality is essential particularly because it captures the crippling/creative binary of the title and the contents. If the first part of our title for this study also references the inability of singing because of the sheer heat of this region, then the second part "liner notes under the sun" positions our activity as creatively and performatively attempting to note and scribe this non-performance, even if unsuccessfully, under the same relentless heat and glare. A non-performance, and a potentially failed performance which intends to witness and bear it. If we think of liner notes, most commonly a piece of writing accompanying a music recording, writing *about* a recorded performance, usually in its appraisal, readied for consumption, then us writing liner notes under the sun complicates this tradition, challenging the desire to write about and foregrounding the struggle to write alongside and from. Which is then to say that insofar as the heat of the sun is a critical component in a construction of blackness, what we really want to think about is the extent to which singing, or rather, creating and/or expressing, could happen in the deep hole that is blackness. If torrid sun entails and assumes destruction that becomes particularly evident in the corporeality and character of the inhabitants of this region, and the energy necessary for singing, for creation or art by these

inhabitants, may lead to a self-destruction, then we want to explore, in a manner not driven by destination, the ability and space to do anything, that is, to perform within this (black) condition. This indeed may be the more terrible sense of the exclamation 'the sun's in my blood' that escapes the poet, that the torridness of the sun already anticipates a total embroiling that becomes the lot of the black; an anticipation of seizure, an expectation of impossibility and loss, and a salvaging that is a poetics and poetry and song that exceeds that of the poet and singer – "you know we're black right?"

The study takes the form of an introduction, three long essays structured as chapters, and a coda. The first chapter introduces the reader to many of the key concepts that help and allow us to think through the arguments that we engage throughout the study. We suggest that places thought of or determined as black acquire through this very blackness a peculiar ability to be abstracted and pliable which properly deny them the stability and prevalence of place and project onto them the fears and fabulations of the outsider-onlooker. This then impels us to contend with ancient, medieval and early modern imaginations of geography, cosmography and cartography, and their particular relation to the region that is sub-Saharan Africa, for the purpose of tracing the ontological genealogy of blackness in the way we think of it. We suggest that these notions of sub-Saharan Africa, and the people said to be from or close to it, contribute to how the sub-Saharan world is approached, encountered, confronted, constructed, and captured. In essence, the first chapter broaches blackness from the side of *the thing*, postulating how an archetypal space comes to be constructed historically.

If the first chapter traces the spatiality that sets the tone for blackness as it prevails as a foundational determinant in how a world's region and its people come to be known, then the second chapter seeks to trace how this blackness coheres in the body, or more appropriately, the flesh of the black. We explore how certain notions of the kinds of beings emergent of the torrid zones, together with religion and theological exegesis and the Mediterranean geo-politics of the late medieval/Renaissance era, combine to instantiate a paradigmatic relation from which our understanding of modern subjectivity and alterity are formed. We ruminate in this chapter on the ways that

blackness is figured as that which is at odds with prevalent conceptions and categories of humanity despite its indispensable role in constructing these very categories and conceptions. In essence, the second chapter broaches blackness from the side of *that thing,* postulating how an archetypal (non) being, the black – and its variants, comes to be constructed through its indelible and inescapable association with *the thing*. It is not only an enduring binding that proves consequential in pre-modern to modern figurations of the human but that also sustains without the need to be bound to notions of racism as we understand them.

The second half of the chapter engages in a form of experimentation, attempting to write out and represent in a literary form our deeply unsettled sense of how the black, that thing, under its various guises, can contend with its fallen and fleshly existence. This is a necessary endeavour in that on the one hand it further elaborates the complex, dramatic, otherworldly and mundane ways that the figure of the black as ineradicably marked by its geography is historically constructed, and on the other hand follows the proposition that a historiographic contention with this kind of subject matter is inadequate particularly from the position of the black historical scholar or practitioner.

This then leads us to the third chapter, which is a critical contemplation on methodology and historical method in particular. We specifically examine how black feminist methodologies and poetics, together with black studies ethico-poltical frameworks provide us the apparatus required when approaching certain historical discussions in non-reactionary and non-subjectifying (and non-objectifying) ways. In essence we consider here the (im)possibilities and struggles involved in recovering from the historical archive the lives, voices, presence, and narratives of black people and whether this is a desirable objective or not. The final section of the study is the coda, in which we see how the conceptual assertion that we have been building throughout allows us to critically interrogate a position within South African contemporary debates about land. The intention of the coda is not a summation is not quite a direct summation of the preceding work, but a look forward to the thematic

and theoretical possibilities offered us through a creative and critical understanding of *that thing from the thing*.

“sunshine, black skin, and doubt (in that order)”[i]

Cornered, on the corner, cut, cur(at)ed, a coat hook for some headphones, to listen to a language you don’t have…the corner where site and work converge in and as displacement…

- **Fred Moten, 2017**

Who made the land? Who made the land?
God made the land, God made the land.
Who owns the land? Who owns the land?
Mr Johnson owns the land, Mr Johnson owns the land
Who did Mr Johnson buy the land from?
He bought the land from God
Far as I know, God don’t take cash, cheque, Visa, or Mastercard
So how did Mr Johnson pay for the land?
Mr Johnson is God
I know because Mr Johnson told me so
I said “Am I God too? Am I God too?”
He said “no, you’re only 3/5s of a man, you can’t own no land”
…
Mr Johnson is God
I know because Mr Johnson told me so
I said “Am I God too? Am I God too?”
He said “no, you’re only 3/5s of a man, you can’t own no land”
Who made the land? Who made the land? Who made the land?
Who made the land? Who made the land? Who made the land?

- **William Parker/Raining on the Moon, “Land Song”, 2007**

Land is not the traditional element used to analogize Black fungibility or think about moving, exchangeable and unstable Black diasporan subjectivity. Rarely does land evoke the kind of flexibility, elusiveness and trickster like qualities that Black diasporan bodies symbolize in the Western Hemisphere. Water, most often the Ocean, has been our faithful metaphor.

- **Tiffany Lethabo King, 2013**

from da corner…

If as Lethabo-King (2013: 5) informs us that "Black Studies enables a discussion of the unique and un-analogous form of terror and domination that produced the Slave," then we too are engaged in a type of Black Study. Although somewhat of an archetypal figure the slave is, we wonder (and wander) what are the grounds upon/through which this figure is produced? And what of the colonised? And the black? These are only some of the questions - we have many - of which we will seek answers, or at least clarification, or at most complication. Alexander Weheliye puts it thus: "blackness cannot be defined as primarily empirical nor understood as the non/property of particular subjects, but should be understood as an integral structuring assemblage of the modern human" (2008; 324). Lethabo-King returns to say "understanding the conditions under which the human comes into being is both a political and ethical project" (2013: 5). Without overemphasising our political and ethical pursuits, or indeed prioritising them, we hope to follow Weheliye and Lethabo-King and weave together some thoughts around blackness in relation to slavery/colonialism, as well as the modern human in relation to the black/slave, by way of a conjecture about (black) space and spatiality, and in doing so making an argument for how it is that these categories emerge and are grappled and played with in this study.

There are many places to begin, but let us continue with 'substance'. What we know of it is manifold. It is matter, and that which matters. It's materiality - not light and superfluous but weighty and compelling. It is "mellow enough to ease the pain, but could also cause haemorrhage to the brain" (Inspectah Deck, 1999). And as the Rebel INS tells us further, it is "too hot to handle, and too cold to hold" when pumped in a manner that is uncontrolled (Inspectah Deck, 1999). Indeed, its relationship to control in many instances determines its nature (and extent of illicitness?); when moving as "unfettered ur-matter, unthinkable exorbitance, and deregulated transubstantiation", in other words, as the "mythicized substance ambling around despised flesh and an otherwise creativity exceeding the fungible fantasies masquerading as thought itself" then it is what Carter and Cervenak (2016: 204) dare to consider as ether, as black ether, as blackness. As blackness, it is the flavour that is

the stuff of the world, the coarse salt of the earth and wherein lies its rub, that which can be inexhaustively run into the ground but/and also the "mythic *ground* that intoxicates and fortifies whiteness, that which is held and expelled" (Carter and Cervenak, 2016: 205, emphasis added).

Substance is also a rapper or MC. He raps from Vosloorus, a township east of Johannesburg, South Africa. Substance's song 'Inhlakanipho Yemali' featuring Cut Corner contains a rhyme that opens up our reflections in this chapter but also allows us an intuitive conceptual moment upon which most of this study is attempting to build. In particular, it propels us into thinking and sensing about place and space, about blackness, about 'black spatiality', about what looms, about what's inevitable, about what awaits that which already was. The song itself is the most directly, self-consciously made 'conscious' – to use hip-hop parlance – song on an album/mixtape titled 'Do The Knowledge Vol. 1' released in 2008. And it is certainly one of the more poignant and perceptive songs, and the only one fully rapped in his vernacular language (a mixture of isiZulu and tsotsitaal or 'Joburg Zulu') as opposed to English (the prominent language on all the other songs). This factor lends credence to Marlene Nourbese Philip's sense that "some experiences demand a faithfulness to the language in which the experience happens" (Philip, 1991: 130). Near the end of his second verse, Substance raps:

ijele nalo alipheli ntwana liqala ecorneni
nalengoma ibuhlungu ntwana ngoba ibhalwe 'corneni

(With all due respect, and with apologies) Roughly translated: "jail/prison won't see an end because it begins on the corner/ and this song is painful because it was written on the corner" (Substance, 2008). The corner, as we know it to be: within the black township or ghetto, is where mostly young men are known to coalesce, for reasons and/or activities that can be interchangeably and nominally mundane, ritualistic, convenient, suspicious, criminal, panoptic, ebullient, territorial, violent, lazy, despondent, menacing, mischievous, wasteful, destructive, constructive, protective, spiritual, loving, joyful – amongst others. Common, The Last Poets and Kanye West,

on the corner: “on the corner niggas rob and kill and dying just to make a living huh… the corner was our time when time stood still… the corner was our magic, our music, our politics, fires raised as tribal dances and war cries broke out on different corners… the corner was our Rock of Gibraltar, our Stonehenge, our Taj Mahal, our testimonial to freedom, to peace, and to love” (‘The Corner’, 2004). Nonchalant, on the corner: “a black woman, trying to get through to the few/ so you can lead the next crew… 5 o’clock in the morning, where you gonna be? (outside on the corner!) you need to get yourself together, while you’re wasting all your time right along with your mind” (‘5 O’Clock’, 1996). Mandoza, on the corner: “uwe lo ekuseni… sowuse’corneni, uhlupha abaya emsebenzini/ uzovuka nini, ufane nabo, bade lam’, isikhathi siyak’shiya, walala walimala… uzoyithola kanjani uhlele ‘corneni”[ii] (Mandoza, 1999).

For Substance, the corner seems to be many of these things too, and perhaps more. There is certainly a suggestion of a space given to, and characterised by, criminality or some kind of illicitness. This is expressed in the sense, idea and argument that jail or prison is a guaranteed presence, reality, outcome or inevitability. Why? Because it is already on the corner. And so there is too a suggestion of this particular space as given to a creative rendering of an experience of pain (perhaps partly the pain that lies in lethargy, that *is* lethargy, and partly the pain of past, current and impending criminality), or the pains of township or ghetto life. It appears that he is, or is not, or is invariably, saying that the crime is happening, has already happened and is about to happen. It appears that he is, or is not, or is invariably, saying that the pain that is the song is being sung, has already been sung and is about to be sung. “The corner was our time where time stood still” – we don’t know if it can be said that time stands still on Substance’s corner, but there is certainly an arrest of some sort that is coming or has happened. We also don’t know if like the Last Poet who marks out an ‘our time’ that continues to move at the same time as a ‘time’ or ‘Time’ that stands still, it can be said that Substance’s corner’s time maintains and is maintained by varying and infused temporalities, but there is certainly a paradoxical temporal movement (corner to prison even though in/on the corner prison already is) that is at the same time as the ‘time’ or ‘Time’ in, of, and that is arrest or imprisonment.

The movement is, of course, of spatial simultaneity too. Alves, thinking of the Brazilian favela, (2013: 329) writes:

> Within the context of urban Brazil, the dialectics of life and death, violence and resistance, territorial captivity and placelessness produce the favela not only as a zone of death, but also as an alternative spatiality in which a black "spatial praxis" (Soja 1980) and a black (painfully and deadly constituted) subjectivity come into being. That is to say, because the cargo ship, the plantation, the favela, and the prison were/are geographic technologies of domination, black survival depends (ed) on spatial strategies of resistance that challenge not only the racial spatial order but also the very equation blackness = placelessness (Brown 2005; McKittrick 2006; Spillers 1984).

A spatial contemporaneity; on the one hand a space of death, and on the other hand (without emphasising the 'resistance' of it all) a space of attempts at, and actual flourishing of, some kind of life as well as creative renderings in response to and around the death-giving and death-letting of that space. Alves also speaks of a "spatiality produced in/by *black* subjugation to death" (2013: 327). Substance and Alves are, as we see it, in the same cypher; that is, if we are to think of Substance as referring to the corner as a spatiality produced in/by black subjugation to impending arrest. It being an arrest that is as inevitable as it has already transpired designates the corner as also a spatiality produced *for/as* black subjugation to impending arrest. Again, the same cypher; for Alves, spatiality produced in/by black subjugation to death, or "macabre spatiality", is also and always an alternative spatiality that is coterminous with the creative emergence of a black subjectivity that is nonetheless "painfully and deadly" constituted, in much the same way as for Substance the corner spatiality, or spatiality produced also for/as black subjugation is coterminous with an acoustic (or otherwise) creative rendering of pain because and despite of impending arrest(ability) (Alves, 2013).

Once more, the same cypher; if as the Merriam Webster dictionary defines 'placeless' as "lacking a fixed location" and as "indistinguishable from other such places in appearance or character" and for Alves 'macabre spatiality' is characterised by a dialectics of "territorial captivity and placelessness" as well as an equation between blackness and placelessness, then much the same can be said for Substance, for whom

corner spatiality (in that it is also, always, as yet and almost jail/prison spatiality) lacks a fixed location, and for whom exists a fundamental (ontological?) indistinguishability between corner and jail/prison (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/placeless). Blackness then appears to devoid place of its fixity, transforming into a black space characterised by the machinations of arrest as well as the desire (potential) of its unravelling. This is certainly consistent with McKittrick's view, who in noting the conceptual and logical extension that is prison from the plantation uses the term 'prison life' to "point to the everyday workings of incarceration as they are necessarily lived and experienced, as a form of human life and struggle, inside and outside prison" (2011: 956). The work of prison, the work of the plantation, the work of black space, is therefore already in process on the corner. After all, for blacks, prison is the "site that houses the slow death of inmates, racial violence, and the spatial management of race, and can also be conceptualised as an abstracted urbicidal geography that deliberately harms a particular population" (2011: 955-6). Frank Wilderson, in sighting the structural, anticipatory and routine work of the plantation-to-prison forwards the figure of the prison slave and prison slave-in-waiting to conceptualise this logical extension (2003). Pointing out Assata Shakur's disdain and flat-out hatred of working within specific activist circles involving white allies, Wilderson suggests that this belies a sense from Shakur that blacks in these spaces are essentially as unsettled, both experientially and ontologically, as in the non-ally or non-radical outside that is a general racist society that these activists are raging against (2003). Wilderson continues,

> Her hatred of this work is bound up in her anticipation, fully realized, of all the zonal violations to come when a white woman asks her if Zayd [Malik Shakur] her "panther... you know, is he your black cat?" and then runs her fingers through Assata's hair to cop a kinky feel. Her narrative anticipates these violations-to-come at the level of the street, as well as at the level of the body. Here is the moment in her life as a prison-slave-in-waiting, which is to say, a moment as an ordinary Black person, when she finds herself among "friends" - abolitionists, at least partners in purpose, and yet she feels it necessary to adopt the same muscular constriction, the same coiled anticipation, the same combative "one-liners" that she will need to adopt just one year later to steel herself against the encroachment of prison guards. The verisimilitude between Assata's well known police encounters, and her experiences in civil society's most nurturing nook, the radical coalition, raises disturbing questions about political desire, Black positionality, and hegemony as a modality of struggle (2003, 19).

The paradoxical nature of the indistinguishability and abstractness that are black spaces, is amplified by a territorial(ly-based) captivity or arrest or immovability with a synchronous kind of inability for fixedness, rootedness, and place. They are as indistinguishable as they are simultaneous, asynchronous, contemporaneous, separate, interchangeable, differing, coterminous and at odds. They speak to black positionality proper, that is, black positions and blacks in position, that thing from the thing. So, the corner, back to Substance, is a placeless space; it is a black space, it's a space by its very nature of the prison slave-in-waiting.

from de corner…

To challenge and push Substance's cypher further, however, and importantly: BUT JAMETTES GET RAPED TOO! This is what Marlene Nourbese Philip reminds and teaches us. In thinking about 'place' and the attachment to it such that it enables a movement towards writing "*from* rather than *about* place", Philip highlights the necessity, impossibility, and dire inevitability looming over (black) women's claiming and reclamation of public space (Philip, 2017: 241 – emphasis original). Philip contends:

> In patriarchal societies (the only ones we have known), the female body always presents a subversive threat. By far *the* most efficient management tool of women is the possibility of the uninvited and forceful invasion of the space between the legs – rape. Which is a constant. A threat to *the space* – the inner space between the legs. Even if never carried out, this threat continually and persistently inflects how the female reads the external language of place, or public space – the outer space (2017: 242).

Philip, in what could be a direct conversation with Substance, continues:

> How the female poet interacts with the land, the countryside, or the urban-scape – with the outer space in all its variety, or place in the most physical of senses – is entirely affected by gender. Is the choice, therefore, either to accept the restriction in physical behaviour and available space that the threat of rape brings – limit one's activities to the daytime, and to specific places? Or what? *The female poet's understanding of place in its most physical sense will be different, and necessarily a more restricted one, than that of the male poet's* (2017: 242; emphasis added).

Marlene Nourbese Philip and Nonchalant, black women, seem to be on one side, away from and aware of the corner, unable to access it comfortably, critical of it/its denizens, threatened by it and the worlds that produce and necessitate it, potentially dispossessed by it. Substance, Common, The Last Poets, Chiskop, black men, seem to be on the other side, on the corner - as well as away and aware of it, able to access it - uncomfortably, both critical and affirming of it/its denizens, threatened by it and the worlds that produce and necessitate it, threatening *from* it, potentially dispossessed by it, finding and building fraternity on and from it. It is not the space that is the corner that sets them apart, but it is space, the space between. Philip once more:

> Space and place – the public space – must not only be read and interpreted from the point of view of the space between the legs, but also from the perspective of how safe the space between the legs is or will be. The Body. And that most precious of resources – the space. Between. The legs. The Black woman comes to the New World with only the body. And the space between. The European buys her not only for her strength, but also to service the black man sexually – to keep him calm. And to produce new chattels – units of production – for the plantation machine. The Black woman. And the space between her legs. Is intended to help populate the outer space… The space between the Black woman's legs becomes. *The place.* **Site of oppression – vital to the cultivation and continuation of the outer in a designated form – the plantation machine**. Harness the use value of the inner peace to the use value of the outer space so that the inner space becomes open to all and sundry. Becomes, in fact, a public space. A thoroughfare. The "black magic" of the white man's pleasure, the "bag o' sugar down dey" of the Black man's release. *And* the space through which new slaves would issue forth (2017: 243 italics original, highlighting added).

With a glance at Sun Ra, but keeping it terrestrial, reluctantly, but necessarily so, we see that Space *IS* the Place. And the place is the space that is a site of oppression, the space created and seized to enable and continue the passage to the plantation machine. It is this space that sets the black women and the black men mentioned above, together; in the passage towards the natal moment, within the natal moment itself, and the passage to the numerous plantation moments thereafter and before. And it is these plantation moments (and the passage to them) that at times sets the black women and black men as indistinguishable, in that they rely on the paradoxical assemblage of gendering and ungendering elements that form the plantation machine

itself. It is the space that puts both black women and black men on the same corner, in the same space. But, again, JAMETTES GET RAPED TOO!

In nineteenth century Trinidad, only a few decades after the declaration that slavery was abolished, jamettes emerged as a symbol and embodiment of the moral morass that was, of course, always bound to be rampant in the absence of the virtuous and civilising project of trans-Atlantic slavery. The term 'jamette' itself is a Trinidadian Creole derivative of "the French diametre, which translates into "diameter," referring to the imaginary line that divides society into two sectors, the respectable and the criminal" (Noel, 2010: 61). 'Jamette' therefore, was firstly "used to describe a class of poor, underprivileged, and formerly enslaved people" before being more lastingly deployed as a "strategically gendered descriptor for women of a certain race, class, and deportment" (Noel, 2010: 60-61). The importance of this locutionary alteration is twofold; firstly, as alluded to above, the history of the amiable gendering and ungendering entanglements to the point of gender indistinguishability constitutive in the creation of a slave people, together with the post-slave society attempt of incorporation of former slaves into conventional gender roles, is what permits, and is illustrative of how, 'jamettes' in the first instance is used in a way that it "clearly feminizes the cultural practices of a certain class of people, and [is then], in turn, used by society to regulate and scrutinize the sexuality of black women" (Noel, 2010: 61). Secondly, and relatedly, the jamette Carnivals of the late nineteenth century soon became associated with the scandalous public performances and behaviours of the women involved (jamettes), who slyly and/or boisterously defied and exaggerated gender and sexual stereotypes as well as prevalent norms of respectability. They also aggressively and at times violently imprinted themselves in a public domain formerly and conventionally at odds with them (not forgetting, as Noel points out, the men who would dress as women much to the chagrin of the elites), and thus aptly epitomised the extent of social decay, and in effect provided a preview of the total dissipation if left uncontrolled. Noel writes:

> The women of the jametre class often organized themselves into bands for Canboulay [Carnival], with such names as "Black Ball, Dahlias, Don't-Care-A-Damns, Magentas, Maribuns (usually Maribone), Mousselines and True Blues," all of which were seen in the 1868 Carnival,

> wearing fantastic dresses. Their participation in Carnival, however, was not pure revelry; the concealment of weapons was a common practice in these bands as early as 1864, and many of these women armed themselves with horsewhips, stones, and razors, reflecting the violent culture inherent among the jametres. The viciousness of slavery and its quasi continuation in the post-emancipation era of colonial plantation society produced a class of both men and women who could inflict violence with as much vigor as they endured it. Women not only actively participated in riots and confrontations, they could be key instigators. It is this disposition of animosity that culminated in the Canboulay riots of 1881 when several jametre bands and the police force confronted each other during Carnival in a calculated attempt to defeat each other (2010: 63).

It is within this context that Philip tells the story of the jamettes and implores us to remember that JAMETTES GET RAPED TOO! For Philip, a lower-class area in the streets of Port of Spain, Trinidad, a jamette haven, is the stage and space of a confrontation between the Don't Give a Damns and the Mousselines. They fight, in and for the space, they do what jamettes do. Soon, the police, all men, circumspectly enter the fray. Prudent, with attempted authority, they declare "you're a disgrace to womanhood! All you jamettes – a disgrace, you should be locked up". They back up as they say this, unsure of the reactions of the jamettes many of whom they have a history of clashes with. Indeed, as they feared, the jamettes, now united, taunting, skirt-lifting, are doing what jamettes do: advancing, prodding, claiming, protecting (Philip, 2017: 248). It is now set for a showdown between jamettes and the police, in the public outer space, in the public inner space, the space between; and by all indications, the jamettes are winning. They shout, variously: "The streets is we own!" "You see we here in all we nakedness – you see any of we shame of it? Not one, not one a we shame of we nakedness or frighten of you," "De space between we legs is we own to do with as we please, and we not frighten of these streets. Dese streets is we own – we have a right to be here and beating any man who telling we different" (Philip, 2017: 248-249). The police run! The jamettes won! "*The women laughing loud loud like real jamettes. Suddenly the stage* ***black black****"* (Philip, 2017: 249). Needless to say, JAMETTES…

Noel (2010) explains how after 1881 the colonial administrators and elites classes began a series of clampdowns on jamettes and their cultures and activities,

particularly around carnival, resulting in the eventual curbing of exuberant jamette presence at Carnival by the conclusion of the century. The characterisation of jamette women as licentious and untrammelled, as effective or actual prostitutes was one of the ways in which jamettes were pushed back and their public and spatial ranging restricted. Noel notes how the "police constantly scrutinized them, following them on a regular basis and, in some cases, extorting sexual favors. Those who did not comply might be sent to the courts to be registered as common prostitutes, a marker that made them even more vulnerable to official harassment" (2010: 64). The more actual jamettes were systematically stifled and suffocated, the more 'jamette' emerged as a figure and parable mobilised as the foil of respectable womanhood, that is, the domain of no womanhood at all, and thus the domain of black womanhood.

We move on to the next part of the story that Philip shares, and it commences at Act Two - Scene Two; a jump from Act One - Scene One (that ended in jamette victory), but located at the same scene, the "same crossroads as in Act I, Scene I". It's a part that is characterised by song and silence. A man, on one of the corners of the crossroads, strums a guitars and laments the contemptible audacity of Boadicea, one of the leaders of the jamettes from the previous scene we know. She, Boadicea, sings the man, should have embraced the life-saving mores of Victorian womanhood; "is better she die or lock up in jail," these the apparent options on the table in the event that she didn't embrace these mores, which she didn't (2017: 249). These options, descendants of the plantation, itself a descendant of the passage, itself descendant of farther places deemed black, are staples of the plantation machine, serving 'impending arrest' and 'macabre spatiality' to bring back Substance and Alves. We hear, here, the song and silence of this song in Act Two - Scene Two, and the silence and song of the "missing text" between the Acts (Phillip, 2017: 251). That is, what is missing in the narrative that goes from the resounding public victory of the jamettes to the lament that reminds us of their fateful options of death and arrest. Philip reflects that to "read the silence around the text, one must become a jamette poet – possessing the space between the legs – the inner space – uncompromisingly – as the outer space" (2017: 251). It is from the dispossessed space that song is as audible as silence, is impossible without silence, and indeed anticipates the silence; victory is

unfathomable without defeat; claiming and reclamation lie in wait for deprivation and bereavement.

In the dwelling of the missing text, we are then moved to a calypso, by the famous calypsonian "Mighty Sparrow", titled 'Jean and Dinah', popular in the 1950s and 60s. On calypso, Noel (2010) makes the contention that despite being able to trace its beginnings in the kalinda songs of the jamettes in the 19th century, by the 20th century calypso had largely become a genre in which the jamette caricature was utilised to denigrate women of unacceptable social standing and behaviour, through their very designation as jamettes. "Calypsonians were often critical of these women, and their songs reflected what the masses felt about this cohort, relegating them to the category jamette. In their lyrics they often presented the moral ideals they expected women to follow, yet they seldom professed a desire to change their own behaviors" (2010: 70). In Mighty Sparrow's calypso, Jean, Dinah, Rosita and Clementina are sex workers who have apparently fallen on increasingly tough times following the departure of a large military presence of American men in Port of Spain - men who had constituted the majority of their clientele. The exit of these foreign military men has thus entailed a financial adjustment back to the pre-war, pre-inflated reality for these women, a reality where men like the protagonist of the calypso knew them for what they were really worth, jamettes. Philip writes:

> Jean, Dinah, Rosita and Clementina, their space a corner, a street corner, where they posing and selling what all men wanted and still do – a piece of their space, the space between their legs… Because of the Yankees, Jean, Dinah, Rosita and Clementina charging a higher price for their space, the place that was theirs and theirs alone. Sparrow man, calypso man, putting them round the corner posing, and believing he could get it all for nothing. Because he controlling the outer space, which controlling their inner space. Jean, Dinah, Rosita and Clementina – their space, their place, dis place between the legs – public women, women in public on the street corner, round the corner selling… your life, mine and theirs (2017: 250-251).

> The seeming reclamation of space – between, inner, and outer - was momentary, apparently, much to the delighted contempt of the caplysonian. The return of the status quo is a return to a spatial structure that for the jamette only differs in the level to which it is explicit in its articulation of who belongs where and when. The jamette corner then, are continuations of the space between, spaces of possession circumvented by initiatory dispossession. A non-redemptive possession, the kind of possession in the plantation machine. What the jamettes remind us of is that within the precariousness that is black public life, which is to say black life generally, the corner is, on the one side, not the exclusive realm of black man/male sociality and spatiality-cum-potential recuperative insurrection, and on the other, not an especial quintessence of the black man/male experience of dispossession. Philip shows us, or at least allows us to realistically imagine, that these corners are black spaces, that is, they are too spaces of black woman/female reclamation-cum-potential recuperative public insurrection. In doing so, Philip warns against a romantic appraisal of the corner, and reminds us of the corner as a constant threat to dis/place. And in its guise as a masculine panopticon peering across the township landscape, it is a space that so often figures as the site for unwanted attention and harassment for black girls and women, occasionally intense enough to warrant a reconfiguration of routes and a reconstitution of a township/ghetto geography.[iii]

from the fungible/black/nullius…

From the corner, we move and seek to find as divaricate a polyphony as we're allowed, and as necessary, with Lethabo-King's (2016) idea of black fungibility. With the intention of employing it as a "spatial analytic", Lethabo-King states how "within the tradition of Spillers (1987) as well as Hartman (1997), the concept of fungibility denotes and connotes pure flux, process, and potential" and so Black fungibility could be understood as the "capacity of Blackness for unfettered exchangeability and transformation within and beyond the form of the commodity, thereby making fungibility an open-ended analytic accounting for both Black abjection and Black pursuits of life in the midst of subjection" (2016: 1023, 1024). Because of slavery's initiatory extraction, (of and) from blacks, of humanity and those traits that did and would go on to satisfactorily cohere the human form, the black body, and indeed blackness, is left open, is left an open field, and is left as openness. What lies in the wake of this process for Lethabo-King is "Blackness as abstract matter or space" (2016: 1026). The foundational extraction is because of, leads to, and is for, a foundational abstraction; blackness, which on the one hand renders a tensility, pliancy, and

shapeshiftability, the sort of which grates against, distorts, and collapses logical adherence to conventional forms. And which on the other hand, as open field, as unencumbered access and as generative inconsequence, provides occasion and space for decimation, demarcation, delineation, and decision.

The abstraction is spatial and space-making in that way; it clears a space, opens space up, provides the space for, spatializes, spaces, *and* places space. Lethabo-King continues: "under slavery and conquest, the Black body becomes the ultimate symbol of accumulation, malleability, and flux existing outside of human coordinates of space and time… Blackness is the raw dimensionality (symbol, matter, kinetic energy) used to make space. *As space, Black bodies cannot occupy space on human terms*" (2016: 1028-1029, emphasis added). Blackness as raw dimensionality therefore maintains a primordial menace that discounts certain categories (place, space, time, human) even as it makes and consolidates them at premium. And so it is what permits the black body, as its constellation and installation, to not be a body like bodies are and should be. And it is what allows a colonial settler to see black bodies as preserving the capacity to "merge with the green plantain fruit and become blocks of colour. Black bodies become part of the vegetation and the abstract space of terra nullius that constitutes the Caribbean Island" (Lethabo-King, 2016: 1028).[iv] Wilderson reminds us that "what it means to be a slave is to be subject to a kind of complete appropriation… [and that] it's a body you can do what you want with (Hartman and Wilderson, 2003: 188).

Slavery and conquest are foregrounded by thinkers such as Wilderson as elemental to the formation of the conception of blackness, the black body, black space, and black time, as fungible and abstract. We would however, here, like to think of the possibility of adding to, or anticipating, the primacy allotted to slavery in the formation of these conceptions. Following Substance's and Philip's insights and taking seriously the idea of the 'abstract space of terra nullius' we want to explore a potential; that is, slavery's potential, and colonialism's potential, or the potential that is both slavery and colonialism. And so to move from the colony, the middle passage, the plantation, the township/ghetto/favela, the corner, the prison, and back again, for the very first time.

What we have being doing thus far is looking at the peculiar and commonplace ways in which blacks/blackness (that thing) cohere in, as, and with black spaces (the thing), in the different places in the "black diaspora" or those places that black people have been regarded as black historically. We continue by picking up on the concept of terra nullius, and working with it in a way that further permits us to tell a story about that thing from the thing. Indeed, if for scholars like Wilderson slavery marks the dissolution of preexistence or being prior and the impossibility of subsequent categorisation in the emergent and successful modern world for the black (who is only produced as prison slave and prison slave-in-waiting), then we would like to suggest that this is already anticipated by the long-held conceptions about the space that is Africa and the beings emergent from it. If our discussion of the corner succeeds in showing the ways that rendering spaces as black at once abstracts them and offers their inhabitants and dwellers as both placeless and inextricably bound, as rootless and captive, then what we hope becomes clear in our following discussion is that slavery does not present a departure of kind to a prior relation (into a non-relation) but rather a logical expatiation of a history of encounters, mappings, and narratives. This perhaps is what also presents us the opportunity to travel between a corner in a South African township in the early 21st century and a corner in 19th century Trinidad and various corners in late 20th century American ghettoes; we forfeit the conceptual investment that Wilderson has in marking a difference between the black descendent of slaves and slavery (and perhaps the Khoisan) on one side, and the black African descendants of the colonised and colonialisation on the other[v], and look towards a more fundamental connection between blackness and space that also sustains prior to trans-Atlantic slavery, and subsequently *in* Africa.

Mbembe informs us variously: "for a long time, in the Western imagination, Africa was an unknown land. But that hardly prevented philosophers, naturalists, geographers, missionaries, writers, or really anyone at all from making pronouncements about one or another aspect of its geography, or about the lives, habits and customs of its inhabitants… Africa is sometimes a strange land, marvellous and blinding, and at other times *a torrid and uninhabitable land*. It appears sometimes as a region afflicted with an irreparable sterility; at others, as a country blessed with spontaneous fertility… But

whatever the beauty or ugliness of its face, *the destiny of Africa is to be dispossesse*d" (2017: 70/71, emphases added).

There is a lot to be said about terra nullius; Springborg suggests that

> the early modern doctrine of *terra nullius* seems to have been derived from the Roman Law concept of *res nullius* and the innocuous clause in the *Digest* that uncultivated land belonged to the class of things open to the first taker; as formulated by Gaius it included 'wild beasts, birds and fish', which Grotius paraphrased as 'a numerus clausus of things unowned' that might be subject to *possessio*: 'Of such sort are many places hitherto uncultivated, islands in the sea, wild animals, fish and birds'. From these apparently innocent beginnings *terra nullius* had a long career as the pretext for the dispossession of native peoples in North America, Australia and the Middle East (2015: 114-115).

It is our desire to think about terra nullius and to simultaneously think about nobody's land, *no-bodies* land, dis/ possessible land; in conjunction with lands afar considered torrid (oppressive) and uninhabitable (unlivable/not germane to ordinary life). That is, to say all these words in the same breath. We do this because we think of the Latin meaning of the term as meaning 'nobody's land', then we think of modern colonial history that, unlike Springborg's words above, crucially includes and begins with Africa. Then we think of how the modern matrix of colonialism and slavery is not only developed in Africa but can be argued to be that which slings us forward into modernity. And so if Springborg omits Africa as not having a pretext for dispossession steeped in the notion of terra nullius comparable to North America, Australia and the Middle East yet it was still the exemplary case of dispossession, land and people alike, we can only surmise that it is because the pretexts for colonial African dispossession was something other than terra nullius. Or perhaps that colonial dispossession of African body and land is noteworthy in an-other exceptional or unexceptional way. Or that it is simple discursive oversight. Either way, terra nullius, for us a historical referent veered conceptual heuristic and intervention, properly forms part of a lineage of designations pointing towards the yonder that is sub-Saharan Africa when from the Mediterranean, and the yonder of hinterland Africa when from the eastern coast of the continent. Insofar as it not popularly understood to be applicable to black Africa, part of what we want to suggest in this study is that the Iberian wandering into areas

formerly thought torrid, and their encounter with black Africans neither Muslim nor Christian, is paradigmatic such that it forms a kind of blueprint for a relation to land and people in the new world and the Indian and Pacific Oceans. We want to use the term 'torrid nullius' then to refer to the specific no-bodiedness and abstractness that sets the bounds for the emergence of various categories specific to what becomes the modern, that is, as specific to sub-Saharan Africa. Torrid nullius also allows to evoke other meanings of torrid, and capacities of torrid; that which implies extreme heat that melts and liquefies and thus makes fluid and adjustable and adaptable. The archetypes for nobodyness and no-bodiedness are then moulded from the raw material of torrid zones.

Back to the corner, on the corner, where Substance anticipates the prison, and as we have pondered, the corner that is, in effect, already the prison. Are we then allowed to abstract that if "Afropessimists have gone to considerable lengths to show that, point of fact, slavery is and connotes an ontological status for blackness; and that the constituent elements of slavery are not exploitation and alienation but accumulation and fungibility," then notions of scorching yet extractable lands deemed thus for their not-bodied or more acutely 'imbodied' nature, already anticipate the constituent elements of slavery? (Wilderson, 2010, as quoted by Lethabo-King, 2016, 1028). Can we think of torridness and uninhabitability as that which points towards, directs, and is an 'ontological' status for blackness, that is, that which sets that stage for and is already fungibility and accumulation?

from way back who…

Holding Mbembe's above utterances, we always seek some kind of serrated symphony with Sylvia Wynter, who weaves together a panoramic chronicle that teaches us of the terrestrial and celestial unravelling that becomes modernity. It is Wynter's sojourn into the middle-ages of Western historiography and cartography that awakens us to the digging necessary for us to write something that we feel compelled to write. We don't exalt uncritically, but we offer praise, and carry with, and move. It is Wynter then who leaves us at Mudime's search in antiquity for "Greek

and Latin writers' influence on the European invention of Africa" (1987, 81). It's a search that finds a varied lot of ancient writers' perceptions about Africa and its inhabitants, as a whole, that do by no means have any salient fidelity to what become modern conceptions of race, but in many ways that revel in modes and tropes familiar to the modern eye, albeit admittedly more fanciful. Mudimbe reads ancient Greek historian Herodotus as having suggested that "west of the Tritonian Lake the country is savage, full of wild animals and strange creatures: 'dog-headed humans,' 'headless peoples,' and 'human beings who have their eyes in the breasts,' 'besides many other creatures not fabulous'' and was indeed mapped as a "geography of monstrosity" (83/84). Mudimbe continues:

> "In the fifth century B.C., Hereodotus could state: 'to my thinking, there is no part of Libya of any great excellence whereby it should be compared to Asia or Europe, save only in the region which is called by the same name as its river Cinypus' (iv, 198). Five hundred years later, Pliny described the north of Africa in terms of the transformations brought about by Roman civilisation (NH, v, r, i4). Yet, his geography of monstrosity faithfully mirrors Herodotus's description. To Herodotus's immense space of human monsters living in the eastern part of Libya, Pliny opposes a specific area around the 'black river which has the same nature as the Nile' (NH, V, Vita, 44). Strange beings live there: peoples who do not have individual names, cave dwellers who do not practice marriage, the "Blemmyae" who are headless, satyrs, strapfoots, etc. (NH, V, VIII, 45-46). Let us note briefly that Diodurus of Sicily's ethnography of Ethiopians (Book iii) conforms to this model. It is also antithetic and presents two types of Ethiopians. There are 'civilized' ones who inhabit the capital city of Napata, and whose history is transformed for the better by a Greek-educated king, Ergamenes. Then there is the majority, the other ethnic group, who are savage (agroi) and black in colour (melanes)" (1987: 84).

The purview of mythologizing did not only move in the realm of the monstrous and beastly however. Tsri (2016) notes how various Greco-Roman writers considered and characterised Ethiopians (also spelt 'Aethiopians'), with whom there had been contact with and knowledge of as a people from the areas south of Egypt, as boasting a favoured relation with the gods thus their prodigious sanctity and military might. In Book I 400 – 430 of the epic poem 'The Iliad,' Homer writes: "for Zeus went yesterday to Okeana, unto the noble Ethiopians for a feast, and all the gods followed with him" (Leaf, Long, and Myers, 1909: 14). And documenting the feats of Cambyses II, son of Cyrus and King of Persia from 530 to 522 BCE, and in particular the encounter with

and subsequent attempted attack on the Ethiopians, Herodotus, in Book III of *Histories*, writes – at length:

> "After Cambyses took counsel with himself, and planned three expeditions. One was against the Carthaginians, another against the Ammonians, and a third against the long lived Ethiopians, who dwelt in that part of Libya which borders upon the southern sea. He judged it best to despatch his fleet against Carthage and to send some portion of his land army to act against the Ammonians, while his spies went into Ethiopia, under the pretence of carrying presents to the king, nut in reality to take note of all they saw, and especially to observe whether there was really what is called 'the table of the Sun' in Ethiopia. Now the table of the Sun according to the accounts given of it may be thus described: it is a meadow in the skirts of their city full of the boiled flesh of all manner of beasts, which the magistrates are careful to store with meat every night, and where whoever likes may come and eat during the day. The people of the land say that the earth itself brings forth the food. Such is the description which is given of this table. When Cambyses had made up his mind that the spies should go, he forthwith sent to Elephantine for certain of the Icthyophagi who were acquainted with the Ethiopian tongue… As soon as the Icthyophagi arrived from Elephantine, Cambyses, having told them what they were to say, forthwith despatched them into Ethiopia with these following gifts: to wit, a purple robe, a gold chain for the neck, armlets, an alabaster box of myrrh, and a cask of palm wine. The Ethiopians to whom this embassy was sent are said to be the tallest and handsomest men in the whole world. In their customs they differ greatly from the rest of mankind and particularly in the way they choose their kings; for they find out the man who is the tallest of all the citizens, and of strength equal to his height, and appoint him to rule over them.
>
> The Icthyophagi on reaching this people, delivered the gifts to the king of the country, and spoke as follows: 'Cambyses, king of the Persians, anxious to become thy ally and sworn friend, has sent us to hold converse with thee, and to bear thee the gifts thou seest, which are the things wherein he himself delights the most'. Hereon the Ethiopian, who knew they came as spies, made answer: 'The king of the Persians sent you not with these gifts because he much desired to become my sworn friend – nor is the account which ye give of yourselves true, for ye are come to search out my kingdom. Also your king is not just a man – for were he so, he had not coveted a land which is not his own, nor brought slavery on a people who never did him any wrong. Bear him this bow, and say – 'The king of the Ethiops thus advises the king of the Persians – when the Persians can pull a bow of this strength thus easily, then let him come with an army of superior strength against the long-lived Ethiopians – till then, let him thank the gods that they have not put it into the heart of the sons of the Ethiops to covet countries which do not belong to them'… The Icthyophagi then in their turn questioned the king

concerning the term of life, and diet of his people, and were told that most of them lived to be a hundred and twenty years old, while some even went beyond that age – they ate boiled flesh, and had for their drink nothing but milk. When the Icthyophagi showed wonder at the number of the years, he led them to a fountain, wherein when they had washed, they found their flesh all glossy and sleek, as if they had bathed in oil – and a scent came from the spring like that of violets. The water was so weak, they said, that nothing would float in it, neither wood, nor any lighter substance, but all went to the bottom. If the account of this fountain be true, it would be their constant use of the water from it which makes them so long-lived. When they quitted the fountain the king led them to a prison, where the prisoners were all of them bound with fetters of gold. Among these Ethiopians copper is of all metals the most scarce and valuable. After they had seen prison, they were likewise shown what is called 'the table of the Sun'.

