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Permanent juniority: black youth politics in the Vaal under late colonisation

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Chapter 1

Confronting the Past: On the Anthropology of Ethics

Trauma in Archives

It is the summer of 2013 February. After ordering a cool drink at the Spur in Vereeniging, I sat at the table in the middle of a restaurant, waiting to do an interview with my past. About six weeks before I had discovered that my father had been one of the subjects of my study while doing archival research in the William Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. I was looking at the violent events that led to the Zone 7 shooting in Sebokeng when I came across his name, Tilly Bojosi, alongside his brother's name, Ismael Bojosi. In the archive they are part of a gang, or at least many in the community are convinced they are. A gang that was unleashing all forms of terror on local activists. After a long period of soul searching, I decided to look for him and request an interview, to talk to him about the 1980s and his role in the violence thereof.

So I sat, waiting for this man, a man I knew very little about. Up to this point we had only spoken a few times, totalling a little over 30 minutes, since I was born. In December of 2003, I had just finished matric[1]*. In fact, it was the day after matric results had been published in national newspapers and my name had appeared with an exemption, meaning that I had qualified for admission to university. A person came home, greeted my grandmother and said that my father was up by the street corner and requesting to see me. I replied asking why he sent someone and had not come himself. The man simply said he was passing the message, but he thought I should go. I asked my grandmother what she thought and she told me to go and hear what he had to say. I protested, saying that it is a sign of disrespect to wait at the street corner and send a person when he could have come himself. My grandmother explained to me that he could not come himself because custom dictated that if he did, he would have to be led by his own elders. I conceded and went to see him.*

He congratulated me on passing matric and asked what was next for me. I then told him that I had applied to the University of Witwatersrand for a degree in Social Sciences. He asked me if I would be staying at the university, to which I replied in the affirmative. He then lamented that I should not move into student residence, that instead I should continue to stay at home and travel every day because there was too much drug abuse at varsities. At this stage, I got very irritated. How could this person, who was a complete stranger to me, think I could do drugs when I got to varsity? He asked me if I could drive and if I had a driving license. I replied that I did not know how to drive. He went on to imply that he would see what he could do.

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[1] Matriculation ('matric') exams are the final examination for high school students in South Africa, and determine eligibility for college or university entrance.

We moved to a conversation about my being a faithful Christian, who is always at church. In a very sarcastic tone, he rhetorically asked why I attend church so much. In a firm, but not overly excited, tone I replied that it was because God was the only father I knew. This, I suspect, accelerated the end of the conversation. In less than ten minutes our meeting ended, on the street corner, next to his car. I walked back home as he drove off.

Now we are in 2013. It had been 10 years since that last encounter. It had also been 27 years since 1985, the year of my birth, and I would turn 28 in just a few months. He was an absent father to me, but a father nonetheless. A married man with two children in his immediate family. He was a businessman who lived at the tipping edge of black middle-class life, in a previously whites only town, when many blacks continued to live in the black townships of apartheid times.

Over the years, the impression I held on to is that I found him very hard to converse with. He seemed almost smooth, but in a very unsettling way. Always in a hurry, often to fix the relationship, perhaps so that he did not have to account for the past – his absence in my life and what it may mean.

Coincidentally, before delving into each of the pages of the Peace Corps archive which documented incidences of violence in the Vaal and other areas, I received a call from a strange number. This was in January, the second day of that month. It was him on the other end of the phone. He was asking for a meeting in an attempt to reach out after many years of having not spoken at all. This is how I got to save his number, mostly in an attempt to make sure I did not take his calls again.

And so it happened that when I did call, his reaching out was focused on mending relations. I explained that I was doing school work, a PhD to be precise. "I came across a painful story of you and your brother which I really would like to speak to you about", I told him. I remember these words clearly, because I had rehearsed them in my head many times before. "I do life history interviews", I said, and I told him that this means "we start from when you were born right to the present because that allows me to situate the period I may be interested in within a much richer history of your life". I added that I understood that we have an unfinished business and if he would like us to discuss that first I would be amenable. Also if he would not like to speak about it at all, again, I would understand and would never hold it against him.