When the spies had now seen everything, they returned back to Egypt [a land that Cambyses had conquered and had declared himself a pharaoh], and made report to Cambyses, who was stirred to anger by their words. Forthwith he set out on his march against the Ethiopians without having made any provision for the sustenance of his army, or reflected that he was about to wage war in the uttermost parts of the earth. Like a senseless madman as he was, no sooner did he receive the report of the Icthyaophagi than he began his march, bidding the Greeks who were with his army remain where they were, and taking only his land force with him. At Thebes, which passed through on his way, he detached from his main body some fifty thousand men, and sent them against the Ammonians with orders to carry the people into captivity, and burn the oracle of Jupiter. Meanwhile he himself went on with the rest of his forces against the Ethiopians. Before, however, he had accomplished one-fifth part of the distance, all that army had in the way of provisions failed; whereupon the men began to eat the sumpter beasts, which shortly failed also. If then, at this time, Cambyses, seeing what was happening, had confessed himself in the wrong, and led his army back, he would have done the wisest thing that he could after the mistake made at the onset; but as it was, he took no manner of heed, but continued to march forwards. So long as the earth gave them anything, the soldiers sustained life by eating grass and herbs; but when they came to bare sand, a portion of them were guilty of a horrid deed: by tens they cast lots for a man, who was slain to be the food of the others. When Cambyses heard of these doings, alarmed at such cannibalism, he gave up his attack on Ethiopia, and retreating by the way he had come, reached Thebes, after he had lost vast numbers of his soldiers. From Thebes he marched down to Memphis, where he dismissed the Greeks, allowing them to sail home. And so ended the expedition against Ethiopia" (1978: 93-94).

The palpability of the display of beatific poise and firm yet unostentatious conviction by the Ethiopians in these passages betrays the level of awe with which they were held

by Herodotus. Furthermore, the perceptions surrounding their military vigour is even more deepened and fabled by the very fact that Cambyses and his army had lost the fight before even reaching the lands of the Ethiopians, which were the 'uttermost parts of the earth'. Such is their favour with the gods that not only is the unleashing of their force preserved, but so too is it necessary that their instinct for conquering is divinely curbed lest their possible subjugation of vast lands and peoples. And so ordained is their mercy, or, so impervious are they and their lands to prevalent and terrestrial notions of value, that they bind their prisoners with gold manacles.

Following Mudimbe then, we could postulate that by the time of the late Middle Ages/Renaissance, the period that is of requisite consequence for Wynter, there did exist discursive precedents to the prevalent knowledge of some kind/s of unknown (black) lands and peoples therein, who were obscured in and by arcane overtures both monstrous and saintly. There certainly appears to be a greater knowledge of Africa and its peoples along its east coast then there appears to be of its west – that expanse that lies deep into and beyond the modern-day Sahara. It seems too the case that it is the hinterlands or less immediate portions of Africa (at this point beginning and/or ending at places variously named Ethiopia or Southern Libya or Kush), as opposed to the areas closer to the Mediterranean, that were embroiled in the hyperbolic fantastic. Indeed, it is likely that the key factor upon which assessments of civility and savage beastliness of the peoples turned was the extent to which the lands whence they came were known or imagined to being accurately known. These assessments and their guiding notions were of course part of an already existent grammar of alterity that Tsri (2016) regards as being defined by the category of the 'barbaros' or 'barbarian' which was used as immediate designation for people not touched by the sophisticated hand of Greco-Roman cultures, or their likeness. This designator of alterity did not only map the imagination south into Africa, but also offered a locutionary criterion in the identification of many other peoples, lands and customs whether in (modern day) Europe, Asia, or the Middle-East as at times strange, alien, savage, fabulous, admirable and inferior (Tsri, 2016). Alongside geography, custom, ancestry, and language, Tsri argues that skin colour was also a significant determinant of alterity in ancient Greco-Roman literature (Tsri, 2016).

The skin colour of the Ethiopians, whose lands purportedly extended from the south of Egypt to the edges of habitability represented by torrid zone, is here instructive. In the abridged version of Lidell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* (1909: 19), the translation offered for Ethiopian is written thus: "**Αἰθί-οψ**, οπος, ὁ, fem. **Αἰθιοπίς**, ίδος, (αΐθω, ὄψ) an Ethiop, negro, properly *Burnt-face*" followed by a couple of associated words denoting 'burnt,' 'burning heat,' and 'fire' and then followed by the entry "**αἴθονσα** (ϛc. Στοά), ἡ, (αΐθω) the corridor or vestibule of a house; mostly looking East or South, to catch the sun – whence the name". The darkness of the Ethiopian's skin is thus said to be so because of their proximity to the sun; an inescapable mark of its blinding glare and burning char, and perhaps what is owed their said closeness to the heavenly light and warmth of the gods. This apparent adjacency or close association with the sun echoes throughout Herodotus' quote above, through the allusion to the storied 'table of the sun', and is a prominent feature too in the writings of other Greco-Roman authors.

In Book I, 21 – 52, of *The Odyssey* by Homer, said to be the sequel to *The Iliad*, the propinquity of the Ethiopians to scorched regions teetering on unbearable is made evident: "Howbeit Poseidon had now departed for the distant Ethiopians, the Ethiopians that are sundered in twain, the uttermost of men, abiding some where Hyperion sinks, and some where he rises. There he looked to receive his hetacomb of bulls and rams, there he made merry sitting at the feast but the other gods were gathered in the halls of the Olympian Zeus" (Butcher and Lang, 1887: 2). The reference to Hyperion (Titan of heavenly light and father of Helios, god and personification of the sun, in Greek mythology) and a place of rising and place of setting, is said to betray a commonly held belief in antiquity that Ethiopia and India were in fact not that separate geographically; at times the same place, at times one the extension of the other, at times only separated by a body of water (Red Sea or The River Nile), but both the most proximate to the sun's mercy (Tsri, 2016; Snowden, 1970). Snowden does however make the point that inasmuch as the 'Ethiopian' and 'Indian' were interchanged, collapsed into one, and confused, one still maintains the ability to tell whether Indian or Ethiopian is being written of (1970). Invoking the grammar of alterity mentioned earlier, Tsri writes:

> The conventional divisions based on the perceived differences between Greeks or Romans and barbarians were reconstituted to capture and reflect the new group, the Africans. The reconfiguration of those who were neither Greeks nor Romans and barbarians was based on their proximity to the Greco-Roman geographical location. The inhabitants of the known regions located nearer to the Greeks and Romans were regrouped under the generic name 'Scythians' or 'Nomads' and the inhabitants of the regions far removed from them were designated Ethiopians. However, the term 'Ethiopian' was later used strictly to designate foreigners inhabiting the regions of Africa. Pliny brings to the fore the importance of skin colour in the Greco-Roman categorisation when he observes that Indians were burnt by the sun but not as burnt as black as Ethiopians (2016: 30).

Snowden corroborates this view stating that "Ethiopians were the yardstick by which antiquity measured colored peoples. The skin of the Ethiopian was black, in fact blacker, it was noted, than that of any other people" (1970: 2). If not the sun that caused the extreme blackness of the Ethiops then it was the earth on which they dwelled, or at least a combination thereof. Either way, environmental theory, as Tsri would have it, "established a direct relationship between geography and what was referred to as 'the influence of the laws of nature', which means that the inhabitants of a place assimilate into their physique and character the nature of their land, water and air" (2016: 30). Perhaps an example of what could be called an environmental theory of the ancients we can catch sight of can be found in the voluminous tome *Geographica* by the Asiatic Greek geographer and philosopher, Strabo, who in Book II Part II wrote of the torrid zones in relation to the Ethiopians:

> "Poseidonius, then, says that Parmenides was the originator of the division into five zones, but that Parmenides represents the torrid zone as almost double its real breadth, inasmuch as it falls beyond both the tropics and extends into the two temperate zones, while Aristotle calls "torrid" the region between the tropics, and "temperate" the regions between the tropics and the "arctic circles." But Poseidonius censures both systems, and with justice, for by "torrid," he says, is meant only the region that is uninhabitable on account of heat; and, of the zone between the tropics, more than half is uninhabitable if we may base a conjecture upon the Ethiopians who live south of Egypt — if it be true, first, that each division of the torrid zone made by the equator is half the whole breadth of that zone and, secondly, that, of this half, the part that reaches to Meroë from Syene (which is a point on the boundary line of the summer tropic) is five thousand stadia in breadth, and the part from Meroë to the parallel of

> the Cinnamon-producing Country, on which parallel the torrid zone begins, is three thousand stadia in breadth" (1959: 361 -363) .

Strabo here locates the Ethiopians in the vicinity of lands rendered uninhabitable as a result of the torridness of the heat of the equator. In Book XVII Chapter I of *Geographica* Strabo furthers his project by making a connection between the geography of the place that is Ethiopia to the nature of Ethiopians: "indeed the Aethiopians lead for the most part a nomadic and resourceless life, on account of the barrenness of the country and of the unseasonable climate and of its remoteness from us, whereas with the Aegyptians the contrary is the case in all these respects; for from the outset they have led a civic and cultivated life and have been settled in well-known regions, so that their organisations are a matter of comment" (1967: 9). Strabo drives the point home; Book XVII Part II:

> "In the earlier parts of my work I have already said many things about the Aethiopian tribes, so that the description of their country may be said to be included with that of Aegypt. In general, the extremities of the inhabited world, which lie alongside the part of the earth that is not temperate and habitable, because of the heat or cold, must needs be defective and inferior to the temperate part; and this is clear from the modes of life of the inhabitants and from their lack of human necessities. They indeed live a hard life, go almost naked, and are nomads; and their domestic animals – sheep, goats, and cattle – are small; and their dogs are small though rough and pugnacious. And perhaps it is from the natural smallness of the people that men have conceived of Pygmies and fabricated them; for no man worthy of belief professes to have seen them… The Aethiopians live on millet and barley, from which they also make a drink; but instead of olive oil they have butter and tallow. Neither do they have fruit trees, except a few date-palms in the royal gardens. But some use grass as food, as also tender twigs, lotus, and reed-roots; and they use meats, blood, milk, and cheese. They reverence as gods their kings, who generally stay shut up at home. Their greatest royal seat is Meroe, a city bearing the same name as the island… The Aethiopians also use bows, which are four units long, are made of wood, and are hardened by fire; and they arm the women also, most of whom have a copper ring through the lip; and they wear sheep-skins, since they have no wool, their sheep having hair like that of goats; and some go naked, or wear round their loins small sheep skins or girdles of well-woven hair. They regard as god the immortal being, whom they consider the cause of all things, and also the mortal being, who is without name and not to be identified. But in general they regard their benefactors and royal personages as gods: of these the kings as the common saviours and guardians of all, and special individuals as in a special sense gods to those who have received benefactions from them. Among those who live near

> the torrid zone, some are considered atheists, since it is said that they hate even the sun, and revile it when they behold it rising, on the ground that it burns them and carries on war with them, and flee for refuge from it into the marshes. The inhabitants of Meroe worship Heracles, Pan, and Isis, in addition to some other, barbaric god… And this is the last I will say of the Ethiopians" (1967: 141-147).

And of the Libyans, Strabo, in Book XVII Part III, continues:

> "Now let me describe Libya, which is the only part left for the completion of my Geography as a whole… Now the writers who have divided the inhabited world, according to continents have divided it unequally, for the threefold division indicates a division into three equal parts; but Libya lacks so much of being a third part of the inhabited world that even if it were combined with Europe it would seem not to be equal to Asia. Perhaps it is even smaller than Europe; and in power it is much inferior, for the greater part of the interior and of its ocean-coast is desert, and it is dotted with settlements that are small, scattered, and mostly nomadic; and in addition to its deserts, its being a nursery of wild beasts drives out people even from the land that could be inhabited; and it overlaps a considerable part of the torrid zone. However, the whole of the coast opposite to us, I mean that between the Nile and the Pillars, and particularly the part which was subject to the Carthagininians, is settled and prosperous; but here too some parts here and there are destitute of water, as, for example, in the regions about the Sytres, the Marmaridae, and Catabathmus" (1967: 155).

Although writing about four centuries later, Strabo's stance stands towards the Ethiopians stands in contrast to that of Herodotus. Whereas for Herodotus the tallness of the Ethiops could be said to conjure images of a bodily reach and extension heeding to the summoning of the divine sun; for Strabo, the blistering earth and sweltering sun that those closest to the torrid zones have it ritually ingrained to evade, leads to a wincing hunch turned permanent shortness of person and animal alike. This starkly negative association defining Strabo's view is not dissimilar to the assertions attributed to Aristotle a few centuries earlier than Strabo, but after Herodotus, in its positioning within an environmental theory framework. In Book VII Chapter VII of *The Politics*, Aristotle writes:

> "The races that live in the cold regions and those of Europe are full of courage and passion but somewhat lacking in skill and brain-power; for this reason, while remaining generally independent, they lack political cohesion and the ability to rule over others. On the other hand the Asiatic races have both brains and will-power; so they have remained enslaved and subject. The Hellenic race occupying a mid-position geographically, has a measure of both. Hence it

> continues to be free, to have the best political institutions, and to be capable of ruling all others given a single constitution" (1970: 269).

Aristotle's omission of the areas we now call Africa in this formulation could may well be due to his geographical placing being such that it includes Ethiopia and surrounds as part of the Asiatic regions and includes the more immediate parts of North Africa as part of the Hellenic cultures, or not. What is for sure is that notions of alterity from the Greco-Roman perspective do seem to have been importantly comprehensible through geographically determined natural dispositions. Snowden shows how Ptolemy, in marking a division between Ethiops as exemplary of nearness to the intemperate climes of the equator and Scythians as a model of peoples near the intemperate zones of the north poles, attributes a natural 'sanguineness' to those of warm climes and a natural frigidity to those of frosty climes (1970: 174). These two idealisations of a climactically determined form of alterity inform inconsistently predominant imaginations of what it means to be most unlike or 'other' in Greco-Roman literature.

One can't help but conjecture though that this was likely more so the case for the 'uttermost' Ethiop than it was the Scythian. Even though the Ethiop could be reconciled into a schema of alterity as an example of a geographic and epidermal (and subsequently interiorised) extremity without recourse to established nor normatively foundational theories or projects of *racial difference*, one gets no sense of the extent to which the Ethiop could merely and only figure as a barbarian, without corporeal qualification. In other words, is it to take it too far to suggest that the Ethiop (or blacker) disparaged or valorised, domitable or valiant, figured as the embodiment of geographic and epidermal alterity to the extent that no other figure was enabled? This even in the absence, as Snowden is at pains to show, of the type of racial cosmography that comes to typify and structure modernity? One gets the sense that an answer erring on the side of the affirmative would be vexingly unsatisfying. This, partly in light of Tsri's insights on the extent, within the Greco-Roman lexicon, of the proliferation of discursive, metaphorical, and figurative associations of the colour black with the unfavourable or ominous, with darkness or passing of light or ill-fate, or death (2016). By no means to suggest a logical and direct transplantation of these connotations onto

the bodies of the Ethiops or darker skinned peoples, and by all means to concede as imprudent and even dishonest that the sight of black skin unravelled a plethora of enduring negative overtones. But perhaps to propose that 'black' and all the different meanings it encapsulated or found kinship in lent itself to a wanton and speculative resourcefulness that could result in it captured in a labyrinth of implication and explication with black skin, from which emerged a normative possibility. This normative possibility, within a field of heterogeneous meanings, is precisely the inception of an extremity, of an 'uttermostness' unlike any other, which is the condition for the emergence of the illimitability leading up to the 'uttermost' and thus the metaphor invoking the 'uttermost'. This can certainly be gleaned from Snowden's account of the continuity of the inexistence of racial bias qua racism from the Greco-Roman periods to the early Christian period:

> "the early Christians adapted to their credo a frame of reference which had been employed frequently by Greeks and Romans to express their opinions on the equality of men. In fact, the early Christians used the Ethiopian as a prime motif in the language of conversion and as a means to emphasize their conviction that Christianity was to include all mankind. That the Ethiopian was used so was a natural development of classical tradition, for the Ethiopian was in many ways a convenient symbol for certain patterns of Christian thought. The Ethiopian's blackness and other physical characteristic conspicuously called him to the attention of a predominantly white society. The Ethiopian was the blackest and the most remote of men. Yet his blackness gave rise neither to a theory of racial superiority nor to an inferior treatment. It was in such a climate that the early Christians made it clear that the Ethiopian's blackness was to be of no more consequence to them than it had been to the Greeks and Romans… Color was inconsequential; in fact, we have seen that they regarded as black all men who had not been illumined by God's light and considered all men, regardless of the color of the skin, as potentially Christians. Ethiopians were by all means to be embraced, for the Church, in the words of Augustine, was to reach even the Ethiopians, the remotest and the blackest of men" (1970: 196; 205).

Snowden's desire to disprove the existence of any sophisticated racial imagination in antiquity carrying over to the early Christian period, at least that which bears similarity to that which would come to know in modernity, belies an acknowledgment of the import that the figure of the Ethiop as the remotest and blackest has not only on what *is* a racial imagination, but to the *formation* of a racial imagination. Johnson makes the

assertion that Eusebius of Caesarea, the exegete and Christian historian and bishop in the 4th Century, espoused a "'triumphalist' interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures, which is epitomized in the phrase 'Church from the nations'" and so "interprets biblical passages that mention the Ethiopians in a positive sense. Such instances show his focus upon the geographical remoteness of the Ethiopians [as] inhabitants of the hazy horizons of human geography, at the ends of the earth, they evinced the sweeping extent of Christ's kingdom. If even those who dwelt farthest away had become incorporated into the kingdom, then no people could be left out of the universal scope of Christianity" (2006: 176).

That the early Christian exegetical writings, in a similar vein as the classical writings before, reached for and created extremity in the form of the Ethiop as an indicator of the magnanimity and extent of the most Provident's redemptive power is really a tale of a triumph over the purported limits, which is really a tale of the extent in which the Ethiop stretches and tests the limits, which is really a tale of the Ethiop's existence beyond an initiatory limit, which is really a tale of the Ethiop *as* limit and more. This is certainly the case if we recall Tsri's contention of how the extended and extendable alterity that is the Ethiop/black, as embodied torrid heat, permitted a Roman characterisation of their physical traits as perverse and improper, an exemplar of being from the heat and being on heat (2016). Indeed, the extreme darkness that is to be overcome by redemptive light might also then be read as a taming of a (potentially) transgressive carnality. The normative possibility referred to above is this; the 'remotest and blackest' as limit and more – blackness becomes the limit and that from and through which the limit is created, evinced and pushed. In the absence of any sustainable notion of 'race' and its cognate meanings, is the sustained presence of the 'Ethiop/black of the torrid zone or somewhere near it as the blackest and uttermost,' which prefigures blackness as limit and more and therefore as possibility by way of myriad adaptability or usability.

This is certainly the case when considering Greco-Roman influences on Arab/Muslim perceptions of African geo-corporeal extremity through use of the term 'Zanj'. A very much contested term with a contested etymology (McLeod, 2016; Popovic, 2011; Talhami, 1977), it appears the norm that authors broach the term by way of the 'Zanj

Rebellion' a revolt by African slaves in the Basra region of modern-day Iraq under the Abbasid Caliphate in the 9th Century. 'Zanj' therefore was a designator both for the slaves as well as the region from which they are said to have been brought; the emergent consensus seeming to accept that Zanj referred to 'blacks/negroes' and too the 'land of the blacks' – the swathe of African earth, skies and waters from its Eastern shores south and into the hinterlands. Chang (1970: 23) in a paper highlighting Chinese cartographic representations of Africa and the Indian Ocean upholds this notion of Zanj as referring to blacks as well as the land of the blacks by pointing to Ming scholar Lo Hung-hsien's 16th century revision of Chinese geographer Chu Ssu-pen's 1320 map inclusive of a representation of the Southern parts of Africa wherein "between the west coast and the inland water body, one sees an area named Sang-ku, a Chinese transliteration of the Arabic term Zangue or the 'Black People', hence the Congo". In addition, there also appears to be scant consensus existing with regard to the accuracy of the writings that take as their object, or at least one of them, the descriptions of the Zanj people. Popovic ponders:

> Now let us hasten to add that many more left descriptions of the Zanj themselves. Unfortunately, their information is rather anectdotal. Here are a few examples: "Galen, (the famous Greek doctor of the first and second centuries) says Kazouini, the Arab cosmographer and geographer of the thirteenth century, (see Athar al-bilad) attributes ten special characteristics to the Zanj: black complexion, kinky hair, flat nose, thick lips, slender hands and feet, fetid odor, limited intelligence, extreme exuberance, cannibalistic customs… Incapable of sorrow, they all abandon themselves to gaiety. Doctors say this is because of the equilibrium of the blood from the heart or, according to others, because the star Soheil (Canope) rises over their head every night and this star has the power to give rise gaiety... Two centuries before Kazouini, Masoudi [Herodotus of the Arabs], also mentions the attributes of blacks according to Galen's ten characteristics. His lists differs on a few points from the one we have just read… Would you like a prince of Arab philosophy's explanation for these characteristics of the Negro? Here is how al-Kendi, undoubtedly inspired by some Greek, puts it: God has established a chain of causes in all parts of creation; the cause exercises on the creature subject to it an influence which in turn becomes cause; but this purely subjective creature cannot react on its cause or its agent. Therefore, the soul being the cause and not the effect of the sphere, the sphere cannot react on the soul. But it is the soul's nature to follow the body's temperament as long as it meets no obstacle, and that is what takes place in the case of the Zendj. Since their country is very hot, the heavenly bodies exert their influence and draw the humours to the

> upper part of the body. Hence the eyes of these peoples, their hanging lips, their large flattened nose, and the development of the head following the upward movement of the humours. The brain loses its balance, and the soul can no longer exert its complete action on it; the swell of perceptions and the absence of any act of intelligence are the result *(Prairies d'or, ch. VII, t.I, p. 164)*" (2011: 16-17).

Popovic, at least, notes the influence of Greco-Roman perceptions and texts on these Arab considerations of the Zanj. Even when such works are kinder about the ways and nature of the Zanj, they attribute these specific characteristics to Arab/Muslim influence (Popovic, 2011). Of what was written of the Zanj, Mcleod (2011) points out "even the notable Arabic author of the ninth century, al- Jahiz, himself of African descent, described the Zanj as 'the least intelligent and the least discerning of mankind' and held that they were 'the worst of men and most vicious of creatures in character and temperament'" (59). Bashear (1997), as quoted by Mcleod (2011: 60) continues to point out how it was commonly thought of the Zanj that they were "the worst of creatures, and their physique as ruined by the heart of their homeland, and which has caused them to be burned in the womb." Whether this sun-seared alterity of the Zanj could be written in the same sentence as their enslavement in the Arab world at this particular time, as a crucial predicate for and perpetuator of it, or not, what we can say is that such are the cultures that converge upon and amalgamate the Mediterranean and its spheres of affect, by the time of the Medieval period, that there seems to already exist a tacit accord about the occurrence of degradation and it's likelihood the further south Africa moves. Whether or not race existed up until the modern period, some consequences regarding the alleged geographies and natures of blacks/Ethiops/negroes certainly moved in the same discursive milieu as those of the modern period. In the Arabic world, the Ethiop is replaceable with the Zanj as the literal and metaphorical exactitude of alterity.

What following Mudimbe's delve into ancient authorial archives offers us then, besides the sense that Snowden's conclusions about ancient 'race relations' are not as complex as should be, is not so much the European invention of Africa in the sense of a historiography or genealogy of a would-be continent as much as the ambit within which are fantastically and mundanely yielding bounds of hitherto geographically/spatially determined humanity. We gain the suspicion or surmising

that the existence and spectre of blackness allots this capricious and prosaic yielding its particular character; a suspicion that is unremitting and even unnerving, and one that can perhaps only be addressed in allowing us to carry it further into our explorations around and into these places transformed black.

from way back where…

The consideration of ancient perceptions of blacks and blackness is decidedly pertinent for us if we are to believe that the Renaissance was a period of a creation and subsequent recovery of a European history that served as a predicate for and conduit into modernity. The much maligned 'dark ages', the gloomy rigidity against which modern luminosity launches itself in endless progression, are thus simultaneously figured as paragon, forgettable, regrettable, exemplar, credulous and peremptory. We hope that it is and becomes clear that we are not uncritically holden to these depictions of Western temporality, but we are more interested in the study and development of an idea. It is a study that chronological fidelity beckons us to now focus on Medieval perceptions and ideas of blackness as following our antiquity excursions and preceding our modern; a beckoning we seek to evade in the (non) interest of flouting historiographic disciplinarity lest this reads too much as a 'history of…', and because that endeavour could be preserved for other and more particular studies.

There is, however, two important pretexts to consider for our wanderings, and they are placed within the timeframe of the Middle Ages: medieval cartography or *mappaemundi* and the expansion of the Arab empire. The mappaemundi are befitting capsules of medieval 'European' cosmographic imagination in that they are general indicators of the discursive formulations predominant, if unevenly spread, throughout Europe regarding the (rest of the) world and the heavens. This particularly in relation to the Christian worldview. Woodward (1985: 510) contends that the mappaemundi, "rooted in both the Hellenistic and Roman traditions, [were] adapted by the early leaders and scholars of the Christian Church." And so,

> for this purpose of spiritual education, however, more was required of the mappaemundi than a modicum of current geography. The maps needed also to be imbued with the richness of the Christian historical tradition. It is thus also important to realize that the mappaemundi were not snapshots of the world's geography at a given point in time, but a blending of history and geography, a projection of historical events on a geographical framework (Woodward, 1985: 514).

Relano, in agreement, states that "the making of world maps was not an identifiably separate activity in the medieval period. Maps and text were normally linked, as can be seen in some 900 of the 1100 surviving mappaemundi which are found in manuscript books. Their primary purpose was not so much to provide the precise locations of the geographical features of the earth as to illustrate by means of images, the written record of Christian cosmogony and cosmography" (2002, 10). Two types of maps are exemplary in this tradition of the ecumene – notions concerning geographies with regards their inhabitability; namely, and broadly considered, the Zonal Maps and T-O Maps. As touched upon earlier when we paid attention to Strabo's tracing of Parmenides as the one of the heirs of the zonal tradition (vertically organised climatic zones on a hemispheric continuum) by way of noting his cartographic division of the earth into five zones and locating the torrid zone in the middle of it, zonal maps have their anchorage in ancient times.

Pomponius Mela, an heir of sorts of Parmenides, and another figure worthy of mention within this convention, was a Roman geographer of the 1st century whose seminal work *De chorographia* or *De situ orbis* constructs the world as divided into two hemispheres, and five zones: two cold zones at the poles, and two temperate zones below them which are divided by a hot zone in the middle (Dilke, 1984). Perhaps the most influential of the Zonal cartographers of late antiquity and the early Christian period, whose influence would to significant extents infiltrate the late medieval/renaissance consciousness, was Macrobius, whose *Commentary of the Dream of Scipio* was compiled early in the 5th century. Macrobius' map, expanding on the writings of Roman philosopher Cicero, saw the world divided into "frigid, torrid and temperate zones" and further explained "the effect of climatic conditions on temperatures in different parts of the world and the nature of the north and south winds. In accounting for the meaning of Cicero's use of the term maculae, and his

description of people standing obliquely, transversely and diametrically opposite, Macrobius maintained the probability (based on reason, but not experience) that human habitation was to be found in parts of the world beyond the ecumene and specifically rebutted those who mocked the idea of the antipodes because antipodeans would 'fall into the sky'" (Hiatt, 2007: 151).

The notion of the antipodes is an indispensable, if at times downplayed, facet of this cartographic tradition in that it assumed, on the level of logic, the likelihood of life in the zones beyond the torrid zone, given this zone's bordering by two temperate zones on either side. Those who accepted the accuracies of the zonal maps debated the possibility of austral life outwith the ecumene, with prevalent sentiments seeming to suggest its impossibility based on the insuperability of the torrid zone in reaching yonder zones, or at least the dire affliction and torment that would come with its traversal, or that indeed if there was life beyond the torrid zone, it was not the kind of life in kin to that of the known world (Relano, 2002). Relano does point out the exceptions to these attitudes; geographers and Christian scholars alike who particularly questioned the notion of the torrid zone's insurmountability and in that rendering life on the other side probable (2002). These voices were in the minority, however, and the dominant viewpoint remained that of the torrid zone signalling the end; the beginning of the descent into the end, the end of land and life itself, or end of comprehensible, knowable, recognisable land and life. It is this reality, as Relano (2002) interestingly conjectures, that is perhaps contextualised by, or contextualises, or can be considered alongside, the persistent hold of monster folklore and its geographical nature in the Middle Ages. General medieval geographic myopia meant that the further and/or darker and/or expansive and/or unknown and/or daunting, the more liable it was that myth, marvel, mystique, monstrosity, and menace would be reified. Whether it was forests, mountains, waters, or distant lands, these places were often shrouded in fear, contempt, antipathy, and numinous reverence. The notion of the antipodes and that of geographical extremity therefore, in their cartographic manifestations, are in a sense local geographic and cosmographic perceptions, superstitions and realities on a grander scale. Relano, pivotally, when thinking about our sense of blackness and fungibility, adds:

> A first outstanding characteristic of monstrous races is their extreme versatility and variable location. From one author to the other, the number of these races is enlarged or diminished, their names are often modified, and their physical appearance is repeatedly transformed in multiple combinations… monstrous races were always located far away in distant unknown lands, inaccessible to men. This fact has both geographical and a symbolical significance, for in the medieval mind monsters exist in the confines of the world as well as in the confines of humanity. They appear in creatures in extreme form as well as in geographical location. In maps monstrous men are represented at the edge of the world as far as possible from Christ and Jerusalem. This placement was clearly linked to their monstrosity, for it had been believed since classical antiquity that there was a close relationship between physical appearance, character, and place of birth… The rigid hierarchy of values which guided the medieval concept of space helps in the location of monsters… Monstrous races are indeed creatures of the extremes. Taking the known and ordered *ecumene* as initial reference, beings aliens to the norm would only find shelter in the most remote and unknown lands, where they could freely go ahead with their unrestrained anarchy leaving the Christian world well alone (2002: 28-29).

As we demonstrated earlier the invocation of the monstrous and fantastic in relation to Africa and its inhabitants goes back to antiquity. By the Middle Ages it had emerged as a feature of much writing; Christian bishop Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* being an example, as well as being a central component in the widely read genre of traveller's tales. *Etymologiae,* compiled in the early Christian period ca. 600, was a favoured and influential encyclopaedia containing geographic and cartographic information and including the claim that "antipodeans were to be found in Libya (Africa) and that they receive that name because their feet were turned backward" (Relano, 2002: 33). Notable texts among the travelogues of the later Middle Ages comprised of Marco Polo and Rustichello da Pisa's *Travels of Marco Polo* written in the 13th Century, *The Travels* by the Odoric of Pordenone written in the early 14th century, and the popular *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* scribed by Sir John Mandeville later in the 14th century. Of the three, Marco Polo's text is regarded as engaging the least in the wondrous, grotesque and inexplicable due to a literary style relatively averse to hyperbole and the ethnographic credibility that his eye-witness accounts had afforded; this is unlike the other two more popular texts at the time whose narratives were a combination of folklore, other traveller's scripts, and curiosity (Parry, 1964). Mandeville, in continuance of the belief of a torrid zone somewhere in the region that begins as sub-Saharan Africa, wrote

> In that country of Lybia (that is to say, Lybia the low) that beginneth at the sea of Spain where the pillars of Hercules be, and endureth unto Egypt and toward Ethiopia – in that country is the sea more high than the land, yet it passeth not its marks. And whoso turneth toward the east, the shadow of himself is on the right side; and here, in our country, the shadow is on the left side. In that sea of Lybia is no fish; for they may not live for the great heat of the sun, because that the water is evermore boiling. And many other lands there be that were too long to tell or to number (Mandeville, Denney and Filmer-Sankey, 1973: 34).

Ethiopia, again in line with conventional geographic thought was thought by Mandeville to be somewhere in the region of, or continuous with India, and this is evident in how Ethiopia is mentioned as part of his travels east towards India. Of this land he writes

> In Ethiopia all the rivers and all the waters be troubled, and they be somedeal salt for the great heat that is there. And the folk of that country be lightly drunken and have but little appetite to meat and they have commonly the flux of the womb. And they live not long. In Ethiopia be many diverse folk; and they go so blyve (nimbly) that it is marvel. And the foot is so large that it shadoweth all the body against the sun, when they will lie and rest them. In Ethiopia, when the children be young and little, they be all yellow; and when they wax of age, that yellowness turneth to be all black (Mandeville, Denney and Filmer-Sankey, 1973: 38).

Parry, pointing out the legacy of Mandeville's text, explains how

> Mandeville had his importance in the Reconnaissance [invoking the Renaissance to name the particular period of 'discovery', that is, maritime exploration that is coupled with conquest/colonisation]; for probably no book did more to arouse interest in travel and discovery, and to popularise the idea of a possible circumnavigation of the globe. Gradually, however, as the search for India by sea got seriously under way, the unique value of Marco Polo's "Travels" as a reliable source of information came to be generally recognised among the more penetrating amateurs of geography. It influenced most of the pioneers of the Reconnaissance. Prince Henry of the Portugal knew it in manuscript. It was printed at Gouda in 1483, and frequently thereafter. Columbus had a printed copy. (1964, 24).

What we gather here therefore is how fantasy and cartographic science were fairly inextricable and how this had very concrete implications for the cosmography of the world throughout the upcoming centuries. As a tradition of mapping that regularly embraced the monstrous and marvellous, zonal maps and in particular their characterisation of torrid zones and the inhabitants in, around or over it surely had

consequences for perceptions regarding peoples and places found in lands considered uninhabitable. We place zonal maps alongside another cartographic tradition that also had an impact on the geographic imaginations of Middle Age Europeans, particularly given its at times visually pronounced Christian overtones; the T-O maps. Isidore of Seville emerges as the key figure in this custom of mapmaking, issuing some of the first T-O maps in his works *Etymologiae* and *De Natura Rerum* (Relano, 2002); and significantly, the map used in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* was a T-O map similar to those labelled as the Hereford mappaemundi – made by Richard of Holdingham, a prebendary of Hereford Cathedral in England ca. 1300 (Mandeville, Denney and Filmer-Sankey, 1973).

They are named thus because they typically represented the world as a circle divided into three parts by lines that form a 'T'. The perpendicular lines constituting the shape of the 'T' are intended to represent the three major bodies of water (Mediterranean Sea, Nile River, and the Don River) separating the three known but roughly and uncertainly determined districts of the world: Asia, Europe, and Africa (Libya). Half of the circle is occupied by what we would call Asia, usually placed at the top, and the other half divided into two equal parts denoting the regions roughly corresponding with Modern day Africa and Europe. The lines that form the T, which represent the aforementioned bodies of water, join at the centre of the circle, which represents the geographic region in which the Christian holy city of Jerusalem is found and in part explains the opportunity for the interpretation that contextualises the map in a markedly Christian ecumene (Relano, 2002). Furthermore, taking heed of what undoubtedly and more conspicuously grants the reading of the T-O ecumene as constructed upon Christian tenets, Williams (1997: 13) points out how "when, in the ninth century, the Escorial manuscript [of *Etymologiae*] fell into the hands of Eulogius and was supplemented, this precise text (Etymologiae XIV, 2, 3) was placed on the page, folio 25r, facing the primitive map and was introduced by another small T-O map. To this later T-O diagram, however, were added the names of Noah's sons-Shem, Japheth and Ham, for Asia, Europe and Africa, respectively-outside the circle of the globe". What this specific geographic delineation has gained, during the Middle Ages, but arguably, more so since, is an association with the 'Curse of Ham' particularly

with regard to its connection to the justification of the enslavement of African peoples and subjugation of blacks and dark-skinned peoples from the Renaissance period onwards (Goldenberg, 1997; Kenny, 2007; Whitford, 2009; Williams, 1997). The 'Curse of Ham' – a providential History, originally locatable in the book of Genesis, is told thus:

> After the Flood Noah planted a vineyard and, drunk from the wine, lay naked in his tent. His son Ham saw him naked and told his brothers. When Noah awoke he placed a curse on Ham's descendants, to be 'servants of servants'. From the three sons of Noah the whole earth was peopled. The descendants of Ham, according to Genesis, spread out to inhabit Egypt and Canaan and also parts of Asia Minor. The London Religious Tract Society's *Short Comments on Every Chapter of the Holy Bible* (1838) explained that the whole of Africa 'was peopled mostly by the descendants of Ham'. In the *Cobbin Family Bible*, published in 1844, a map showed the dispersal of the descendants of the sons of Noah. Those of Shem occupied most of Arabia and Persia, parts of Asia Minor and, interestingly, the southern regions of India and Sri Lanka. The descendants of Japheth occupied most of the Eurasian landmass including the British Isles. Coloured brown on this map were all the regions of Africa it showed, parts of Arabia, much of southern Asia and, with a question mark to denote uncertainty, that northern area of Scandinavia inhabited by the Lapps (Sami) (Kenny, 2007: 370).

The maps mentioned in the passage above are not the type of maps that fall under our specific focus, but they do look to maps such as the T-O as their cartographic and ontological progenitors. Our intention is not to dwell too much on the concept of, and realities informed by and unfolding from, the notion of the 'Curse of Ham' – they should be obvious enough, or not. But it is to display the sort of rhetoric in conference within the medieval geographic discursive realm. The extent to which this is the case is debatable: Braude (1997) argues that the idea of the 'Curse of Ham' or the 'Sons of Noah' and its geographic manifestation did not infiltrate the consciousness of common population Europeans to as widespread and significant extent as the modern mind exposed to nation-states and clearly defined continents would think. And in addition, that the nautical voyagers and surveyors had more to thank Ptolemy and the Catalan Atlas for inspiration, consult and education than they did T-O maps that exhibited and endorsed a Hamitic account of 'racial' or 'ethnic' diversity. Indeed it is tenuous to suggest, according to Braude (1997), that an illiterate and myth-prone medieval European society were generally concerned with, or maintained a clear,

consistent, uncontested and collective sense of the specificities concerning the sons of Noah's descendants and the regions and countries within which they could be located. What Braude is willing to concede regarding Ham and his inconsistent medieval allegiance to the region we call Africa, is that Ham "was an *Archetypal Other*, the example of qualities not to be emulated, but, as Mandeville's and Luther's depiction intimate, the cruel mastery he could command was powerfully seductive" (1997: 133, emphasis added). In any event, it is these two aforementioned works of cartography, namely Ptolemy's *Geography* and the Catalan Atlas of 1375 ascribed to Abraham Cresques, a Jewish cartographer from the Majorcan school of cartography, while perhaps not fitting within the Zonal/T-O nexus that we have chosen to concentrate on here, that are worthy of further mention because of their impact on Renaissance scientific geographic thinking.

Geography, compiled in Alexandria ca 150 CE, became particularly widespread in the 1400s through its widespread reproduction and textual interpretations, proved particularly appealing to maritime practitioners not only because of its extensive documenting of places, but also its technical acumen in providing a "new theoretical framework from which the *ecumene* was conceived and a new method for representing known territories on a map, all of which initially clashed with the traditional world picture of the Middle Ages" (Relano, 2002: 126). The extent to which these Ptolemaic renderings enjoyed popularity despite clashing with and not fully satisfying conventional Christian ecumenal prescripts, is also indicative of the early modern feelers already visible in the 1400s; and thus how these seafarers, to whom such texts as *Geography* taught the nautical skills with which they had to be equipped, were at the forefront of the modern revolution in the same way as the lauded philosophers and scientists. Consistent with the prevalent knowledge of Libya (Africa), beyond certain points, however, Hunwick (2005: 109) notes how for Ptolemy, "Africa south of the Sahara… simply becomes a large blob, filling out the semi-circle of the map and extending eastwards until southern Africa, [where it] is shown 'facing' China [and] it even appears joined to Asia creating an 'inland sea' out of the Indian Ocean". The southern part of the blob was considered terra incognita.

The Catalan Atlas, on the other hand, in line with the portolan charts reputable for their relatively high-level accuracy, provided more detailed representations of at least the more northern sub-Saharan areas by way of illustrations, place names, and depictions purportedly representative of the peoples from those regions. Problematics notwithstanding, and even though a significant amount of the information contained in the Catalan Atlas' (including that of 1375) "still came from hearsay of merchants in the European colonies of North Africa, when compared with the erudite mappaemundi based on classical authority, portolan charts represent a great leap forward towards a more positive geography of Africa" (Relano, 2002: 98). Positive, here, we imagine, in relation to positivism and not optimism; for this Catalan Atlas remains rather in the dark about the darkness that is and falls from Central and Southern Africa. What the notion of 'hearsay from North Africa' as well as the stories of both the Ptolemy's *Geography* and the Catalan Atlas permit us to conjecture is the extent to which the cultures of the Mediterranean were intertwined, and thus the level of influence that the Middle Eastern world had on medieval Europe.

We've already discussed, importantly, how Arabic/Muslim concepts of the Zanj looked to Ancient Greece for their descriptive precepts. It is therefore only becoming to briefly touch on how this could have become so. It is historically notable that the Hellenistic empire stretched to Arabic lands with places like Alexandria in Egypt, a powerful centre of Greek culture and influence. In the time following the demise of the Greek empire and rise to prominence of Arab conquerors in former Greek colonies many Greek texts came under Arabic scrutiny and control with this intensifying during the expansion of the Islamic empire from the 7th century under the Prophet Muhammed and the establishment of the successive Caliphates following his death. To quote Chism (2009) at length:

> Islam's continually altering and often anxious uptake of its ancient and Hellenic antecedents parallels and intersects with Christianity's troubled relation to its Jewish and Hellenic predecessors. Both Islam and Christianity manage heterogeneous origins. Byzantine Greek Orthodox culture (which heavily influenced the Ummawy caliphs) was Greek speaking but determinedly anti-Hellenic; the Byzantines were much more interested in exploring and establishing new forms of Christian writing, learning, and history than in mining secular learning from ancient and pagan sources. The Byzantine Empire placed a barrier between an

> eastern center of learning, in Persia and Mesopotamia, and a western one, in Egypt. These lands were then administratively unified by the early Muslim conquests of the Byzantine lands of the Fertile Crescent from Egypt to Persia (Berkey, *Formation*). When the Abbasy caliphate came to power, moving the capital of the Muslim empire from Damascus to Baghdad, it drew on the local expertise of a diverse cultural mix - Christian and Jewish Aramaic speakers, Persian speakers, and Christian and Muslim Arabs. The early Abbasy caliphs built their state in a multilingual, multireligious society already invested in ancient Greek and Persian textual study. The caliphs sponsored translation into Arabic of Pahlavi and Greek texts, a politically expedient way to assimilate, recognize, and co-opt the traditions, skills, and knowledge base of their heterogeneous polity. Knowledge became cultural capital fairly early and to an astoundingly profitable extent, and the caliphs' example was emulated at all social levels from civil servants to the petty nobility to private citizens. The Abbasy translation movement lasted two centuries, with determined support at virtually all levels of society (Gutas) (626-627).

If we corroborate our leanings with Parry's (1964: 26) assertion that the "Arab scholars… were the most direct inheritors of classical Greek learning" then we can begin to be confident in thinking of the Arab/Muslim role as the intellectual and cultural archivists, curators, interlocutors, innovators and bridge between the classical period and the Renaissance, as being indispensable to modern European history. It is no wonder then that it is thought that al-Idrisi, the Cuetan-born acclaimed Arab geographer of the 12th century, is said to have had access to Arabic translations of Ptolemy's *Geography*, or its bootlegs/samples/derivatives, before producing *Tabula Rogeriana*, his commissioned work for the Norman King of Sicily, Roger II (Parry, 1964). It is no wonder too that besides the aforementioned probable sources of knowledge about Africa, we can infer, as does Brentjes (2008), that the iconography and illustrative techniques that in many ways sets the Catalan Atlas of 1375 apart, particularly in its representation of Africa, clearly evinces a filiation with Byzantine and Arabic mapping and illustrative traditions. Parry pushes this postulation further by suggesting that

> The accounts of the great Arab travellers – Masudi, Ibn Kaukal, El Bekri, Ibn Batutta – were unknown to Europeans in their original form, but traces of their influence appeared in Europe from time to time. Edrisi, writing in Norman Sicily in the twelfth century, transmitted scraps of Arab knowledge to western Europe. Much of this information was not only inaccurate, but from the point of view of the maritime explorer, positively discouraging. Masudi, for example, described accurately enough the places he had visited, but beyond them relied upon hearsay

> and guess. He believed the 'green seas of darkness' (the Atlantic) to be unnavigable, and the frigid and torrid zones of the earth to be uninhabitable; and in these opinions he was followed by many later writers, both Muslim and Christian. A more practical channel of information was the school of Jewish cartographers and instrument-makers working in Majorca in the later fourteenth century. Iberian Jews were well placed as intermediaries between Christendom and Islam, and the Majorcan Jews had particular advantages because of their commercial contacts in the Maghreb. They were familiar with both the Arab and (such as they were) the European traveler's tales from Africa (Parry, 1964: 21).

The Catalan Atlas of 1375, produced by an Iberian Jew, is also noteworthy for its portrayal of several African leaders, most (in)famously Mansa (emperor) Musa of Mali, a devoted African Muslim, about whom legend tells of his Hajj being an unmatched display of opulence and generosity enabled by his privileged access to deep reserves of gold. Planet Asia (2018) channels the emperor of Mali in song, who then tells us "I'm still the nig / to the top of the pyramids, my pilgrimage." A time prior to modern demise of the sub-Saharan, spaces unknown; it could have gone any way at this point, and if he's still the nig [ger], all the wealth in the world, then who were we? Who are we? We… digress.

As we have seen, and will see, that the development of cartography in the Middle Ages, in all the multifariousness that we have touched on above, helped position the conquistadors and their backers in the lands from which they emerged, in a perfect maelstrom of knowledge, ignorance, arrogance, valour, eagerness, desperation, and competitive recovery. This in particular with regard to the mapping and actual visual representations (or lack thereof) of torrid zones/terra incognita and black spaces or places rendered black. The lines, however hazy, and with whatever history, were drawn.

from the ships that come, the ships that take…

Here was a fault line, certainly adjustable and differently determined, but seemingly pervasive and necessary. In 'Europe', the torrid zones, or unknown spaces that constituted certain (and uncertain) parts of 'Africa' was by the time of the Middle Ages

the inscrutable yonder within which if human-like life dwelled then it could only be in unexplainable forms which nonetheless offered degrees of soundness to forms hither. In renditions where these lands were not shrouded in complete outlandishness, they were also tantalising prospects promising an array of possibilities. Indeed, about half a century before Columbus landed in the 'new world' of the Caribbean, impelled by opportunity for trade in the Indies which prevalent geography often placed as not-too-distant if distinguishable from the eastern parts of Africa and learned in Christian humanist/Scholastic worldviews, Portuguese explorers set sail.

In the air are stories of Arab/Muslim dominance and presence in parts of Africa unexplored to them; whether it was profuse and enticing tales of Mansa Musa, whose supposed revelling in an abundance of gold had provided him immeasurable wealth during his reign in the previous century; or stories of the purported Islamic trans-Saharan monopoly over the lucrative gold trade; or the allure of the fabled Prester John, a Christian priest and leader (and thus possible ally) believed by differing accounts, to hold great authority over vast expanses in near and far eastern lands either somewhere in India, the Middle East, or Ethiopia. It was indeed the case that these Iberian explorers, depart a region still in the throes of the geographic, socio-political, religious, economic, discursive power struggle they would centuries later go on to think of as the Reconquista. And so it was the convention that the Iberians were still imbued with the spirit of the Crusades that had seen them and their disparate allies battling away the influence and presence of Islam across the Mediterranean world. Knowing and/or curbing Arab/Muslim influence in the parts of Africa unbeknownst to them was thus also influenced by Iberian geopolitics as well as the struggle for religious influence. The conquering of the North African territory of Cueta in 1415 unfolded under these auspices, with the large expedition overwhelming the town and thus forming a victory ground containing the spoils of war, a strategic outpost for the Iberians in the war against Islam and Semitic sway, as well as a not too disconcerting vantage from which to learn of lands and seas yonder, thus enabling the charting of further inroads into North African regions as well as sub-Saharan Africa (Blackburn; 1997; Fuchs and Liang, 2011). Russell-Wood mentions how

> Ceuta was also just the first in a long line of Portuguese expeditions to, and discoveries in, Africa and Asia. Contact with previously unknown religions, institutions, cultures, and peoples forced the Portuguese to reassess such concepts as "honor" and "just war." Crown policy had to be modified in response to new political and economic developments, for it could no longer be satisfactorily couched in the traditional language of an "ideology of crusade" (Russell-Wood, 1978: 28).

These seafarers-cum-crusaders-cum-slavers-cum-colonisers then, sought and in many ways also created a newly discovered sea route around the "hitherto nonnavigable Cape Bojador on the bulge of West Africa – a cape that had been projected, in the accounts of the earth's geography given by medieval Christian geographers, as being the *nec plus ultra* line and boundary marker between the habitable temperate zone of Europe and the inhabitable torrid zones" (Wynter, 1995: 9). What encountering these unknown 'religions, institutions, cultures, and peoples' also did is further define and redefine their very own religions, institutions, cultures, and peoples. Their landfall, therefore, initiated a series of repercussions that saw the (onto) logical elaboration as well as critique of "mainstream [medieval] Christian geography that had been based on the authority of the classical doctrines of the ancient Greco-Roman authorities" (Wynter, 1995: 9). As noted above, the influence of Arab/Moor/Islam cultures on Iberian geographic knowledge of Africa by Arab historians and geographers (who had, uniquely, long been in contact with Africa and Africans from its east coast and regions of the Sahara), had infiltrated into Iberian societies and therefore had somewhat of an influence on the extent and the forms of the *elaboration* and *critique*.

By elaborated we mean that if we understand torrid nullius – that is, torrid zone, no bodies land, dis/possessable land, open field, conceptual precursor of terra nullius- as a black space, as that which clears the space for and is already fungibility and accumulation, and potentiating blackness, then we can't but think that the whimsical, creative, and violent project of questioning, answering, detailing, designing, mapping, planning, defining, confusing, depleting, deleting, categorising, arranging, building that is elaboration, was inevitable upon and after landfall. Put differently, the elaborate that becomes of lands decreasingly torrid nullius, was anticipated by the elaborate that once was torrid zone (from the ancient through the medieval); the

illuminating and wanton detail proffered these lands achievable only through the utter openness upon which it could be imprinted. And by critiqued or challenged we mean that if the "Cape Bojador had marked the limits of Christian being, and had thereby functioned as the boundary marker of the habitable regions of the earth enclosed in God's providential Grace, so that beyond its limits, the then believed to be non-habitable regions of the Torrid Zone (i.e the zone which included today's sub-Saharan Africa) could be made to attest to the chaos that ostensibly analogically threatened any Christian whose behaviour moved outside the prescribed pathways of the Church," then experiences in these new conditions that weren't as chaotic were somewhat at odds with this analogous outcome (Wynter, 1995). It thus makes sense as Wynter notes that "Columbus [visited] the trading fort built by the Portuguese at El Mina on the west coast of Africa in or around 1482, and his empirical experience of the habitability of that torrid zone against the then learned premise of its uninhabitability was to lie at the origin of his own 'grand design'" (1995: 9).

So, if anything, in conventional European medieval knowledge and ethics broadly conceived, the provision of order within, and direction towards absolution from, the chaos that is the torrid zone was nowhere other than on the prescribed pathway of the Church. Bartels, quoting C. Raymond Beazley in James Williamson's *A Short History of British Expansion,* further adds that "rumour had it, up to the early fifteenth century, that 'any Christian who passed [Cape] Bojador' – the southernmost point explorers had reached on the West African coast – 'would infallibly be changed into a black, and would carry to his end the mark of God's vengeance on the prying'" (1997: 48). The 'insolent prying' continued nonetheless, and step by step, from 1415 onward, "Portuguese mariners made it beyond that first awesome obstacle and around the next, the Cape of Good Hope, in much the same color they started in" (1997: 48). Indeed, the continued triumphs in exploration and prying, without seeming castigation, could be interpreted as examples of not only the merciful extension of God's common grace but also as testament to the sort of feat and gratuity resulting from a persistent inquisitiveness based on Christian humanist and Scholastic method and knowledge. The Romanus Pontifex papal bull of 1454, and Dum Diversas preceding it, which granted the Portuguese Crown pre-eminence over lands

discovered by Portuguese voyages could therefore have only provided fresh impetus and a formally legitimated premise to make of the openness what they pleased.

We can thus continue to say, as Mudime points out, importantly if we are to consider a period enmeshed in and enmeshing theological and (emergently) scientific thinking, that "*missionaries*' accounts and those of *anthropologists* witness to the *same episteme*. In their variety and contradiction, the discourses explicitly discuss European processes of *domesticating Africa*. If these discourses have to be identified with anything, it must be with European intellectual signs and not with Africa cultures" (80, emphases added). Travellers, explorers, slave-raiders and merchants notwithstanding, notions of missionaries and anthropologists being purveyors of differing knowledge systems are specious in the face of uninhabitable lands. With the proliferating critique or practical unfolding of prevalent epistemologies, which is also the emergence and progress of new ways of knowing and thinking, the manner of conceptualising these formerly uninhabitable zones in relation to the inhabitable, as well as the development of new threatening analogies designated for those whose behaviours threatened the pathways of the nascent order, became pertinent, necessary and inevitable.

Indeed, and when thinking further about the elaboration and challenging of prevalent knowledge of the torrid zones and torrid nullius, this was even the case with the conceptualisation of the peoples of the uninhabitable - that "unknown expanse of land that glimmered black under the equatorial sun" (Blackmore, 2006: 27). About the Portuguese invasion of Guinea – which had previously constituted part of the 'land beyond' – and enslavement of its people in the early modern period/Renaissance Herman Bennet makes the point that as the "Portuguese, and subsequently the Castilians, ventured south into the 'land of the blacks', they constantly had to contend with the theoretical and practical recognition that Guinea did not represent [actual] *terra nullius*" and thus had to appeal to a complex assemblage of an extant as well as incipient taxonomical, temporal, spatial, and cosmological notions that would be definitive of the early modern period (2005: 28, emphasis original).

This, for example, allowed the differentiation of the 'types' of blacks/natives found in the 'land of the blacks' and thus the association of "aesthetic distinction with corporeal differences" meaning that the "dark and unsightly captives the characterizations of whom verged on the bestial actually embodied their own difference" (Bennet, 2005: 29). These scatterings of an emergent modern racial discourse meant that "as the Portuguese entered the 'Land of the Negroes', these distinctions continued to suffuse the slave raiders' imagined taxonomy which linked phenotype, the corporeal, and geography" (Bennet, 2005: 29). Therefore, as the uninhabitable slowly ceases to be the uninhabitable; the designation/construction, differentiation and categorisation, enslavement and estrangement, of the natives becomes more pointed. In other words, no sooner does it begin to conclude being descried and/or known as the *land beyond* does it become the land beyond of those who would land beyond the boundaries set in and by the descent into modern humanity.

As indicated earlier in Mudimbe's reflection on ancient knowledge of Africa, speculation abound about the types of creatures and humans habiting the lands beyond; knowledge of and what constitutes these people ever-changing and the borders containing them ever adjustable. The figure of the 'Moor', and variations thereof, however, emerged as a crucial boundary marker and harbinger in the Middle Ages when thinking of the inhabitants of the uninhabitable. Upon suggesting the etymology of the term 'moor' to coincide with the geographical region that is Mauritania, Blackmore writes:

> "Maurus could, from an early date, be a catch-all term for Africans in the pens of western writers. So varied were the understandings in the early Middle Ages, in fact, that by the eighth century ''Mauritania' [became] a word, like Christendom, whose geographical significance depends on the context' [Barbour 258]. This is a crucial point since it establishes that Mauritania – and, by extension, *moro* or *mouro* – was open to the exigencies and positionalities of ideologically produced discourse, even though putatively what was being referenced was the 'objective' fact of geographical boundaries. Mauritania ceases to be a specific region in Africa and becomes an itinerant and constructed zone of religious, linguistic, and racial alterity whose existence and location reflect culturally or politically determined

> objectives. That is, the location of Mauritania in large part depends on who's doing the looking" (2006: 29, emphases original).

Bartels (1990; 1997) agrees with slipperiness of the term as an authoritative ethnic signifier or racial categorisation given its adaptability across time and space. On occasion it designated a religious identity (Muslim), at times a region (North Africa/Middle East/Ethiopia), and intermittently a 'racial' and/or 'ethnic' group (Arabs, Moslems, Berbers, Ethiops, blackamoors). The term 'morisco' was not only employed in reference to Spanish Christians who had converted to Christianity (willingly or unwillingly) from Islam, but also as a mostly denigratory determination of the extent of 'moorish' blood and/or Islamic (moor) influence still detectable in them and their descendants (Fuchs, 2007). What becomes clear however, is its use as a determinant of an alterity. And more specifically, as a close yet boundless expression of a geographically originating racial alterity/difference. It is an approach to, as well as boundary marker and harbinger of the uninhabitable in this way; Mignolo (2007: 318) asserts that "as the Mauri [from Mauritania] were dark-skinned people from Africa, 'Moor' was extended to African populations beyond the north of Africa". In this extension lies the blurred and docile frontier between an alternately (relatively) knowable and exotic alterity and difference, and an unknown vastness, openness, torridness, fungibility, that is, blackness. Bartels writes:

> "It is difficult to determine what qualifies as discourse on the Moor in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* as it is to identify such discourse in the *Historie*, precisely because of the indeterminacy of the term. Hakluyt's descriptions of Africa are filled with 'Africans,' 'Negroes,' 'Ethiopes' who are not always kept distinct from each other and whose nationality, and sometimes color, ally them with the Moors. Yet the latter are nonetheless given a somewhat separate space within the text. Just as Richard Eden initially maps out the divisions of the continent in his 'briefe description' of Africa, so Hakluyt also marks a division within its people: like Africanus but more explicitly, he assigns Moors to a particular geographical region, the 'hither part' of Africa, which is 'now called Barbarie'. Accordingly, it is in accounts of Barbary, for the most part, that Moors appear. Beyond this regional difference their singularity amidst other Africans is less consistent and less clear (and demands an essay of its own). What does seem true in general, however, is that Hakluyt's Moors appear more civilised than his other Africans… Despite his higher, more civilized, sometimes orientalised, and sometimes Englished status, however, the Moor is no less the object of othering than other Africans here or within

the *Historie*. For here, too, those aspects that might prove the Moor's authority too similar to 'ours' or too legitimate as a competing alternative to 'ours' are presented as Other or erased" (1990: 439).

Blackmore picks up Bartels' pen, and carries us further, at length:

"Zurara's next chronicle, the *Cronica de Guine*, narrates the Portuguese explorations of the West African littoral under the initiative of the infante D. Henrique (Prince Henry, "the Navigator") through the mid-fifteenth century, explorations that were also frequently slaving raids. It is in *Guine* where Zurara tells of the passage of Cape Bojador in 1434, long a *terminus ad quem* of European knowledge of Africa and beyond which no recorded voyage existed before Gil Eanes's 1434 expedition. The geographical regions and peoples Zurara documents in *Guine* are largely sub-Saharan; despite centuries of legends and stories about Africa and its inhabitants, sub-Saharan Africa was a *terra incognita,* so much so that it 'was… a "new world" in its own right as much as the latterly named America' (Relano 1). There is a general geographical division established by Zurara separating the more well-known parts of North Africa from the more unfamiliar, sub-Saharan territories, the 'terra dos mouros' (land of the Moors) and the 'terra dos negros' (land of the blacks) which begins at the Senegal River. Zurara refers to sub-Saharan Africans inhabiting these lands alternately as the *negros* (blacks), *guineus* (Guineans), or *mouros* (Moors). The physical characteristics of these 'new' Africans claims repeated attention in *Guine*, and it is this chronicle where we find Zurara's only references to the supposed existence of the Torrid Zone (a staple of medieval geographical thought taken from Macrobius's climatic map), the region of Africa believed to be so hot that it prevents habitation… 'Ethiopia' was also a toponym of shifting boundaries, and Ethiopians were automatically associated in the medieval imaginary with blackness of skin. Zurara appears to be arguing metonymically (using the Ethiopians as the best known case) for the blackness of all Africans living outside the northern regions. Zurara's references to the scorching heat of the sun as causing outer blackness echo Alfonso X's comments in the *Libro de las cruzes* in which the monarch groups all Africans under the label 'ethiopes' and makes the following observation: ***(the immense heat is not tempered in that region and it is evident in them [Ethiopians] in their color and their black skin and kinky hair. Because of it their spirits do not circulate due to the great dryness and heat that burns them, and that is why they do not possess a subtle intellect, and have no state, or laws, or decrees, and not pursue sciences or knowledge… and this is why… in their manners and customs they are like beasts*)**. Alfonso's references to the 'espiritos' and the 'entendemento' coincide with the physiologically based interior wits we saw above. Alfonso's 'spirits' are the so-called 'vital spirits' (Latin *spiritus*, Greek *pnuema*), the form of refined blood thought to cause the body's operation by emanating from the heart and communicating with all the body's members. Here, the heat of Africa prevents the spirits from reaching all members of the body (and thus

> causes a slowness of movement) and adversely affects the intellect or *entendemento* so that Ethiopians – and indeed all black Africans – are 'like beasts'. Alfonso invokes medieval physiology and psychology to explain the inferior alterity of Ethiopians and is so doing makes 'Africanness' an interior, physiological quality, an organic and therefore 'natural' disposition that is created and conditioned by the sun's heat (2006: 37-39).

Both Bartels and Blackmore make the observation that even in the context of the knowledge and usage of other terms to designate Africans 'racially', 'ethnically' and geographically, 'Moor' remains a relatively slippery term that maintains its faculty to designate multiply. What they both also note however, is a strong sense of a differentiation between a more contiguous if accessible yet averse 'Moor' and 'Moorishness' or 'Moorlike-ness', and a more far-flung if impenetrable yet malleable range of epithets in comparison and relation. 'Moor' functions as an entry-point of an alterity, whilst also the interior of alterity; it is the disparate slippery that precedes without necessarily descending into and upon, nor acceding to, but varyingly infused by, the bewildering slope that is and into darkness. 'Moor', and its work, anticipates a grander anticipation, the expanse of which grants 'Moor' its originary anticipatory powers. In other words, the more thither the 'Moor' the less hither its mores and thus more wither causes its core. Again, the less proximate the 'Moors' position the more profound its atrophy. Once more, inasmuch as the variability and flexibility of 'Moor' is afforded to it through its being an entry point to an alterity, a grammar of an alterity, it is also a fundamental condition of alterity the acuteness of which is determinable through its proximity to the bewildering slope, the fungible unknownness (range of interchangeable epithets) that is, ultimately, blackness.

Commenting on the Portuguese royal chronicler Gomes Eanes de Zurara's account of a slave raiding expedition in mid-fifteenth century 'Guine', Wolf writes how "the West Africans, about whom the Portuguese were hitherto wholly ignorant, were made eminently familiar by being conflated with those 'Moors' whom the Portuguese nobility 'knew' all too well" (1994; 455). 'Moor' provides an initial schema of coherence, a language with which to make sense of geographies and peoples heretofore unknown precisely because of its ability to encapsulate an alterity, and alterity proper. This "new Moor" that is encountered by the Portuguese slaver party as Blackmore explains "disrupts expected paradigms of signification, one of the many

ways the Other represents 'un object potential de scandale'" (2000: 104). This 'Moor' is also not new in this way, it is rather a variation; if the Other represents 'an object of potential scandal' then 'Moorness' is not only a degree of scandal but also a potentiality of a greater scandal. Zurara, as quoted by Wolf (1994: 467), goggling at a parade of captives at a slave market in the Portuguese port town of Lagos, writes: "And these, placed altogether in that field, were a marvellous sight; for amongst them were some who were fairly white, handsome, and well-proportioned; others were less white, more like brown; others again were as black as Ethiopians and so ugly both in face and body as almost to appear, to those who looked upon them, the images of the lower hemisphere".

The 'new Moor', we see, is but a rendition of a beginning, middle, or end; that is, a scale or calibration, of putrefaction resulting from a breach by a hemispherically determined 'blackness' and 'ugliness'. The resonance and concentration of this breach is also the potential of the scandal and the potential that is the scandal. The degree of potentiated scandal, and therefore permissible invocation of metaphor, is what ultimately allows and enables the movement away from 'Moor' and into other categories such as 'negro' and 'Ethiopian'. This 'new Moor' came upon by the Portuguese isn't Ethiopian but *as black as* them, and *almost appears as* an image of the lower hemisphere. The relative proximity of the Moor to the abstract and fathomless Ethiop is also what permits the Moor to be mobilised as metaphor for scandalous alterity. In explaining what the 'Black Legend'[vi] has to do with race, Mignolo brings up the way in which Spain's history and proximity to the Moor was used metaphorically to prove the retrogressive nature of the Spaniards:

> As such, race corresponds in time and in space with the New World order that emerged after the American Revolution in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789. In Spanish (and Portuguese), in the Iberian Peninsula and in Ibero-América, race is *not* taken to be an invention of the Enlightenment in the countries north of the Pyrenees, but of the Renaissance. I would suggest that when the secular and scientific discourse on race (which covered up racism as ideology) was formed in the nineteenth century, the conceptual frame had already been in place since the Renaissance. What secular science and philosophy did in the nineteenth century was to translate and adapt the racial system put in place by theology in the sixteenth century. Theology served as the conceptual framework to argue "racial differences" in two directions simultaneously: First, Spain, and later England and France, distinguished themselves

> from the Muslims (in the north of Africa) and the "Turks" in the East (the Ottoman Empire). Second— and this is when the Black Legend comes into play—England distinguished itself from the Spaniards, who, the English said, had Moorish blood and acted as barbarians in the New World (2007: 312-313, emphasis original).

The use of metaphor by Zurara is thus both instructive and apt as an indication of the gravity of the potentiality of the scandal and thus what facilitates the movement away from 'Moor' (new or old) into the range of epithets representing differing exhortations of scandal. It also permits us to read the expeditionary and colonial endeavour as crucially narrative and literary; Blackmore thinks that "there is elaborated in *Guine* what [Blackmore is] calling a 'topography of (mis) reading,' a loose, problematic alliance between foreign space and the possibilities of hermeneutic authority. The journey across foreign soil by the explorers is tracked by Zurara as an analogue of the problems of representation. Raiding expeditions, to be sure, are reading expeditions" (2000: 104). What is summoned through the metaphorical invocation of the Ethiops, and others, is an allusion to the most extreme fathomable example of alterity, an example that teeters on the edge of this very fathomability if not already falling beyond it. If the Portuguese explorations of deep Africa are tracked by Zurara as an analogue of a problem of representation, then lower hemispheric images and supposed corporeal traits are indeed analogies of the *problems* of representation.

The terra nullius, or more appropriately, torrid nullius, that was/is represented by Guine, is made readable, read, made writable, written, edited, and mapped through the employment of such literary techniques, specifically the metaphorical allusion to a looming yet shifty land beyond, a threatening and scandalous lower hemisphere, and is very profoundly a "writing journey that maps the undoing of received schemas of the other" (Blackmore, 2000: 105). As the boundaries and nature of the torrid zone change and move, so becomes severely undone the already relatively undone body of the 'Moor' to the point where 'Moorness proper' will no longer hold. If the 'Moor' functions as an entry point to an alterity and is a condition of alterity, that is, a 'received schema of the other,' that is again, the Other proper, then in Guine the paradoxical nature of this schema is compounded by torrid nullius and its ever-shifting prospects. The 'Moor' here, ponders Blackmore, is "a conundrum (what language

issues from it? Where does it live? Where might it be lying in ambush? Can it be trusted once contacted?) over which the sense-making activity of both explorer and chronicler must operate; it is a cipher elusive of univocal signification, an icon of indeterminacy and of slippery, shifting referentiality" (2000: 105).

This referentiality is key as it offers and augments the creative license required for this writing, mapping and undoing. What lies in the land beyond therefore is possibility and expanse upon which a range of creative metaphysical pursuits could be undertaken, and too, that which returns to proffer meaning, albeit inconsistently workable, in lands within. As extensively quoted above, and to cite again Bartels' and Blackmore's noting of a geographical division coming to organically bear upon the relative articulacy of the category 'Moor', Alfonso's vision of the intemperate climes of the torrid zone as moulding appropriately intemperate 'beast-like' bodies under the moniker 'Ethiopes' does the work of permitting further differentiation of 'Moors' from the more Northern and thus temperate regions of Africa and elsewhere. What Alfonso's communication of pervasive medieval knowledge of the torrid zone or land beyond or 'land of the blacks' tells us is, to ask for Lethabo-King's assistance once more, that "conceptions of blackness mediated the ways that the natural world could be imagined as manipulable and an open landscape of flux" (2016: 1023).

Indeed, it is the blackness of the skin of the Ethiops, as well as the blackness of the expanse that is the unknown, and Torrid, and of no-body, that invigorates Alfonso's imaginings to assert the existence and mechanisms of a natural and spiritual world that accounts *for* the scandal, and too gives account *of* the problem. Although in reference to later Iberian conquests of the new world as well as British colonial exploits, but also quite relevant for our discussion now and here, Lethabo-King argues that "Black bodies in their fluttering, stretching, and changing states became a symbol for unstable borders, processes, and the shifting power relations that inspired key renderings… [and] Blackness, as expansion and spatial possibility becomes a constituting feature of the spatial imagination of the conquistador/settler rather than just another human laborer exploited as a mere technology to produce space" (2016: 1023). The extremity of the blackness of the Ethiops' skin is that extent and severity that not only pierces through and creates the various and irresolute gradations of

blackness/'Moorishness' away from the 'Ethiop' and 'land of the blacks', but also is fundamental to the malleability and mouldability of the Ethiop itself and its lands.

By way of unknown and unowned scapes, lands beyond and bewildering, unbearable and oppressive zones, and through the black, malformed, monstrous skin and bodies best exemplified by the Ethiops, blackness in the 15th Century imagination of European colonisers and thinkers emerges as potential and potentiating. It is the expanse and spatial possibility that beckons writing, reading, editing, deleting, re-writing, redeeming, categorising, explaining, traversing, mapping, knowing, owning, mystifying, exoticising, capturing, possessing, violating, controlling, disciplining, paternalising, protecting, stabilising, instabilising, capitalising, oscillation, salaciousness, and death. What we are suggesting that it is by no mere coincidence that these 15th Century incursions, and their discursive and pontificatory predecessors, are what precedes the conquistadorial aggressions beginning in 1492, the African centred (and mostly genre-defining trans-Atlantic) slave trade, Descartes' subject founding *cogito ergo sum*, the Scientific Revolution, and capitalist expansion, that is, those undertakings and episodes said to inaugurate modernity.

Indeed, in many and important, but perhaps not exhaustive, ways these incursions and what they encompass form the grammatical, ontological, cosmological, and epistemological antecedents for these undertakings and episodes that inaugurate modernity. The unfolding of modernity, in crucial aspects we argue, is the range of possible manifestations of the potential found in and encapsulating the lands beyond and their prospects. Zeroing in on the general ambience from which that exemplar category of modernity, that icon not only of indeterminacy but also of rigidity and regenerativity that is the modern human, emerges, will allow us to display the ways that blackness as extremity (abjectness), accumulation, spatial/physical possibility and raw matter provides occasion for a plethora of outcomes made common by the variable conflation and trouncing of black persons and their environs, rendering it all extractable and tractable.

Endnotes

[i] From Marlene Nourbese Philip's poem "Cyclamen Girl" under the sub-title "Vows". *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly* Breaks (2015: 15)

[ii] The lyrics are basically an admonition of corner life, where Mandoza, the protagonist, warns the corner dweller, the antagonist, about the pitfalls of hanging around on the corner. "What will you get, and how will you get it, if all you do, from early morning till night, is hang on the corner?" The song was Mandoza's breakthrough hit as a solo artist after enjoying much success with the group Chiskop. Mandoza (1999). "Uzoyi'thola Kanjani". *925 Zola South*

[iii] This is also the case, perhaps to a different degree, or in different forms, for queer men and boys, or boys and men who do not perform dominant masculinities.

[iv] Lethabo-King (2016) notes how in his account of the history of Barbados titled *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados,* the "colonial traveler and settler Richard Ligon, who first saw Black women in West Africa, became confused upon viewing them in a different context, in this case, sugar cane plantations in Barbados. Black women were not familiar with the landscape or the specific kind of agricultural labor required on the land… A gap existed between the colonial imagination's need to construct Black women as agricultural labor that could easily work and breed and the reality that West African Black women were unfamiliar with the new landscape and the labor required on plantations in Barbados. Black women had to be turned into laborers with specific skills. The slave as laborer had to be produced. In order to close the gap, a new metaphor was needed. The metaphor functions as a space of slippage where one thing can become another (Mohanram 1999). Within this space of slippage, Black women (and men) become nature to fill in the conceptual gap until Blacks become more familiar as laborers" (1027-1028). Lethabo-King is here suggesting the level of conceptual coherence offered by malleable and abstract blackness, even if, or particularly when, apparently fantastical.

[v] In a conversation between Saidiya Hartman and Frank Wilderson titled "The Position of the Unthought" Wilderson remarks "… And this is why Africans say we're just too complex. They think black Americans are complex and moody and depressive. I'm very jealous of the African position in many ways. There are all these therapeutic grounding wires, so when apartheid is slapping them down, they've got this whole other psychic space that they just go into" (196 – 197). The African position alluded to here is the supposed preserved interior life despite colonialism that we referred to in the introduction. Wilderson is jealous that Africans have an alternative point of reference not exhausted by the black-as-slave category and thus are able to maintain some of the markers of personhood that can be fought for and recognised in modern civil society (tradition, culture, language, place/land). Elsewhere Wilderson writes, at length, "… what does it mean to be positioned not as a positive term in the struggle for anti-capitalist hegemony, i.e., a worker, but to be positioned in excess of hegemony, to be a catalyst that disarticulates the rubric of hegemony, to be a scandal to its assumptive, foundational logic, to threaten civil society's discursive integrity? In White Writing, J.M. Coetzee (1988) examines the literature of Europeans who encountered the South African Khoisan in the Cape between the 16th and 18th centuries. The Europeans were faced with an "anthropological scandal": a being without (recognizable) customs, religion, medicine, dietary patterns, culinary habits, sexual mores, means of agriculture, and most significantly, without character (because, according to the literature, they did not work). Other Africans, like the Xhosa who were agriculturalists, provided European discourse with enough categories for the record, so that, through various strategies of articulation, they could be known by textual projects that accompanied the colonial project. But the Khoisan did not produce the necessary categories for the record, the play of signifiers that would allow for a sustainable semiotics. According to Coetzee, the coherence of European discourse depends upon two structuring axes. A "Historical Axis" consists of codes distributed along the axis of temporality and events, while the "Anthropological Axis" is an axis of cultural codes. It mattered very little which codes on either axis a particular indigenous community was perceived to possess, with possession the operative word, for these codes act as a kind of mutually agreed-upon currency. What matters is that the community has some play of difference along both axes, sufficient in number to construct taxonomies that can be investigated, identified, and named by the discourse. Without this, the discourse cannot go on. It is reinvigorated when an unknown entity presents itself, but its anxiety reaches crisis proportions when the entity remains unknown. Something unspeakable occurs. Not to possess a particular code along the Anthropological or Historical Axis is akin to lacking a gene for brown hair or green eyes on an X or Y chromosome. Lacking a Historical or Anthropological Axis is akin to the absence of the chromosome

itself. The first predicament raises the notion: What kind of human? The second predicament brings into crisis the notion of the human itself. Without the textual categories of dress, diet, medicine, crafts, physical appearance, and most important, work, the Khoisan stood in refusal of the invitation to become Anthropological Man. S/he was the void in discourse that could only be designated as idleness. Thus, the Khoisan's status within discourse was not that of an opponent or an interlocutor, but rather of an unspeakable scandal. His/her position within the discourse was one of disarticulation, for he/she did little or nothing to fortify and extend the interlocutory life of the discourse. Just as the Khoisan presented the discourse of the Cape with an anthropological scandal, so the Black subject in the Western Hemisphere, the slave, presents Marxism and American textual practice with a historical scandal (2003, 23 -24)

[vi] See the anthology, *Rereading the Black Legend: the discourses of religious and racial difference in the Renaissance empires* (2008) edited by Greer, M.R., Mignolo, W.D. and Quilligan, M.

“That skin become

Slur slide susurration”[i]

shed the skin, shrink the iris
human don’t corrupt I
frank when I speak, chief wordsmith alumni
feel like I’m chasing traces
focus faded
trying to outrun the taking of these hard places

- **Yugen Blakrok, “Secrets of the Path”, 2013**

humanity don’t feature
yet we find ourselves in it
flesh and blood
up against the metal rod

- **EJ Von Lyrik, Freedom in a Cage, 2008**

the be come
apprehended

- **Marlene Nourbese Philip, 2008**

i never walk tall
the need is missing
for i am the shadow man
when all tall men measure their being
against the length of a shadow-man

i am the silent shade

of generations down there
where the soil holds the real you
against the afrika sun

even as sound is dry
across the winter scale
i am the echo of things
you would have wanted
but could never have had
because I am NOW
and again tomorrow
the silhouette of life's pulse

as blackness walks slowly towards dawn
i am the shadow of your being
- and perhaps mine!

i am your sky tonight-
and your future soon!
i am the shadow-man

- **j.v.b gumede, "Mongs Azef (1945 – 1975)", summer '74**

but if you taking stock
and you don't save a spot
for the forsaken lot
from the baking hot
land of the slaver's dock
that's your prerogative
we polar opposites

- **Stogie T "Sway in the Morning Freestyle", 2018**

the terrored dusk screams
the land
in the beginning

- **Dollar Brand "Africa, Music, and Show Business", 1967**

And so the question of humanity. And the question of this black's relation to it. Not so much questions we want to answer but questions we can't help but consider when wanting to do what we really want to do; which is think to think of a performance under the sweltering and seething sun. Blackmore starts us off by sharing with us how

> Moors are emanations of African space, in and outside of Mauritania, bodies that both conjure and mark Africa. In Fonseca's line of reasoning, Africa begins to exist in the fifteenth century in a fundamentally different way from previous eras: Africa now exists primarily because of the bodies it generates, and the capture and transportation of Guinean slaves captures space itself for the purposes of exploitation. By metonymically racializing African land through the colors of its inhabitants, Zurara and others attempt to establish otherness as an inert fact of nature waiting to be revealed through the hermeneutic activity of writing. The natural world colludes with Zurara's Christian cosmos and its moral hierarchy by marking its inhabitants visibly and therefore placing those inhabitants in an order of being that it is up to interpreters like Zurara to read. In the early pages of *Guiné,* the chronicler summarizes geographic knowledge on Africa and writes: "I see those Garamantes and those Ethiopians who live under the shadow of Mount Caucasus, black in color because they live opposite the full height of the sun; and the sun, as it is in the head of Capricorn, shines a strange heat on them that is demonstrated by the movements from the center of its eccentric or by the proximity of these people to the Torrid Zone" (2009: 32-33).

The hermeneutic activity of writing; that is if we understand a comprehensive process of writing as inclusive of reading, invention, imagination, query, quotation, marking, abstraction, erasure, ordering, amongst other things. While perhaps not carrying the metaphor of writing consistently and throughout, the following chapter is an order of meditations regarding the black generated by the torrid nullius that is Africa, and who indeed generates the torrid nullius that Africa is. If the previous chapter concerned itself primarily with the invention, elaboration, corroboration loop of a geographic and a cosmographic, then this chapter searches for something more flesh and bone. And spirit. In other words, and addition to Blackmore, we can't help but be informed by a sampling of Kamau Brathwaite's words in the poem *Nuum*, wherein he writes: "and out of the ground/ these men with black faces… they still worship the gods that make them smile/ that allow them to welcome the stranger/ that will render them heavily prisoner" (1987: 34). In more words, we aim to look closely at the contours of that

thing that comes from the thing. We want to muse and contend that the lead up to the encounter between the European and black African, the encounter itself, and what follows the encounter, all unfold in a particular manner that fulfils a somewhat preordained trajectory of the unthought/overthought inhabitants, or proximate inhabitants, of torrid zones.

Furthermore, we indulge the experimentation that this being or that thing provokes, as well as what it means to perform in these conditions. We want to think through this problematic in four parts: firstly, and following directly from our discussion of the category of the 'moor, we consider the late-medieval 'pre-encounter' account of Ethiop-as-close-inhabitant-of-torrid-zone and how this rendition opens up for us a reading that shows the centrality of the geographic, climatological, pneumatological, theological, biological, and edificational in creating a matrix from which sketchings of improperly constituted beings and thus properly constituted persons are penned. Secondly, we contemplate how Renaissance geography, religion, and geo-politics, professing of ancient knowledge, and humanism, all entangle to excavate narratives of the fleshly and thus define early Christian/political subjectivity. Third and fourthly, we consider where the conceptual elaboration of the Fallen Flesh might take and leave us when thinking about that thing and its relation to humanity. The last two parts of the chapter are a loose response and playing with what was laid out in the first two parts (as well as the first chapter). They attempt to be akin (even if falling short) to an improvisor looking at a chart of music and then trying to interpret it into new and productive directions. It thus takes the form of experimenting with asking the question "where to from here?" as well as answering this question.

The rise against

Alfonso X, or "King Alfonso X, el Sabio, the Wise or Learned (1221 – 1284), the son of San Fernando, said to be 'one of *los grandes civilizadores* in the annals of mankind'" – is considered an indomitable figure in Castilian intellectual, cultural, and political history (Sedgwick, 1925: 81). We want to return to Alfonso X's words in the previous chapter – his account of the blackness of skin and spirit alike of the Ethiopian as a result of the intemperate weather of the torrid regions and hence their easy

characterisation as beastly and lacking subtlety of intellect. Crucial to Alfonso's determination is the medieval notion of vital spirits, which within the Galenic spirit schema are those forces or energies that collectively bestows upon the body its life, sentience and sapience. The vital spirits, as Blackmore (2006) pointed out in the excerpt shared in the previous chapter, centre the heart and the blood vessels as their domain of activity wherein an enlivening force, vitality, is sent throughout the body either in the blood, with blood, in place of blood, or as blood. These spirits, in optimal conditions, work in tandem with the animal spirits whose domain of activity is centred on the nerve complex that is the brain (Koppl, 1991). In a text contemplative of the concept of 'spiritus' and its medical, philosophical and religious influences both ancient and medieval, Bono focuses on the writings of 12th century English philosopher Alfredus Anglicus, pointing out that

> the function of vital spirits suggests irradiation as a mode of distribution, where the function of animal spirits does not. Vital spirits must vivify the body as a whole, continually and without external prompting. Hence some internal cause of distribution must always be operating through the vital spirits, if they are to serve their proper function. By contrast, animal spirits operate only intermittently and often sluggishly: they are subject to fatigue and need some external cause to give rise to sensation and motion. Since irradiation occurs continually and intrinsically, it is thus fitting only to vital spirits. The second point is that Alfred turns to the concept of irradiation in connection with vital spirits because of historically significant assumptions about the nature of life and of organic functions in the animate organism. As we have seen, life is the act of the soul according to Alfred: all vitality – in the body as a whole, as well as each of its parts depends upon the activity of the soul. But the soul, for Alfred, is not present in the whole body and its individual parts. It is spatially localized in the heart as the *arx corporis* and *domicilium animae*. Removed from the body as a whole, the soul does not directly and immediately animate it and sustain the vital organic functions of each part. Through the agency of its prime active principle, heat, and its instrument, *spiritus*, the soul imparts life and organic activity to the heart and the rest of the body (Bono, 1984: 116-117, emphasis original).

Irradiation – the exposure of something to a diffusion of light or heat. This logical provision brings with it the question of whence comes the initial impetus resulting in the activity of the vital spirits (the soul, for Alfred); a question not fully within our curiosity to answer. The notion of heat (and its concomitant glare) as an elementary

medium does however prove immediately relevant. Earlier in the text, Bono had made the contention that

> as a corporeal organ the heart can claim as inherently its own only the essential potentialities for motion of elemental matter. Since, on the other hand, the soul for Alfred is incorporeal and incapable of being the *inherent* principle of a bodily organ like the heart, the one alternative left is that the heart's motion is caused by an *external*, extrinsic principle acting contrary to the heart's essential elemental nature. Such an external principle is found by Alfred in heat (*calor*) which causes air and blood to expand and thus dilate the heart itself. In the Aristotelian and Galenic traditions this heat is usually thought of as inherent in the heart as the vital *calor innatus*. While Alfred does regard the heart as the *sede*s of this heat in the body, his metaphysical perspective forces him to regard its presence in the heart as accidental, not substantial. Hence the proximate cause of the heart's movements, while spatially located in the heart, is onto logically extrinsic to it (1984: 115, emphasis original).

In attempting to read Bono alongside Alfonso the Wise's portrayal of the Ethiopians, the heat in question appears to emanate from different sources. The heat that Alfonso X is referring to as causing the dark skin, the lack of intellectual subtlety as well as lack of adequate industry in the Ethiopians, is obviously the external climatic heat of the torrid zone, sun and earth alike. The Aristotelian-Galenic-Alfredian heat on the other hand seems to be heat ontologically extrinsic to the heart but functionally intrinsic to the operation of its system. It is generated from within the body, but from without the heart itself, yet evident only in its function. Somehow then, for terrestrial heat and dryness to figure in any way so as to modify the nature of the Ethiope, it has to fundamentally compound the inherent Aristotelian-Galenic heat of the heart and therefore dilate the heart too widely, with the air and blood expanding too much, leading to an aberrant yet symptomatic hypotensional dizziness, sluggishness, light-headedness, blurredness, and immanent propensity to fainting, fatigue, and falling.

This is the case if Blackmore is correct in pointing out that the spirits that Alfonso X speaks of are specifically the vital spirits, since it is these spirits that enjoy the privileged and necessary employ of internally generated irradiative energy. This too is the case if Blackmore is incorrect, and the spirits that Alfonso X is referring to (the spirits that do not circulate because of the heat and dryness) are in actual fact animal spirits. Are these not spirits already prone to the induction of sluggishness and fatigue

given that they are cut off from a consistent vivacity regardless of external environs? So then the external terrestrial heat, its severity, thus fails to resonate at the level of accuracy required to give "rise to sensation and motion" and therefore leaves the animal spirits of the Ethiopes especially sluggish and fatigued hence their failing to evidence any of the markers of civility, and cognitive and spiritual advancement that Alfonso X deems otherwise normal. Either way for Alonso X, regardless of whether spirits vital or animal, the torrid heat – the cosmographic reality – has spiritual consequences. And too the obverse – we conjecture. It can be said that the spiritual concatenations have cosmographic consequences; indeed, as pointed out in the previous chapter, the longstanding historical presence of Christianity amongst Ethiopian communities was discursively mobilised in medieval Christian teachings as instantiations and allegorical examples of the reach and mercy of Divinity itself.