Perhaps knowing that it was related to my school work, he agreed. I still could sense though, as we arranged where to meet, that he was trying to kill two birds with one stone – he wanted to mend relations between us. My predicament was – What do I do with this interview? Here I came as a student: do I conduct the interview whilst controlling him not to use it to recruit me into his life, and speak of reconciliation? These questions troubled me in the depths of my

soul. Was this work a way and a platform to do this? Frankly, I thought to myself, I had made peace long ago with his absence and the fact of my rejection by his family and his mother. I might risk undoing this peace I had realised, and doing so during a PhD project that should be finished soon.

When I turned eleven, my mother sat me down to explain that my father had deserted me. I remember that evening in Evaton, the township where I grew up, when she came to explain to me. She sat down and, by candle light, she began to narrate the story. She told me that when she fell pregnant with me, my grandmother and her brothers went to my father's family home to present the matter of the pregnancy. Upon their arrival, they were rejected and told never to come back again. I never thought about what age my mom was until I had to interrogate this past in 1996; she was 30 years old, and I was 11. In 1984 when she conceived me she was only 18.

My grandmother never forgets the rage of my father's mother and how harsh she was to my family delegation. She tells me "they never even allowed us into the yard". In humiliation, they came back home and that was the end of it. I came to know this story when I was 11 years old. I grew up to accept that I do not have a father, like many in the townships. Nevertheless, I am older now, and this is a struggle that I can choose not to get into, a burden I can choose not to carry.

I did once, like any child would, wish that he could recognise me, come for me, integrate me into his family, as I came to hear and know about that family. I came to know that he lived a much better life than my family did, that his children went to better schools. I came to know this when I was in primary school, not from him, but from those who knew him and would discover that I was his child. Once, in 2002, I made national news when I won a national speech contest; my face appeared on TV and in newspapers. When I went to a tuck-shop not far from home, some men were sitting outside in a group. One of them told me that they recognised me from a newspaper picture. They asked me who my father was and I said, "Well he is not in my life, but his name is Tilly Bojosi." The man exclaimed his surprise, asking how Tilly could desert a child like this. "He is a fool!" But I had no choice, I had to find peace and peace meant moving beyond and not allowing this to hurt me or violate my emotions.

As I ponder this history, and these questions, sitting and waiting for him in the restaurant, a cellphone call came in. A voice on the other side said to me, "who am I speaking to?" I replied asking, "Who do you want to speak to?" Abruptly, they dropped the phone. The person called again and said, "My father asked me to leave something with you. Could you come outside?" In irritation, I dropped the phone. As I hung up, my father called and requested that I meet "my brother" who is outside. This means, I thought to myself, "he is trying to use this opportunity to have me back into his life". It was an ambush! Or so I thought.

For me it quite simply meant I was about to hear of a life I could have been part of. A life I could have been shaped in, and that must now shape my intellectual journey into a PhD degree. When I decided to do my research about the Vaal, I knew it would be a way of rediscovering a place I grew up in, but had not learnt the politics of. Now, the process of rediscovering the Vaal and its political history has provoked me to unearth, revisit, re-interrogate and re-negotiate the peace I made with my own past, a personal past of living with an absent father.

Now Mohau, his son, was here standing in front of me. Tilly, my father, chose to send his other son to meet me first, before meeting with me himself. I was forced to meet this man, my 'brother', before dealing with the fact that my father was ambushing me. I knew his name, because in the past I took interest, and people would mention that his first son was Mohau. As he spoke, I thought to myself about my father – "this man has no sense of process". I immediately concluded that he was emotionally stunted and perhaps simply uncultured. There was no form of sophistication on his part, no manner it seemed, of interrogating and reflecting on my own positionality. It seemed he was ignoring my request to keep our meeting strictly about my research.

His son also seemed domineering – or so I felt. He wanted me to meet him outside. I convinced him to come inside the restaurant, a Spur[2] steakhouse. He came in walking on crutches. "Why do you make me come inside when I am on crutches?" he asked me as he approached the table I was in. As he approached with his demanding questions, I thought to myself that he seemed like a bully. At this stage, I recoiled emotionally. I then told him gently that I would prefer to meet with his father only and that although he had called and requested that I must meet him first, I would rather not.