This is to say that the barren perdition that Alfonso X invokes is as much an appropriate result of its inhabitants' short-circuiting of the spirits, of the Spirit, as their spiritual immobility or excessive/exaggerated mobility (in the case of compounded heat of the heart) is a result of the hellfires of the torrid zone. We need to keep in mind that if Ethiopia and Ethiopes presented, in the medieval mind, a representation of the edges of the physical world, a beginning of/and the descent into the unknown, a teetering reaching for the divine tugging hand of redemption, a cesspool marked by absence of scientific and cultural comprehension, then their lot in the parched provinces of the world could be transformed for the better by the appropriate tempering and modulating and civilising force. It is important to also keep in mind the epistemological ambit contextualising Alfonso X's erudition; as Bono (1984) writes:

> During the twelfth century western Europe witnessed a tremendous broadening of its intellectual horizons, a broadening which was stimulated by a growing desire to understand man's immediate environment, Nature. Both ancient authors, like Plato, Aristotle, and Galen, and many Arabic authors on medicine, natural philosophy, and cosmology were translated and studied as possible keys to a better understanding of nature. In this process many of the problems generated by Galen's medicine and that of his Hellenistic and Arabic followers were not only inherited by medieval writers. They were also absorbed into the project of exploring nature, man's relation to it, and its relation to the realm of the divine… The concept of *spiritus*

> in physiological thought was considered in the twelfth century within this larger context of the relations between man, God and nature (97-98)

With these things in mind, we propose the pursuance of this inkling that the malfunctions/absence of the spirits, of the Spirit, in the Ethiop emerges, conceptually and in practicality, as both cause and consequence of damnation to/in torridness. We take further instruction here, therefore, and as ever, from Sylvia Wynter. But not before a brief glance at Whelan's discussion, important even if in reference to the scholarship constituting the Platonic vitalism accessible to the learned men of 16/17th centuries, on the enlivening capacities contained in the Divine Spirit. According to Whelan (1996: 267), human reason or nous, human soul and human spirit is resultant from an essential vitalising Spirit and is unequivocally an endowment from God and therefore "man's closest link to God and Truth". Humanly exercises or displays of rationality and reason are attributable to an originating divinity and showcase within their own context a triumph of terrestrial divinity. Indeed, the material, the corporeal, the earthly, sensual and fleshly, when fully manipulable by and beholden to the soul, the Soul, is defeated and capitulates to that unvanquishable strive towards the essential Perfection of the Divine Spirit. The Cambridge Platonists argues Whelan "associated motion and strength with spirit, [and] inertness and sluggishness with the body" (1996: 268). When this is not the case, when the corporeal emerges victorious, when Spirit, through spirits, cannot transform the sluggish or fatigued mass of matter into an 'energised human being', that is, 'spiritualised matter', at an ontological level, then the embodied result is akin to Alfonso X's Ethiopians who represent an example of inadequately spirited flesh. The unbearable and oppressive heat of the torrid zone, is again, not only what causes the immense blackness of skin, but is also what leads to a short-circuiting in spiritual enlivening and a dominance of fleshly matter that forecloses the virtues of divinely ordained reason and soul.

We continue then with the conjecture, and, as promised, with Wynter, who suggests that the Judeo-Christian medieval imagination functions on a spirit/flesh divide or structuring principle where the "Redeemed Spirit is mapped onto the incorruptible heavens, onto their celestial realm, while the Fallen Flesh is mapped onto the earth or the terrestrial realm… as the abode of fallen mankind" (2000: 176). Van Peursen,

pondering the concepts of 'body, soul, spirit' in the both the Old and New Testament of the Bible, tentatively concludes that

> 'Flesh' is more, certainly, than 'the body' and denotes first and foremost the modus vivendi of the whole man, in the broadest and most neutral sense. Slaves are to obey their masters 'according to the flesh', that is, those who are their masters in this earthly and therefore historically and socially determined situation… This has nothing to do with man's physical nature as such, but with his manner of life in this world. The fact of his earthly existence is not in itself sinful; but it becomes the occasion for sin when man orientates his life wholly and utterly upon it. To walk 'in the flesh', then, is the antithesis of walking 'in the spirit'. In the former case a man fails to take God into account as the setting against which life is to be lived; whereas in the latter his whole existence is directed and controlled from precisely such a standpoint (enlarged upon in Rom. 8:4ff). There is no question of the body – or the physical as such – being the sinful element in man, as opposed to the soul or spirit (1966: 98-99).

Wynter and Van Puersen are dancing in the same circle here because if we are to believe that the structuring principle referred to by Wynter then later undergoes a shattering as a result of Copernican heliocentric interventions in the sixteenth century thus setting the stage for modern astronomy, science, and subjectivity, then it is at least partly so because of the intermediary role of "earlier humanists' invention of a revalorized natural Man in the place of Christianity's fallen creature… so [that] now it is Man as a subject for whose existence the earth will no longer have to be known as his non-moving degraded fallen abode" (2000: 176). That is, the true Christian self was reinvented in the wake of Western conquest through the invention of the "untrue Other of the Christian self, as that of Man's human others" meaning that the initial structuring principle of Redeemed/Damned, Spirit/Flesh, "could not be mapped any longer on the physical cosmos" and so had to be reformulated and terrestrially mapped "instead, on the value divide projected as existing between rational humans and non-rational animals" (Wynter, 2000: 176 -177). Prior to that the "Spirit/Flesh code had then been projected onto the physical cosmos, precisely onto the represented nonhomogeneity of substance between the spiritual perfection of the heavens (whose supralunar bodies were imagined to move in harmonious and perfectly circular motions) as opposed to the sublunar realm of Earth, which, as the abode of a post-Adamic fallen mankind, had to be at the center of the universe as its dregs – and, in addition, to be not only nonmoving as it is sensed by us to be, but to

be so because divinely condemned to be nonmoving in the wake of the Fall" (Wynter, 2003: 279).

The 'nonmoving' degraded fallen abode therefore ceases to become the actual geographic dwelling of Man, who, at the very least, on the level of aspiration, witnesses the glare of Salvation, of Spirit (later Enlightenment), and in its stead becomes the damned grounding of flesh, or the earth of which the flesh is an extension, which thus functions as the unmoving dregs or accumulation around which harmoniously spirited bodies move and are provided cohesion. We witness, in Alfonso X's formulations on the Ethiopians, an example of the sketchings of the invention Wynter refers to through the cartographic mapping of a more spirited human who walks in *the* Spirit, walks in and because of the spirits, by way of a geographic designation of fleshly sun-baked, beast-like black beings. In other words, the logic of Redeemed Spirit/Fallen Flesh structuring principle is summoned by Alfonso X and is transplanted to scale for a geographically based determination. The fleshly epidermal interiority of the Ethiop as the most extreme and at the gate of the extreme, as literal and metaphorical exactitude and excess of alterity, thus overwhelms the cohesion of the body; it is more than the body, scalds and chars the skin too subdued, stretches the heart too dilated, heaves too much air, generates current surges that disable the circulation of energies, and leaves it in prime state as absolution-beckoning-piteousness. Heng (2011: 259) extends this thinking, invoking the 'moor, in the manner that we have heretofore suggested, and in pointing to how an

> illustration in six scenes of Cantiga 186 of *Las Cantigas de Santa Maria*, commissioned by Alfonso X of Spain between 1252 and 1284, performs juridical vengeance on a black-faced Moor who is found in bed with his mistress; both are condemned to the flames, but the fair lady is miraculously saved by the Virgin Mary herself… Black is damned, white is saved. Black, of course, is the color of devils and demons, a color that sometimes extends to bodies demonically possessed…

On (and in) earth, the torrid zone comes to be and represent the most extreme rendering of the abode of the Fallen Flesh, and as well as the condition of Fallenness and Flesh. On the other side, or the rest of the sides, that are and move towards Judeo-Christian Europe - its most (exponentially) judicious, albeit incomplete, embodiment of Redeemed Spirit, of Redemption and Spirit. Alfonso X's musings on the Ethiopians,

recited to a troupe of acolytes, or neophytes, in the 13th century, also pre-empts the commonplace 17th Century philosophical discussions over 'the nature of the body and the soul (or spirit)' and the 'ultimate reality of immaterial existence'. They form an epistemic heritage the consequences of which are the same for the inhabitants of the torrid, for the Fallen and falling. In obvious ways of course with the position of the Platonists and their notions of spiritualised matter touched on above. But also, with regard to more materialist positions; with those viewpoints that questioned the validity of specially ordained corporeal substances (i.e. spirits or souls) and argued that all things terrestrial and celestial, physical and spiritual, were material, corporeal, and as such, mere atoms or matter in motion set forth by a tangible God, a material Spirit (Whelan, 1996). Thomas Hobbes is the figure best exemplifying this tradition; Sarasohn explains how Hobbes

> argued that both the natural world and people are determined by natural necessity, which in every case is the action of matter in motion. Hobbes thought that determinism governs all aspects of being from the act of sense (moving bodies impinging on the human subject) to the instinct for self-preservation itself. According to Hobbes in the Little Treatise neither the "animal spirits," the brain, the soul, the appetite, nor the will have any original principle of motion. They are completely passive and act only in response to the impact of external agents… the ethical implications are clear. Hobbes built his materialistic determinism upon a logical foundation by equating a necessary cause and a sufficient cause, and thereby concluding, "Hence appeares that the definition of a Free Agent, to be that, which, all things requisite to worke, being put, many worke, or not worke, yes a contradiction" (1985: 365).

Not letting go of the Christian convictions readable in Hobbes' *Leviathan* Mitchell (1993: 82) contends

> Human beings dwell in a world of constant movement. They are impinged on by the motions of the world, which are registered by the senses, and experience these sensory impingements as appearances or representations of something from without; it is only from these appearances and representations that thought originates. Dreams and imaginings - and by this he has in mind what often passes as religion - what are these but agitations which arise from *within* the body when the organs of sense are benumbed and unexcited by outside objects? Only motion begets thought. Even the "visions" that one may claim of another world transpire from internal disturbances. Visions have no referent independent of the world of motion; if

> we could only grasp this, then *false* religion-not *all* religion-could be dispelled… Enveloped in a world of motion, humanity cannot know anything about the infinite, about God. All thought is necessarily finite. We rise above the beasts through the use of speech and method; yet, in spite of its grandeur, this height still remains within the limits of finititude. What separates humans from beasts is a difference of degree and not of kind. There can be no legitimate idea of the infinite. We can, at best, only know our inability to know it. At best, we invoke the name God not to make us conceive the infinite but to *honor* what we cannot know.

Hobbes' materialist or mechanistic stance, in the most part, is thus what permits the conferral upon him the characterisation as uniquely uninterested in attributing the traits and mores of the peoples of the Americas and Africa to an inherent inferiority, against the norm in prevalent Renaissance/early modern thought, and thus a true believer in the equality of all persons. Indeed, in Hobbes' own words "nature hath made men so equal, in the faculties of body, and mind; as that though there bee found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind then another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable" (1931: 63). However, it is the way that Hobbes' famed 'state of nature' polemic is, according to Moloney (2011), deployed rhetorically and analogously, if somewhat carelessly, to elucidate the necessity of a strong sovereign in avoidance of society marked by civil war and disorder, that opens Hobbes to possible critique for revealing an outlook not too dissimilar from that which framed or informed any colonial aggressor of the day. Hobbes cartographic familiarity for one, evident in the frontispiece of his various books (but particularly *De Cive* which was published before the *Leviathan*), betrays a knowledge of the discursive minefield that are early modern maps, and thus how their depictions were instrumental in justifying, encouraging, representing, and mapping the colonial project (Moloney, 2011). The visually represented geographic distribution of civility/barbarism, inhabitability/uninhabitabilty, known-occupied lands/nobody's land, Redeemed/unredeemed regions certainly moves in the same discursive realm as that from which Hobbes makes the oft-cited statement about the Americas in the *Leviathan*. There, Hobbes writes:

> It may peradventure be thought, there was never such a time, nor condition of warre as this; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world: but there are many places, where

> they live so now. For the savage people in many places of *America*, except the government of small Families, the concord whereof dependeth natural lust, have no government at all; and live at this day in that brutish manner, as I have said before. Howsoever, it may be perceived what manner of life there would be, where there were no common Power to feare; by the manner of life, which men that have formerly lived under a peaceful government, use to degenerate into, in a civill Warre (1931: 65).

The opening for a critique of Hobbes pointed out by Moloney, is one that we are impelled to peak our heads through. For Hobbes, then, inasmuch as all people may be equal, it is the emergence of a particular kind of Sovereign that yanks colonial peoples out of their state of nature. Why would we think otherwise given that Hobbes all too readily accepted the notions of the peoples of the Americas, for example, as living in a given state of nature? This is all the more compelling if we are to grant audience to Springborg's (2015) intrigue at the likelihood of Hobbes' acquaintance with the *reality* of 'terra nullius' based on his time at the Virginia Company – an English trading company with the mandate to establish colonial outposts in North America – as a younger adult, before scribing his more notable works. There's a most certainly a concession from Springborg, who although disagreeing with Moloney's central thesis, does say that Hobbes' "Virginia Company experience and, specifically, lurid accounts of the Jamestown massacre, were probably the source of his negative judgment of 'savages of America' characterizing the state of nature" (2015: 144). But, Springborg maintains that "this did not preclude their eventual transition to political society because, contrary to Maloney, Hobbes did not see them 'trapped' there. So, he defines the state of nature precisely in terms of the arts and sciences that native peoples in the Crown Colony of Virginia lack, but that it is hoped they will eventually acquire" (2015: 144-145).

And this is key, an archetypal lack has to be demonstrated in order for an outside driven acculturation to the arts and sciences, as an example, to eventually take place. This line of thinking is not difficult when one imagines the exploits of an organisation such as the Virginia Company. For a philosopher like Hobbes though, this apparent proximate experience of what was considered terra nullius should have enriched him with a more nuanced and additional set of ideas for an analysis of the socio-cultural, political, economic, intellectual and institutional life of America societies. Surely an

explication of a Leviathan specifically native to the Americas, or the parts of Africa not included in the 'some of Africa' (Moloney, 2011) that is said to have adequate scientific and institutional history, was due consideration?

In the absence of this, his brief and cursory comments about colonised peoples can only inspire a suspicion not of an authorial laziness, or of the result of a determination of conceptual negligibility, but rather of an indictment of the seriousness and attention worthy of them given their perceived lack of institutional, cultural and political advancement, as well as a performative, narrative, and conceptual gesture suggestive of the empirical reality that is the ever-present antagonist in the allegorical tale of the Sovereign. We remember here that the Ethiop is not beyond salvation, yet it is necessary for them to be placed at the furthest starting point in an order of alterity (and the furthest even if near end point), or even beyond it, in order to truly exhibit the power of the civilising force that is divinity, that is, the force that yanks them from the starting point towards the end. Can the same be said of Hobbes' savages? Conceptually, are they the savage flesh especially cultivated and refined by the sovereign spirit?

We are compelled to return to Alfonso X once more, who when pointing out how the Ethiops' Fallennes, that is, their non-tempered Flesh, as what causes and precludes a non-circulation of spirits which is what leads and leaves them unable to "*possess a subtle intellect, and have no state, or laws, or decrees, and not pursue sciences or knowledge*" (live in a state of nature, have no sovereign?) is engaging and speaking in/from a grammar, and episteme, that anticipates the Hobbessian 'state of nature' polemic of the 17th Century. Maybe we should think of Moten's words who maintains that "sovereignty may very well be located or instantiated in the split between the king's two bodies, but this still requires us to consider that sovereignty, which can never be separated from the (symbolic) body, is detachable from the (biological) flesh, which would justify some interest in the fleshliness, the thingliness, of the ones whose sovereignty, subjectivity, citizenship, and selfhood are placed in question… it is this inalienable heritability of owned, disowned, unowned flesh and not 'my body' that makes such questioning resound while rendering the difference and distance between the king's two bodies inoperative and inarticulate" (2018: 180). The epistemic grid

consecrating navigatory powers to the cartographic norms, the travel and other literature of American conquest and its images of savagery, as well as real-life experience working for the Virginia Company, invoked and perhaps casually used as a short-hand or point of reference by Hobbes evidences the existence of pre-modern geographically based imaginations that cleared the space for sovereign interventions driven by the establishment of order and a multi-pronged bridging of a gap between spirit and flesh.

This short saunter into questions of immaterial existence is for no reason other than to continue to multiply point to an epistemological/ontological continuity, in the vein of Mudimbe as we pointed out in the previous chapter, despite a historiography and chronology that points to a fissure or break from, or leap from, the dark ages to modernity. Heng notes how despite all the "state experiments in tagging and herding people, and ruling on their bodies with the violence of law; exterminations of humans under repeating conditions, and disparagement of their bodies as repugnant, disabled, or monstrous; in spite of a system of knowledge and value that turns on a visual regime harvesting its truths from polarities of skin color, and moralizings on the superiority and inferiority of color and somatic difference – canonical race theory has found it difficult to see the European Middle Ages as the time of race, as racial time" (2011: 261).

Although we perhaps wouldn't place as much investment in designating the Middle Ages a time of race or racial time, we do want to position this era as somewhat enabling and being a continuity - not necessarily in a linear, chronological sense -but a continuity nonetheless, that from the scape and scopes of blackness is facilitated by the enduring and fundamental nature of blackness itself. It is to say that even with the gradual transition in which notions of humanity move from religious/theo-scientific to secular/biological, they are still predicated on the mobilisation of blackness (as both black regions and black persons) as extremity, excess, and fungibility. Which is to say that on a fundamental level, the structuring grammar of, and that is, that thing from the thing still holds albeit in different forms across epochs from and is not exhausted by racism qua slavery, scientific, biological and anthropological racialism, colonialism, racial capitalism, and white supremacy. Indeed, we locate as the late

medieval/Renaissance/early modern period an epoch that is dealing precisely with the vicissitudes and dynamic impulses causing and resulting from the movement from religious subjectivity to the sovereign subjectivity so crucial to European historiography; a period in which religion itself, specifically Christianity, is being made and remade. The prospect of, as well as contact with, people not previously known to exist, or people living at the edge of torrid monstrosity ignites therefore constant negotiations with religious principles and practice, and in effect making religious principles and practice. Given the far-reaching, rapid and encompassing nature of modernity, it is often underplayed, however, the extent to which the early pioneers of modern paradigms were very much staunch adherents of their religious dogma and maintained strong conviction even in those contexts of a seeming critically impelled insubordination to the tenets of the Christian Word. Key to this was a method of teaching and thinking and systematic theology known as Scholasticism, which could be said to be the epistemological predecessor to, and perhaps at certain points indistinguishable from, Renaissance Humanism. Scott explains

> how the later Middle Ages society evolved rapidly, and higher education was required for administration in the church, secular states, and municipalities, as well as for the traditional "professions"… The new universities developed Scholastic philosophy by applying Aristotelian logic (philosophy) and dialectic (debate) to Christian doctrine. Soon, the church formally adopted Scholasticism, because Christianity was the worldview that permeated medieval society and university life. Scholasticism provided not only a state-of-the-art teaching methods but also a rational method of inquiry or research into the whole range of knowledge, including the flood of new information from the Islamic world. Consequently, after the 12th century, logic came to dominate the traditional medieval curriculum known as the seven liberal arts (2006: 5, 8-9).

Even though the masses of the burgeoning European world still remained illiterate and unable to access the university or those erudite circles centred on exegetical practices, many of the leading thinkers and upper classes were trained in Scholastic centres of learning or exposed to Scholastic scholarship. Scientific, philosophical and political thought therefore was not deeply untied from theological explication and religious conviction. Ancient philosophical method and teachings were fused with medieval theological exegeses in a manner reflective of the period regarded as the early

Renaissance, which developed into a later Renaissance/early modern humanism distinct from the enlightenment inspired, secular humanism of the 18th century. The period therefore, and its leading figures, is marked as constituting the ontological forebears of modernity.

the not-quite human,

If we are to follow Carter (2013) and think that "given the modern world's constitution not just as an ontological but as an ontotheological formation, indeed, as a formation of (onto)political theology and given its coming-to be within a planetary logic of spatialized rule that quickly modulated into spatialized-as-racialized rule while mediated by the symbols and practices of Christianity and its 'religious' others;" (589-590) and that religion is "produced of the colonial encounter and is a feature of modern sovereignty" that is, "it is the name the colonizers granted the colonized, the name they granted their subordinate others within the order of (redemptive) sovereignty and as part of the machinery of the legitimation of the order of things" (598-599); then we'd like to think of the theological/religious as coming into and reshaping an archaeology and ontology of thought that rendered blackness (by way of torrid nullius, uninhabitability, the Ethiop, the Zanj) as excess, extremity, and fungibility, as well as tainted proximity to it. It does so such that it reconfigures blackness once more as limit and beyond, indeed creating a language and grammar of abject limit and beyond, reliant on empirical and metaphorical invocation of blacks and black environs.

It is from this language and grammar that an elocution of sovereignty emerges most epidemically and indelibly. And it is then within this context that we try to understand the unfolding that became modernity and its subject-par-excellence – the human. We know that the earliest recorded encounter between Portuguese explorers and what we can call black Africans, somewhere around 1441, occasioned on the side of the Iberians, a performance and indication of a Christly spirited mettle and curiosity. It constituted a search and capturing of local inhabitants, a reconnaissance of hinterlands to learn of further potential commercial exploits and thus a mapping of the land and seas, and importantly, a confrontation with a being darker than they had seen that was not discernibly Muslim, that is, a black Moor. We've already touched on the elasticity of the term 'Moor' in the previous chapter; the point to make here is that if the very initial experiential impetus between the Portuguese and the non-Muslim sub-Saharan inhabitants was within the explicit paradigm of the crusades and gallant

seafaring (with its worked in notions of superiority and inferiority, and its practice of capturing enemies as slaves before being held for ransom), on the part of the Portuguese of course, then it quickly developed into a paradigm of contact between non-equals as the unprepossessing and solvent prospect of more non-Muslim lands and blacks became ostensible as the actual contact with blacker blacks increased. Russell-Woods informs us that

> against this background of religion, war, and slavery, the significance of Antao Goncalves' action must be assessed. The arrival of blacks marked a break with longstanding tradition, not merely because the Africans came from a different geographical location and had a different ethnic heritage but because their arrival engendered the development of a new attitude toward the institution of slavery. Previous slaving activity on the African coast and the Atlantic islands consisted of [mostly unsuccessful] sporadic raids by armed groups composed of many nationalities... Goncalves' initiative, coupled with Lancar'te's [trader/entrepreneur] commercial acumen, introduced three new elements in the slave trade: (i) discovery of conditions in the sub-Saharan region conducive to establishing a permanent slave mart; (2) enslavement of peoples with whom the Portuguese had no territorial dispute or religious rivalry; and (3) use of black slave labor in Portugal. Within a few decades the pattern of trade on the West African coast and in the Atlantic islands was irrevocably altered. With the discovery and exploitation of the Americas, slavery and the black man and woman became essential parts of the checkered [sic] tapestry of European colonization of the New World. Half a millennium was to elapse before this institutional legacy was exhausted (1978: 17-18).

Wolf (1994), in conversation with Gomes Eanes de Zurara's *Cronica dos feitos de Guine,* completed in 1453, holds that

> the reader is presented with entirely new grounds - biological ones - for enslavement. If the "Moors" could be enslaved as prisoners of war, the "black Moors" could be enslaved as the accursed descendants of Ham… yet they had souls like the others, and all the more as these blacks did not come from the lineage of the Moors but of the Gentiles, and so the better to bring into the path of salvation." Zurara is, in other words, drawing a clear religious distinction between the "Moors" and the "black Moors," the latter being considered pagan and therefore more likely to embrace Christianity than Muslims would be (465) … Zurara "Mooricized" the peoples encountered south of Cape Bojador. If we can legitimately treat Zurara's views as representative of a court ethos, we might say that the Portuguese sea captains, when confronted with the novelty of the peoples of the Rio d'Ouro and Arguim - who struck them variously as "bestial" "barbaric," untrustworthy, poorly clothed, non-Arabic-speaking, and pagan-responded by placing them in a preexisting category that had meaning for them: "Moors" (468)... [by 1448] the old - and in Zurara's opinion, noble-form of slavery as a product

> of military action against the Moorish enemy had given way to slavery as a product of trade in peoples deemed enslavable by virtue of their inferiority as human beings. This observation on Zurara's part suggests that the two accepted categories for enslavement among the Portuguese at that time were at least partly functions of class. Portuguese nobles, longing for some empirical justification of their privileged status, were more than ready to regard their slaving activities as extensions of the crusade against Islam. But from the perspective of the merchants, who were less concerned with acts of valor than with commerce, it made sense to transform the West African s- at least the black ones - into commodities and regard them as natural slaves." As the merchants took over the process of acquiring slaves, it was to be expected that slavery as a function of warfare should give way to slavery as a function of biology (469).

It would be remiss for us not to raise the pronouncement that the Portuguese did find in the West African territories in which they landed some kind of slave infrastructure, if of varied degrees and guises. The trans-Saharan trade was well established at this point, and an exchange in slaves was one of the available and regular transactions constituting it. We do know, thinking back to our discussions of 'the Zanj', and looking at the history of East Africa, that Muslim/Arab enslavement of sub-Saharan and eastern and Southern Africans had been instituted for centuries. The extent to which slavery was an unremarkable practice of sub-Saharan West African societies however, is contentious. As Fage (1969) disputes, the manner in which Atlantic and trans-Atlantic slavery was and is understood may differ quite significantly in nature to what is regarded, and was said to be or resemble, slavery in these African societies. Fage refers to several different possible categories of subservience, servitude, and a non-kin based violent relation, of which only two could resemble the type of chattel slavery that would be established at the Atlantic; and even in these cases the similarities are tenuous (1969). That these societies came to be considered to have an entrenched slave system and be embroiled in an active slave trade is argued by Fage (1969) to be a possible result of early European propaganda that sought to justify slavery in multiple ways. Patterson argues that even if it may well be true that the Iberians found an already entrenched system of slavery, and that most of their captives were enslaved already (an argument Patterson regards as "morally specious and in all probability factually inaccurate") it is likely that most slaves on the West African coasts

were captives of war in intra-African squabbles and not acquired through an extensive and profitable slave trade (1982: 114).

This distinction is key when we want to think, in one sense, of slavery as the age-old practice evident across most societies over time, and in another sense, of the kind of slavery that comes to have a bearing on the way in which slavery itself becomes a particular capacity of blackness. Even in the case of the former, Patterson says, many of what passed as internal wars were in actual fact fronts created for European slave raiding activity; and in the event that they were actual battles, were usually at the mischievous instigation and prolongation of European traders and merchants (1982). And in the case of the latter, although the kidnapping of people for captivity, as opposed to captivity in warfare, was too an age-old and generally widespread practice of enslavement among societies, for sub-Saharan captives it appeared the norm to be brought into captivity by way of kidnapping and slave raids particularly by those who had discovered torrid zones to be inhabited and traversable. Patterson writes that "for virtually the entire period of Portuguese devastation of this vast area [west coast of Africa], almost all Africans taken were captured in raids – most as in the rest of Africa conducted by African middlemen, but many by Portuguese themselves" (1982: 119). The relative ease in which African leaders and merchants became party to and participants in the slave trade though should not be surprising, particularly if we are to contextualise the currency that blackness had already accumulated through interaction with the Arab traders. In addition, we must understand that the first encounter between Portuguese and darker skin Africans was not only of consequence in the Portuguese subjective imaginary, but too in the general configuration and emergence of particular variants of blackness and whiteness, which was to touch everyone within eye and earshot. In other words, the commodification of black flesh was there to be witnessed and created by all.

Even in the absence of Fage's variance, it is not a stretch to know the trans/Atlantic slave trade's distinctly violent ontological turn; and too its placement at (and perhaps as?) the cusp of modernity. Indeed, as is evident to us in Wolf and Russell-Wood's arguments, if the preamble to modernity is ontotheological then it is certainly the case

that how the slave begins to figure in this time is a *creative* conflation of theology, commodification, biology, geography and blackness, that would put on a plate the development of notions of sovereignty, capital, and humanity. Even though the 1452 papal bull *Dum Diversas*' granting of the Portuguese throne the permission to conquer and enslave more Moor and Saracen territories in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and Middle East may look to the Reconquista, the crusades, and the aggressively advancing Ottoman Turks as its more immediate reasons or grounds, it also made reference to the pagans of the recently explored West Africa (Mudimbe, 1994). The *Romanus Pontifex* papal bull of 1454 however, was a more stated reaffirmation of many of the adjudications of the *Dum Diversas* thereby solidifying Portugal's claim to, and authority in, the West African territories they had established their already thriving trade in.

Mudimbe relates how in "the second paragraph of the bull, [Pope] Nicolas specifies the mission of the colonization: to expand Christianity [and] he invites the king [Alfonso V] to follow the tradition exemplified by the royal House of Portugal: a commitment to spread the name of Jesus to the most remote territories of the world" (1994: 32). The years in which these papal bulls are issued reveal the fact that they respond to a reality already in full motion, justifying proceedings already ingrained, betraying how doctrine often follows experiential innovation and normativity. The category of 'Christian,' as was that of non-Christian and pagan and slave, here was being reformed and refined, its capacity extended, its control elaborated. Mudimbe summarises the *Romanus Pontifex* (1454) as follows,

> First, all non-Christian peoples have no ownership rights to the land on which they are living. Second, when Christian Europeans – namely Spanish and Portuguese people – met natives, they would present them a Christian interpretation of history that closely followed the Old and New Testaments. At the end of the meeting, the natives were invited to pledge submission and to convert. If the natives failed to accept the "truth" and, politically, to become "colonized," it was not only legal but also an act of faith and a religious duty for the colonizers to kill the natives. The philosophical system underlying the Romanus Pontifex and its explanation of how to deal with non-Westerners was Aristotelian, which as we know, also justifies slavery.

The papal bulls also substantiate to us the extent to which Portugal was not the only country with imperial ambitions at this time, and how indeed the early Atlantic slave trade on the west coast of sub-Saharan Africa involved merchants from a number of countries, including African ones. And how only a century later would there be more pronounced national commercial presence and fierce competition from the English and the Dutch for example. It is the Iberians though who maintained a monopoly in these parts and this reflected in the thousands of slaves from sub-Sahara who formed large populations in Iberian towns and cities at the time. It is this dominance of the region that resulted in the Iberians gaining an expert knowledge of the oceans and thus partaking in the creation of a world from which they would launch further journeys that would be momentous to the spiralling effervescence of the modern story, namely Christopher Columbus' coming upon the Carib Islands in 1492 and importantly for us, Vasco da Gama's successful arrival on Indian shores via the Cape of Good Hope in 1498. Portuguese adventurer Vasco da Gama, as the most popular member of his seafaring expedition, is widely recognised as the first European to have sailed the southernmost tip of the continent en-route India in 1497. This enterprise came about a decade after another Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias had also rounded the Cape of Good Hope only to return after reaching what is the present day Eastern Cape.

At this point many of the members and explorers on this voyage had good contact and knowledge of African peoples with some of them such as Martim Afonso having already travelled in the Manikongo (modern day Congo). The only thing that would remain unbeknownst to them therefore was the extent of the variety of the peoples of the landmass further south, as well as the possible metals, minerals and materials therein. Upon docking in what they named St Helena Bay for a few days of replenishment and taking stock, Da Gama wrote[ii] of what he saw:

> In this land the men are swarthy. They eat only sea-wolves and whales and the flesh of gazelles and the roots of plants. They wear sheaths on their genitals. Their arms are staff of wild olive trees tipped with fire-treated horns. They have many dogs like those of Portugal and they bark the same as they do (Axelson, Da Gama and Velho 1954: 3).

After capturing one of these men (who "was small of body and looked like Mexia Sancho [one of the sailors in the command]) and bringing him aboard the ship to attempt to attain information about the land from him, he is permitted to break bread with the Commander-in-Chief before being clothed and sent back. The following day this former captive came back with more men. The Portuguese then proceeded to present these men with certain goods (gold, seed-pearls etc), closely gauging their reaction in order to determine whether these goods were present or native in these lands. They were disappointed when the darkly natives only responded to the trinkets that Portuguese deemed worthless (Axelson, Da Gama and Velho, 1954: 4). After a few days of exchanges and sharing feasts and musical performances, Da Gama and the rest of the command left their temporary dwellings quite hurriedly after relations had spontaneously turned sour and the locals turned their assegais to the navigators who were at that point unarmed because they "had trusted them [the locals], they appearing to be men of little courage who would not dare attack in the way they later did" (Axelson, Da Gama and Velho, 1954: 4).

The Portuguese then continued south on their expedition around the southern regions of the continent variously coming across "men, swarthy of appearance like those of St Helena" in what the Portuguese had named Aguada da Sao Bras (current day Mossel Bay); hospitable "negroes and negresses, large in body" in what they named "Terra da Boa Gente (the Land of the Good People);" and also relatively welcoming people of who it was said were "black and of good physique, and they go about naked except for some small pieces of cotton cloth with which they cover their private parts, and the chiefs of this land wear larger pieces of cloth [and] the young woman in this land look well," in what they named Sao Rafael [modern day Zambezia] (Axelson, Da Gama, and Velho, 1954). In this land, the chiefs adorned in satin and silk, together with the presence of people who appeared to have come "from a far-off country," seemed to suggest the presence and infiltration of outside influences and led the explorers believe they were heading in the right direction (Axelson, Da Gama and Velho, 1954: 12). And indeed as the voyage headed north up the Indian Ocean coast, to the region that is current day Northern Mozambique, they were to find thriving trade towns and

their sophisticated infrastructure, evidence of long-time Arab/Muslim and Indian presence:

> the men of this land are ruddy in colour and of good physique. They are of the Muhammadan faith and they speak like Moors. Their clothes are of very thin linen and cotton and of many-coloured stripes; they are rich and embroidered. All wear caps on their heads hemmed with silk and embroidered with gold thread. They are merchants and they trade with the white Moors four of whose vessels were here at this place, carrying gold, silver and cloth, cloves, pepper and ginger, and rings of silver with many pearls, and seed-pearls and rubies and the like: men of this land use all these things. It seemed to us from what they said that all these things had been carried here, and the Moors had brought them, except the gold; and that further on, where we were going, there was so much, and the stones and seed-pearls and spices in such quantity, that it was not necessary to trade for them, but simply gather them by the basketfulls. All this a seaman understood, whom the Commander-in-Chief carried with him, who had been a captive of the Moors, and for this reason understood those whom we found here. Further, said the Moors we met, on the route we were following we should find many shoals; we should also find many cities along the coast; and we should have to call at an island on which half the population were Moors and half Christian; the Christians were always waging war on the Moors; and the island was very rich. Further they told us that Prester John was situated close to there and that he had many cities on the sea-coast; the inhabitants of them were great merchants and had great ships; but Prester John was situated a great distance inland and it was not possible to travel there except on camels. Those Moors brought two Indian Christian slaves here. These things and many others these Moors told us, which made us so happy that we shouted with joy; and we begged God to grants us health so that we should see what we all desired (Axelson, Da Gama and Velho, 1954: 14).

This excitement was both redemptive and foreboding; for on the one hand the Portuguese had located what had long been the desires of Iberian seafarers – a clear and guaranteed path to India, access to precious commodities such as gold, the prospect of locating mythical figures such as Prester John which would entail the presence of Christian communities and influence in the region dominated by Moors/Muslims, and relatedly, the opportunity and ability to witness and recon the extent of Muslim/Moor influence in Africa. They also found a slave culture which they could exploit in a similar manner as they did on the west coast of the landmass. It is no wonder then that even though Da Gama's command would go on to India bypassing any settling or causing any known major disruption to the areas they encountered, it was only a few years later that more Portuguese travellers and

conquerors would arrive on the east coast of Africa with more marked colonial and commercial interests.

Da Gama's voyage then, much as it is revered for establishing a route to India, was also a direct precursor to a more explicitly violent colonial relation to the land and people of the southernmost parts of the continent in that it effectively served the purpose of a reconnaissance mission. A mission that saw the Portuguese surveying and enquiring about the environment everywhere they stopped, as well as in a sense claiming these places by setting padraos[iii] in addition to smaller crosses thus marking the territory as effectively their own (although, as was the case in one of their stops in modern day South Africa, sometimes witnessing the inhabitants of these areas destroying the insignia). McKittrick follows Wynter in making the contention that the

> negotiation of social, corporeal, and spatial human configurations, initiated by encounters with the unknown, created new spaces, specifically Man's geographies, which are overdetermined, normalised, and naturalised. *The inventions of Man come to be reflected in spatial queries and arrangements*. If Man is an overrepresentation of humanness, Man's human geographies are an extension of this conception. The development and mapping of the uninhabitable and uneven archipelagos are two important ways Man's geographies are overrepresented (2006: 128, emphasis added).

Benign as Vasco da Gama's interactions with the inhabitants of the southern parts of Africa may appear, apart from the violent skirmishes whilst moving up the Indian coast, we only believe them so because of the invasive and extractive nature of preceding and subsequent encounters between Europeans and Africans. McKittrick (2006) helps us to think of how the very act of spatial querying, together with symbolic actions such setting up padraos, naming places, and just generally touching and surveying uninhabitable lands as well as sailing, surviving and feeling torrid waters, bolstered a sense and imagination of a divinely ordained and sublunary triumphant human-as-Man. And it is needless to say the extent to which these interactions and symbolic gestures may have been experienced as far from benign for the peoples of these lands and the lands themselves. The notion of expansion into parts and paths unknown, of the spatial elision of different worlds, of the spatial estimation of the terra firma, is the creation of space itself. And space, as Mbembe tells us, has in the African context been "a raw material for Sovereignty and the violence it carried with

it" (2003: 26). As noted in the previous chapter, the concept of 'terra nullius' as most developed and furnished in the early modern Americas and later Australia thus enjoys its incubation period in expeditions towards and in sub-Saharan Africa, through among other things, the performative elaborate of querying, acts of ritual marking, and extraction, all under religious guidance as well as doctrinal permission.

And so the purpose of charting how religion played a role in the early encounters between Europeans and sub-Saharan Africans is to build the argument showing the extent to which notions of humanity, on to which we still hold to this day, have in them a very particular ingrained relation to blackness. In other words, existing conceptions of torrid zone and lands considered uninhabitable which are sometimes conflated with, or placed near, lands of the blacks, as well as the inhabitants of these regions, combine with religious dogma and discursive and rhetorical associations of the colour black, to set up a dismantling and attestation upon European contact with blacks. It is a dismantling and attestation that is to invigorate, augment, and indeed form a Renaissance/early modern humanism which is the closest ancestor to modern humanism. As alluded to in McKittrick's quote above, Sylvia Wynter's formulation of Man1 and Man2 can be helpful in establishing for us how this humanity is constructed.

Wynter's thesis is that with and through the moderate dawning of the epoch that would be considered 'the modern' there is a synchronous overrepresentation of the category of 'the human' (hitherto religious subject inclusive of pagans) by the figure of (the lighter, religious, acculturated, rational, temperate) Man – what Wynter refers to as Man1 - which in the inhabitants of the New World locates its (darker, pagan, unrefined, intemperate/temperamental) ontologico-spatial Other. In other words, Man "as the physical referent of, in the first phase, its irrational or subrational Human Other to its new "descriptive statement" of Man as political subject; [and] while the 'Indians' were portrayed as the very acme of the savage, irrational Other, the Negroes were assimilated to the former's category, represented as its most extreme form and as the ostensible missing link between rational humans and irrational animals" (Wynter, 2003: 266).

We want to agree with Wynter's assertion here, perhaps in a way that twists her words, and say that the negro (black/Ethiop/black moor/slave) may indeed get assimilated into the category of irrational Other as its most abject *instantiation*, but this is the case only because the blacks and the land of the blacks (torrid zone-cum-terra nullius; torrid nullius), that is, blackness, is the preceding factor constitutive of these categories to begin with. In other words, pre-1492, blacks/slaves and their terrains didn't quite figure as Other to the conquering Iberians (in the same way as perhaps the Arab/Muslim Moors as well as Jews) but rather as figurations – flesh, or embodied abstractions - that made the very notion of alterity intelligible. That is, in the first instance, as looming myth that is ever-present in the medieval imagination as torrid zone and the monstrosities thereof, including Ethiopians, and in the second instance as the raw material, in the form of people and land and seas and resources therein, that was used to certify difference thus asserting and building the category of Same, that is, of Man (in his religious and rational phase). It is the Indian in the Americas, who gets incorporated into the schema as a gradation of Otherness, as the savage, and not the black that replaces the Indian.

We've already explained how some of the initial impetus for the Portuguese (not always just Portuguese or even Iberians but also involving merchants from all over the regions) travels into the uninhabitable and unnavigable (having monumental cartographic implications - opening up the world as it were, as well as pioneering nautical technologies that enabled extensive seafaring) were at least partly due to their being embroiled in a power struggle and competition with Muslim presence and ever-threatening dominance. And also how the commercially driven search for India, perhaps as partly in trade competition with other European regions, figured parts of Africa as crucial posts from which to navigate and replenish. And furthermore how parts of Africa itself was slated as rich in metals and minerals such as gold. And how the slave trade became so rapidly and extensively institutionalised in West Africa, in a way that was unlike the enslavement following Iberian crusade enterprises, reflecting both the intensification of Christian dogma in the justification and action of enslavement (papal bulls) as well as its liberalisation in how this commodity and its discovery contributes in opening up a market which in a few short decades traversed

the world and calculated it anew. So in conversation with Wynter's notion of Man1 we see how these fleshly blacks encountered in torrid zones-cum-torrid nullius therefore enabled a self-categorisation on the part of their new slavers; in the first phase that distances itself from the imprisonment of flesh and evidences a cultivation of spirit and mind thus clearing the way for notions of self-possession and a kind of sovereignty that is constantly testing the boundaries of Christian/Scholastic thought, and in the second phase, on the occasion of the New World, develops as a sovereign political subject.

Looking back at the cavalcade of captives at a Lagos slave market in 1444, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Zurara practices dutiful commiseration unbound from an exonerating revelation:

> But what human heart, no matter how hard, would not be stabbed by pious feelings when gazing upon such a company of people? For some had their heads held low and their faces bathed in tears, as they looked upon one another. Others were moaning most bitterly, gazing towards heaven, fixing the eyes upon it, as if they were asking for help from the father of nature. Others struck their faces with the palms of their hands, throwing themselves prostrate on the ground; others according to custom of their country, and, although our people could not understand the words of their language, they were fully appropriate to the level of their sorrow. But to increase their suffering even more, those responsible for dividing them up arrived on the scene and began to separate one from another, in order to make an equal division of fifths; from which arose the need to separate children from their parents, wives from husbands, and brothers from their brothers. Neither friendship nor kinship was respected, but instead each one fell where fortunes placed him! Oh powerful destiny doing and undoing with your turning wheels, arranging the things of this world as you please! Do you even disclose to these miserable people some knowledge of what is to become of them, so that they may receive some consolation in the midst of their tremendous sorrow? And you who labour so hard to divide them up, look with pity upon so much misery, and see how they cling to each other, so that you can hardly separate them!... And so with great effort they finished the dividing up, because, aside from the trouble they had with the captives, the field was quite full of people, both from the town and the surrounding villages and districts, who for that day were taking time off their work, which was the source of their earnings, for the sole purpose of observing this novelty. And seeing these things, while some wept, others took part in the separating, and they made such a commotion that they greatly confused those who were in charge of dividing them up. The Prince was there mounted upon a powerful horse, accompanied by his retinue, distributing his favours, like a man who wished to derive little

> material advantage from his share; for of the forty-six souls who belonged to this fifth, he quickly divided them up among the rest, since his main source of wealth lay in his own purpose; for he reflected with great pleasure upon the salvation of those souls that before were lost. And his thoughts were certainly not in vain… I who have brought this history together in this volume saw boys and girls in the town of Lagos, the children and grandchildren of those people, born in this land, Christians as good and true as though they were descended from the beginnings of Christ's law, through the generation of those who were first baptised (Zurara as quoted in Blackburn, 1997: 104-105).

That the captives suffer a loss of whatever personhood they maintain, and are torn apart from their families, and are thrown from their worldly and spiritual coordinates and are being distributed as things, is to read the scene cursorily. What is on display is in actual fact a performance of self-contempt, a retroactive derision necessary for the clemency that follows in the form of acceptance of Christ. For Zurara then, this requires a reciprocal performance of piousness befitting a chivalrous man of Faith, which in the end is resolved in the closing scene of conversion. The tears, the moans, the low heads, the tight grips, the fear; these do not belong to the captives as such, they are written onto them through the self-creation of the Christian subject, of Man1. It's as if the captives had to perform the suffering and trepidation, at once an extreme alterity and intimate proximity – strange and familiar gestures, in order to facilitate an ambit of responses and emotions that at that very moment are constitutive of a community and in creation of a particular system of slavery.

Indeed, the moment of confusion experienced by those charged with separating and dividing the slaves is instructive; in this time there appears to be a confounding of those who are sympathetic/empathetic towards the slaves, those who are participating in the separation, those who may be obstructing the progress of the separators, and those who are just marvelling at the sight of these duskly things. This possible instant of indistinguishability renders a sympathetic distance and an aggressive intrusion as substantively equal; all the reactions function to produce the captives as captives and slaves, and produce the onlookers and participants as precisely that, as that distance that crystallizes in the converted slave and Christian subject. Blackmore points out that "Zurara's commiseration may well be a rhetorical

move meant to distance himself and the proponents of expansion from the dangerously close darkness of Africa through a gesture of pitiful sympathy" (2009: 29). This is a sympathy that is sovereign in its ambition and path, and as crucial as the fortitude and acumen bestowed upon the raider at the scene of capture, the restraint and unaffectedness of the slaver at the scene of trade, and the satisfaction and excitement or self-possession of the owner at the scene of sale. One of course maintains the suspicion that the reactions of the Lagosians would have been the same regardless of the tenor of captive expression; whether it be stoic resilience, placid resignation, amused delirium, or petulant hostility, none of these would be their own reactions, and would all fall in line with the expected outcome of a slave market.

And so to say, and bringing it back to how we read with Wynter, that it may be fair to note how the negro, or, the black, became the extreme irrational Other to nascent Man1, but it's more important to note how this black also exceeds the very category of Other and is, and becomes, what is useable to determine the very contours and coordinates of Man1 and its Others. Man1 therefore represents a working through of fledgling and adjusting narrative and symbolic orders of understanding and meaning-making that particularly intensifies when venturing into torrid zones and into the New World. McKittrick (2006: 126), for example, points out how "Man[1] had to be worked out differently, humanness altered, on terms that spiritually legitimated a nonindigenous New World presence and the profitable dehumanisation of indigenous and enslaved black cultures". The pre-New World experiential encounter with torrid regions and their black inhabitants which both critiqued and validated the cosmographic notion of the ecumene, forming torrid nullius, combined with a prerequisite spiritual and combative verve from the Crusades – which were also competitive profit-making endeavours, provided an interpretive matrix in which the New World emerges as the event and site that eventually inaugurates a *new World*.

Blackburn states that "the Portuguese were to be less secretive about their slave trading than their search for gold, since they gave it a religious gloss. Bringing African or Berber captives to the Atlantic islands or to the Peninsula could be represented as entirely consonant with the objective of winning souls for Christ" (1997: 103). We

argue then that the machinations at work in the putting together of Man1, in the first phase, already anticipate, in the period preceding 1492, Man1 in its fullest sense; if we are to understand Man1 as religious albeit increasingly at systematic odds or manipulative of doctrine to satisfy and accommodate empirical reality, and Man1 as exemplar of recipient and advancer of progressive and cultivated cultural, social and institutional heritage and life, and indeed Man1 as corporeal embodiments of Spirited Man's wrestling of and victory over matter, that is, over raw and wild nature and flesh. The previous designation of the native's land as uninhabitable, as torrid zone, as 'unpeopled', as 'un-lifed'; combined with its incipient destining as accessible, ownable, profitable, and simultaneously exotic and knowable, cannot be separated from the ontological exclusion productive of those who lived where life wasn't thought to exist. And because they lived where life wasn't thought to exist - in the uninhabitable which thereupon contact became the land of the infidel, pagan, savage, negro, black – where humans (in their predominantly religious modes) didn't and couldn't; their ability to live *as humans* where humans (in their secularising yet still religious modes i.e as Man1) can actually live - in the inhabitable – is regarded as impossible. McKittrick is right in pointing out that in order for Man1 to "come into being, [he had] to encounter the unimaginable and unrepresentable… [and that] in naming [unknown lands] 'terra nullius/lands of no one' and mapping them as 'peopleless' voids, the uninhabitable was abstracted by cartographic translations of where and who can constitute the terms of normal habitability" (2006: 127, 129).

And if early modern configurations of the human as Man1 are ultimately mapped on "the value divide projected as existing between rational humans and non-rational animals" then it is in the glare of the Enlightenment, the modernist human sciences and Darwinian evolutionary interventions that constructions of the human as Man2 - and its attendant ontological Other - can be chronicled (Wynter, 2000: 177). For in Man2 a purely secularised – as opposed to secularising – figure of (human) Man is presented based on the bio-evolutionary model. That is, bourgeois intellectuals, "by placing human origins *totally* in evolution and natural selection, [are] going to be able to map the structuring principle of their now bourgeois social structure, that of the *selected* versus the *dysselected*, the *evolved* versus the *non-evolved*, on the still extra-

humanly determined order of difference which was left available in the wake of the rise of the physical and, after Darwin, of the biological sciences" (Wynter, 2000: 177). From Man1 to Man2 we therefore see how "evolution, conquest and difference become signs of a theological, biological, and anthropological destiny, and assign to things and beings both their natural slots and social mission" (Mudimbe, 1988: 30).

> The surfacing of this bio-centric mode of the human as Man2 is concomitant with that of the typological notion of race which meant that natural life was placed on a continuum, with the bourgeois (hu)Man constituting and defining its zenith. The ontological Other of this configuration of the human as Man2 is, however, still the black/native/nigger - who doesn't only embody this extreme Otherness, but whose blackness still leaves them remaining in excess of the category of Otherness itself. Blackness remains the malleable abjectness that determines true alterity - the other 'non-white' 'races' being determined in comparison and metaphorical allusion to this "zero degree signifier" and thus allocated into less severe yet still Othered gradations. It is within this bio-centric schema – and its coeval notion of time - that blackness properly attains its dysgenic properties and whiteness its eugenic properties. As Wynter notes, this notion of blackness as dysgenic or degeneration…… enabl[es] the experiencing of euphoric supremacy at the level of race and culture - that euphoric supremacy that it is above all the function of South African apartheid to protect. For the Ontological Other slot of this ultimate negative specification of the bourgeois conception of human being was/is filled by the empirical reality of Africa/the Negro and the related tropological complex of representation projected in the emergent philosophical discourse of nineteenth-century Europe. The Negro represents the Negative Signifier of an allegedly primal human being totally subordinated "o "natural necessity." As such, the tropology of Africa/The Negro was to provide a foundational constant of the system of inference-making of biological idealism and to be constantly projected, as Chinua Achebe notes, as "the antonymic foil to Europe's spiritual grace," as the projection of that primal/near bestial nature which Europe and the bourgeoisie had overcome in themselves" (1987: 222).

This capacity of blackness is, of course, not peculiar to formulations of Man2. As shown in the previous chapter, blackness functioned metaphorically and retrospectively to

provide increased definition to the category of the 'Moor' upon Iberian contact with Saharan Moors and sub-Saharan black Africans. The Moor was also the category utilised to disparage, stigmatize and expose Spain as evidence and reason of their degraded activities in Africa and the New World. Fuchs, takes note of this curious invocation of blackness:

> Particularly in anti-Spanish propaganda—the *leyenda negra* [Black Legend] Spain is consistently associated with Islam, with Africa, with dark peoples. It is important to recover the essentializing "blackness" of this cultural mythology: critics typically read it metaphorically, as a figure for Spain's cruelty and greed in the New World, yet it often refers in unambiguous terms to Spain's racial difference, its *essential* Moorishness. While this usage in no way counters the frequent association of blackness with evil in the early modern period, it pointedly conflates the metaphorical with a literal sense, in an attempt to render Spain visibly, biologically black… Thus "The Coppie of the Anti-Spaniard," translated from the French in the same year, urges the nations of Europe to rally around France "and with one breath to goe and abate the pride and insolencie of these Negroes," invoking European racial solidarity against an African, black Spain. Conflating "Moors" and "Negroes" in this way is a powerful rhetorical gesture. Not only does it construct Spain's difference as essential and easily identifiable but it substitutes the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa for the encroaching powers of North Africa and the Levant. As Nabil Matar usefully reminds us, English (and European) relations with these two groups were very different: "England's relations with sub-Saharan Africans were relations of power, domination, and slavery, while relations with the Muslims of North Africa and the Levant were of anxious equality and grudging emulation." Here, then, the specific substitution of "Negro" for Moor seems not merely a question of misunderstanding, but a deliberate rhetorical ploy in an attempt to diminish Spain (2007: 94, 96).

The astonishing and tensile nature of blackness is not only in its dysgenic marking as degradation, that is, that it soils whiteness in a manner that dethrones it from the seat of purity vis-a-vis one drop rule/miscegenation, but as Mullen informs us, and evident in Fuchs' quote regarding the French conflation of Moor and negro to essentially bring Spanish whiteness into question, it is also a central constituent in the very production of untainted whiteness as well (1994). Mullen contends that the dearth of popular narratives reflecting the experiences of those white Americans who have successfully passed into whiteness from blackness and consequently and proactively maintain their black heritage betrays an overwhelming tendency for those who pass as white to disavow all traces of their blackness in order to circumvent having their whiteness

brought into question (Mullen, 1994). In other words, to successfully pass as white involves a necessary severing from all black traces. The effect that this has therefore is a paradoxical strengthening of the boundary constituted as pure whiteness since any vestige of blackness or non-whiteness has to be eliminated in order to stage a convincing performance of whiteness. And so Mullen forwards the contention that the "literature of passing demonstrates the actual fluidity of ostensibly rigid racial boundaries that define the power relations of margin to center. The center exploits the energy of the margin, augmenting and renewing itself as the racially ambiguous are drawn to the self-validating power of the center to define itself as white and therefore pure, authentic, and 'naturally' dominant" (1994: 73).

Blackness therefore is also that substance or sediment whose stain, by way of a propinquity, beckons an emphatic and severe cleansing producing a cleanliness and purity of a quality which cannot be questioned. Does Mullen's intervention permit us to then think of blackness as having both dysgenic *and* eugenic capacities in that it both blackens and whitens? And does this then permit us to conjecture that part of the reason why blackness issues such a productive and variegated role to those extrinsic to the land of the blacks and the position of the black is precisely because the geography of blackness is in one sense quite immediate and intimate, and in another, distant enough to not be immediate yet close enough to determine immediacy? That is, it is in touching distance in one regard, and in touching distance of that which is in touching distance in another. In other words, can blackness be remote? We digress. Or not. Either way, blackness historically marks, and is a metaphor for, racial degeneration or degradation. Zine Magubane, in the book *Bringing the Empire Home* drives our suspicion home by wondering what it is "about blackness that makes it such an elastic signifier – able to signal pain as well as pleasure, disenfranchisement as well as resistance" (2004: 1). Magubane then proceeds to eloquently show how, for example, racial and sexual discourses within the colonies, specifically 19th century South Africa, are then metaphorically and discursively mobilised within the coloniser countries, specifically Great Britain, to designate degenerative and othered groupings.

So, with the dominant mode of the human in the nineteenth century presented as "being both biological being and homo oeconomicus [sic]" (Wynter, 1996: 534), and with the plantation/slave-holding and colony as this modality's ontologico-spatial generative mill, "the now profitable and workable lands of the uninhabitable are not so much unliveable and unimaginable as they are grids of racial-sexual management and geographic growth" (McKittrick, 2006: 130). The former uninhabitable lands thus become sites of sustained ontogenetic and phylogenetic production and regulation, at least in an ontologico-spatial sense. Put differently they become the factory sites of biocentric epistemologies - with the human sciences towing the ontological line in this consolidated field of meanings – and in which sex and sexual reproduction as well as black sexuality obtain a distinct currency. The libidinal insatiability which is said to characterise black sexuality is regarded as the ultimate boundless expression of sexuality, which is no type of (hu)Man sexuality at all. In the Cape Colony for example, as Gabeba Baderoon contends "the colonial period is thus the primal scene for understanding racial and sexual codes" and therefore one can make sense of how "at the Cape, both under Dutch and British rule, control over sex was fundamental to imperial definitions of race" (Baderoon, 2014: 85). And it is "precisely because [the] colonist's sexual license to indigenous and enslaved bodies was fundamental to colonialism and slavery, [that] the racial implications of sexual transgressions haunted the colonies" and was thus conceptually concordant with the prevalent biocentric discourse that produced and engendered the notion, and stringent policing, of 'miscegenation' (Baderoon, 2014: 86).

It is through the transformation from the medieval-feudal Christian subject into the current biocentric form of the human that we can also gain insight into how blackness is produced as the flexible boundary as well as the excessive beyond-of-the-parameters of humanity (McKittrick, 2014). This production of blackness is dependent on the ancient to medieval Christian characterisation of the regions roughly corresponding to sub-Saharan Africa as uninhabitable, as 'torrid zone', as unliveable, together with the fantastic and tales and conceptions of the inhabitants or monstrosities of or near these regions. And it is precisely the presence of life in the unliveable places, in the torrid zones, in the land beyond, that forms the basis for these

lives' exclusion from the emergent modern category of the human. Place, space, geography and time are indispensable to these humanistic mutations that make blackness possible. Wynter would think of the torrid zone as the uninhabitable, unliveable places that fell outside of God's spiritual and providential grace, and subsequently outside of the human's natural and material grace. That is, as torrid, hellish, demonic grounds, as *the* alternative source of an alternative system of meanings, "the situational 'ground' or slot of out of which the systemic behaviour regulatory role or function as the ontological 'native/nigger'" is located and emerges (Wynter, 1997: 383). They are characterised by an alternate temporal configuration, an other than to the teleological time of Man1 and Man2. In other words, as precisely the kind of germane and productive grounds from which new and creative offensives in the form of alternative humanities can and should emerge. We would like to work alongside Wynter and pursue further the idea of Fallen Flesh. We would also like to take up Wynter's challenge to the imagining of creative approaches to the ways in which we think of the possibility of humanity. If indeed the strictures and structures of being that thing from the thing have historically shaped the conditions of a people, can the murky, unknown and unexplored parameters contained in the notion of 'that thing' and 'the thing' not provide the devastatingly necessary creative points of departure for the imagination of a new kind of relation to and with darkly persons and the darkly places from which they come? Not in the prescriptive sense of setting out the conditions under which a new human which is not innately anti-black is likely to triumphantly prosper out of the liminal environs it has been condemned to, but to heed to the more morose sentiments that do not promise an escape from arrest for blackness but without capitulating to them. Put differently, to think experimentally of the possibility of life within the stifling and deathly liminality, within its unbroken chains. It is in this way that fallenness and flesh become particularly interesting to us; we sense in fallenness and in flesh a trove of black possibility which may be as worthless as it is intriguing and as it is treasure.

the fall in

It is also in these senses and notions of uninhabitability, of torridness, of torrid nullis - as expanse and spatial possibility, as fungibility and accumulation, and in this instance, as spaces of/for Fallen Flesh, as spaces of fallenness and fleshliness and fallingness - a fallen/falling place; all as blackness or potentiated blackness, that propel our thinking about the methods of doing black, blackening, or being black. In simpler words, the structuring principle of Redeemed Spirit/Fallen Flesh as has been transplanted to actualise the lot of blacks and the land of the blacks, put together with the notion and sense of blackness as fungible and accumulative, in addition to the molten cosmographies that are torrid nullius, all occasion for us an exploration of doing black, or actively *being* black, as attempts at a fall (and having fallen) into a falling place, for one. What happens when those who are fallen, and are falling, decide to further engage or enact their fall, or indeed, fall for themselves? The resource and reservoir and repository that has been made of us, we too drink from this well, but how so in a way that desires to be different but may not know or believe how to? To try to fall? For Moten and Harney,

> "there is a social erotics of the lost and found in fallenness's [and, we want to add, fallingness's] refusal of standing. We fall so we can fall again, which is what ascension really means to us. To fall is to lose one's place, to lose the place that makes one, to relinquish the locus of being, which is to say of being single. This radical homelessness – its kinetic indigeneity -, its irreducible queerness – is the essence of blackness" (2015: 82).

What is the fall onto or into an even more torrid and intemperate darkness that is marked by the anguishing scream of dusk that Dollar Brand's poem (an excerpt of which is included in the epigraph) reminds us of, if not the precipice and an already enactment of yet another coming and continuing fall? Does this fall induce a rejuvenated upsurge? Is that ascension? Or is it *Ascension*; that which marks the falling apart of the classic quartet into ambiguous or 'polarised' reception? The uncertainty, as it were, from loving and supreme acclaim - itself made uncertain by what was always following? Spellman (1965) quotes musician Archie Shepp in the liner notes of the now classic John Coltrane LP:

> "The emphasis was on textures rather than the making of an organisational entity. There was unity, but it was a unity of sounds and textures rather than like an A B A approach. You can hear the saxophones especially, a reaching for sound and an exploration of sound".

Spellman, continues:

> Speaking of the total effect of Ascension, Archie Shepp said, "it achieves a certain kind of unity; it starts at a high level of intensity with the horns playing high and the other pieces playing low. This gets a quality of like male and female voices. It builds in intensity through all the solo passages, brass and reeds, until it gets to the final section where rhythm takes over and *brings it back down to the level it started at*". By that time your nervous system has been dissected, overhauled, and reassembled (1965; emphasis added).

Can we speak of an ascension that is brought *back down* to the level it started at, is that what ascension really means to us, here? An ascension that falls? Or a fall that anticipates an ascension that is already a fall? Is ascension not a spirited and valiant rise, is it not an emergence, phoenix-like, from the loud clinker of Zanj furnaces? We remember that the animal spirits dwell in the brain, the heart of the nervous system; so if *Ascension* dissects, overhauls, and reassembles the whole of an already faulty system, wherein the spirits do not circulate properly, it can only mean that *Ascension* somehow validates and circumvents this system. It goes straight into it to go out of it in a way that takes it back to it; maybe anew, maybe not. We also remember the dizziness, light-headedness, blurredness, and symptomatic susceptibility to fainting, fatigue, and falling brought on by the heat of the heart when exacerbated by torrid heat. N, in the wake of a consequential attack of dizzy spells, writes a letter to the Angel of Dust, from a hospital bed, on the 2nd of January 1981:

> I've been here for almost three weeks now. They've put me thru test after test but don't even begin to have a diagnosis yet. This is only appropriate to my condition it would appear – a wheeling, drenched or drunken intensity in which aberrant flight answers aberrant fall. The attacks tend to come on as an inverse gravity in which I'm cut loose from every anchoring assumption, a giddy index if not an indictment of a tipsy world. I feel it as a weightlessness, a radical, uprooting vertigo, a rash, evaporative aspect of myself as though I were empty of all solidity or substance – overtakes me just before I either pass out or enter a kind of trance, my behaviour during which I'm unable to remember once I return to control (Mackey, 2010: 102-103).

N stays in the hospital for a few more days, his condition if improving then only slightly, but an accurate diagnosis still evading the medical professionals attending him. This happens until one day, his bandmates walk into his room at the hospital and proceed to play him a song, perform for him a song, each member on their own instrument. Except, this is a hospital, not a concert venue or street corner; the band do not really play their instruments, instead they grant N a 'mute concert', musicians taking much care to not have any audible music emanate from their instruments. The silent music - 'Embraceable You' originally composed by George Gershwin, has a somatic affect on N, inducing a slight dizziness, exactly what he needed; he is discharged the following day. Seven months later, however, N to the Angel of Dust:

> I'm in bed now, as I've been for the past four days, bearing the brunt of a new round of shattered cowrie shell attacks. I can't say for sure what it was that brought them on, though I suspect Djamilaa and Aunt Nancy's recital plated a not insignificant part. In any case, they remain as much a mystery as ever. So much so, in fact, I no longer bother to see the doctor about them. I have, though, had occasion to do some reflection and self-diagnosis these past few days. A remark my mother made the other day sparked it. We were talking on the phone, me telling her about the latest round of attacks, the quandary they've got me in, the dizziness, trances and so forth, when she said, "It's all that music, all those records you've been buying all these years." I laughed. "No, seriously," she went on, "all those records doing all that spinning have made you dizzy". I laughed again, my only defense. It was an old axe, one she's been grinding ever since I was a kid. My mother, as I may have told you already, has never really understood my becoming a musician. Virtually nothing, as far as she's concerned, could be more impractical. I recall times as a kid I'd buy a record and have to sneak it into the house, so upset would she get at my 'throwing away good money'. Still, it' an axe I've come to take more seriously than my laughter let on. It set me to thinking. Are the attacks a self-sentencing conviction the music fosters and feeds, even if only as the occasion for a reprieve? Are self-sentencing conviction and self-symbiotic halves of a self-cycling ordeal? Do I knock myself down in order to be picked up (Mackey, 2010: 2017-208)?

N, triggered into constant falls of ascent. Dramatic flings, pulled down by counter-gravitational forces, unmoored and moored. We do not wish to diagnose N, but we wonder with him about his bouts of unexplained dizziness, considering that vertigo is commonly associated with a dysfunction in the inner ear and/or brain, a vestibular condition of sorts, the lack of medical prognosis and diagnosis therefore is telling. What we think we know is that for him, ascent can carry overtones of assent, pointing

to a manifoldness, multiplicity hinting at a communality, a jam of sorts - together we fall, divided we fall. What we think we may not fully know is the extent to which the kind of falling we're thinking through here is the kind that David Marriott is thinking of with Steve McQueen's *Caribs' Leap*; that is, an "interminable and incessant falling" that endlessly defers "the landing which would allow burial and mourning to commence" (2013: 214). Whether the fact of this Marriott/McQueen falling containing neither "end nor becoming" or "any possibility of destination" and indeed being perpetual and "single, companionless" whilst making "disaster conceivable, but not representable" leaves possible an impossible itinerary of the fall for the black who does black, that is, a knowledge and/or faith of outcome or/despite its impossibility; or whether this fall is the inevitability that trivialises the intentionality that a method or doing implies, that is, the inexorable flailing in and into the chasm so as to render futile any 'attempt' at and that is doing, we can't say we know with confidence (Marriott, 2013: 214).

We can say we know with confidence however, that for us, burial and mourning do not of necessity mark a landing or an ending place of interaction. In other words, to bury and mourn you is not to cease to speak and communicate with you, or, to speak or communicate with you is not to require your presence. In other words, to bury and mourn you is not to cease falling. To those who live and speak with 'abaphansi' (those down below)[iv] the prospect of a "passionless fall into nothingness, into a void in whose worldliness one is neither compelled to believe nor disbelieve", one that is "neither immanence nor transcendence, but one interminable and immemorial, and from which there is no return, no way back" is not too daunting, not singular beyond a certain trajectory, as we become one amongst many who fell and fall (Marriott, 2013: 215).

It is perhaps in the tradition of N's ascent/assent, Moten and Harney's relinquishing of the singular locus of being, 'the silent shade of generations down there', that j.v.b gumede's 'shadow man,' (the protagonist in the referenced poem in the epigraph) locates his being double/multiple/penumbra/pall/apparitional/desecended/offshoot. It is a shadowiness, obscuring and doubleness or multiplicity that happens under and because of the glare of the torrid and terrored sun. What is the shadow of your being

and perhaps my own if not the manifold spectres from which many beings mount and thus relinquish the singular locus of being? What do they have to do with the "vanished but visualised presences" that "metaphoric imagery [intricately] conveys music as the shadow of" (Harris as quoted by Mackey, 1987: 48)? The musical shadow as in "where shriek turns speech turns song – remote from the impossible comfort of origin – [is where] lies the trace of *our descent*" (Moten, 2003: 22, emphasis added)? Is this "shadow or shade" that Mackey, quoting Wilson Harris, considers as being "alive with voices so real, yet strangely beyond material hearing, that they are peculiarly visualised or 'seen' in the intricate passages of a poems", that is, the "*visualised presence* [that] acquires therefore a *shadow and voice* that belongs to the mind's ear and eye" (Harris as quoted by Mackey, 1987: 48)? We are interchangeable, pliant, analogous, and abstract after all.

If the divine spirit is what enlivens sluggish matter into spiritualised matter, into Man proper, in the terrestrial realm, if it's wherein lies the non-extended and immaterial mind or soul; then the 'numinous shadow' that Harris refers to in discussing Legba - the limping orisha or lwa who stands at the door between the spiritual and earthly, who is intermediary, elocutionary mediator of the ethereal and earthly - must be a searching for, a visualisation of, and/or a yielding to some other kind of divinity (1987: 48). Indeed, as Mackey tells us, "Heaven is wholeness, meaning that any image which takes up the task of evoking it can only fail" and so we find in "Legba's limp the obliquity of a religious aspiration which admits its failure to measure up to heaven" (1987: 49). Legba's limp is the anticipation of the fall, already fallingness, or off balanced bluff extenuating the hankering towards spiritualised matter. It is what prevents a 'walking in the spirit', threatens to fall towards a 'walking in the flesh'. It "is anacatastrophic refusal of the case and, therefore, of the world, which is the earth's capture insofar as it was always a picture frozen and extracted from imaginal movement" (Harney and Moten, 2015: 82). The anacatastrophic - backing up from catastrophe; the bluff that extenuates, does also remind us of the playfulness of Legba. As Mackey writes:

> "His limp the offbeat or eccentric accent… he's the master musician and dancer, declared first among the orishas because only he could simultaneously play a gong, a bell, a drum, and a

> flute, while dancing. The master of polyrhythmicity and heterogeneity, he suffers not from deformity but multiformity, a 'defective' capacity in a homogenous order given over to uniform rule. Legba's limp is an emblem of heterogeneous wholeness, the image and outcome of peculiar remediation. 'Lame' or 'limping,' that is, like 'phantom,' cuts with a relativizing edge to unveil impairment's power, as though the syncopated accent were an unsuspected blessing offering anomalous, though unpredictable support. Impairment taken to higher ground, remediated, translates damage and disarray into a dance. Legba's limp, compensating the difference in leg length, functions like a phantom limb" (1987: 40).

A phantom limb as we know is the experience of the sensations of a limb that that is no longer present, a felt yet impossible reality after and in the cut. "There are musics which haunt us like a phantom limb" writes N to the Angel of Dust on the 14th of June 1978 (Mackey, 2010: 3). The spectral resonance coaxes us, causes us to extend for what may or may not be there, with what may or may not be there, risking an imbalance, causing an imbalance, a defection, and therefore a fall. In much the same way as what ascension really means to us is to fall and fall again, what full-bodiedness - inbodiment and embodiment – really means to us is to limp and limp again. The slow walk towards dawn of gumede's 'shadow man' is perhaps a result of this limping; which also results in the fast sprint of the fugitive. The phantom limb, presents for Harris a legitimate case for a pun - limb/limbo. Limbo: zone of non-existence, oblivion, suspension; a dangling space characterised by exclusion, apprehended in permanent deferral, thoroughfare or purview of Fallen Flesh. Limbo, "then reflects a certain kind of gateway or threshold to a new world and the dislocation of a chain of miles" (Harris, 2008: 10).

Limbo: a dance, where the "dancer moves under a bar which is gradually lowered until a mere slit of space, it seems, remains through which with spread-eagled limbs he passes like a spider. Limbo was born, it is said, on the slave ships of the Middle Passage. There was so little space that the slaves contorted themselves into human spiders" (Harris, 2008: 10-11). A spatial condition unearthing a contortion; a distortion that as well appears as and is a multiple bodily protuberance (spider-like, invoking the "cunning trickster god" Anansi), in this case, limbs (Mackey, 1983). A multiplicity of beings and a multiplicity of limbs; what we are pointed to here is what is accumulatable and irrealatable. In the spatial condition that is the ship and its

anticipation, the limbs are in multiplicity; a dexterous, morbid and parodic dancing around in attempt at some kind of hollow reprieve, each limb an attempt. And they are perhaps as manifold as they are autotomic; that is, hopeful, extemporised outgrowth - reachings and extensions that result in a self-severing where necessary. In place of the cast-off limb/appendage is the possibility and potential of regeneration of another limb, within the spatial condition. In the meantime, this potentiality exists as phantom limb, the result of an imminent dislocation, limping, a severance, and autotomy. Limb/limp/limbo, prominent tropes in the tradition of falling and fallenness as a method or way of doing or being black.

We ask that you continue to indulge us, as we introduce the band.

LAHL'UMLENZE JAMMED SESSIONS performs *Ziyawa! Requiem for Bheki Mseleku and Rahsaan Roland Kirk:*[v]

- On dance, gong, drum, flute, and translation we have Papa Legba AKA Eshu (whose trickster ways and multifariousness bring two best friends to an unexpected brawl under the sweltering and dawdling Yorubaland sun. On this day, the friends work their respective plots that are planted adjacent to each other at the chief's behest in honour of this affecting and exemplary friendship. Down the middle of these patches of land is a pathway leading to and fro the village, which is the direction our old man Eshu is seen heading by the friends following an exchange of greetings between them and him. At the conclusion of the working hours, the friends reflect on the events of the day preceding including their sighting of the old man. The one friend recalls seeing him walking towards the village, the other swears seeing him walking out from the village; they disagree, a back and forth, the conversation creaks, on the verge of breaking down, both friends recollecting details and empirical technicalities that portray the other as imperceptive, their escalating rage betraying possible long held animosities, back and forth, they continue. The conversation breaks down, one hits the other with a hoe, the other retaliates by throwing the other onto his back; a friendship in tatters. We hear that upon learning of this skirmish, a perplexed and disappointed chief resolved that an oblation to Eshu must have been due. At the next council

meeting the chief holds aloft "an old hoe for all to see, [and] he said, mysteriously, "The sacrifice that iron refused to make is what's eating him" (Gleason, 1971 :14).

- On bellowing saxophone, book-banging (and reading), afflicted face-contortions, multiple foot-tapping, multiple finger snapping, and hand-clapping, we have Dumile Feni's multi-limbed 'Musicianaire'. Amongst other things, Titlestad (2004), about our generously limbed band member, writes:

  > the saxophone is transverse to the screaming mouth of the player. The surreal embouchure of the mouth is a black hole, and the oblique saxophone seems to instrumentalise a sound in excess of it: rather than blowing into the saxophone, the musician is screaming across the mouthpiece. To return to Baker's tropes, the 'Muscianaire's' instrument, we could argue, is a device for voicing the black (w)hole, for projecting communal suffering and pain into the world (177).

  We hear more from this gaping mouth of the 'Musicianaire': Mackay Davashe's 'Lakutshon' Ilanga' alongside the 'Terrored Dusk Screams,' that Dollar Brand tells us of in part XI of "Africa, Music, and Show Business: An Analytical Survey in Twelve Tones Plus Finale," which helps summon further contours audible to us in the anguished screaming of the 'Musicianaire'. In finding a syllabic, phonetic, acoustic, and epistemological affinity and commensurability in 'terrored' and 'torrid' and 'terra', the screams at the insufferable precipice of a darkness, a black hole, or indeed, from it, conjoin the 'terrored/torrid dusk screams' and the 'Musicianaire's' screams. Dusk, the zenith of a depreciation, the apogee of a decline preceding a fall, the apex of a twilight that is already descent into and anticipation of night, of darkness, which is an anticipation of torrid day. For if the torridness of the torrid zone is attributable to the intemperate heat of the sun, and the extractive and possessive and depository relation to the land and persons is attributable to terra (torrid) nullius, then the terrored screams of torrid dusk certainly do no give us hope of reprieve, do not promise us the soothe and calm of eventide. They also don't not promise us this; it could be that the screams of dusk are relieving overtures to the tender darkness of evening, of the coming respite that is the blackness that walks slowly towards the dawn. Titlestad's mention of black (w)hole also returns us to Marlene Nourbese Philip's reflection on the possibility of language of the inner space, the space between, that for (black) women controls the outer space through a geography of fear and threat.

Philip wonders “How to make the black hole (w)hole”; a contemplation of whether this language is a language of silence or is a language of the jamettes, who stage a possessing of the outer space, with the “outer space c(o)untouring and shaping the inner space: its language of silencing exerting pressure of threat and fear causing the inner space to collapse in upon itself like a black (w)hole absorbing everything around it” (2017: 265). We ponder with Philip about the sound of the space between, the space that is the black hole, and the collapse or fall of black (w)hole; could this sound be the same screams of the ‘Musicianaire’, giving voice to a communal dispossession or anguish in the same tones and register? Or is it a different kind of screaming, inscrutable if from the ‘Musicianaire’ who after all sits, or stands, or falls, or limps, without any apparent clothing on his lower half and thus his phallus protruding among his lower limbs, no space between? Or is the maternal sound/silence of which the screams are echoes threatening a falling in upon itself?

- on the mics we have the Groundworks emcee Hueman (who famously, in response to an American kid astonished by his knowledge and articulation of the English language, sniggered “yo jo I got six tongues” (‘Stereotype Type’, 2002).

On second saxophone, and foot-tap, we have Joey with big feet. When it comes to Joey, we don’t follow Micheal Titlestad who writes about Mbulelo Mzamane’s reading of Dollar Brand’s aforementioned poem:

> “The layers of meaning that arise in Brand’s bursts of signification produce a surplus of meaning (that is, approached from within a particular paradigm or armed with a particular ideology, phrases can be held to elicit a spectacular range of possibilities). Mzamane (1983: 285-6), for instance, interprets the fifth ‘tone’ (‘joey had biggest feet/so he played tenor’):
>
> *A Western band or orchestra would have wanted to audition Joey first. What Dollar Brand is saying that in Africa, where music is in the blood, such auditions are considered unnecessary. It is often enough to look at Joey’s feet and pronounce that with such large feet he should make a good tenor saxophonist, able to tap his feet to keep rhythm, the basic ingredient in African music. In other words, there is hardly much to choose from between one aspiring musician and the next, since all Africans are musical.*
>
> The essentialisation this inscribes is clearly a function of the somewhat reified version of ‘black consciousness’ that Mzamane imposes on the text. Its ponderous over-reading clearly does a

> disservice to both the poem and the diversity of African music and musicians. What his reading undervalues in particular is the oblique playfulness in Brand's poem... (2004: 169)"

Titlestad's complete dismissal of this idiosyncratic commentary is ironic when set against his subsequent championing of critical disorder and the disturbance of (white, liberal) assumptions. Instead of revelling in, and availing his critical sensibilities to, the "spectacular range of possibilities", he reverts to the postmodernist staples of 'essentialism', 'reification' and 'over-reading'. But that's not our concern here; we accept that Joey can play the sax because of his big feet. His feet are useful beyond the sax and percussive tap-foot, perhaps he can also conjure his sciopod ancestors and provide shade for the rest of the band when needed. Mzamane is right, the band we imagine and know is not a Western band or orchestra. And perhaps he is also right about an Africa where music is in the blood, if we consider the haemography of the vital spirits and all the dynamics they are said to induce in Africans of sub-Sahara, then what is reserved is an especial propensity to falling by way of dances, screams, swaggering and staggering limps, desperate contortions, improvised multiplicity, fugitive arrangement, endless adaptation – music.

- On the mics, again, and dance, again, "the many-voiced one of one/ours", "polyvocal and many-tongued", "six-limbed", is Caribbean Ceres (who holds with and lost to her, Prosperine, her daughter) (Philip, 2015: 7, 10; Philip, 2017: 270).

The band asks for our silence, murmur, and noise; let us listen together.

the flesh

We turn to read Percy Mabandu's meditations in part to twist and reconstruct his words for our own purposes. Mabandu, in trying to come to terms about what it may mean to write of the now deceased quartet who recorded Winston Mankunku Ngozi's classic *Yakhal' Inkomo*[vi] album*,* contemplates that

> Any efforts to come to terms with what these four departed men have left us, the songs they made, any account of their work and lives, must confront some discursive dangers. There exists a possibility that by constructing them solely as subject matter, we may deny them a voice. We run the risk of silencing them. There's a chance we may force them back into the darkness; arrested places of blackness out of which the music is an escape, a will to presence, a reaching out for the ever-present now of their lives, a longing to live, a hunger that issues out of an intimate knowledge of real beauty, the largeness of the human heart, the insatiable compassion that makes creativity possible, a love supreme (2016: 14).

Allow us to remix then, and say: any efforts to come to terms with what these present and departed people have and continue to leave us, the songs they made, any account of their work and lives must confront all dangers. There exists a probability that by constructing them as subjects, matter, and subject matter, we deny them a voice. We run the risk of silencing them. There's a certainty that we will all be forced back into the darkness; arrested places of blackness from, out of, and into which music is an escape, *a will to presence*, *a reaching out* for the ever-non-present now of their lives, a longing to live, a hunger that issues out an intimate knowledge of real ugly and beauty, *the largeness of the human heart*, the insatiable compassion that makes falling possible, ascension.

Never too far from the mind of course, is Hartman's interjection that "suffering and shuffling were complementary" in the gratification and thus discursive economy of antebellum and Jim Crow USA, and with that asks whether it is "possible to consider, let alone imagine, the agency of the performative when the black performative is inextricably linked with the spectre of contented subjection, the torturous display of the captive body, and the ravishing of the body that is the condition of the other's pleasure? As well, how does one explicate the conditions of slave agency when the very expression seems little more than an oxymoron that restates the paradox of the

object status and pained subject constitution of the enslaved?" And importantly "what are the constituents of agency when one's social condition is defined by negation and personhood refigured in the fetishized and fungible terms of object of property?" (Hartman, 1997: 29, 52). A useful caveat after reading Mabandu's heeding to the 'discursive dangers' of reading *Yakhal' Inkomo*, and after jamming alongside the 'Musicianaire', both of whom are in reference to a temporality - apartheid South Africa - that we know is a logical extension of the trans-Atlantic slave plantation. It is the case after all, that the 'Musicianaire's agape embouchure impossibly produces an instrumental lucidity expressive of the collective *suffering* and *pain* of a people while his many limbs shuffle about. And also that Mankuku's horn is the metaphorical cow letting out continuous bellows decrying the slaughter of one of its own for purposes ritual or quotidian (blacks dying and suffering under colonial apartheid) and so relatedly also forming the sound of an ominousness denoting "the many natives singing struggle songs as they shuffle their feet towards the gallows to be hung by the neck until they die (Mabandu, 2016: 17).

Not forgetting the conditions that the other members find themselves. Joey with big feet lives in a place brimming with Cape colonial/apartheid imagery: the slave bell - sonic overseer, bearer of news bad and good and coming for you; a District Six through which a tense south easterly dances and plays creating fiery audibility on one new year's morning, and through which a callous south easterly hauntingly beleaguers finding and creating silence on another new year's morning; and where in "in the afternoon came white dressed white men in a big white car and took him away/ in the afternoon came black dressed black men in a big black car and took him away" – arrest and death, again (Brand, 1967: 35-36) (See Appendix). Legba, conservator and hoodwinker of the gateway and the crossroads, is rooted both in West Africa and in the Caribbean, glancing in either direction through the vestibule that extends from torrid nullius to the Middle Passage to the plantation and back again to colonial Africa, and back again. Hueman (his name meaning shade of a human? His position best remembered as an 'underground' legend?), an object of tourist intrigue and curiosity, subject to a litany of stereotypes, erroneously thought to have lions and tigers as pets – but no such in a postapartheid South Africa that has been anointed by settler

colonialism with atypical infrastructural embellishments and a refining cultural proximity to the given civilisers. And Caribbean Ceres, searching for chattel and child, language and land, locus and loss; in the tradition of Anansi, multiply traversing and contorting to find comfort and mother in the new world.

Given the inescapably violent historical contexts of the players in our band, their conditions, (broken) connections and continuities, we share with Hartman the uncertainty about the applicability, validity, and usefuleness of the category of 'agency' when attempting to conceptualise or imagine the experiences of the slave. Such is the encapsulating terror, mundane and spectacular, of the institution, as well as the utter command to which slave life is subject to that to even speak of slave activity, particularly in relation to song and dance, is to assuage the reality of slavery at best and to kind of conserve the conceptual status quo that (mis)reads the slave as subject. Hartman (1997) asks

> how does one represent the various modes of practice without reducing them to conditions of domination or romanticizing them as pure forces of resistance? To complicate the picture still further, how does one make any claims about the politics of performance without risking the absurd when discussing the resistances staged by an unauthorized dance in the face of the everyday workings of fear, subjugation, and violence? How does one calculate or measure such acts in the scope of slavery and its reasoned and routinized terror, its calibrations of subjectivity and pain, and the sheer incommensurability of the force that it deploys in response to the small challenges waged against it?... what possibility for agency exist that don't put the enslaved at risk of a greater order of pain and punishment since the slave is a legal person only insofar as he is criminal and violated body in need of limited forms of protection? In this case, the assignation of subject status and the recognition of humanity expose the enslaved to further violence in the case of criminal agency or require the event of excessive violence, cruelty beyond the limits of the socially tolerable, in order to acknowledge and protect the slave's person (55).

Substance was perhaps right in telling us something about performance and agency: the song is painful or hurts because it is written on the corner; a corner not necessarily as the space from which to mount a revolt or rebellion of the scarred and disenfranchised, but a corner that is already the beginning of prison, a corner that already awaits some kind of criminality, or criminal subjectivity. We are however not beholden to the category of agency. This is so as a recognition of the merits of

Hartman's argument particularly as an explication of the black condition at its most extreme, as well as a base conceptual chassis within which categories such as performance and agency are to be considered even outside of conditions or environs of slavery and sheer dominance and terror. Perhaps what we want to think of is the possibility of provision; so not quite what actions are possible from the slave and what it is they mean in the context of a system of slavery and its before and afterlife, but the extent to which slave (and black more generally) performances evidence a kind of sincere fidelity to internally constructed and determined standards of method and/or prowess, aptitude, finesse, whatever they may be, and thus an unapprehended and unpossessed ability to hold and give and supply.

If, for Hartman (1997), on the one hand, spectacular public instantiations or scenes of slave subjection and their trademark staging of black pain and suffering are effacing of blacks in their mobilisation of, among other things, white witness/participant empathy as a vehicle for an accessibility that hollows out and stands in stead thus reinforcing white subjectivity by way of black fungibility. Or on the other hand, they arouse a sadistic facing of these scenes therefore occasioning white enjoyment and thus reinforcing white subjectivity by way of brutal and breath-taking exhibitions of striking black chattel (sorrowful or ebullient). Or on another hand the scenes are not spectacular at all, but instead are incredibly routine incantations of the guilessness, gaiety, goofiness, degradedness, gung ho-ness, gratefulness, grooviness, and grave resilience of the slave despite (and in certain instances because of) their condition as chattel, therefore reinforcing of white subjectivity by way of black susceptibility to abjectly corporeal and epidermal praxis and humanity. Then performances of blackness, in the Hartman sense, specifically those evocative of black pain, suffering, ignorance and joy, are subsumed into this discursive field such as to make agential flights impossible when not buttressing the field itself (normally, or through transgressive criminality).

What we seek however are not 'forms of agency' or agential flights that run the risk of reinscribing the "terms of subjugation" since we already assume that very subjugation and its relentless re-inscription (Hartman, 1997). What we seek is provision; the ability for recognising and (re)attempting to see, hear, touch, taste, feel,

know that which is held, not really had, and given from one slave to another, from one black to another. A concern for tradition of sorts; not necessarily in the sense of an inter-generational transferral, but of characteristic method particular to a condition, regardless of effect. It is in this way, and others, that we further agree with Hartman who states that

> these performances of blackness are in no way the "possession" of the enslaved; they are enactments of social struggle and contending articulations of racial meaning. The unremitting and interminable process of revision, re-elaboration, mimicry, and repetition prevents efforts to locate an originary or definitive point on the chain of associations that would fix the identity of a particular act or enable us to sift through authentic and derivative performances, as if the meaning of those acts could be separated from the effects they yield, the contexts in which they occur, or the desires that they catalyse, or as if instrumental amusements could be severed from prospects of pleasure or the performative from scenes of torture. Moreover, these performances implicitly raise questions about the status of what is being performed – the power of whiteness or the black's good time, a nonsensical slave song, or recollections of dislocation… The construction of black bodies as phobogenic objects estranged in a corporeal malediction and the apparent biological certainty of this malediction attest to the power of the performative to produce the very subject which it appears to express. What I am trying to argue here is not that the black body exists prior to the discourses and practices that produce it as such but that what is particular to the discursive constitution of blackness is the inescapable prison house of the flesh or the indelible drop of blood – that is, the purportedly intractable and obdurate materiality of physiological difference (1997: 57-58).

Of course, when thinking of the elaborate that is what Hartman refers to as performances of blackness, it is clear that they are not the preserve or possession of the enslaved. But when one thinks of provision (space being already made?) instead of the agency of the enslaved, as we have been discussing, then one is tempted not to say that this is what is in actual fact in possession of the enslaved, because such is the extremity of slavery (and the fungibility of blackness) that it is there to mould, maraud and manage everything, but to say that there is space (provision) for a generativity that is opened precisely because of the conditions in which slave performance takes place. Which for the enslaved proves imperative for the possibility of any kind of survival. What emerges from this generativity needn't be consequential beyond the fact of its happening in the conditions which it is happening and there being other enslaved observing, learning, witnessing, sampling, or not. Hartman asks the question:

"Do the provisional forms of action available to the enslaved necessarily entail utopian premises that assume a greater degree of power and possibility than usually exists?" and then a few sentences later answers it by saying that "these tactics are unable to effect reversals of power and instead evidence the provisionality of resistance and the magnitude of domination, at the very least, they are guided by the yearning to refashion and transform the given" (1997: 112).