Mohau took out notes of cash and said to please give this to him, meaning his father. As he handed them over to me, I reluctantly took the money and immediately placed it on my opposite side of the table where it was obvious his father would be sitting. Before he departed, he shook my hand and said that he was pleased to meet me. As soon as he left, his father walked in. A tall, heavy and dark-skinned man. I have seen him many times before, and each time his image escaped me and my memory. I recalled that in one instance at the taxi rank in Johannesburg, I saw him. It was during my first year at the university. I decided, reluctantly, to go and say hello, and like he once did when I was twelve, he greeted me like he did not know me, as if I were a mere stranger. When I arrived at home from the taxi rank I narrated the story to my mother because of the emotional turmoil it put me through. Her response that day closed the question of this man for me. She said, "you must never let him get to you because think how many great people out there wish you were their child. If he does not recognise that by now, he does not deserve you." Somehow the turmoil was launching me into feelings of being unworthy.

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[2] *Spur restaurants are a popular family-oriented steakhouse chain, ubiquitous in South Africa.*

Now, he came in and sat down at the table across from me, facing me. It was not hard to get him to focus on the objective of our meeting. I told him immediately that he need not tell me about his whole life if it would be hard. I added that I realised the relationship between us could complicate things. I also indicated that it was not easy to decide to interview him, but I felt that the story was critical and had to be told. He said he understood and would have no problem. I further explained why I had dismissed his son and that I would prefer it if we kept the meeting about my PhD. He agreed and we began the interview.

As we spoke, it became progressively easier for me, emotionally. He seemed tense, sometimes he even trembled. He would relax, but not for too long. He did not seem to like going through this process, but he was committed to doing it. Sometimes I thought he might shed a tear, but he did not, despite the fact that his eyes would be bloodshot and watery as he spoke, his voice wavering.

My feelings travelled with him. I was opening up as we went, hearing a man who was both my father and my "research subject". I never suppressed any emotions, at least consciously. I was attentive, asked questions, even though I thought they might be uncomfortable. It was really a dance. Towards the end of our conversation I asked him how he felt and if there was anything else he felt he wanted to share since I had asked all my questions. We then came to the elephant in the room. It had been there all along. I think we both tried hard to forget it, to postpone it, but at times we glanced at it, and it was there staring right back at us.

At this stage I could move on with the process of "meeting" this man, unimpeded by his attempts at evasion. This was a life history interview, and so we arrived at that point in the narration of his life story when he decided not to have my mother, or me, in his life. He spoke about this part with a sense of intensity. I did not interrupt him. I was not the only child he had fathered outside his immediate family. There were two others, and they were fully part of his life - only I was kept out. And so, the wound had to be pierced.

I am a grown man now, he is also a man. However it was still not clear who still feels "wounded", whose story carries a pain that the other does not know and therefore had not dealt with. In my heart, emotionally, the story of his life evoked a lot of empathy for him and his family. I did not know this feeling existed in me; I discovered it as the painful story of his life of violence in Sebokeng came to be embodied in front of me. My judgement was unimpaired though. I was not about to decide to jump into his life and allow this pressure to make me re-think my closure about his absence in my life.

He requested that I should forget my past and be in his life and the life of his family. He said that I am his blood and I should come meet the rest of his children, who are also my blood. I told him his proposal would take him hearing my

story. So we spoke and, for the first time in 27 years of my life, I heard his side of the story and he heard mine. He asked to switch off the recorder at this stage. Several times in this part of the conversation I saw tensions build as I told him my views, explained my feelings and versions of events.

As we concluded, I asked him not to expect me in his life. I told him that I held nothing against him and that if I did it would mean that after 27 years of my life I thought my mother was not enough. I explained that even as I sat at this table with him, more than three hours later, seeing him, listening to him, absorbing his story, as humanly as I could, I held nothing against him. I explained that I could not fight my mother's battles with him. I was not here to avenge her. She had never asked me to. I explained that none of my people, uncles, grandmother or my mother ever spoke ill of him or his family all the years of my short life. If I ever held anything against him it was not because of anything anyone ever told me about him, but that over the years when I tried to reach out to him he had rejected me.

He said I was his blood. I tried to ask him to explain what that meant. This seemed like an excuse on his part, allowing him not to explain why it was critical now but not before. Having reached this stage without him, he must live with the reality that I have a choice and choosing not to have him and his family in my life would be as perfect as choosing to have them. My past has no inevitable force over me, over my present and my future; this is the little freedom I have. He still could not explain how being blood relations meant I had to form a relationship with him and my "brothers and sisters" - his children.

As we said farewell, he asked if I had a car and if not he could arrange that I be dropped at home. He is a taxi owner, so this would have been easy for him, but I refused. He asked to give me money for the taxi, and I told him that I was truly fine. As we parted ways, I went home to my mother, full of contentment and told her and my grandmother the whole story. I was also full of sorrow because of his story, a story we shall explore in Chapter Four. My mother and many in my family knew this story, but none of them ever told me. Nevertheless, I told them both how content I am with the part they have played in raising me.