Although provisionality, as both adjective and noun, interests us, it is primarily so as a possible simultaneity, outcome, consequence, stylisation, or interpretation of a provision. Provision here as both noun and verb, as provision and a provisioning. Or, perhaps, in following Agamben, who follows Aristotle, we want to think of provision as an "existence as potentiality" in which case it would also be similar to a "hexis, a 'having,' on the basis of which" the slave's agency is not brought into actuality (1999: 179). For Agamben, potentiality "is not simply the potential to do this or that thing but potential to not-do, potential not to pass into actuality" (1999: 180). Taken further, and for what it really is, potentiality then is also necessarily impotentiality:

> It means that in its originary structure, *dynamis*, potentiality, maintains itself in relation to its own privation, its own *steresis*, its own non-Being… To be potential means: to be one's own lack, *to be in relation to one's own incapacity*. Beings that exist in the mode of potentiality *are capable of their own impotentiality*; and only in this way do they become potential. They can be because they are in relation to their own non-Being (1999: 182, emphasis original).

This is, of course, not meant to attribute to provision a necessary will, its own generative possession to not actualise (which is also a possibility to actualise) in the form of will and agency. And not quite to belabour the stance that "the root of freedom is to be found in the abyss of potentiality" and therefore to "be free is not simply to have the power to do this or that thing, nor is it simply to have the power to refuse to do this or that thing" but instead "*to be capable of one's own impotentiality*, to be in relation to one's own privation" (Agamben, 1999: 182-183). After all, "potentiality is not will, and impotentiality is not necessity" particularly if we take this will to be the "principle that makes it possible to order the undifferentiated chaos of potentiality" and to also think of the slave as being totally subject to the master's will (Agamben, 1999: 254). But what provision as an existence as potentiality does help us

to do is to think of something existing by way of its possibility for non-actuality; which is to *not* suggest that in its actuality its existence as potentiality is exhausted by being fully realised, but that this is rather proof of precisely that ability to not actualise i.e. its impotentiality. In other words "contrary to the traditional idea of potentiality that is annulled in actuality, here we are confronted with a potentiality that conserves itself in actuality. Here, potentiality, so to speak, survives actuality, in this way, *gives itself to itself*" (Agamben, 1999: 184).

It is the case then that the 'provisional resistance' mentioned by Hartman is not an actuality that exhausts the existence of provision (its contents or itself), but that we have divulged in sighting or witnessing or knowing of or hearing or feeling the actuality is, at the very least, *an* im/potentiality, a provision. What we don't mean to do is put forth a presupposed extractability of the condition of the enslaved in the Americas as directly transplantable to all conditions of black subjection (continental slavery, colonialism – whether settler, exploitative/extractive, managerial; neo-colonialism, apartheid, global anti-blackness etc). Our ill-preparedness, for example, to read Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection* with, against and in the slave world of the Cape Colony would already make this endeavour relatively shallow. We do mean however to think of the trans-plantation, as it were; not considering 1492 and the subsequent trans-Atlantic slave trade as the fissure releasing some into the modern horizon, but considering the construction of blackness alongside pre-1492 notions of Torrid Zone/uninhabitable regions as prefacing the subsequent conditions, contexts, (broken) connections and continuities engendered and made intelligible by the *inescapable prison house of the flesh [and] the indelible drop of blood* that variously and superlatively constitutes blackness. And this allows us to therefore place it in a longer and varied trajectory. In particular, we converse with Hartman in order to think of what it means to fall, what it means for the black practitioner to fall, and even more specifically, the conditions in which a falling can, is and will be attempted. In other words, an aversion to a wistful, ornate and halcyonian characterisation of the fall. And in more words, a sober grasping of the abjectness and degradedness that blackness is and can assume so as to render the fall at the scene of subjection (spectacular and

mundane), imbibed in 'performances of blackness' with no immediately discernible transformational capacity.

What is of the matter then for us, is not transformational capacity per se, but capacity for something, anything, including transformation. That is, provision, space; in and/or from which a fall is enactable or perceptible. Ultimately Hartman elicits from us a deeper deliberation of the *inescapable prison house of flesh and the indelible drop of blood* than initially imagined from our discussion of the Fallen Flesh ignited by Alfonso the Wise's commentary. Perhaps it even pushes us to have the temerity to note another phonetic, acoustic, and epistemological affinity and commensurability, the Fallen Flesh and the Fall(in) Flesh. None other than Hortense Spillers to help us further think through the flesh, who maintains that it would make sense to

> make a distinction in this case between "body" and "flesh" and impose that distinction as the central one between captive and liberated subject-positions. In that sense, before the "body" there is "flesh", that zero-degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse or the reflexes of iconography. Even though the European hegemonies stole bodies – some of them female – out of West African communities in concert with African "middleman," we regard this human and social irreparability as high crimes against the *flesh*, as the person of African females and males registered the wounding. If we think of the "flesh" as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship's hole, fallen, or "escaped" overboard (2003: 206).

We think of the searedness of the flesh here not only in response to the invocation of the branding of black slaves by the Portuguese crown, and the capture of and branding of slaves-cum-chattel, before the export of slaves to the Americas, but also of the sear of the unbearable sun of the torrid zones that had already rendered the inhabitants of these uninhabitable areas fleshly. As referred to above, our locating of sun-seared fleshly inhabitants of the torrid zone finds a genealogy antedating the Atlantic slave trade (Iberian, Italian, and trans-Atlantic). Whether reading it in Alfonso the Wise's medieval ponderings or listening to Mudimbe's telling of Flavius Philostratus' (Greek teacher of the 2nd Century) characterisation of the Pygmies of Libya (Africa) as "children of the flesh" (1994:1). Indeed, Philostratus's narrative of the myth of Hercules (Heracles) and the Pygmies, and its engraving by Cornelius Cort, a Dutch artist in the 16th century, in a piece entitled *Hercules Besieged by the Pygmies*,

> represents Hercules reposing after his hard fight with Antaeus [Libyan half-giant and famed fighter]. The hero is sleeping on the sand, near the body of the vanquished Libyan, when he is assailed and awakened by a multitude of Pygmies, coming out of the earth as from an ant hill; he arises in all his grandeur, and for his sole revenge, laughingly contents himself with enclosing his little enemies in the skin of a lion, to make a gift for Eurystheus (Mowat, 1901: 72).

That the Pygmies emerge from the earth is significant; particularly when considerate of the longstanding depiction (in various forms) of Hercules defeating Antaeus by way of hoisting him off the ground, thus distancing Antaeus from the source of his power (the earth), and then squeezing and crushing him to death. Even though Pygmies in ancient mythology were not the exclusive reserve of Libya – they were also presumed to inhabit India or to be found somewhere around or in relation to Ethiopia, hence betraying their proximity to prevalent approximations of torrid regions - their stark association, even co-extension, with the (simmering?) earth is quite instructive for us. Mudimbe (1994: 1) concurs in pointing out how "by trying to avenge the death of Anteus and destroy Hercules, [the Pygmies] confirm the tension between earthly and spiritual realms". Driving this point further, and specifically considering Philostratus' rendering of the scene and a French translation of it by Blaise de Vigenere in 1614, Mudimbe continues

> Hercules, the model! He has here all the prestige of physical strength, intellectual awareness, and spiritual wisdom. His role as a model depends not only upon his own virtues and capacities but also on the fact that these qualities are carefully by a space and tradition whose structures serves as the creation and affirmation of his being. His healthy self-awareness and body speak of a paradigm: power is historical, cultural, and, in this case, visibly descends from the divine. The plate, the story, and the commentaries regulate this paradigm or normality to the extent that Hercules' opponents *cannot transgress the fatality of their role: that of being aberrant, morally sick little "things," springing from the soil like ants…* [Philostratus and Vigenere's retellings] make explicit the *exceptional cultural tension existing between Hercules and the Pygmies, who are qualified as "children of the earth," that is, those who live according to the passions of the body, completely subservient to its pleasures and violence* (1994: 2, 4, emphasis added).

In the same manner as we thought important to caution in the previous chapter, we repeat here in reassuring that we don't mean to place the burden of contemporary

racial cosmographies on unsuspecting ancient shoulders. If anything the idea is to provoke an awareness to resonance, whether as directly referenced and inherited, that is, as pronounced, or as cumulative and diffusive discourse, knowledge, consciousness, and viscerality, that is, as reverberations or echoes. It is also to consider, by way of witness to the unravelling of blackness and blacks throughout this history to present, that such essential and ubiquitous properties that we may call anti-blackness and racism as understood today, cannot but offer gratitude to the prerequisite conceptual and epistemological vectorial predecessors that are claimed by their velocious successors in what becomes the linear acceleration that is the early modern era. As Mudimbe illustrates above, notions of fleshly beings unknowingly imprisoned in their whimsical form were traceable to Antiquity by late medieval/Renaissance/early modern minds. Van Den Boogaart (1982: 38) argues that "English seamen and traders in West Africa" in the 16th century could concede that some rudiments of True Religion were found in the heathenism of the blacks, but in general their religious practices demonstrated their anomie, their 'wildness,' [and so] they were – or at least seemed to be – *devils made of flesh*, who accepted neither God nor his commandments" (emphasis added). Continued:

> In all aspects of their behaviour the English found major deviations from what was right and proper. Since the blacks did not abide the rules of morality, *they were in thrall to their passions and lived like animals*. The kinship and similarities between blacks and the recently discovered man-apes was a subject for speculation, though none went so far as to imagine actual descent. As among the apes, among these beastly black humans the *dominant passions were the sexual urges. That they were punished by God with a black skin and a monstrous appearance for transgressions of fundamental sexual norm* was an assumption that white, virtuous Englishman accepted without much though on biblical exegesis and *which soon became self-evident* (Van Den Boogaart, 1982: 82, emphases added).

In accordance, much of the behaviour of blacks on the West African coast was for the Dutch attributable to their "lust and licentiousness"; Van Den Boogaart says of these perceptions that polygamy for example "showed the African men had few restrictions in the gratifications of their sexual desires, and, according to De Marees, the size of their penises also demonstrated their great libido [whereas] the women were 'very ready for whoredom and unchastity' and 'were very happy to have had to do with a

Dutchman, as this gave them a great reputation among themselves'" (1982:82). We glance at these brief periodic characterisations of blacks moored as flesh, blackness as flesh or fleshliness, to make the point, firstly, that many of these artefacts, stories and ideas of antiquity, like that of Hercules and the Pygmies, are retrieved, reclaimed and redeemed, or form an indelible if subtly suffused epistemological and spiritual hereditament, in the late medieval/early modern period thus contributing to the gradual emergence of a racial consciousness that is world defining. And secondly, partly because of this, the ancient and medieval eras get marshalled into a historiography recounting sequential movements and events, which creates a discernible heritage at least insofar as its construction of blackness as unavoidably cosmographic.

Our understanding of the flesh then, keeping in hand what Fallen Flesh and Fall in Flesh can mean for us, very much hears the discursive reverberations of darkly Libyans so closely fettered to the earth as to relinquish ascendancy when lifted away from it, or so abjectly moored to it as to literally live in it (as opposed to on it), in naked unadulteratedness. That they too desire upon no lengthy height from it, be so indistinguishable from it such that they can mount only an irritating, pitiable, and laughable offensive and thus their inevitable defeat rendering and corroborating their state as curios to be enclosed and taken. It is very much in tune with Wynter's outlining of the "lawlike manner through [which] the systemic stigmatization of the Earth in terms of its being made of a "vile and base matter," a matter ontologically different from that which attested to the perfection of the heavens, and thereby (as such) divinely condemned to be fixed and unmoving at the center of the universe as its dregs because the abode of a post-Adamic "fallen" mankind had been an indispensable function of the "verifying" of medieval Latin-Christian Europe's then theocentric descriptive statement of human as "sinful by nature." (2003: 267). It is especially audible to us when we think of slaves in the 15th and 16th centuries lifted and torn from the land of their kin and ancestors and squeezed and crushed into ships, experiencing a 'social death'. When we think of how the encounter of blacks' living conditions by the Portuguese in West Africa provoked their denunciation as lacking edificial sophistication and complexity and being so simple, so unaltered from the

natural habitat as to be living in 'bestial sloth', in effect ant hills scaled to size. When we consider how this earthly simplicity and extendability/indistinguishability proffered these inhabitants as posing no significant threat - being an unpredictable, fickle, juvenile nuisance at worst - so as to require the mobilisation of great military might in the manner of the prior and various Crusades, and thus to lay claim to slaves captured in wars and battles as booty. And when we think of the curio-courier-cruoris-carnal-commodity-convertee-colonised-capitalisable nexus (institutionally and explicitly the kommodity-**k**ruoris-**k**riminal nexus on the American plantation and beyond), inconsistently predominant, but everywhere displaying a tug in one and more of its components; and how this retroactively and prospectively constitutes the scape and scope of the incipient world of fictile and fictive black life and land wherever contact is or is about to be established with people extraneous to the landmass in which torrid earth is the last frontier. And this, by today and a while before, is everywhere.

The inability of the darkly Libyans to escape or flout the fatality of their role and to be so bound in the passions of the body and completely subservient to its pleasures and violence is also audible to us. Reminding us that the climes of the regions are such that its inhabitants are in constant heat, and so of the 'longue duree' of the colonial/slavery/capitalist/post norm as being intrinsically linked with the sexual violence inflicted upon welcoming and debauched black flesh, and its logical placement in the long tradition of the creation and captivation of welcoming black flesh. Making us recall the inevitable seizure of the space between for purposes of the erection of a comely and arresting thoroughfare, a passage – enabled by fleshly pliability to burrowing and excavation - entered by all and sundry because such is her/it's nature, exited by pure use; or seized and preserved, the erection of the thoroughfare such that it is manned, covered, patrolled, protected, not entered or exited, pure use inverted, redistributed and effused nonetheless.

Not letting us forget unkempt fleshy pliability manifested as exaggerated and vitalised (overwhelming blood/heat?) phallic protrusions awakened by any whiff of potential even if unlikely gratification and therefore beckoning a valorous and spectacular castration; the flesh wound manned, patrolled, surveyed, the autotomous nature of

the flesh meaning that it can never not be a potential obtrusion. We recollect as well that the genital focus is also intended as an empirical and corporeal rationalisation instructive of a purported nature of the whole flesh, meaning that the vaginal-to-womb space between could have been, say, the space on top, and that the prodigious phallic protrusion could have been the ear. It is on the one hand reflective of the general excitable, roguish, and trespassive nature of the fleshly being; and on the other hand betrays the remarkable lifeblood of this malleable flesh in being simultaneously excessive and ostentatious, and austere and timid. Hortense Spillers notes this apparent paradox when alluding to those icons of black female sexuality named in the USA as 'Jezebel' and 'Mammy'. Spillers, quite brilliantly, writes that

> the black-female-as-whore forms an iconographic equation with black-female-vagina-less, but in different clothes, we might say. From the point of black people (or sex between black and any other) is so boundlessly imagined that it loses meaning and becomes, quite simply, a medium in which the individual is suspended. From this angle, the act of sex has no occasional moments of inauguration, transition, and termination; it does not belong to human and social process, embedded in time, pledged to time and to notions of mortality. It is, on the contrary, a state of vicious, routinized entanglement, whose passions are pure, direct, and untrammelled by consciousness. Under these conditions of seeing, we lose all nuance, subjects are divested of their names, and, oddly enough, the female has so much sexual potential that she has none at all that anybody is ready and able to recognize at the level of culture. Thus, the unsexed black female and the supersexed black female embody the very same vice, cast the very same shadow, since both are an exaggeration of the uses to which sex might be put… The black American female, whether whore or asexed, serves an analogous function for the symbolically empowered on the American scene in fixing the frontier of "woman" with her own being. If life as the black person – female or male – leads it is the imagined site of an illegitimate sexuality, then it is also, paradoxically enough, the affirmation of sexuality (2003: 164-165).

Can we follow Spillers then and ask whether the same be said of the black male, in the sense that is popularly attributed to Fanon, that the black man *is* penis? The immenseness of the black penis becomes an appropriate referent or metaphor or overture for something so extremely that thing that it ceases to be that thing. Could we perhaps say the same of the 'hottentot apron,' the frontal complement to an allegedly enlarged posterior, supposed sexual features salaciously characterised as visible manifestation and evidence of an inferior being? Perhaps we could speak of

black sexuality in the same way that we would speak of, say, a pig's appetite or palate; such is the voracious and miscellaneous nature of a pig's dietary consumption, that is, it basically eats all that is put in front of it that is edible, and insatiably so, that one could speak equally of it having tremendous appetite and it not really having any appetite at all. Indeed we can think of appetite in relation to a pig as being redundant, in that redundancy implies an excess of/to a fulfilled state that is indistinguishable from that fulfilled state hence making discernment or differentiation between a fulfilled state and its excess unnecessary since it is essentially the same thing. Appetite is pig and more which is to say it is properly pig, which is to say pig is very much not appetite but just pig. It is this quality that allots it its purchase as a metaphor – we speak of being hoggish or piggish, or of hogging things, when referring to excessive behaviours such as being gluttonous or engrossing or rapacious and simultaneously when referring to behaviours of (near) complete deficiency or lack, such as being distasteful or unpalatable or intolerable.

In this sense then black fleshliness *is* sexuality, instead of having or possessing sexuality; that is if we follow the Merriam-Webster definition of sexuality as the "quality or state of *being* sexual" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sexuality; emphasis added). It is also an active process of being sexual, and being made sexual; about this we seek Spillers' words once more:

> First of all, their New World, diasporic plight marked a *theft* of the *body* – a *willful* and violent (and unimaginable from this distance) severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire. Under these conditions, we lose at least *gender* difference *in the outcome*, and the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific. But this body, at least from the point of view of the captive community, focuses a private and particular space, at which point biological, sexual, social, cultural, linguistic, ritualistic, and psychological fortunes converge. This profound intimacy of interlocking detail is disrupted, however, by externally imposed meanings and uses: (1) the captive body as the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality; (2) at the same time – in stunning contradiction – it is reduced to a thing, to *being* for the captor; (3) in this distance *from* a subject position, the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of 'otherness'; (4) as a category of 'otherness', the captive body translates into a

> potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general 'powerlessness'. (1994: 206)

Weheliye expands on pornotroping:

> In pornotroping, the double rotation White identifies at the heart of the trope figures the remainder of law and violence linguistically, staging the simultaneous sexualization and brutalization of the (female) slave; yet, and this marks its complexity, it remains unclear whether the turn or deviation is towards violence or sexuality. Pornotroping, then, names the becoming-flesh of the (black) body and forms a primary component in the processes by which human beings are converted into bare life (2008: 72).

This whippy and incessant being-madeness complexion of black flesh is precisely what permits and proceeds the black body's over-gendering and 'ungendering', allows it to be non-gender-specific and non-gender-related, which is to also say potentially trans-gendered. Whether it is the famed designation of 'the black race as the feminine race,' or the fiery, snappy, aggressive, recalcitrant, and masculine black woman caricature named as 'Sapphire' - who sometimes has the same characteristics as the patriarchal matriarch black woman who is both chief nurturer and provider-in-chief thus unsettling or even threatening/trivialising/castrating the position of the black man. Or, as Blackmore informs us about Venetian explorer and merchant, Alvise Cadamosto, whose voyages in sub-Saharan Africa at the behest of Portuguese Prince Henry in the 1450s included "observations [that] record deviances from an assumed European cultural norm, such as the gender-transgressive behaviour of men in the first kingdom of Blacks in lower Ethiopia (the Wolofs), who 'perform womanly tasks, such as working with cloth and other items, and spinning cotton'" (2009: 53).

Or indeed, as Spillers teaches us, if the primary site for gendering in the modern Western imagination is determined as the domestic then the un/gendering contained in the constant making of black flesh (which is subjection to mystical cosmographically induced anthropomorphic characterisation, capture, moulding into chattel, atomization and quantification as spatial measurements, unnaming and misnaming, denial of parental relation, minimal differentiation in labour, infantilisation, migrant and domestic labour etc.) is a process necessarily entwined with violent erasure or

nullification of black domesticity. The not-domestic, that is, the public, is no different, as Marlene Nourbese Philip and Substance, with their reflections in the previous chapter on the (gendered/ungendered) space that is the corner, show us; ungendering is a process of enfleshment. That is, it is the making of flesh as process, as constant fleshing, enfleshment, fleshening, fleshing out; to add to or put weight onto or into an outline, to concretise an abstraction, to inure through a demonstration, to expand on or further explain and detail a draft. It is also, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, to *skin or to 'free from flesh'* (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/flesh). The prospect then of a process that empties out as it fills in, that abstracts or dissociates as it attributes or associates, that epidermalises and grafts on as it lacerates and scorches, that leaves open a space for abscondment while enclosing a space for detainment.

We take seriously Alexander Weheliye's sentiments of how possibly "partaking of the flesh, albeit the habeas viscus[vii] kind rather than the pure abjection varietal, tenders flavours and textures found in the lives of imprisoned freedom, desires for survival, and viscous dreams of life that awaken future anterior humanities, which exceed Man's inesculent culinary laws" (2014: 124). And also Fred Moten who questions "what happens, then, if the traditional placement of flesh within the outer depths of the king's two – symbolic and biological – bodies is refused by the Africanist's presence's fleshly, thingly displacement of 'American grammar?' What happens, then, if we follow Mama's Baby Suggs in claiming the mere monstrosity of 'mere' flesh?" (2018: 179). We hope not to suggest unto them a parting with Hartman's notion of the inescapable prison house of the flesh; but what we want to put forward, or even ask about, is not quite the fugitive immersion in the productive possibilities contained in the dregs or sediment that is/of flesh, but rather and relatedly, about the ineluctable provision of space open for a (bearing) performance of falling, *in* the prison house of the flesh. That is, a Fall *in* Flesh.

Substance is important to our reflections not only because of inscribing a geography of corner/prison, of the corner as already prison, of black space as menacing, malleable, arresting, abject and inevitable; but also because of his scribing of a hurt and hurting (pained and painful) song precisely because it was written on the

corner/prison. We conjecture that in this moment, for Substance, an acoustic realisation of the corner as prison is not explicitly inspirational or instructional of a plot to rail and escape underground, but is just illustrative and inflective of a particular condition, which is just as effective and not as effective a thing to do as to plot. And importantly, it is there to be borne. From the corner, the cell, imprisoned: a forlorn inmate seeks - and is granted - chorus, singing "sengikhumbule ekhaya abazali bami/ umama nobaba ngabashiya ngisesemcane" (I am missing home, my parents, who I left at a young age); a South African jailhouse lament. In prison, visions of a home never really known, moans of a practical orphan, reachings really for a natal relation, a parental relation, a home; also an apology of sorts, for a juvenile retreat or departure until the cell, and so, ultimately, visions of an impossible flight or freedom. And here: "voices take on flesh/ and the flesh, stripped by the sun's rod, by the slaver's rod, by the gumboots of conquerors, hardens to spirits that will not be revealed" (Brathwaite, 1973: 210).

Endnotes

[i] From Marlene Nourbese Philip's poem titled "She Tries Her Tongue; Her Silence Softly Breaks" from the book of the same name (2014: 72).

[ii] Although it is apparently widely accepted that the primary author of the text was Alvaro Velho, a fellow sailor or member of the expedition.

[iii] A large stone cross containing the Portuguese coat of arms.

[iv] Another word commonly used to refer to one's ancestors in IsiZulu

[v] 'Lah'umlenze' – directly translated means to throw away a leg; when colloquially translated, what it actually means is to dance in a spirited manner, in a similar way as the black American colloquialism 'get down'. 'Ziyawa' – directly translated means the things are falling; colloquially translated it means it's intensly fun and electrifying, in a similar way to the black American colloquialism 'it's going down'. Bheki Mseleku was a South African jazz musician who would famously play the piano and the saxophone at the same time, and Rahsaan Roland Kirk was a jazz musician who would blow on several woodwind instruments at the same time. The dexterity and multiplicity of these musicians, and their music, is what inspires our band.

[vi] A popular South African jazz recording released in 1968, with the title track being perhaps South Africa's most famed jazz standard. The title, which means 'the cow cries' or 'the cow bellows' together with the music on the album, is popularly interpreted as a lament on the black experience under apartheid, a sorrowful cry as it were, as well as a celebration of black diasporic cultural life.

[vii] Alexander Weheliye uses the term habeas viscus "on the one hand, to signal how violent political domination activates a fleshly surplus that simultaneously sustains and disfigures said brutality, and, on the other hand, to reclaim the atrocity of the flesh as a pivotal arena for the politics emanating from different traditions of the oppressed". *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. (2014: 2).

“Fired in history’s unrelenting sun”[i]

He meant you have to root your voice in fabulous origins, find your voice in the dark, among the dead.

- **Nathaniel Mackey, “Cante Moro”, 195**

Am on the plantation and in the great house – literally and it is pleasant being in the great house, but I can never forget myself. We can never forget ourselves.

- **M Nourbese Philip, “Fugues, Fragments and Fissures – A Work in Progress”, 12**

But my mother calls me back to her calm histories…

- **Kamau Barthwaite, “Bell”, 1977**

hag raddled with sea salt: dumb

mouth: unmothered mother

- **Kamau Brathwaite, “Fever”, 1977**

Them brothers said “don’t go written bars filled with rage

To primetime television in your gilded cage

And forget its people in the world still enslaved”

So I barb wired my wrist and let it fill the page

- **Black Thought “Hot 97 Funk Flex Freestyle”, 2017**

black sycorax my mother…

…

she will remember the eyes

sinking into the night of dead water

cries of flame when there was gun-

fire, gong beat and the cripple footsteps running from the tribe

she wears on her wrist the shadow of the chain

history of flesh

written by whip of torture

legacy of bribe

from the sickness of the plantation

she gathers sticks

gutters them to fashion pipes flutes siphons

rambles of herbs she touches and sniffs

Offering them prayers and names:

Mint nunu kema-weed shamar

Pem-pem piaba fall-down-bush

And she crumples words into curses:

- **Kamau Brathwaite, "Hex", 1977**

Variations on a theme of irreverence

In *Vasco da Gama and Africa: An Era of Mutual Discovery, 1497-1800* David Northrup argues for a fairer and variegated reading and writing of the history of early contact between Europeans and sub-Saharan Africans. A history that contextualises the encounters as more mutually beneficial at least in terms of prospective commercial and cultural exchanges, and that also casts the Africans as willing and agential and thus as effective co-authors of the narrative. Along with contesting the extent to which trans-Atlantic slavery really depleted West African society and fabric – dusting off the seemingly institutionalised-as-knowledge hyperbole of 19th century abolitionists, Northrup intends to show how

> varied were the early African encounters with the Portuguese, and they suggest that the ways in which Africans perceived the Portuguese and acted toward them were as important in shaping the relationships between the groups as were the motives and actions of the Portuguese. Depending on circumstances, Africans welcomed the newcomers as partners and

> allies, regarded them as passing curiosities, or opposed them as enemies. Along the Atlantic coast of the continent, the Portuguese and African ruling classes generally formed mutually attractive commercial ties. In the more thinly settled southern region, relations were sporadic until the Dutch East India Company established a way station at Cape Town in 1652. In eastern Africa, Portuguese efforts to gain a commanding position in the rich trade of the Indian Ocean produced both violent conflict and alliances, partly influenced by religious agendas on both sides… It is no longer possible to examine these centuries only in terms of European actions and perspectives. A generation of diligent research has made it clear that the agendas and outlooks of the African participants also shaped these interactions. The revisionists' detailed examination of the inner workings of African societies shows that, with few exceptions, Africans remained in direct control of their communities and territories during these centuries (1998: 196).

That Northrup characterises the initial encounters as between two entities with self-recognised capacities for sentience, sentiment and even sapience, as well as with the ability to interact and participate in processes with others, both selfishly and selflessly, would be ridiculous to counteract. That the encounter was, however, with any semblance of consistency, between thought and known equals - certainly from the perspective of the Europeans, is, we'd like to argue, misleading. As indicated in the previous chapter with regard the Iberians, we want to contend, for one, that a range of behaviours, dispositions, and attitudes were governed by the same ethical framework when it came to how these Europeans interacted with the black Africans they came upon: the benign, mundane, sympathetic/empathetic, inquisitive were never really at odds with the more violent and extractive. As a matter of fact, they were crucial elaborations of a fundamentally violent, partisan, erosive (non)relation/distance that is coming into being; that of a Christian/rational/political subject and a black African pagan/slave/extreme other (whose diplomatic elaborations include, among others, facilitator, informant, impaired ally, guide). In other words, far from being reliant only on a one-sided vehemence and brutality, the encounter was paradigmatic in its empirical diversity; it brings upon a world, which delimits the prosaic from the outstanding, the consultant in prose from the outer most standing (falling), the ally from the commodity. For Northrup then to suggest an equitability of some kind based on apparent concord, cooperation, mutual contribution or even combat, in contradistinction to lopsided aggressive, acquisitive,

and authorial overtures is a misnomer. For not only is cordiality, correspondence, and even a differentiating veneration to be expected within the ontological schema introduced and exceeded by blackness, it is necessary for its stabilisation.

The reverberations sounded off by, at and towards the initial encounter thus resonate well beyond the scene of the encounter. They set a tone that brings into its ambience whether remote villages in Europe and those “African communities still under the rule” and influence of themselves and each other. Africans as participants or Africans as actors was therefore never not a reality: the scene in Lagos set by Zurara as previously discussed, reminds us of the centrality of the captive’s performance as the generous actor that enables an array of other performances from the rest of the cast; performances that reinforce the abject condition of the captive despite the prevalence of a seemingly compassionate recognition of the captive’s human-likeness. To put it differently, the type of variation upon the same substructure that we are trying to establish here between, on the one, violent enslaver and coloniser, and on the two, equal ally and co-conspirator, is one that for the black is really a difference of black body and black flesh. The process that is enfleshment works against a bodying, and through a bodying, which is to say that it presumes a body that can and needs to be unravelled into flesh, which is also to unveil flesh that maintains the ability to take the shape of some kind of body. So, black body, if it is body then it is provisional body at best, it is essentially black flesh-in-the-waiting. Black allies and equals, if they can even be called that, are ontologically provisional at best, and are necessarily interchangeable and thus ultimately, imminently, intimately, immanently enslavable. On the cultural frontier of mutually beneficial exchanges, or at least sub-Saharan African agential reception and negotiation of external culture, in Africa, Northrup writes

> Despite their obvious importance, the material aspects of the Vasco da Gama era are not the only features worth considering. Significant cultural changes also took place in African societies. As one historical survey points out, "to an impartial observer living in the year 1400 Africa would have seemed inevitably destined to join the world of Islam." However, the new contacts with Europe that directly challenged Muslim power in Ethiopia and on the Swahili coast also began to counter the Muslim world's cultural hegemony. As in the case of the commercial influences, the greatest period of cultural change would come in the nineteenth

> and twentieth centuries, but the pattern and direction of cultural change were set before 1800. Here too, one needs to beware of the tendency to presume that cultural change was largely destructive or otherwise negative. As Ian Campbell has persuasively argued in the case of Polynesia, cultural contact is generally nonviolent and mutually advantageous, a characterization that applies to Africa in this period (1998: 205).

Firstly, the image of a sub-Saharan Africa on offer, on the brink, for two potential worlds, makes us read Isabel Hofmeyr's suggestion that "we need to think of the Indian Ocean as the site par excellence of 'alternative modernities; those formations of modernity that have taken shape in an archive of deep and layered existing social and intellectual traditions" quite differently (2007: 13). It certainly allows us to wonder of how alternative or different a modernity could have unfolded given how torrid zone, torrid nullius, the land of the blacks, that is, how blackness is provided its parameters in the historiographic, intellectual, commercial, political, epistemological, theological cultures that coalesced in, as, and away from the Mediterranean. And it is through these cultures of the Mediterranean that Africa comes to be known even through the Indian Ocean if we are to believe that is the Arab/Muslim influence that is most lastingly visible and detectable on the east or Indian Ocean coast of Africa during the Middle Ages. In this sense, modernity seems unthinkable without shared Mediterranean archives that conjure and centralise the raw material of Africa as source, passage/traversal, and parable, as Zanj *and* torrid zone.

Secondly, and relatedly, Northrup proposes and shows that it is the varied African interaction with (sometimes outright rejection, sometimes extensive localisation of) Christianity and Islam that disproves the narrative of linear and sweeping acceptance of (even if forced) external religion and spirituality. The extent to which this at times pragmatic reconciliation and mitigation of religious influence is a valid determinant, however, is skewed; if only for the fact that Northrup fails to chart the extent to which African spiritual and/or religious cosmologies figure as entities that may in all seriousness come to be variously accepted and rejected amongst the incoming Christians (and by extension Muslims). And this is telling; sub-Saharan Africans were explicitly pagans or even heretics, or, in the eyes of the Iberians - potentially Muslim, meaning that they were convertible matter, without capacity for incorporeal, sacred, and ecclesiastical reciprocation. Or, they were to figure as adversarial convertible

matter, at essence without reciprocity but being offered by Islam the veil and privilege of alterity. Both cases, if necessary, beckoning violence. For even in those instances where religion and spirituality did not explicitly set the bounds and desired eventuality of an encounter, paganism (and perhaps Islam) could easily, for the European, figure as stated justification for violence and commodification.

This anointed and convenient availability of violence wasn't the sole property of Christians; Patterson notes how the "the Islamic emirs, sultans, and noble families who ruled the many petty states of northern Nigeria and other areas of the Sudan not only raided the African pagans on their borders but frequently turned on the subjected tribes within their own state boundaries even when they were known to be converted Muslims" (1982: 117-118). Even if Islamic constitution proscribed the enslavement of another Muslim, paganism was utilised as a fleshening mechanism, exposing the true nature of the convert: "the viciously predatory rulers of these unfortunate Africans easily got around [the] prohibitions… they either simply ignored them or justified the raids on the grounds that the captured groups were really pagans… [and by] tacitly agreeing to raid across one another's boundaries with the understanding that there would be no retaliation as long as the captives were Negroes" (Patterson, 1982: 118).

That Africans could contend with Islam and Christianity in a myriad of ways therefore, is, again, not surprising when thinking about blackness and torrid Africa in the way we have conceptualised it here. The formative encounter of the early modern Christian subject as well as the pagan/black/beastly African is paradigmatic, and if anything, bolstered by the empirical variability that is one way of sustaining and progressing the plasticity and pervasive evasiveness of blackness. Alongside religion, Northrup makes the case for another colonial bulwark and mechanism: European language, as occasion for African subjective experimentation, play, travel, regional geography, cosmopolitanism, and a utilitarian equivalence. Let us ponder for a second on Nourbese Philip's rumination on the methodological (and ontological?) struggle to (not) tell the story of the slave ship *Zong!*[ii] wherein she constantly stumbles upon and implores a deep distrust for

> this tool I work with – language. It is a distrust rooted in certain historical events that are all of a piece with the events that took place on the Zong. The language in which those events took

> place promulgated the non-being of African peoples, I distrust its order, which hides disorder; its logic hiding the illogic and its rationality, which is simultaneously irrational… like the language poets I question the assumed transparency of language and, therefore, employ similar strategies to reveal hidden agendas of language. In my own work, however, the strategies signpost a multifaceted critique of the European project. Language was and is integral to this project, hence the centrality of the critique of language in my work (2008: 197-198)

It is likely needless to point out, in the manner that we have been, and in the manner that Philip would surely agree with, how the fluency of Africans in European languages – sometimes acquired through the shipping of Africans as slaves, or as prospective commercial and religious middlemen, to European countries – under the particular historical circumstances, even if creolised/indigenised/localised, should be a difficult pill to swallow at best and devastating prospect at worst. Or too, how European facility of African languages, no matter how scarce, in the main, took place to facilitate some kind of colonial inquiry, extraction, exploitative trade or missionary enterprise. If we think of Northrup's positioning of language, then we are led to the point of thinking that for the black, the adoption of a European language was, in the end, and the beginning, not a *choice*, even if it bore resemblance to an 'agency-affirming' choice and decision for some blacks. And it was so because of a simultaneous *loss* of language, not necessarily in the sense of Africans replacing their languages with European or Middle-Eastern languages, but because of a rendering of a grammatical and historical order that prefigures sub-Saharan languages as effectively advanced pre-language and thus easily succumbed to the lure of genteel, historical, and literary tongues from without torrid nullius. This loss/gain was, anticipating and upon encounter, inexorable, if only because of what the peculiar combination of what torrid existence (black skin), paganism and enslavement made due. Zurara didn't need to understand the pitiful language of the captives in Lagos to comprehend and fully implicate them in the scene of subjection; for what is staged by their strange utterances and synchronous gestures is a further separation, that of mother from child, mother from tongue, child from mother tongue, that is, pagan/slave/black from their language - with the unforeseen prize for the loss of their language being the successful gain of the Portuguese Language.

Although Northrup intimates that Portuguese was the main language of trade on the Atlantic coast particularly in what can be called the early Vasco da Gama era (late 1400s to the late 1500s), and perhaps the decades preceding it, partly due to the absence of a widely spoken African language on the coast thus stunting the development of a lingua franca or language of trade in the mould of Kiswahili on the east coast, one wonders the extent to which this would be institutionalised in the forms that was attempted with regard to the various European languages on the coast (1998). In other words, if Africans were being taught European languages at institutions in Europe as well as and in schools or programmes established on the African coast, then one wonders that if an African lingua franca were to emerge whether the Europeans would not only be willing to partake in a similar institutionalisation, but also to subject themselves to being taught the language at such institutions. Which also then leads us to suspect that is also an initiating legacy in how these foreign languages (Portuguese, Dutch, French, English, Arab) come to be the language of trade, that is, the language of the commercial, the public, the professionalising, the official; and through this, rendering the local languages as unsociable, particular, insular, remnants of an idyllic if wistful non-progressive African past, that is, private.

Can we perhaps say that it is ill-advised for Northrup to choose to focus on religion and language as cultural arenas wherein Africans exercise the subjective capacity to choose, decide and scrutinise, given the distinctly weaponised forms that religion and language took, and their enduring and complex legacy on the continent? Religion and language particularly show how even their acceptance, adaptation, and rejection was not only circumscribed by a very possible resort to violence, which was unlike the combative or warlike violence meted out against enemies (say Muslims or Turks), but also productive of a foundational non-recognition. It's a fundamental non-acknowledgement which renders a repertoire or actions, responses, behaviours, ambitions, and even subsequent recognition, as variations and expatiations of that very non-recognition. Particularly with reference to those categories implied by Northrup (agency, authorship, religious subjectivity, equality, possession, proprietorship, consumer, partner, resistance, praxis). If we know that that the recent

history of Africa is one characterised by waves of being taken from, then we know that in the end, Africa always gets taken not only through guns but through a combination of guns, god, gadgets, goods, gore, guidance, grace, and greed, which has *always* required proactive involvement on the side of Africans.

Maybe it is unfair to consider what Northrup does as ill-advised and as being anything other than a practice of history, a corrective excavation; that is, a mining against the narrative grain, a pushback against a reading and writing of history that characterises early contact and encounter as between violent and greedy European perpetrators and passive and bamboozled black African victims. Northrup is a historian writing history. A similar line of thinking is evident in Northrup's more lengthy study of the varied dynamics of European/African encounter titled *Africa's Discovery of Europe 1450-1850*. Although a more in-depth study and critique of this text is due, a reading of it quickly reveals some of the same pitfalls that Northrup inadvertently sets. On sexual encounters between African slaves and Europeans *in* Europe, for example, Northrup proclaims

> Other records give the impression that the African encounter in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Europe was most often not distinctively European or distinctively African, but typically human. This is nowhere more apparent than in the sexual relations between Africans and Europeans, although cultural, social, and physical differences mitigated the circumstances. Because most African slaves were servants, one might imagine that they were likely to be sexually exploited by their masters and mistresses. The frequent mention of mulattoes is a clear indication of illicit or sanctioned sexual unions between blacks and whites. However, there is also some suggestion that unions between Portuguese and African-born slaves were not particularly common. Cultural differences were one impediment, and it seems that many Portuguese did not consider blacks physically attractive. Marriage registers suggest that, although sexual relations and marriages between free persons and slaves were not rare, native Portuguese preferred lighter skinned North Africans to the darker people from below the Sahara. Supporting evidence also comes from regulations in the episcopal constitutions of Lisbon and Evora that forbade priests from owning white women, but apparently did not consider black female slaves to be a sexual temptation. It is not recorded if sub-Saharan Africans similarly preferred mates nearer to their own pigmentation (2013: 9-10).

The initial bizarre move from implying equality through the suggestion that relations, particularly those of a sexual nature, were typically human, to the reference of the

probable systemic sexual exploitation (assault and rape) of slaves – which is a dehumanising and fundamental essence of black slavery; is matched by the second bizarre move from implying proof of human equality, to citing the uncommon nature of sanctioned black-white relations as at least partly attributable to Portuguese perceptions of the physical unsightliness of the blacks - and wholly attributable to their dehumanised condition as black slaves; which is only further matched by the bizarre manoeuvre from insinuation of an innocent common humanity based on sexual mutuality, to considering the non-prohibition of ownership of black woman slaves to be imputable to them being seen as not sexually tempting or attractive (asexual) – which we already know to also mean as excessively sexually tempting (lascivious) – as opposed to white women who were recognised as sexual subjects, and thus, again, evidence of anything but a common humanity. The added observation that there exists no historical record of sub-Saharan expression of sexual desire, specifically that desire mediated by notions of pigmentation, should be for Northrup an indicator of the total scandal inherent in the allusion that the sexual domain was an occasion for pure and equal human interaction. What is, however, actually divulged in Northrup's statement are some of the circumstances and conditions under which the European or white human, which is the embodiment of *the* human, comes to light: the non-possibility of black consent, the alluring grotesqueness of blackness, the recognition and protection - if partial and complicated - of white female gender and sexuality, the non-possession and dispossession of black sexual agency, the absence of black historical record, and the productive abjection of black people.

Later in the text, Northrup asks:

> how much did the Africans who encountered Europe as victims of the slave trade have in common with the princes, kings, and merchants who dealt with Europeans as equals? Subordination and sufferings, abuse and alienation from homelands set the captive exiles apart, but when the enslaved Africans' inner experiences are considered, one can discern some remarkable parallels. Even though the process of enslavement, alienation from home, and transportation across the ocean was a traumatic one, African exiles showed great capacity for adjusting to new situations and learning new skills. Like their elite brothers and sisters of the coastal ports, they mastered new languages, internalized new religions, acquired new skills, and created new social networks (2013: 184 – 185)

Firstly, how subordination and suffering, abuse and alienation are set apart from what are called inner experiences is what is remarkable; that black captivity is reduced to a historical physical violence that generously preserves an interiority is precisely one of the things our project is seeking to move in contraposition from. For if we see the trans/Atlantic slave trade as an always-already capitulation of exteriority and interiority, as flesh-making, then we do not need to see a black in chains in order for us to ascertain that a violation has occurred, we just need to *see* a black. In addition, the notion of great capacity after a traumatic moment is not only problematic but also flawed, as we've shown how notions of resilience, resistance, sorrow, joy, as responses to slavery, all figure as ontologically equal elaborations of a violation/process that situates European subjectivity and dis-positions black abjectivity/objectivity. Furthermore, it's almost as if Northrup trivialises the very trauma referred to by likening the post-traumatic interior life of the captive black to the supposedly uninterrupted interior-life of the black that hadn't experienced the momentary physicality of captivity. This effectively reduces the harrowing passage across the ocean, and the at times ferocious, and at all times terroristic, plantation and other arenas of slave labour in the Americas to almost exciting "adjustments" to new contexts and laudable "learning" of "new skills". And it also enables a characterisation of the captives maintaining a "brothers and sisters" relationship with the remaining lot, despite the kin and familial severance that enslavement recognises and forces, almost painting slaves as shrewd cosmopolitan global citizens liberally creating world networks in a new world of flows and exchanges. They were slaves, and the remaining ones were all pending slaves.

This directs us to our second point here; the possibility of equality between Europeans and (elite) Africans must be brought into question. For one, sub-Saharan Africans were such an extreme epidermal-cosmographic-non-material entity that it precluded or made difficult the ethics of assimilation or reciprocity with those governed under different orders of life. Hence discourses of savagery/beastliness, paganism, lack of civilisation and cultivation, repugnance, and otherworldliness, which did not discriminate between elites and non-elites. And as shown earlier, examples and occasions of mutuality were evident more so in the form of accommodation,

compromise, and life or death improvisation from the side of Africans than it was the Europeans. In other words temporary and pragmatic cordiality is not a kind of substantive or paradigmatic equality. Northrup's account of the Christianized King Afonso of Kongo's letters to the Portuguese throne is a case in point. In 1526, Afonso writes of the concerning increase in the indiscriminate nature of slaving expeditions where even nobility and royalty are constantly figuring in the numbers of those stolen into captivity (2013). Northrup then explains that by the end of the century that had seen promising 'allyship' between Portugal and the Kongo, "the complex political, cultural, and commercial mission of the Portuguese in West Central Africa [had] narrowed to obtaining an ever-increasing supply of slaves for export to Brazil that left Kongo in a weakened state. Adrian Hastings concludes that by the late 1500s what Portugal delivered 'was little more than a few half-ruined church buildings, the absurd importation of titles [and] Western finery ... and, principally, a host of unruly slave-traders" (2013: 40). In the eyes of the European, the distinction between black slave and elite is conditional and circumstantial, and fully contained by what is most advantageous for and enabling of the European.

To move on from Northrup to another historian albeit moving from different kinds of historical projects politically and ideologically, Hugh Trevor-Roper, who in the first chapter of the text *The Rise of Christian Europe,* writes

> It is fashionable to speak today as if European history were devalued: as if historians, in the past, have paid too much attention to it; and as if, nowadays, we should pay less. Undergraduates, seduced, as always, by the changing breath of journalistic fashion, demand that they should be taught the history of black Africa. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European, pre-Columbian America. And darkness is not a subject for history. Please do not misunderstand me. I do not deny that men existed even in the dark countries and dark centuries, nor that they had political life and culture, interesting to sociologists and anthropologists; but history, I believe, is essentially a form of movement, and purposive movement too. It is not a mere phantasmagoria of changing shapes and costumes, of battles and conquests, dynasties and usurpations, social forms and social disintegration. If all history is equal, as some now believe, there is no reason why we should study one section of it rather than another; for certainly we cannot study it all. Then indeed we may neglect our own history and amuse ourselves with the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but

> irrelevant corners of the globe: tribes whose chief function in history, in my opinion, is to show to the present an image of the past from which, by history, it has escaped; or shall I seek to avoid the indignation of the medievalists by saying, from which it has changed? For on this subject, I believe, with the great historians of the eighteenth century, whom I find very good company (the good sense of the ancients is often more illuminating than the documented pedantry of the moderns), that history, or rather the study of history, has a purpose. We study it not merely for amusement – though it can be amusing – but in order to discover how we have come to where we are. In the eighteenth century men certainly studied Afro-Asian *society*. Turn over the pages of the great French and Scottish writers – Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, Adam Smith, Millar. Their interest in non-European society is obvious. Indeed, in order to found the new science of sociology – one of the great intellectual contributions of the Enlightenment – they turned deliberately away from Europe. They read the accounts of European missionaries and drew general deductions from the customs of Otaheite and the Caribbes. But with Afro-Asian history, as distinct from society, they had little patience (1965: 9-10; emphasis original).

We don't mean to visualise Northrup and Trevor-Roper in the same boat against their wishes, but what the two conceptual and methodological standpoints that their texts and the excerpts that we have shared here point to are the sort of dilemmas we contend with when faced with the prospect and task of 'writing about history,' a prospect and task that our study undertakes and pursues in a fundamental way. That is, on the one hand, the possibility of writing of and from a place with no acknowledged history, with no historiographical cultures or Language, only darkness as Roper reminds, only torridness; and on the other hand, writing of and from a history that begins with conquest, captivity, commerce, Christianity. That is, a historiography of a place only "officially" existent through the creations and mediations of the outsiders - of darkness illuminated, swelter tempered. Which is not to say that we necessarily think of ourselves as doing historical work – or involved in the scientific pursuit of historical facts, chronology and data, nor do we have aspirations to do so. But given the spatial and temporal foci of this study, we can't but be embroiled in some kind of historical contestation and narration and be significantly reliant on historiographical data. Even with this in mind, we maintain that we do not mean to miscast ourselves as historians precisely because of this project's relationship to archival material: most of the sources here are secondary, most of the connections

made through conceptual and intuitional concerns and not necessarily by allegiance to eventive chronology and extensive excavation.

The image of the assiduous student, zooming hours, dusty tomes, a muggy basement, national archives, institute or museum, deep conflict, is not lost on us – we are able to write, and think and feel because many others have done this. But that is a process reserved for another time. For now, and despite the visceral and cerebral reaction that Trevor-Roper's historical thesis ignites, we know that we also don't consider this study to be reflective of a kind of counter-history, or history of the oppressed, or forgotten history; we do not aim to recover, foreground, or uncover, nor found. Therefore, even though it may well depend on who is reading it, this study is not a threat to Northrup or Trevor-Roper.

We do not read Northrup critically because we have better historiographic material at hand, we do so because we're black; because the "Africans actions and initiatives" that he searches for and locates happen with the backdrop and curtains of slavery, colonialism, ceaseless expropriation and exploitation (1998: 190). Perhaps Trevor-Roper critiques Northrup most effectively in saying "there is only the history of Europeans in Africa," that is, insofar as it is history and all its attendant categories, it is only European (and perhaps Arab/Muslim) history in Africa. We do not chuckle at Trevor-Roper's proclamations because he's an incapable scientist of history - in fact we assume quite the opposite, but we find ourselves amused because we're black: for one because of the imagined tide of black historicism that he thought himself swimming against, and secondly, because these kinds of characterisations are par for the course and need not be asserted so explicitly and loudly for them to be within earshot. Being black in, with and impossibly against history; in, with, and impossibly against the archive.

Variations on a theme of not-telling

We want to continue by thinking through these dilemmas with a few writers, who also share with us their difficulties of being black in history and in the historical archive, and who in particular problematize the method of representing or recovering

completely or partially unwritten, undocumented, unacknowledged, and unrecognised histories. We begin with, as we've already alluded to above, and so continue with, Nourbese Philip's *Zong!.* In attempting to tell a story that may only be told through its not being told, through its non-telling or untoldness, Philip contemplates a method:

> To not tell the tale that must be told I employ a variety of techniques:
>
> - I white out and black out words (is there a difference?).
> - I mutilate the text as fabric of African life and the lives of these men, women and children were mutilated
> - I murder the text, literally cut into pieces, castrating verbs, suffocating adjectives, murdering nouns, throwing articles, prepositions, conjunctions overboard, jettisoning adverbs: I separate subject from verb, verb from object – create semantic mayhem, until my hands bloodies, from so much killing and cutting, reach into the stinking, eviscerated innards, and like some seer, sangoma, or prophet who, having sacrificed an animal for signs and portents of a new life, or simply life, reads the untold story that tells itself by not telling (2011: 193-194).

Nourbese's attempt is engagement with/as poetics writ black. Maybe it's the only way. It is after all a journey through a legal archive that documents black (non) life only through inadequate or debatable and thus unrecognised black death, or more properly, conclusive disposal of cargo. There is no history of and upon the 'Zong' ship other than that of the slavers, there is no history of the slaves not fully confined by the slave ship and other than through their interaction with the slavers; there is no meeting history on its terms for an impossible history of the slaves to be told. It's as if Philip arrives too late, forages the deck, descends into the hold, ascends relieved and devastatingly empty-handed, submerges into the waters, re-emerges with nothing but the faintly heard names, held in the water, of the drowned collected at the bottom, or somewhere near it. The only resort now is to blow up the ship and anything that may have been left on it, or maybe methodically dismantle it if patient enough - once fallen apart the debris tells the story that cannot and must not be told. If the last ones couldn't be saved, then at least this particular vessel can no longer function as normal, not again.

Nourbese's attempt is also an engagement with/as language writ black. If, as we suggested above, black African language is effectively advanced pre-language, then Nourbese wonders about the possibility of this mode, whilst anticipating the pending violence of Language. "In the struggle to avoid imposing meaning, I confront the tension between the poem that I want to write and the poem that must write itself. While the concern with precision and accuracy in language is common to both law and poetry, the law uses language as a tool for ordering; in the instant case, however, I want poetry to disassemble the ordered to create disorder and mayhem so as to release the story that cannot be told, but which, through not-telling, will tell itself… [therefore these poems, *Zong!*] transforms the desiccated, legal report into a cacophony of voices – wails, cries, moans, and shouts that had earlier been banned from the text"(2011: 199; 203). Philip's most immediate method is the initiation of a visual and lexical, and thus apprehensive, maelstrom; precisely for the purpose of not making legible something that must be so desperately and necessarily be read. It must be but it cannot; the confusion as a result of evisceration revealing the true nature of the historical text for the black. Despite the overwhelming desire to account for the slaves, for their lives, and their relations, and their deaths, that is, bear witness to them, Philip resolves that this can only be done by not doing it.

'But don't forget, we are black' – the refrain that began it all and is so crucial to the spirit of this study, which is to mean that there is still a very active relationship to the ancestors to be claimed, particularly by those who were the family of the deceased who have to observe a mourning period in order to remove the 'shadow' cast upon them by a death. If kin is lost in life then perhaps it can be found in death, in mourning, in subsequent communication and living with the dead? Perhaps what the 'hauntological' presents for Philip, and the desire to "exaqua" – to exhume the bodies from the waters serving as a 'liquid grave,' is the prospect of performing a ritual of going to fetch, collect or bring back the spirits of the ancestors from the waters so that they do not exist there restlessly and possibly bother others, or that they do not continue to haunt her (2011: 201). This however, assumes an ancestral line, does it not? An ancestral line complicated or completely devastated by the trans-Atlantic slave trade? What if the ancestors don't know or recognise their own as their own?

This failure would just be one amongst many expected when subjecting oneself to the archive; and it is crucial for Philip, if a story that must be told can only be told through its not telling, through its failure to account in some way. Phillip writes that

> In allowing myself to surrender to the text – silences and all – and allowing the fragmented words to speak to the stories locked in the text, I, too, have found myself "absolved" of "authorial intention." So much so that even claiming to author the text through my own name is challenged by the way the text has shaped itself. The way it "untells" itself. One of the strongest "voices" in the *Zong!* text is that of someone who appears to be white, male, and European. Had I approached this "story" in the manner of wanting to write the story *about* the *Zong* and the events surrounding its fateful journey, I would have not chosen a white, male, European voice as one of the primary voices in this work. My "authorial intention" would have impelled me toward other voices. And for very good reason. This realization, however, presents me with a powerful example of how our language – in the wider sense of the word – is often, as I wrote earlier here, preselected for us, simply by virtue of who we understand ourselves to be, and where we allow ourselves to be placed. And by refusing the risk of allowing ourselves to be absolved of authorial intention, we escape an understanding that we are at least one and the Other. And the Other. And the Other. That in this post post-modern world we are, indeed, multiple and "many-voiced". Monk's use of the word "absolve" is intriguing, given its connection with the idea of freeing from debt, blame, obligation, or guilt. Within the moral framework of Zong!, however, I find it an appropriate word I that it points to a relation and relationship, between past, present, and future generations; it speaks to a relation and relationship of debt or obligation of spirit owed by later to earlier generations (2011: 204-205).

The practice of not-telling what must be told involves letting go of authorial intention and opening up the possibility of the story telling itself – through a deliberate untelling. Phillip is so profoundly useful to our reflection on thinking and writing history, and of method more generally, in this regard. It is a particular positioning of the black towards the historical archive that is fully implicated in the ongoing present. What Nourbese also allows us, with this particular translation of the notion of authorial intention, together with this particular fleshing out of the term 'absolve' and its associations – specifically the 'relation of debt owed by later to earlier generations,' as well as Philip's invocation of the ancestral and hauntological, is an opportunity to put two other 'authors' contemplating the archive into a conversation with each other.

Saidiya Hartman's *Venus in Two Acts* and Pumla Gqola's *What is Slavery to Me? Postcolonial/Slave Memory in Post-Apartheid South Africa* both give us ideas of how historical data or the archive can be worked through. Hartman's text moves more closely to Philip's in its enactment of a flouting of authorial intention, of an insistent failure and refusal to account for slaves who die upon a slave ship. *Venus in Two Acts* is an extended meditation on Hartman's previous non-telling of the story of the killing of two slave girls on board a ship named *Recovery*, known through the recorded and archived trial of its captain John Kimber in 1792, when he was brought to book for the unflagging flogging to death of the two girls (Hartman, 2008). The captain is eventually acquitted of the murder of the one girl, this happens despite the almost coincident mentioning of the death of the other girl said to be at the hands of the captain, a girl called Venus, during the cross-examination of one of the witnesses – a murder for which he is also acquitted. Like Philip points out in reference to the 'Zong', if the authorial voice is of a white male, then the obvious lure and bait for the black woman poet is to bypass this voice and dig for another, one that doesn't push 150 slaves into the ocean to drown or one that doesn't torture two black girls to death. Hartman however, asks: "how does one recuperate lives entangled with and impossible to differentiate from the terrible utterances that condemned them to death, the account books that identified them as units of value, the invoices that claimed them as property, and the banal chronicles that stripped them of human features?" (2008: 3).

The struggle contained in 'giving voice' or even 'finding voice' is manifold; there is no voice – the documenting of the event is in the voice of those belonging to the same order of the slave ship, from the murderous captain to the legal system that acquits him. There is no voice – the event itself is a brutal and mundane erasure of the voices of two girls and others. There is no voice – even if the girls did say something, who's to know and say whether it would be intelligible to the black poet/author, who's to know and say whether it helps the girls to 'give' them of 'find' for them their voice? Hartman's questions are piercing: "is narration its own gift and its own end, that is, all that is realizable when overcoming the past and redeeming the dead are not? And what do stories afford anyway? A way of living in the world in the aftermath of catastrophe and devastation? A home in the world for the mutilated and violated self?

For whom – for us or for them?" (2008: 3). For whom - does this question even matter? Let's say it's for them: what if giving and finding voice to and for the girls is to re-expose them to the events that led to their murder? What if it was precisely their voices that provoked the captain to unleash a murderous streak? What if it wasn't? Are there any circumstances where they survive, voice or not, where they truly *live*? In other words, even if they didn't 'get themselves into trouble,' do we honestly believe there was anything that they could have done that absolutely couldn't have launched the captain on a murderous streak? On the other hand, let's say it's for us: what does finding voice or giving voice do other than, in the end, remind us of a fundamental lack and erasure? What does a story do other than point to us that it is just that, a cool story, a comforting story, fantasy, myth even - not history; that is, tells us of an inadequate account of events, an appeasing appeasement, not fact? What does it prove if not a trajectory of absence and failure, or at least a desire for the fundamentally momentary and failed reprieve from it?

> There is not one extant autobiographical narrative of a female captive who survived the Middle Passage. The silence in the archive in combination with the robustness of the fort or barracoon, not as holding cell or space of confinement but as *episteme*, has for the most part focused the historiography of the slave trade on quantitative matters and on issues of markets and trade relations. Loss gives rise to longing, and in these circumstances, it would not be far-fetched to consider stories as a form of compensation or even as reparations, perhaps the only kind we will receive" (Hartman, 2008: 3-4; emphasis added).

If the first part of this reflection for Hartman is attempting to explain why authorial intention is to be refused and is ultimately an enactment of failure anyway, then after relaying the events on the *Recovery*, as it appears in the archive - in *the* (mundane) authorial voice, then the second part, the second act, meditates on the violent impossibility of telling the story of the two girls. Here Hartman contemplates on matters of representation and narration and in doing so, narrates a series of performances of running into dead ends, of death endings: "Initially I thought I wanted to represent the affiliations severed and remade in the hollow of the slave ship by imagining the two girls as friends, by giving them one another. But in the end I was forced to admit that I wanted to console myself and to escape the slave hold with a vision of something other than the bodies of the two girls settling on the floor of the

Atlantic… I could not have arrived at another conclusion. So it was better to leave them as I had found them. Two girls, alone" (2008: 9). The very reflection, that is, the returning to the happenings on board the *Recovery* evidently betrays an undeniable urge even if the destruction of the urge is phenomenally stark; we see this in both Philip and Hartman. And they are not far apart; for if Philip's settled upon plan at hand, even if uncomfortably, is to decimate and disembowel in order to tell by not telling, then for Hartman it is to advance "a series of speculative arguments and [exploit] the capacities of the subjunctive (a grammatical mood that expresses doubts, wishes, and possibilities) in fashioning a narrative, which is based upon archival research, [which means] a critical reading of the archive that mimes the figurative dimensions of history [with the intention] to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling"(2008: 11).

Far from it being an authorial intention, the idea is to incite and entice a laborious imagining of the lives of those silenced and killed in and by the archive through the very tool of expressing doubt about this creative and/or imaginative possibility, if not downright declaring it impossible, and violent even to attempt. It is a "double gesture" Hartman says, that "can be described as straining against the limits of the archive to write a cultural history of the captive, and, at the same time, enacting the impossibility of representing the lives of the captives precisely though the process of narration" (2008: 11). Hartman broadly refers to this method as 'critical fabulation;' a 'rigorous' and creative practice that constantly has to contend with its own failed efforts at producing anything like history, and by extension the ways in which the discipline of history is an active presence that produces the conditions for this failure. "Narrative restraint, the refusal to fill in the gaps and provide closure, is a requirement of this method, as is the imperative to respect black noise – the shrieks, the moans, the nonsense, and the opacity, which are always in excess of legibility and of the law and which hint at and embody aspirations that are wildly utopian, derelict to capitalism, and antithetical to its attendant discourse of Man" (Hartman, 2008: 12). Understanding the practice of an eruption and irruption of the lexical, visual, and visceral, and thus attempting at that which already exceeds the legible; together with the practice of an equivocation of this excess with dearth, and thus the recognition of

the dangers held in how its representation may allow and re-centre legibility/history and its attendant violence – through exhausting the potential of the unknown and instituting an inadequate and already failed 'counter-legibility', thus presents an opportune moment to bring in Gqola.

In the chapter titled "(Not) Representing Sarah Bartmann" Gqola zeroes in on another Venus, namely the figure given the title "the Hottentot Venus" by colonial/European handlers in 19th century United Kingdom, and the person named Sarah Bartmann by her baptismal certificate. Gqola is thinking about memory and the archive, about history and textual representation when seeking to "explore the possibility of writing about Sarah Bartmann in ways unlike those traditions of knowledge-making that dubbed her 'the Hottentot Venus,' and were therefore complicit in her slavery[iii]" and so considering the "writing on her which does not recast her as a 'freak,'[and that does not permit] reading her in ways that parade her as the ultimate icon of alterity, can only draw attention to the reality that we know nothing about her" (2010: 68; 83). While the critique of the death giving and preserving work of the archive and history is in Gqola very much consistent with Philip and Hartman as we have noted above, where there may seem to be a slight departure between Gqola and Hartman specifically, is in Gqola's reading and critical faith in "texts which position themselves in relation to [Sarah Bartmann], as a means of arriving at a Black feminist/womanist engagement with the histories which fix representations of Black woman in colonialist epistemes… [and thus] against the *felt* effects of the gaze which fixes them/us as oversexed, deviant object" (2010: 68; 69, emphasis original). Hartman is very cautious about attributing relatability and relation not only between herself and the two girls on board the 'Recovery', but also between Venus and the other black girl who both end up being killed by the captain, even if it means doing so only to point out an impossibility of and refusal to do so. Whereas Gqola engages texts which are, on one end, closer to Hartman through rendering abstruse, elusive, and allusive the black feminist historian/writer/poet/activist's relation to Bartmann (Wicomb), and on the other end, further from Hartman through rendering deeply personal, normalised and thus unremarkable the black feminist historian/writer/poet/activist's relation to Bartmann (Ferrus, Smith).

The move is particularly difficult for Hartman who, as we noted in the previous chapter, recognises the severance of relation and relatability that comes with the enforcement and maintenance of the condition of slavery. However, the deeply and wontedly intimate relatability that Gqola is drawn by between now and an 18th/19th century Sarah Bartmann, and that Hartman is drawn away from by a telling refusal of that relatability between now and two 18th century slave girls, is particularly interesting and perhaps even possible because of two evocations. Firstly, and allowing us to bring back Philip, is the matter of the spiritual and ancestral or the hauntological. As we've noted above the idea of fetching or collecting an isolated or scattered ancestor, that is, of having the spirits of a dead ancestor in the right place - home, with us - is crucial to the strive towards varying kinds of impossible stability for the living descendants. And so for the writer/poet/historian for whom these cosmologies and metaphysics factor as quotidian and non-fanciful, the claiming of a historical (anti)figure, or anti-historical figure, presents not only a gesture of historical disobedience, an exenteration of existential and temporal custom, but also a way to live a current life in which interaction with one's ancestor is compelling, operative, ritual and therefore consistent. "Keeping watch with the dead," as Christina Sharpe calls it, "the power of sitting with someone as they die, the important work of sitting (together) in the pain and sorrow of death as a way of marking, remembering, and celebrating a life" is thus something we are pushed to think of here as happening even beyond the scene of the death, in the wake of the wake – that for Nourbese and Sharpe could be the wake of the Zong and too the wake that the slaves may have held for those thrown overboard to die (Sharpe, 2016: 17). It is therefore going back to the scene, keeping watch and/as fetching and bringing back to a home that is irretrievably broken by that departure. An occupation of the performative and existential space enabling one to experience the restlessness, anxiety, and tormenting of the dead ancestor, therefore has real manifestations in how the living descendant coheres their life.

This is important and brings us to the second evocation: the texts that Gqola brings under focus are engaging with Bartmann at a time when either her remains remain in France where she died in 1815, or during the journey of the return of her remains to

South Africa in 2002. It is perhaps this fact that offers the graphic sense that Bartmann's was a history still being contemporarily contested, that Sarah Bartmann herself, even if in the form of her ashes or severed body parts, was indeed there to be reclaimed and recast. Maybe it is this fact that offers the texts that Gqola studies an agitated political meaning and urgency. In other words, writing a non-representative if disorderly, non-empirical, protean, and pressing history about Bartmann through relating to her (particularly by wanting to go fetch her or by bringing her home) may have a particular salience when there is actually someone or something to fetch or bring home. Which is not to privilege or prioritise the material and tangible; but to perhaps conjecture about the ways in which a particular telling or untelling can bring about or establish a materiality or tangibility. Or too how a particular materiality or tangibility provides occasion for a sheer untelling and non-representation. Gqola concludes by noting that what has

> emerged is the manner in which representing Sarah Bartmann within the African feminist imagination moves far beyond drawing attention to history's silences about her. All literary tests analysed in this chapter suggest that rather than speaking about her obliquely, it is possible to gesture to Sarah Bartmann's *absent presence*, and to contextualise and humanise her imaginatively… In other words, they move beyond writing back to older traditions (2010: 102, emphasis added).

Gqola's method of 'creative theorisation' that is stimulated, evoked and provoked by the "absent presence as mnemonic activity" of particular objects or subjects of history is perhaps not so distant from the critical fabulation of Hartman in that history and the archive are not considered objective repositories that hold and document, but are entombings for the black and thus opportunities for impossible and reluctant creative projects (2010: 69). Even if Gqola may in a way consider as legitimate the 'authorial intention' of the writer/poets that she considers as not representing Sarah Bartmann, it can be said that insofar as it is an authorial intention then it must be understood within a context and perspective of an ancestral cosmology the intention of which is not to write *about* Sarah Bartmann or voice her, but to bring one's voice in relation to her, and reminding that a death, a killing has happened. And relatedly, it is also to bring Bartmann's spirit into contention, sharing how it continues to haunt the writer/poet's lives, particularly as it continues to be subject to European harshness

close to two centuries after her death, and therefore makes bringing her home a desperate endeavour. A story with Bartmann is told through an untelling of a story about Bartmann.

Variations on a theme of silence and absence

Gqola's foregrounding of African/Black Feminist/womanist literature and practice is instructive as it contextualises the commonality with Hartman and Philip, even if only to a certain point, and also directs us to the extent in which black women in particular feature in the archives as audible absence. It also makes resonate very loudly the continued contemporary ways in which black women are enfleshened, ungendered, and indeed, written *out* of the present. The archive in this tradition is thus amplified as a non-objective and quite intentional onto-epistemological actor and medium, which ingrains in the black feminist a methodological wariness and sense of limit, a flouting of objectivity (and subjectivity), and a creative impetus to find, dig up, recast, confirm, mould and struggle for alternative analytical, political, and existential categories. This creative impetus and work can only depart from a profound understanding of the ways in which blacks are bound by and in a series of historical shatters and silences that continue to emit contemporarily in and through the archives of history.

Stitt (2018) traces a genealogy of black feminist confrontations with the slavery archive and its continued soundings by primarily focusing on three texts that grapple with different methods of working in the aftereffects and affects of slavery[iv]. One of the texts Stitt brings into the conversation is one already referred to above, namely Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Sharpe's text is a multiple musing on the importance, imaginability, inevitability, incommensurability, incompleteness, and implosiveness of gathering the fragments borne between the scattering shatter of blast waves and the wrenching residue of blast winds; that is, black life in the constant foreshock and aftershock of trans-Atlantic slavery. Fragment, Nourbese Philip reminds, "is both/and: containing the w/hole while being at the same time a part of the w/hole—it compels us to see both the w/hole and the hole: impulse to memory and impulse to amnesia. The fragment is not static; it contains its opposite

and it is that opposite—the impulse to forgetting and erasure that I call the fugue" (2005: 11). If Philip thinks of fugue as a dissociative amnesiac state engendered by the relationship between memory and trauma, it is to make the point that the nature of a fragment is such as to show a loss through a kind of salvaging, that is, to seek to remember by way of and in the face of disconnection and separation (2005). The fragment thought here, with this notion of fugue, is the compulsion to see a whole within or against the hole. There is also an additional sense of fugue that Philips outlines, that which "refers to a musical composition with polyphonic elements" wherein "a melody or melodic phrase is repeated in different keys and different intervals" (2005: 12). This thinking of fugue is supposed to evoke the multiplicity and dynamic variance of the fragment, highlighting the constant manoeuvring resultant and reflective of fragmented yet harmonic interplay.

When we think of the gathering of fragments that we suggest is being carried out by Sharpe, we are however also permitted to refigure the idea of fugue as impulse to forgetting in a different way; a way that maintains its musical interpretation but that also invokes the musical terminology of subjects and countersubjects, points and counterpoints. In an article thinking through the restrictions that the musical theme or subject or lead voice has on the fugal counter-themes, countersubjects or counterpoints, that is, on the voices that come into the lead voice's polyphony by way of repetition, Renwick (1991) reads Austrian music theorist Heinrich Schenker's examination of fugue subjects and registers an interpretation that would be at home if it were speaking of another kind of subjectivity. Renwick quotes Schenker as saying "the fugue subjects of J. S. Bach, with only few exceptions, convey self-substantiation within themselves as they reveal a strictly compact course of action," to which Renwick then responds: "the 'strictly compact course of action' can be taken to signify the underlying linear progression which gives direction and motion to a subject, while that they 'convey self-substantiation within themselves' suggests the sense of unity that such an unfolding of the tonic chord provides" (1991: 197). Fugue, in this iteration, is not *necessarily* what steals in the way of forgetting, but what can also ease in the direction of a remembering; or, it is what progressively sounds the sweet melody of harmonic unity, that is, it is the strive for diversified wholeness. We can't

but think of political subjectivity here, and how perhaps in the heat and scatter of the living archive, fugue is subject-led; the fugal is what invokes and idealises the self-substantiating subject that coheres multiple elements in a propelling advance. Fugue here, in an attempt at healing fragmentation, works in service of either imploring a complete remembering (history) or a complete forgetting (history). We therefore think of fragmentation as breaking against this ingrained fugal urge for wholeness either way. Fragment thought here, with this notion of fugue, is therefore compulsion to see a hole within and against the lure of the whole.

The tentative, fragile and chimerical nature of the whole constructed out of the fragments, is amplified for us by the cover of Sharpe's book. Sharpe reproduces an artwork by the visual artist Cornelia Parker titled *Hanging Fire (Suspected Arson)* created in 1999. The work or installation is a "suspended sculpture" that was "constructed from the charred residue of an actual case of suspected arson" and as an artwork represents "a spectacular explosion of form in space as the once-glowing, now-blackened embers are precisely hung to create a forest of charcoal fragments" (https://www.icaboston.org/art/cornelia-parker/hanging-fire-suspected-arson). *Hanging Fire* bears a striking visual resemblance to another of Parker's works titled *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* produced eight years earlier. It is also a suspended sculpture of sorts, constructed from the "restored contents of a garden shed exploded by the British Army at the request of the artist" with the remnants "suspended from the ceiling as if held mid-explosion, [and] it by a single lightbulb the fragments cast dramatic shadows on the gallery's walls" (https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/parker-cold-dark-matter-an-exploded-view-t06949/story-cold-dark-matter). In trying to conceptualise or think about the possibility of a fragmented geography or how space and its production is radically fragmented, McFarlane, in seeing Parker's fragmented pieces of wood "hanging there, with seeming little capacity to act" proceeds to ask the questions: "What, though, if the fragments could move, or be put to different kinds of work? What if they were more than just the spatial products of fragmentation, and instead generative elements in different kinds of spatial relations?" (2019: 135). We agree with McFarlane's sense of the possibility of generation from what are the fragments and from what is the process

of fragmentation, as we have shown above. But what Parker's *Hanging Fire* together with Sharpe's text reminds us is of the particular nature of the fragmentation of black life; more specifically how attempts at wholeness, regeneration and a recuperative 'gathering of the pieces' can so easily crumble to ash because of the charred state of the fragments themselves. In other words, and always keeping in mind the torrid fate of those doomed to smoulder under the fiery sub-Saharan sun and their charred history, the uncertainty and precariousness of the form of the "now-blackened embers" that are the "charcoal fragments" is such that they can sometimes hold no prospect for being gathered, no ability to be puzzled together into a whole, and no perceptive productivity.

It is with this understated yet complex notion of fragmentation, located within a black feminist genealogy of searching, apprehensive, sincere, painstaking, undisciplined, defiant, and profoundly imaginative methodology, particularly with regard to history and the archive, that we try learn from Sharpe's work, and others. This sense of history and the living archive compels Sharpe to ask questions: "What happens when we look at and listen to these and other Black girls across time? What is made in our encounters with them? This looking makes ethical demands on the viewer; demands to imagine otherwise; to reckon with the fact that the archive, too, is invention" (2016: 51). Sharpe regards as 'wake work' the manifestation of these ethical demands, or as we have put it, the fragmenting and gathering. The term wake is woven by Sharpe, into its full dis/array of meanings:

> wakes are processes; through them we think about the dead and about our relations to them; they are rituals through which to enact grief and memory. Wakes allow those among the living to mourn the passing of the dead through ritual; they are the watching of relatives and friends beside the body of the deceased from death to burial and the accompanying drinking, feasting, and other observances, a watching practiced as a religious observance. But wakes are also "the track left on the water's surface by a ship; the disturbance caused by a body swimming, or one that is moved, in water; the air currents behind a body in flight; a region disturbed flow; in the line of sight of (an observed object); and (something) in the line of recoil of (a gun); finally, wake means being awake and, also, consciousness (2016: 21).

Wake work thus calls upon a labour of keeping watch, a labour of being with, a labour of being in the thick of, a labour of awareness, a labour of treading water, labouring

in the wake of a traumatic and death-dealing history that is really a traumatic and death-dealing present, the afterlife of slavery. Part of what makes the register of Sharpe's critical and creative observations and reflections so pre-eminent and poignant, and perhaps locatable within a black feminist genealogy of 'in-relation-to' as Gqola shows us above, is its personal nature – or the way in which personal narrative is implicated intimately with the trajectory of the wake. Beyond a simple characterisation of the 'personal as political,' it is perhaps a collapse of these very categories, tracing in wake work the bodies that have to be offered and taken in order to make sense of 'the personal' and 'the political,' and indeed charting their persistence as realms and categories of black exclusion. It is therefore a personal narrative that strains notions of safety or non-precariousness, of familial and relational consistency and bequest, of sanguine experience and sense of black lives as complementary with freedom, citizenship, worldliness, and also of an interiority unwilling to salvage and keep watch with.

Through its far-reaching lens, considering blackness in differing locales, it is also a personal narrative that moves closely to Francoise Verges' notion of "contact of memories" for which "slavery goes beyond a defined historical moment and *offers* [and traces] a space for the exploration of disposability, of the ways in which memories become transcontinental, dynamic, and contemporary" (2010: 154, emphasis added). Personal memories here not only become occasions to reflect on the difficulties of collective memories and the possibility of collective memory itself, but through pursuing a bloodline of disposability *become* collective memory, creating that very collective on the journey. They also, through this prospect of creating collectivity and thus staking some kind of claim to a reservoir of sources and/or resources, give collective memory a materiality existing outside of the dependence on individual recollection. Bheki Peterson considers the ways in which black repositories of shared sources and resources could be figured in the wake of colonial and apartheid orders of erasure and purging, and expresses a certainty that "much material has survived, and is stored in the stubborn memories of people, in suitcases and plastic bags under beds, in wardrobes and ceilings," but then warns that "we must desist, however, from consoling ourselves by imbuing such material with a subversive,

underground anonymity, as when we talk about the 'experiential archive' of black people that is somehow simply 'out there' beyond the soiled fingers of officialdom" (2002: 31).

Indeed, the materiality that may emerge from the wake work of personal-cum-collective memories avoids the lures of subversive self-appraisal through the insistence of not being beyond the reach of the soiled fingers of officialdom, that is, of being firmly in the wake. In other words, whereas for Peterson the threat is to get drawn into a frustrating and placatory lull through an uncritical placing of the black archive everywhere, and thus nowhere, for only the purpose of unsettling and delimiting the archive of officialdom, without a simultaneous programmatic for the gathering, collection, and flexible institutionalisation of accessible black archives; for Sharpe, and our reading of Sharpe, the threat remains the soiled fingers of officialdom and variations thereof, which could be anywhere, and thus everywhere (Peterson, 2002). These soiled fingers remain a threat here both in the sense of a co-option of particular black historical or archival narratives, that is, black materiality into comfortable positions within officialdom, as well as the rendering of black historical or archival practitioners as unwitting reproducers of the tropes and episteme of officialdom.

It is this anxiety of the black feminist historical practitioner careful not to be an unwitting reproducer of officialdom, as well as active and personal relation to the historical archive that compels Daphne Brooks in the study *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* to declare: "as a black feminist critic who is most concerned with bringing to the surface the narratives buried at the bottom of the historical troves, I recognise the critical exigencies of my own agenda" (2007: 9). And so with this in mind, and at hand, Brooks goes on to "piece together periodical reviews, epistolary exchanges, actor's articles, playbills, and personal documents with fiction and biographies aiming to present a more vibrantly textured cultural landscape of black performance. This approach highlights an electrifying dialectic between, for instance, the scabrous review of an unconventional play and the dissonant gestures of performers embedded in that same review which sometimes tell a different story of the event in question" (2007: 9).

Taking seriously, and in a sense creating, the scattered archive, as Brooks does, as well as contending with the persistent absent presence in the archive in manners that don't re-impress the archive, together with maintaining an ethic from which the work of even the most well-meaning critic/poet/historian has to be subject to critical self-positioning is what leads Gabeba Baderoon in *Regarding Muslims: from slavery to post-apartheid* to note how "in the past fifteen years, scholarship and art about South African slavery have countered the erasure of sexual violence from the history of slavery through radical experiments in form and theme" (2014: 84). But then warning how some "writers have moved away from realist forms in representing slavery and sexual violence […] proposing that an emphasis on violence can unwittingly reinscribe invasive acts and representations [and so making crucial those] poetic registers [that] can be used to write women's bodies into alternative modes of visibility" (2014: 90). Baderoon's methodological project, in this text and others, involves a troubling of the 'picturesque' tradition of representing the colonial landscape of the Cape, in particular how Muslims at the Cape are historically and integrally built into these representations as serene, charming and apolitical. Baderoon does this through creatively and poetically unearthing and bringing into visibility, from both official and unofficial archives, the silenced and obscured itinerary of meanings in food, jokes, language, music, oral narrative, Hajj etc., therefore pointing to histories of slavery, oppression, resistance, survival, adaption that complicate the picturesque and indeed politicise and historicise Islam in South Africa (2007).

Both Brooks and Baderoon are thus concerned with particular silences and absences in the history concerning slaves and their descendants, methodically refusing to characterise them as historical oversights or reflective of empirical unavailability, and instead portraying them as proactive silencings and absentings. It is for this reason that the black feminist practitioner and historian feels the need to find methods of analysis and work that not only expose these silencings and absentings, but attempt to shine a light on those presences lurking in the dark, albeit in ways that don't enforce a recession back into the darkness. And to also maintain a methodological imperative to undertake excursions impelled by inklings of interiority and possible insurrectionary meanings. Working against the silencing and unvoicing of black/African women is

Abena Busia, who undertakes the imperative of positioning herself against the 'Master Text' in order to implicate it in the production of narratives and images that present black women in fundamentally absenting ways. Busia writes

> If both African men and European women are of questionable legitimacy, African women demonstrably have none. Like Caliban's mother, they are seldom present as billed players on the stage, and when they are, they do not speak coherently. It is one of their burdens that they are called upon to be fully em*bodied*-fleshy beings but unvoiced. Rarely rendered as human beings, they are presented as insubstantial symbols. With no vocabulary and few gestures, their words and actions are significantly absent from the vocabulary of public symbols. One of the marks of their servitude is that Caliban and Ariel have mastered Prospero's language. Caliban's mother is usurped by Prospero; she did not teach her son to speak. Having lost her language altogether, Caliban curses in the language of the master rather than in his "mother tongue." The black woman's voice has been made to "disappear" (1989: 94; emphasis original).

Many points of interest jump out at us from this excerpt, but to focus on two that further our thinking with this notion of silencing. Firstly, as we noted earlier in discussion with Northrup, a profound loss of language occurred for the black upon encounter between European and sub-Saharan African, and the separation of captives, mother from child, child from mother tongue, in Lagos, Portugal in 1444, was allegorical of this occurrence. We follow Spillers then who alerts us to the ways in which the violently enforced and maintained denial of a maternal relation does not interdict a maternal inheritance, for the black child, who becomes the beneficiary or legatee of generational loss and abjectness. As Busia would have it, the black child inherits this lack of language in the form of being untongued; which for the boy child can at least attempt to be overcome, albeit inadequately, through his ability to be non-silent, to be voiced, through his adoption of the master's language. The girl child however, is left both without language *and* without voice, as untongued and unvoiced, and as heir extraordinaire, with only the ability to pass on this condition. Secondly, is Busia's evocation on the play *The Tempest* written by William Shakespeare in the early 17th century. As Busia tells it, the play has proven to be evergreen fodder for allegories on colonialism and the master-slave, coloniser-colonised relation (1989). The centralising, however, by these insurgent readings, of Caliban – a voiced character even if considered "a savage and deformed slave" – as an oppressed and resisting

subject-par-excellence has inspired in many feminist readings an interest in the silenced yet ever-present character of Sycorax (Shakespeare and Reid, 1973: 7). Sycorax: "an evil witch, mother of Caliban. With her son, she represents the forces of Nature when they are not controlled by the spirit of man. Her name, which has been found nowhere else, is perhaps derived from the Greek corax, a raven. It may also be related to the name of Circe, the enchantress who turned men into wild beasts by playing on their sensual desires" (Shakespeare and Reid, 1973: 34).

As both Busia and Lara (2007) point out, the absent presence of Sycorax - whose voice we never hear, whose character we never see, who is only known through her invocation as the evil mystical, supernatural, yet necessary progenitor; whose very banishment and thus physical absence sets the stage for the unfolding of the tale, informs us of her fleshly nature. That is, a materiality and tangibility that escapes a notably embodied and voiced character and only figures as productive and fungible source. Even though Sycorax is said to originate from Algeria, in North Africa, and thus perhaps more likely to be categorised a Moor, we want to follow the quote in the epigraph of this chapter in which Kamau Brathwaite characterises Sycorax as black, and too, think back to our own discussion in the first chapter of the complex term and concept 'Moor'. We want to suggest that the narrative, symbolic and geographic role and mobilisation of Sycorax definitely draws upon the discursive positioning of North Africa as at the gate and forepart of an excessive, untold, menacing, and sullying presence (sub-Saharan Africa, land of the blacks, torrid nullius – which summons the image of an uncontrolled force of nature - primarily heat, that makes the space unbodied and unvoiced, like Sycorax). And also as the surmountable gateway that makes possible the passage to the New World – on an island, where most of *The Tempest* is said to unfold. We do not need Sycorax to be black however, to know of her being functionally and violently silenced, and thus geographically and symbolically blackened. And according to Sylvia Wynter, we perhaps do not even need for the silenced non-European woman to *only* be Sycorax. Sylvia Wynter locates another absence in her reading of *The Tempest* by Shakespeare, stating that:

> This question is that of the most significant absence of all, that of Caliban's Woman, of Caliban's physiognomically complementary mate. For nowhere in Shakespeare's play, and in

> its system of image-making, one which would be foundational to the emergence of the first form of a secular world system, our present Western world system, does Caliban's mate appear as an alternative sexual-erotic model of desire; as an alternative source of an alternative system of meanings. Rather there, on the New World island, as the only woman, Miranda and her mode of physiognomic being, defined by the phylogenically 'idealized' features of straight hair and thin lips is canonized as the 'rational' object of desire; as the potential genitrix of a superior mode of human 'life', that of 'good natures' as contrasted with the ontologically absent potential genitrix—Caliban's mate…To put it in more directly political terms, the absence of Caliban's woman, is an absence which is functional to the new secularizing schema by which the peoples of Western Europe legitimated their global expansion as well as their expropriation and their marginalization of all the other population-groups of the globe, including, partially some of their own national groupings..."(1990: 363-364).

Thinking of Wynter's concern for the absence of Caliban's physiognomical and thus romantic-sexual complement (at the risk of heteronormative assumption) alongside the absence of Sycorax would only confirm Busia's suspicion of the relatively unsilenced position of the African man (who remains untongued however) and European woman whom, in order for their drama to unfold, necessitates the absent presence of a black mother and the absolute absence (albeit being invoked through the maternal presence and abhorrent nature of Sycorax) of a black woman subject of desire. It also re-emphasises the black daughter as the prime heir to the fungibility, excess and dysgenesis of black mother. This means that Caliban's mate can only figure as (non) mother or scandal, that is, as enabling category but not as category, as enabling language but as silenced and untongued, as enabling body but fleshened. Herman Bennett reminds us that in 1441 when the Portuguese came across and captured their first black moors, who weren't Muslim, and didn't not speak the language of the Moors, it was both a black male Moor and a 'black Mooress' (2005). Bennett goes on to suggest that this woman captive comes to represent a kind of limit figure, an appetiser for darkly abundance that laid beyond, a reservoir for coherence and category:

> Through the capture of the ''Mooress,'' but in particular through their marking her as distinct from the Moors on the basis of juridical status and phenotype, the Portuguese introduced a taxonomy that distinguished Moors from blackamoors, infidels from pagans, Africans from

> blacks, sovereign from herrschaftlos (sovereignless) subjects, and free persons from slaves. Later, the Portuguese employed this human measure, formulated via a black woman's body, so as to delineate who could be legitimately enslaved (2005: 22).