The Absent Father

Looking back, I don't blame my father. In the first 'real' conversation we had right after my matric results were published in national newspapers, we stood on the street, next to his car and I pitted him against an ideal subject - God the Father. It was one day before New Year's Eve of 2003 and he asked me where I would be for New Year's Eve festivities. I told him I would be at church. Here, my father cast derision, ridiculing my being a faithful church boy; seemingly suggesting I should spend New Year's Eve like a real youth - partying somewhere.

But much like God, whose revelations or proximity often comes with destruction and rage, all my fantasies about my absent father were shattered each time I encountered him. Zizek explains that the Jewish God is a God of "brutal madness - what changes is the believer's stance towards this dimension of the divine: if we get too close to it, then 'the glory of the Lord is like a devouring fire' (Exodus 24:7)."[3] Zizek was foregrounding the Lacanian event of the Real. The Jewish resolution of the destructive, mad and even jealous God is the "dead letter of the sacred book, of the Law to be interpreted"[4] which signifies God's death. Thus, the entire Jewish religious edifice is about keeping Israel distant from the consuming fire that is Jahweh, either as the fire of the burning bush out of which came a voice calling out to Moses, or as the dark cloud of smoke and fire that shook Mount Sinai violently and out of which the Ten Commandments were spoken. Lacan says this "I am that I am" is "a God who introduces himself as an essentially hidden god"[5] or an absent God. Thus, he lives in his death, in the logos – the sacred scripture or law; as hidden – "God, then is dead. Since he is dead, he has always been."[6] So that to be fathered by God really means to be on your own; he is the absent father - the father that one does not have[7].

This means distance or absence of the father is what provides support for the law, its authority and function; the idea that ultimately it is the father's law. The interpretation of the law, however, rests on the children and provides space for some ability on their part to be responsible for themselves. Once the law exists, even God loses the right to act outside it; its interpretation rests with his children[8]. Lacan shows that in a way, this is Jewish Enlightenment or the moment of its self-

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[3] Slavoj Zizek, *Event: A Philosophical Journey Through A Concept* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2014), 123.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII: Bk. 7* (London: Routledge, 2007), 213.

[6] Ibid., 221.

[7] Of course, by father Lacan does not mean the male figure or the patriarchal subject. He means order and its good and evil. This inevitably carries an implicit reproduction of masculinity and its privilege in how order is imagined. The encounter would be radically different if I were a woman encountering an absent father. This is important to keep in mind precisely because the predominant gender in black youth politics we were looking at in the archives is the man and male child, much to the marginalisation of women in general. We shall deal with the question of gender relations and sexual violence in detail in both Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

[8] Zizek provides an example of two rabbis having a disagreement about an interpretation of God's law. One of them then says let us call God to end this once and for all by telling us what he meant. When God appears, the one that disagrees then says to God that he already created everything and he must now leave humans to debate the implications, so indeed God leaves them to get on with it. It is almost as if God responds in laughter, saying his children have defeated him and goes back to hiding. See Slavoj Zizek, *Event: A Philosophical Journey Through A Concept* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2014), 123.

determination. The law is thus a way of living without God where he does not have to be there enforcing and guiding his people. They are on their own.

My father's reappearance at the heart of my enquiry about black youth political violence put me in emotional turmoil. It was a traumatic experience, but I decided to face it and meet with him. The meeting was as enraging as all the other times I met him. How could he, having deserted me all these years, come into my life to mock me, impose himself and still put himself first? It is under the shadow of this troubling question that perhaps the response I gave to him a decade before his re-emergence in the dead letters in the archives of the William Cullen Library is a way to live with him, as an absent/hidden/dead father – as a past. In my response I said, God was the only father I knew, but looking back this carries a much deeper meaning now; that I preferred him to be as absent as the God I went to church to worship.

There is no better way to set the stage for a study on black youth politics in South Africa than through this personal account of my meeting with my own absent father. In many ways, black emancipation is about a confrontation with a past that keeps imposing itself, as in my story of just such an absent father. One navigates through the muddy streams of life with one's head facing backward, hoping that perhaps the father may return, that he would be the salvation to the sufferings of the day. This produces a disintegration that collapses the future into the past; your body is moving forward, but your vision is trapped in the past and thus this past seems like a future. There is no attention given to a today and a tomorrow. If anything, it is so as to return to a past, or that a past may return to you.