With Busia, Wynter and Bennett we come to an understanding of how early modern silencing and unvoicing of black women in particular is in effect an untongue-ing and enfleshment that increasingly provides a language and body to an emergent imagination and reality. We become aware of silencing not as mere omission of voice but, through a foundational untongue-ing, as functional to the construction of a landscape and scope. Those projects and activities engaged in a recovery of voice therefore are positioned by their earnestness against such a landscape. And even though for us, in our contemplation of method and working with or against the historical archive, the project of giving voice is not quite useful or desirable or possible, it remains crucial in its critical uncovering of the forms and strategies of silencing. This critical uncovering, or drawing of a genealogy of silencing and absenting, as located within a black feminist repertoire, is one of the reasons we aver a performance that gives voice. Ann DuCille's (1994) dubiety with regard to the (ultimately regressive and violent) portrayals of black women as discursive incumbents of race, gender and class authenticity, or as flagship bearers of experience-based knowledge emanating from harsher edges of the modern-colonial matrix, is instructive for us if the intention is not to rehash common tropes that patronisingly imbue black women with super human qualities (which are also non-human qualities) and therefore present them as being the exceptional saviours of the underclasses. In other words, some of which we receive from Hartman and Philip, the risk of re-silencing becomes particularly acute not only when silenced voices are reinscribed into a textual ontology in which writing itself proceeds from that very silence, but also when acts of subversion are made dependent on these silenced voices, making them shout what we cannot shout, making them sing what we hope to sing, making them speak so much, so loudly, that they end up not speaking at all.

Variations on a theme of method

Our focus on the arrest, erasure, and eradication of tongues and voices, particularly in its black feminist literature and practice guise, is not disconnected from our discussion in the previous chapter on falling and the multiplicities of tongues, voices, and limbs alike that exhort, initiate and succour it. To rehash once more the conceptual move we have had in mind from Spillers, that to be so extremely tongued is to be not tongued at all. Dispossession and loss of voice and tongue therefore *can* also be an occasion, provocation, and summoning of many voices and many tongues. We prefer not to think of this multiplicity as being a natural or prescribed eventuality, but rather that which could be coterminous with an experience of a suffering. It is therefore not a solution or an outcome, but a way of a bearing – thinking of bearing as a sufferance, as a person's gait or way of standing (falling), as a sense of position and direction in relation to a surrounding environment, as a carrying forth or relaying of a message or information, and as a holding – or the attempt at it. The idea of bearing a suffering is what is for Wilson Harris is key for a subjection to creative a revelation:

> The constitution of history as it affects the Caribbean and the Guianas is one which the creative writer is profoundly qualified to explore, I believe, provided he can suffer again through his work the ancestral torment of finding his tongue seized again as if he had become a dumb thing without voice or language: yet for this very reason knowing himself uniquely immersed and equipped to embrace the muse through an imaginative re-discovery of the past. As I write this I am struck by the archetypal correspondence with Rimbaud - the dis- ordering (dérèglement) of the senses. It is easy enough to pronounce on "historylessness," oppression etc. - once one stands above it within an order of insulation - once one does not creatively descend into the disorder of it, suffer creatively the disorder of it: an escape route which may well prove the best of two worlds and permit a skilful short-circuiting of real crisis or confrontation in depth. The art in short not of alienation as it is popularly called but of insulation (1968: 44).

Harris' determination that the historical project of the formerly colonised is a necessarily pernicious one for it to not be easily subsumable into an insipid and sheltered history and more importantly for it to provide a semblance of the worlds of those subjected to, and abjected by, its violence, is not dissimilar to what most of the writers we've covered in this chapter suggest. The sense that what has to emerge from

this process is an avowedly creative project unafraid of contravening disciplinary custom and criterion, if not downright hostile towards it, is also prevalent in the works that we have touched on. We read and engage most of the texts mentioned above in order to situate ourselves at various angles and proximities to them and allow ourselves to be taught by them both a historiographical and methodological awareness that we can't but hold close in this study. Insofar as one considers oneself black and embraces and lives in and from this position and condition, it needn't require convincing the extent to which perusing historical thought and data, whether primary or secondary, is an experience of sundry difficulties for a descendant of people and places brought into the historical narrative as violable, excessive and lacking. And insofar as one's primal ideological and political urge is towards liberation, struggle, fugitivity, dissent, and imagination, regardless of whether this is conceptually or ontologically possible for the black or not, the approach has to be one of ingenuity, mystique and ill-discipline, collective and collaborative, in order to at least survive the traditions, structures, strictures and disciplines that are either proponents of, or complicit in, the aggressions, predilections and ambitions against which one positions oneself.

On the one hand we place blackness as a historical if inconsistent category inextricable with morbidity, disfavour, depravity, mystery, wretchedness, penumbra, opacity or absence of light, and the abyssal – in both secular and religious metaphysical symbolism. On the other hand we see place deemed black, black space, as a historical and physical category denoting area, range, clearance, scope, volume, expanse, lacunae, aperture, margin, and in its instance as verb – opening, arranging, ordering, placing, separating, and locating; which in cosmography, geography and cartography finds its varied imaginative and applied interpretation. We coalesce what is in both hands which becomes crucial to envisaging how blackness persistently becomes the extractable property of sub-Saharan Africans. Not only does it determine our modes of being, or non-being, in this world, but for us in this study, it is an experiential and analytical lens permitting the suggestion, and scribing, of a mining of historical narratives that centre the inveterate decentring of blacks. It is mostly for this reason that this study is not specifically attentive to the provision of a counter-history or an

alternative history strictly emergent from the recollections or archives of the sub-Saharan, and also why we are not particularly perturbed by Trevor-Roper's assertion that history in dark Africa begins with the European. Indeed, the critique of Northrup This study seeks to delve limbs-first into this well of knowledge, power, and history that, like Trevor-Roper, determines Africa thus. We perhaps position and consider place deemed black, black space, in a similar manner that Wilson Harris recovers 'limbo' as a way to broach a Caribbean and/or West Indian history that he suggests has been uncreatively and vapidly reproduced and assumed by even the most talented of writers. Harris, at length, writes,

> It has taken us a couple of generations to begin -just begin - to perceive, in this phenomenon, an activation of subconscious and sleeping resources in the phantom limb of dis-membered slave and god. An activation which possesses a nucleus of great promise - of far-reaching new poetic synthesis. For limbo (one cannot emphasize this too much) is not the total recall of an African past since that African past in terms of tribal sovereignty or sovereignties was modified or traumatically eclipsed with the Middle Passage and within generations of change that followed. Limbo was rather the renascence of a new corpus of sensibility that could translate and accommodate African and other legacies within a new architecture of cultures. For example the theme of the phantom limb - the re-assembly of dismembered man or god - possesses archetypal resonances that embrace Egyptian Osiris, the resurrected Christ and the many-armed deity of India. In this context it is interesting to note that limbo - which emerges as a novel re-assembly out of the stigmata of the Middle Passage - is related to Haitian vodun in the sense that Haitian vodun (though possessing a direct link with African vodun which I shall describe later on) also seeks to accommodate new Catholic features in its constitution of the muse. It is my view - a deeply considered one - that this ground of accommodation, this art of creative coexistence - pointing away from apartheid and ghetto fixations - is of the utmost importance and native to the Caribbean, perhaps to the Americas as a whole. It is still, in most respects a latent syndrome and we need to look not only at limbo or vodun but at Amerindian horizons as well - shamanistic and rain-making vestiges and the dancing bush baby legends of the extinct Caribs which began to haunt them as they crouched over their campfires under the Spanish yoke (2008: 12).

For Harris then, limbo, in its multiple meanings and metaphorical allusions enables a history which encapsulates fragmentation, fortuity, friction, and fascination, that encompasses the worldviews of all the diverse heritages that cohere in the region to create something other than conventional historiography. Mackey propounds that

what “Harris is attempting with this figurative act of memory—his own spectral or phantom re-membering of a dismembered past—is to free the Caribbean of a reductionist historiography which imprisons it in its deprivation” (1980: 65). In this reading of Harris’ project, Mackey invokes the concept of ‘duende’, which he elaborates extensively in another essay titled “Cante Moro.” Here Mackey writes about the concept of duende as most notable in the flamenco music of Spain and finds particular interest in Spanish poet’s Frederico Garcia Lorca’s meditations on this concept, which essentially conjures up “the black aesthetic of Spain” (Mackey, 1997: 195). In the essay “Theory and Play of the Duende”, as Mackey notes, “Lorca quotes Gypsy singer Manuel Torre as having said that “all that has dark sounds has duende”, which has also been translated as “all that has black sounds has duende (1997: 195). Mackey writes of how upon meeting Lorca in 1927, Torre is said to have evoked the “Gypsies fabled origins in Egypt by saying to him that what you must search for, and find, is the black torso of the Pharoah” (1997: 195). What Lorca had to search for in order to understand this idea of duende is the blackness of gypsy music. Mackey goes on:

> “The word duende itself means spirit, a kind of gremlin, a gremlinlike, troubling spirit. One of the things that marks the arrival of duende in flamenco singing is a sound of trouble in the voice, the voice becomes troubled, and trouble. Its eloquence becomes eloquence of another order, a broken, problematic, fragmented, self-problematizing eloquence... duende is something beyond technical competence or even technical virtuosity. It is something troubling. It has to do with trouble, deep trouble. Deep song delves into trouble water, troubles the water... Duende is a conversation with the dead, intimacy with death and with the dead. Duende often has to do with a kind of longing that has no remedy, not simply loss, unrequited love and so forth, but what Lorca calls a longing without object” (1997).

Harris, according to Mackey, seeks to produce a history that has duende: methodically encountering deep trouble in the archive, foregoing historiographical prowess in order to attempt to discourse with the dead who provide us insight into another order of things. Far from being the mere melancholia implied in Lorca’s assertion of a ‘longing without an object,’ Harris’ longing is one that seeks to traverse object and objectivity – in the sense of scientific impartiality, of the condition of objecthood which is the

historical preserve of certain people, and of having a particular goal or objective beyond the subjection to the process itself. Harris therefore seeks not to forsake "the anguished ground in which a tradition true to the Caribbean must root itself, what Harris means by a descent into voicelessness," and it is only through this grounding, with this duende, that a history of revelatory and non-parochial parameters could be prevalent (Mackey, 1980: 62-63).

The notion of a descent into voicelessness takes us back to Harris' other warning regarding the likely seizure of the tongue involved in this kind of historical contemplation, which both takes us back to Philip's and Busia's provocations around the loss of tongue and loss of voice; while the position on and from the anguished ground also reminds us of Wynter's marking of "the situational 'ground' or slot of Caliban's woman [and Caliban's mother], and therefore [the] systemic behaviour regulatory role or function as the ontological 'native/nigger'" as well as the producer of 'it' (Wynter, 1990: 363). Inasmuch as this situational ground of Caliban's woman or mother is one of a foundational and hereditary voicelessness and tonguelessness, it also a 'demonic ground' which for Wynter constitutes the space for those "perspectives that reside in the liminal precincts of the current configurations of the human-as-man in order to abolish this figuration and create other forms of life" (Weheliye, 2008: 323). To go back then to how we utilise black space in a method akin to Harris' use of limbo; for one it forces us to contend with anguished and demonic grounds, with blistering and parching grounds from which abundance emerges in the form of darkly, warped, and diabolical beings, amongst other things. It is also the anguished and demonic grounds onto, into, and through which these beings so perennially and multiply fall to approach their fate. Secondly, and at our most optimistic, these anguished and demonic grounds allow us an insight into possibilities the definition and extent of which we may not even know how to fathom. And at our most practical, forces us to engage in a creative method that seeks to address the deeply felt and learned intuition and knowledge that there are things scorchedness cannot exhaust and account for.

Perhaps like duende, blackness and space, combine to make us beseech a black aesthetic of history: the 'aesthetic' and 'history' pointing to a relation between beauty

and history; the black questioning the very relation between beauty and history, questioning the very relation and possibility of a relation to beauty and history, and leaving us with an idea of a grim kind of beauty, or a beauty that is really no type of beauty at all, that is other than the meaning we conventionally know to refer to beauty or that which is pleasing to the senses. Maybe this non recognition of beauty is what is at stake upon the "'demonic observer' ground" that for Wynter falls "outside the consolidated field of meanings of our present analogic," and so positions those within its realm in unavoidably aberrant ways to conventional meanings (1987: 207). Could we then conjecture that part of what we are doing in this study through the conceptually indivisible combining of blackness and space is also a black aesthetic of the human? Insofar as the question of and to humanity is foregrounded and explicitly not assumed?

These questions could most certainly be said to resonate in the field of knowledge and cultural practice known as black studies. This is if we are to believe Weheliye who inform us on how black studies has contributed fundamentally to the "transformation of the human into a heuristic model and not an ontological fait accompli" (2008: 322). Denise Ferreira da Silva sees the task of black studies as the "dismantling of Western thought, moved to design ethical and epistemological programs that released the enslaved and the black body from the grips of commodity, while at the same time exposing how violence enabled the expropriation of the productive capacity of slave male and female bodies while figuring of the thing as commodity interrupted the radintial Blackness holds" (2014: 91). The rigorous and murderous interrogation and critique of the human, and humanism itself as that which recreates and births itself in proximity and opposition to a looming and tangible blackness, is therefore apparent as a formative characteristic of black studies. It should be clear that to the extent that this study has staged and carried through a critical and creative encounter with, and interrogation of, a genealogy contextualising modern/humanist ontology through the concepts of blackness and space, that black studies is a field we are not uncomfortable with being located in or not too far from. Black studies affords us the tradition, flexibility and analytical rigour from which to mount an impossible and failed attack on the notions that continually produce the black as excess, lack, violable, and

fungible. While at the same time affording us the resources to see and enquire about the possibilities that lie in the attempt to think of specifically black life or lives located within the zone that deals in death and conversion.

Ferreira, in the discussion about black studies, regards its interventional methods as being aligned with feminist methodology. Feminism is also propelled by an integral political ethic as well as an epistemology that in defiance of constructed masculinist notion of scientific objectivity and rationality locates the researcher firmly within their research and therefore altering the bounds of what can be regarded as legitimate scientific inquiry. Black feminism, as we have shown above, critically takes this further in grounding its episteme and therefore methodology in ways that creatively appeal to the ontological absence of black women in the modern/colonial matrix, within which mainstream feminism itself, if we are being critical, which we are, can be located (even if figuring as Other within the consolidated field of meaning, white women in particular at least still maintain the ability to access the gendered category of woman – think Wynter's positioning of Miranda in *The Tempest* above). A black feminist methodology therefore helps in enabling us to offer what we hope is a profound critique of modern humanist thought (again, of which mainstream feminist thought itself could be said to belong) as well as be wary of those 'heteropatriarchal' aspects found in black aesthetic engagements of history and the human that seek to be eloquent in Prospero's language as Busia would say. Black feminism, in the way we think it through this study, is not an historical offshoot of feminism (which would be inaccurate to suggest that it is even in a mainstream feminist historiography), but rather locatable within an extensive black studies tradition that perhaps doesn't always name it thus.

What we have chosen to focus on in this chapter when it comes to the key texts and concepts that have contributed to our methodological approach all point to a sense and intuition about the writer/poet/practitioner/historian/archivist's relation to history and the living archive that manifests in a kind of performance of earnest loss, ill-discipline, conjuration, and maybe hope. It is in this regard that we perhaps also think of a performance studies being locatable in a black tradition, in that it includes

an array of interactions not always textual and not always legible with the historical and living archive. Diana Taylor, after all, refers to performance as "an episteme, a way of knowing, not simply an object of analysis (2003: xvi). Although in reference to the black American context Manthia Diawara names black performance studies as a "study of the ways black people, through communicative action created and continue to create themselves" (1993: 265). For Moten, "the emergence and preservation of blackness, as the ontological totality, the revolutionary consciousness that black people hold and pass, is possible only by way of the renunciation of actual being *and* the ongoing conferral of historical being - the gift of historicity as claimed, performed dispossession" (2013: 238).

All of these notions of performance remind us that the very choice to interact with the historical archive of blackness in the ways we have outlined above betrays an actively creative and constructive agenda even if the intentions are purely destructive. This is because this idea of performance directs us to duende in its rendition as a supplication of blackness, they direct us to what is held in the demonic grounds, in the torrid zones, in torrid nullius - the molten quicksand or quickground that indefatigably stages a falling, a sufferance, a disappearance, a re-emergence, and an indelibility. It is a position or bearing from which one anticipates and therefore performs not only the affliction of their outsideness, the obdurate tenacity of their being made on, as and beyond the outside, but also their gesture towards that which follows and thus precedes their dispossession. Anticipation of dispossession is a sort of signal towards the survival of dispossession, implying, at the very least, a skewed or whole other form of possession. Finally, performance studies, in the accenting of the *study* – bringing Diawara into ensemble with Mackey and his notion of verbing[v] – also situates the practitioner of the study – the researcher/theorist/writer/poet - within the performative act through the re-enactment "of a text or a style or a culturally specific response in a different medium" (Diawara, 1993: 265). The theorist is thus refused distant objectivity and is incorporated into the performance of the materials studied through their own performance which is "both political and theoretical" (Diawara, 1993: 265).

Endnotes

[i] "Letter to Haiti" in Marlene Nourbese Philip's *Blank* (2017: 303).

[ii] For more about the "Zong" and the ensuing litigation see Krikler, J., 2007, October. The Zong and the Lord Chief Justice. In *History Workshop Journal* (Vol. 64, No. 1, pp. 29-47); Oldham, J., 2007. Insurance litigation involving the Zong and other British slave ships, 1780–1807. *The Journal of Legal History*, *28*(3), pp.299-318; Webster, J., 2007. The Zong in the context of the eighteenth-century slave trade. *The Journal of Legal History*, *28*(3), pp.285-298

[iii] Gqola traces the naming of Bartmann as the "Hottentot Venus" to a "slavocratic humourous tradition" in which slaves or servants were embellished with "classical Roman names… Venus was the Roman goddess of love, fertility and romance… Humour here was derived from the juxtaposition of slave (Hottentot [which in itself was and still remains a derogatory term]) with goddess (Venus)" (2010: 62-63). Indeed Solly, Moojen, and Lindfors (1985: 133) confirm this use of irony and supposed humour: "The title she bore - "The Hottentot Venus" - contributed more than a pinch of piquancy to an image of exotic, voluptuous allure. But to anyone of that day who had heard anything at all about Hottentots and could read between the lines, the joke would have been obvious. Venus indeed! If this woman was typical of her people, she would not be a beauty queen by English standards but rather a monstrosity, an aberration of nature, a grotesque freak. Her most remarkable features would be a huge, steatopygous bottom and an a elongated genital "apron", characteristics that were thought to link her more closely to baboons and monkeys than to human beings. Any "correct and perfect" specimen of Hottentot womanhood would have to exceed particular European anatomical norms to such an extent as to appear grossly misshapen, oddly malformed. Her perfection could only be spectacular imperfection, her voluptuosness a farce. The coarse joke drew crowds".

[iv] The other two texts, also worth looking at, are Tina Campt's *Listening to Images* (2017), and Michelle D. Commander's *Afro-Atlantic Flight: Speculative Returns and the Black Fantastic*

[v] In "Other: Noun to Verb" Nathaniel Mackey opens up a discussion of the displacement of certain words as nouns in favour of their more productive iteration as verbs; and so allows us to consider how the movement from the noun 'black' to the verb 'blacken' entails the "privileging of the verb [which could result in] linguistically accentuat[ing] action among people whose ability to act is curtailed by racist constraints" (1992: 53).

Coda

What the notion of torrid nullius permits us to conceive are the ways, in both the absence and presence of warfare, foreign territories in sub-Saharan Africa that are peopled, even if sparsely so, come to be declared as not bodied, not belonging to anyone, and empty. Torrid Zone as a historical, cartographic, cosmographic, and metaphysical conception and reality alerts us to the very possibility and form of life, it alerts us to the strange and fantastic nature of life touched by it, and as limit it alerts us to what can be traversed, overcome, known, and subjugated, and the kind of valour, fortitude, knowledge, custom, and faith this requires. Nullius, a historical and legal conception and reality, when combined with the word or term it serves as prefix or suffix to renders a non-boundedness or *nullity* of the implied thing or relation to it, that is, makes the thing 'fair game' by way of its existence outside of legal bounds and sanction. Or it positions it outside of a set of recognised relations or positions, or simply does not recognise any relation to it.

We conjecture therefore that the combination of torrid and nullius conceptually opens up for us a way to think of blackness historically, which is also to think of blackness' in the present and future. Notions of torrid zone, in their characterisation of a geographic region as uninhabitable, and thus utterly uninhabited, and the simultaneous characterisation of life and people near this zone as unusual, uncanny or utterly unlike, when mingled with those iterations of nullius which bring into question or completely reject the relations to and of life of the inhabitants of this zone, leave us with a strong sense that life in this region uniquely and archetypally precludes recognition in any comprehensive, complex, and contextualised manner. We have one notion of torrid zone as constituting those gruelling, infernal and roasting vicinage which lay beyond the ecumene and thus form the boundaries of the ecumene. We have another that points to the broiling impassable boundaries of the ecumene as the known inhabited world, that is, torrid zone as the spluttering *limits between* a known world and a possible (or scientifically/geometrically inferable) yet inaccessible world in the antipodes. When either is intermixed with those

takes of nullius which render the absence of Christianity or any recognisable and recognisably organised religion or exegesis as an absence of a relation to Divinity and its magnanimous and edifying protection, courtesy and honour, thus invoking non-theism, blasphemy, and anathema, it leaves us with a strong sense that this region comes to constitute a terrestrial likeness and allegory or metaphor for perdition.

It comes to constitute the limit for this state of condemnation as well, the redemptive hand toying with immolation by valiantly pulling the region out of the unknown hellfire into the known world of atonement and attempted deliverance. Notions of torrid zone that through the postulation of a destructive, scorching, melting, smelting, ousting, deathly, other-worldly, ghoulish and ghastly expanse where things disappear or dissolve never to come back, melded with those ideas of nullius that infer the unoccupied, the forsaken, unowned, the non-existent, the gloomy, the uncontrolled, the non-sovereign, the gaping, the beguiling, and the opportune, can't but bequeath us the conviction that the people inhabiting and from this division come to be both aberration and apparition. That is, the skewed visibility that their charred skin, and all that it means, allots them is precisely the kind of visibility – non-visibility – that is required in their not being seen as having any relation to anything other than their primal instincts and extreme climate. The 'of nothing' or 'of nobody' or 'of none' that is nullius denotes an emptiness or nothingness (or at best a silhouette or contour) in the place or position with which the thing is supposed to have established a relation. An emptiness or nothingness peculiarly enabled by a fullness or eminence of deviance. It's as if these darkly figures disappear as they come into appearance; the gaze hollowing them out and rendering the outline or shape as pure shape-shiftability. We can't help but to think with David Marriott here, who offers us another way to cohere the idea of a semblance and impression so confusing, scandalous, profuse and tainted that it alters and negates normal visibility:

> when Europeans first saw what stood before them in Africa, the sheer novelty of the data meant that it was impossible to separate spiritual fear from the sense of being haunted. But what is it that haunts: the phenomenal resemblance to uncanny unlikeness, or the sudden dissemblance in the reflected image, as if one's own specular image had become ghosted in turn? What I think the

> word "ghostlike" attests to here is not simply the return of a repressed wish, but also the exposure – if that is the right word – of one's constancy and faith to an otherness that perturbs because of its failure to reflect back to Europeans a comprehensible self-image (this "fright of something like oneself that still under no circumstances ought to be like oneself"). This also means that the violence meted out to Africans was not only a defense against impenetrable mystery, but the foreclosure of the more disturbing possibility of the African as Double. As if blackness were a kind of ghost of whiteness to be hunted down or conjured away. And colonial violence, a kind of rescue service for a self-regard felt to be at the point of oblivion, which, because of that, wages an endless war against the disquieting phantomality of the black body. In Arendt's narrative, then, whiteness is under siege, enveloped by a black imago pressing in on the body with a spiritual violence that is uncanny, imperious, and deeply humiliating precisely because it comes from within. But what is also at stake, indissociably, is the spectacle of whites haunted by the image of Africans which they themselves have created as the ghost of ahuman naturality. It is as discourse of racial fetishism that is itself fetishistic and thus both blind and blinding (2007: 4).

Marriott offers us an expanded, if not already implied, way of conceiving the invisibilising and disembodying urge of torrid damnation and the unexceptionally draconian nullius. Importantly, for Marriott and for us, the violence-inducing phantomality of the blackness that stood before the European, confirms and establishes a spatial and visual order. We consider Marriott's implication of spectral visuality then as not only in conversation with jvb gumede's 'shadow man' that we reckoned with in the second chapter, but also our earlier discussion of Garuba's notion of visual authority, as well as with our discussion of the authoritative and authorial act of surveying carried out and embodied fundamentally by Vasco da Gama's voyage around the southern parts of the African continent in 1497. We also bring up the history of violence committed against a place and a people, violence that becomes endemic to, and paradigmatic of, a place and a people. As Wilderson reiterates that despite African/black performative reclamation of a recuperative history of a place,

> …no other place-names depend upon such violence. No other nouns owe their integrity to this semiotics of death. Meditations on African performance and subjectivity are always already spoken by this grammar and haunted by these ghosts. For whatever "Africa" means when spoken by Africans, whatever it means in the moment of performance, that cannot change Africa's

> paradigmatic relation to other place-names and the people of those places. Performance cannot reconcile this gap between the place of slaves and the places of all others (2009: 120).

In addition, we take seriously, at the prompt of Marriott's idea, Christina Sharpe's extension of the notion of 'retinal detachment' (Sharpe, 2016). Sharpe refers to an interview of artist Kara Walker by filmmaker Arthur Jafa regarding Walker's creative process in which the artist invokes retinal detachment – a physiological condition where the retina (layer of tissue in the eye that manages light) separates from its surrounding tissue and may cause blindness if not immediately addressed - to describe an immersion in a creative space fully open to the potentially pernicious sensations contained in the "gory and grotesque" process of black epidermal detachment and attachment (Sharpe, 2016: 98). In other words, a form of being positioned within a space where the mechanics and processes of the making and unmaking of flesh – in its Spillerian guise, as we've discussed - are vivid, felt, and personal. For Sharpe, retinal detachment is considered and is useful in its more literal sense within an optical and visual field. Sharpe writes of "colonial optics that occupy and reproduce the retinal detachment that, then, reproduces the hold as location and destination" (2016: 124). In this sense, retinal detachment is coterminous with a colonial visual order and visual state - established following a rupture or tear in a previous state of seeing that has a form of blindness as an inevitability when unencumbered. A slide into blindness that renders the hold – the space in the boat carrying cargo, carrying chattel, that is, carrying black slaves – as both location *and* destination, where we're at *and* where we're going. And as we've made the point, the hold - that anticipates the plantation which anticipates the ghetto which anticipates the corner which anticipates the prison - is already anticipated by torrid nullius.

A haunting spectrality, a retinally detached blindness, nonetheless able to establish an order of surveying and surveillance that encapsulates a visual authority; the kind that leaves that under which this all-seeing and non-seeing eye is cast as unapparent, as inapparent, as unparented, and as profuse potential. Saidiya Hartman, in responding to

the question “Why does white supremacy seem so bound up in the visual?” posed by Frank Wilderson, responds: “I think that visually, the threat of blackness is somehow heightened. Fanon's "Look! A Negro": that's the formulation, and within the racial classificatory schema that is how much of the work is done, especially in terms of the way racialization has operated: how it disposes of bodies, how it appropriates their products, and how it fixes them in a visual grid” (2003: 191). Baderoon takes note of this seemingly foundational visuality, and shows the way this manifests as a kind of colonial visuality that is central to the history of South Africa:

> An examination of discourses about population statistics in South Africa from the colonial to the apartheid periods reveals a crucial logic of erasure at work. That is, the correlation of the African and enslaved majority with impurity and primitiveness, and therefore their transformation into excess people. As a consequence, within the orderly processes of history, science and state formation, such beings could be made surfeit, out of place, non-human, extinct or simply non-existent, as Shula Marks shows in an analysis of the “empty land” thesis that asserted that European settlers in South Africa entered territory with no prior inhabitants (1980)” (2018: 259).

As we’ve argued earlier in the paper, particularly with regard to the fleshly nature of the black body, excess and inexistence cohere quite logically and productively when it comes to blackness. It is no wonder then that Baderoon would consider a logic of erasure as fundamentally invested in, and indeed indistinguishable from, the production and conservation of superfluity evident in the salient sulliedness of blacks. It is this stark blackness of the inhabitants of the southernmost part of the continent, and its bizarre and uncanny ability to hold in it a variance of meanings, that precisely makes it such that the inhabitants can be not seen, and their habitat seen as empty. The empty land thesis referenced by Baderoon is a South African historiographical framework conventionally used as a rebuttal to the charge or assumption that European colonisers (the Dutch and British in particular) routinely and widely dispossessed native Africans of land thus appropriately earning them the designation as violently depriving and exploitative settlers. The thesis therefore suggests that in actual fact vast swathes of what is now South Africa were unoccupied at the arrival of Europeans from the 1600s and throughout the various waves of settlers who pushed the frontier of the Cape Colony east and inland.

This vacancy of land and geographical space is said to be so because, firstly, unlike the Khoi Khoi and San populations who are native to the land and were most populous in the Cape regions, Bantu language speaking Africans migrated south into the area at around the same time the Europeans arrived, or so recently that their occupation of the land was concentrated into small enclaves and was thus generally sparse. This then challenges the characterisation of these colonisers as unjust occupiers and owners of land since it suggests that they either were original inhabitants of many of the areas they occupied or they were engaged in a fair contest with other recent migrants over geographical pre-eminence. The *State of South Africa Year Book* of 1974 for example states that "the term 'Bantu' meaning 'People' is now officially used to describe the descendants of the Black immigrants who invaded South Africa from the North at approximately the same time as the first Europeans settled at the Cape" (1974). Secondly, and sometimes apart from the simultaneous arrival theory, is that such was the strife and callousness characterising and defining African intra-regional relations of the day, large areas of the region were empty due to local African populations, native and Bantu, either constantly fleeing from, or being decimated by, each other. Europeans therefore encounter vacant lands that even if they were previously (albeit scantily) inhabited, were inadequately valued and protected and instead merely figured as arenas for incessant and innate conflict and thus positioning the Europeans as functional buffers and essentially harbingers of stabilising reprieve.

As contemporary South African debates about land ownership and its skewed racial distribution rage on, notions of indigeneity and rightful and originary claim to land in Southern Africa have permitted, in its various guises, a rhetorical and discursive return of the empty land thesis by those who wish to challenge black (Bantu) reclamation of stolen and conquered ancestral land. Prime among the proponents of this thesis are AfriForum, a self-styled civil rights group claiming to represent the interests of white-Afrikaners and other minority groups (which in South Africa would mean whites in general as well as 'coloured' and Indian people), who in a 2019 document titled *Single Narrative: How Media is Distorting the Facts About South Africa* – a report prepared for (controversial

American conservative commentator and agitator) Ben Shapiro, which is very instructive of the kind of organisation AfriForum is and the global politics they espouse, write:

> It is often argued that land reform has to be executed in order to correct historical injustices. While it is certainly true that a variety of injustices occurred throughout South Africa's history, it should be pointed out that the history of land ownership in South Africa is more complex than what is regularly argued by political leaders and opinion journalists. The truth is that white-owned land was acquired in three different ways, namely occupation of empty land, acquiring of land through negotiation, and conquest. Two comments should, however, be made regarding the obtaining of land through conquest. The first is that it was common practice among black tribes at the time. The second is that obtaining of land through conquest was not that common among white people who settled in South Africa. The majority of land was acquired either through the occupation of empty land or through negotiations with local black tribes. Under the white minority (apartheid) government, the state embarked on a process of forced removals in order to create white and black areas. Several million people were affected by these removals. As a result of these dispossessions, the Restitution of Land Rights Act was passed to allow for affected communities to institute claims for land they had been deprived of as a result of racially discriminatory practices such as forced removals. This, however, does not justify the allegation that all land in South Africa was subject to dispossession, that all black people would have owned land had it not been for historic discrimination and that all white people who own land have acquired their land through illegitimate means (Roets, 2019: 8).

Several sleights of hand are utilised here by AfriForum in order to undermine the extent of dispossession. Firstly, they overplay the extent to which transfer of land was negotiated under equal terms between Africans and Europeans. Secondly, they set the backdrop of a region embroiled in intra-African conflict and land conquest, essentially suggesting that this was an innate feature of African tribal life or were series of events not of and as a consequence for and of European presence since that kind of conflict and practice "wasn't that common among whites". And thirdly they position the apartheid government as being the primary enforcer of land dispossession and can thus be portrayed as historically aberrant in terms of their approach to land ownership in the close to 400 years of European (or the people Afrikaners regard as their pioneering ancestors) presence in this

region. Non-mention of the 1913 Native Land Act that practically saw black land ownership confined to areas constituting only 13% of the land mass of the Union of South Africa is curious and convenient. This is in addition to repetition of the claim, importantly, that much of the land that was historically occupied by white Europeans was empty. The empty land thesis, far from being the most dominant line of reasoning and contestation against contemporary black calls for land redistribution, remains a powerful voice that is strengthened by the premise that Africans native to the region are markedly different from Bantu Africans thus not meriting their common designation as black, particularly as a basis for indigeneity. It can be argued that this is partly the reason why groups like AfriForum are invested in the idea of Africans native to the region (descendants of the KhoiKhoi and San for example) being designated as 'coloured' and thus belonging to one of the minority groups whose interests they can separate from black Africans and thus claim to protect. And this then permits the characterisation of Bantu Africans, who constitute the vast majority of the whole South African population today, as historically akin to colonial aggressors given how their presence continues to unfold in the Southern part of the continent. That we frame the current discursive re-emergence of the empty land thesis as a return or indeed a re-emergence, is testament to the fact that, as Baderoon's reference to historian Shula Marks implies, notions of empty land have been long discarded in South African historiography.

The idea of empty land due to simultaneous arrival for example has been shown to be factually untenable, with historical and archaeological evidence suggesting Bantu habitation in significant portions of the region for varying periods (decades to centuries up to a millennium) before Vasco Da Gama's voyage around the continent, hence it's designation as the "myth" of the empty land (Crais, 1991; Davenport and Saunders, 2000; Hall, 1984; Marks, 1980). Norman Etherington (2004) questions the validity of the notion that tribal conflict, the practice of conquest that AfriForum says was common among the black tribes, more specifically the 'mfecane' - the 'inter-African tribal wars' of the 1800s central to which was the Zulu kingdom under Shaka and the Ndebele kingdom under Mzilikazi, were responsible for the decimation and displacement of large settlements of

Bantu people by contending that the historiographic knowledge that rendered large portions of South Africa empty due to the 'mfecane' was based on inaccurate cartographic representations produced from the accounts of 'frontiersmen,' explorers and missionaries. This foundational error thus accounted for the continued perception and justification that most of the region was uninhabited, with maps that routinely figure known settlements, habitations and areas being significantly and sometimes wholly misplaced, and some population groups being misnamed and/or granted inaccurate geographic and cultural homogeneity (Etherington, 2004). This is besides the fact, of course, that the very accounts, perceptions and worldviews that formed the data from which maps were produced was already dispositioned to regard much of the land in the region as empty. The colonial visual order, that is, the de facto blindness and spectral visuality of the colonial eye cast upon sub-Saharan Africa, is such that the cartographic representations that Etherington refers to are logical and scientific manifestations of seen emptiness triumphing over and *through* the in-the-flesh presence of the darkly people from these previously thought harsh but now thought potentially bountiful places. Historian Clifton Crais, in outlining the argument to follow in a paper titled *The Vacant Land: The Mythology of British Expansion in the Eastern Cape, South Africa*, writes

> I am concerned with the notion of vacantness in two inter-related senses of the word, and much of what follows analyzes precisely this discursive relation. Vacancy refers to the fact of geographical emptiness in the Western legal denotation of land being "unoccupied or unused.'' The second notion of vacantness, as an "elision" or "emptying" of the humanity of the African and the formulation of a set of negative stereotypes, was embedded in this creation of empirical "fact" - the observation of the apparent materiality of an empty land. These stereotypes centered around a chain of signifying dichotomies "good" and "bad", "us" and "them", "self" and "Other", and so on. These fundamentally symbolic oppositions, which suppress "the memory of their fabrication," came to structure a narrative trope in early colonial historiography in which science spoke as truth and myth became reality (1991: 257).

Crais helps us think further of the ways in which a South African historiography and social ontology takes hold precisely through a visual order and authority that necessarily goes through the presence and fleshliness of the black to render geographical emptiness and

thus white entitlement, ownership and indeed, personhood. That the myth of the empty land is seemingly only related to the fact of Bantu (non)presence and the frontier moving inland from the Cape of Good Hope, however, serves the purpose of accepting a racial demarcation of Bantu and Khoi Khoi/San; a demarcation we contest particularly in its characterisation of the people indigenous to Southern Africa as non-black. For if we are to believe Glatigny, Mare, and Viljoen (2008) then we see how this emptying visual arrangement is not only the purview of the Bantu who supposedly invaded from the north but is also extended to the 'swarthy' people of the Cape falling under the designations of Khoi Khoi and San. Glatigny's et al focus on the cartographic presence and representation of the Khoi Khoi on early Dutch colonial maps of the Cape alerts us to the ways in which the colonial relation to African land depended on certain ways of (not) seeing the indigenous people and their geographies (2008).

Furthermore, the apparently nomadic life of the people the Dutch settlers encountered upon arrival at the Cape substantiated the visual order that their cartographic representation on early colonial maps is steeped in. As we noted earlier with Strabo's assessment of the ways and life of the 'Aethiopians,' being nomadic was said to be as a direct result of the barren nature of the land, made so by the overwhelming heat, and thus for Strabo accounted for the relative lack of notable civilizational markers and impressive institutional advancements. Being nomadic at the Cape further elaborated a visual schema that saw much of the land as empty and available. Indeed, Glatigny et al contend that maps of the Cape in the early Dutch period can be put into four categories based on their portrayal or representations that account for the presence of native populations. First, are the maps which "ignore the presence of the KhoiKhoi" (2008: 306). Noting the irony of the describing the region as that of the 'Hottentots' yet not having them or their dwellings depicted cartographically, Glatigny et al suggest that these types of maps form the bulk of all the maps from early period following Dutch settlement at the Cape (2008). Second are the maps "that locate KhoiKhoi dwellings or kraals as if in a fixed

position". Although these maps make an attempt at representing the native inhabitants, their fixed position gives the visual impression of only occupying small areas of a vast province (Glatigny et al, 2008). Third is the "transitional map" that shows "locations not areas;" these are usually maps depicting the entire South Africa or Southern Africa and has written on them the areas where certain population groups are likely to be found (2008: 308). Fourth are the maps "that that tend to take account, in one way or another, of the temporary status of Khoikhoi locations and their peculiar relationship to territory" (2008: 308). Gligny et al conclude that

> The systematic mapping of the Cape Colony by chart-makers, such as Pieter Potter, Hendrik Lacus, Jan Wittebol and others (Zandvliet 1998: 274), was a definite sign that the VOC and the Dutch had prepared themselves to colonise the vast geographical area known as De Kaap de Goede Hoop and to remain its rulers for a long period of time. Although the Khoikhoi were given a degree of "presence" in the various maps as shown, this still suggests that they were systematically being disowned, disrupted and displaced during the latter half of the seventeenth century. Maps of the Cape, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, suggest that the Khoikhoi had been "ousted" from land and representational maps. This was a definite sign of colonial expansion and colonial domination. According to Richard Saumarez Smith (2004: 149) colonial maps and mapping of colonial societies became part of what he called "a culture of rule". He furthermore identifies the "use of maps to represent society and the relation between forms of knowledge and the apparatus to rule". The inclusion of the colonial farms as landed property on maps suggests that the Dutch had systematically penetrated the land space of Khoikhoi pastoralists and thereby began to threaten their future existence and independence as pastoralists (2008: 315-316).

That the majority of the maps did not explicitly account for the presence of the KhoiKhoi and other indigenous groupings, or did so quite minimally, we'd like to think is consistent with the contention that the Dutch were preparing themselves for a colonisation of much of the land in what was named the Cape of Good Hope. And it was a successful preparation, duplicated in the centuries to come through its characterisation of the land as practically empty despite the vast presence of people. The maps themselves were a reflection and elaboration of a visual order and authority that effectively cast the inhabitants of lands formerly considered uninhabitable due to their oppressive and unforgiving heat as unable to be seen in the same way that other human beings are seen.

This in turn renders them unable to possess or be self-possessed and are thus available or open to have anything that is supposed to be theirs taken, including themselves. If the areas on the edge of or beyond the ecumene were empty because the climate prohibited any life to progress or even be possible there, then the areas that once constituted the beyond of the ecumene but are now known to be habitable are empty because the climate prohibited any significant development such that relations to life there could not be governed by conventional human ideals. That is, what constituted prevalent norms of physicality, presence, ownership, kin, religion, art etc., for example, was put into disarray by the weather-worn black skin and life of the descendants of the uninhabitable, so much so that they could not be seen or related to as even *Othered* human beings. The climate whether under the order of the divine and celestial or the biospherical and terrestrial, thus always brings into deep question the viability and credibility of life in the torrid zone or torrid nullius or land of the blacks. To feel deeply Christina Sharpe's words, "the weather is the totality of our environments; the weather is the total climate; and the climate is antiblack" (2016: 104).

Appendix

Africa, Music, and Show Business:

AN ANALYTICAL SURVEY IN TWELVE TONES PLUS FINALE

DOLLAR BRAND

I
geography
so many theories of east and west abound one thing is certain though this earth is round

II
slave bell slave
master your bell your master like the cat was belled with time no clocks no clime
stipulate late afternoon
nor early mourning for the dead
sombre tolls the very same bell that rings for
slave
time is your master

III
spiritual
When I get to heaven gonna play on my harp
gonna play all over god's heaven
but only with the cats who can make the changes

IV
western influence
my baybee eesah cryink baa baa forra me

i geef her de mango i geef her de banana

but she's stillah cryink baa baa forra me

V
rhythm afrique
joey had the biggest feet so he played tenor

VI
blues for district six

early one new year's morning
when the emerald bay waved Its clear waters against the noisy dockyard
a restless south easter skipped over slumbering lion's head
danced up hanover street
tenored a bawdy banjo
strung an ancient cello
bridged a host of guitars
tambourlned through a dingy alley
Into a scented cobwebbed room
and crackled the sixth sensed district
Into a blazing swamp fire of satin sound
early one new year's morning
when the moaning bay mourned Its murky water against the deserted dockyard
a bloodthirsty south easter roared over hungry lion's head
and ghosted Its way up hanover street
empty
forlorn
and cobwebbed with gloom

VII

where loneliness' still waters meet nostalgia
and morning breaks the city sun and smoke
and towering grey the buildings murmur
grim subway rumblings In their roots
I scan the vacant faces and sad smiles
and long for home

the night my soul had herringed red
through raucous songs of childhood
and friends and comic stories long forgotten
were whisked out of memories dim

to function as narcotic
and silence cruel reality as it screamed
its neither here nor there

i'm hemisphered
but three
the southern cross and libran scale
and god knows
he knows
where

VIII

ballet for tired sons and lovers

figure belt is the tragedy of the illustrious son of a suburban african chief who, disillusioned by the apparent ineffectiveness of his magical beadwork, discards his girds and elopes with a fast-travelling-northbound- salesgirl.

After mesmerizing him with her hypnotic, synthetic ornaments, she locks him up in a fashion magazine and in order to keep him amused, content and in her power, she clads him with so many figure belts that he stifles and loses his voice and in final desperation strangles himself and dies,

IX

wind up

the southern spring winds myself in two

one wintered in cold steel northern city brittle eyed neon guards my empty stomach the other

a dimming summer camera-ed in youth

and matineed each minute of each dreary day

X

double cross

in the afternoon came white dressed white men in a big white car they took him away

in the afternoon came black dressed black men in a big black car they took him away

XI

the terrored dusk screams

the land

in the beginning

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