Is it possible that colonialism has produced this type of disintegration and distorted our sense of time? Is it the case that the way in which we relate with ourselves as the oppressed may indeed be like this disintegrated figure whose body moves forward whilst the head faces backward? Living that has become a battle with a time we call the past – a slave past, a colonial past, an apartheid past – and the countless attempts at escaping it. To be sure, I lived with a commitment never to bring a child into this world that I would not raise myself. This wound of the absent father moved me into this decision, that I would not 'repeat' or 'retroactively' rewrite this wound on any of my children. Indeed, the very decision to keep my father out of my life at the moment of my encounter with him makes me realise that his absence in fact worked to my advantage, and also serves as the basis to continue to keep him absent. Perhaps living is haunted by this. How, therefore, do we come to understand freedom, emancipation and liberation? Does becoming free require a reconstitution of

our relationship with the idea of time in that we must allow our heads to finally look forward, to have the flexibility of being able to look both forward and backward at the same time?

In his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Walter Benjamin charges us that to "articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it 'the way it was'… In every era an attempt must be made to wrestle tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer, he comes as the subduer of the AntiChrist. Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins."[9]

Benjamin wants to disarticulate our concept of history from its view of the past as homogenous and empty time; he is really disarticulating historical materialism from historicism. "History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now,"[10] says Benjamin. The past, the present and the future are all in the present passing. The next act is already the past, so that only posthumously will we be able to say that it is the cause of the following act. Is the ability to articulate freedom here perhaps not about calling for a future, but to call for it in the name of the past? Is this not the union of the past and the future –and a claim that they are always already oozing into the present? Has our time already been written, our next step? Is it not predetermined in that it already exists in the past? If so, are we free? Or to be more specific, if this is indeed the case, what then is freedom?

There is no doubt that encountering my father in the William Cullen Library archives was an accident, something that could not be anticipated, any more than my reaction to it. An accident or a contingent moment stops time. It impresses an opening or a stoppage in time. However, in the next step, the reaction will be written in the image of both the contingent moment and the past, as they both pass by with the next reaction. If I choose not to interview my father, then my research project could continue as planned without encountering him physically and therefore dealing with all I had to deal with. This act would be consistent with the past, but only through infidelity to the disruption. However, if I choose to go ahead and interview my father, meaning accepting the challenge contingently given by his appearance in the archives, through fidelity to the accident, then I allow a different past to be written. The only thing empty is not time itself, but this gap between the accident and my reaction to it; to do history for Benjamin means to account for what is only

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[9] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* (London: Pimlico, 1999), para. VI.

[10] Ibid., para. XIV.

apparently empty, to show it, or remember it – "to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger"[11]. Thus, he says:

> Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It becomes historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated by a thousand years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the "time of the now" which is shot through with chips of Messianic time.[12]

It has not been an easy thing to write about the colonised in Africa, let alone the black and politically active youth. One must first confront the problem of making knowledge – the problem of how to legitimately arrive at rational knowledge about the life of Africans against an archive that has completely distorted their humanity[13]. This story of the absent father that I presented above bears significance for this problem in three ways: on the one hand, it presents an ethical question with regard to research, asking how legitimate knowledge, particularly about Africa and Africans, can and must be made. We shall return to this in the next section on methodology, but suffice it to say that it is not possible to treat humans with the objectivity that is applied when studying animals in a lab. On the other hand, the story cuts deep into the topic of political subjectivity, which lies at the centre of this work. This very reflexive interrogation of my own subjectivity-in-formation (or my own subjectivity-in-question) in relation to my absent father speaks to the larger problem of how the collective political subjectivity of the black youth is constituted through everyday life and through larger contingent political events within society. Thirdly, the story has something to say about law and order, or the ontology of authority; that is to say, how authority is practiced and practices itself in the everyday lives of both the subjects of subjugation and the subjugators themselves.

As we shall see later in this treatise, the idea of colonial law and colonial domination is based on the basic assumption that the colonised are less than human, incapable of morality and self-conduct.

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[11] My emphasis

[12] Ibid., pt. A.

[13] This anxiety of writing about Africans is best expressed by Achille Mbembe in the introduction to his seminal text *On the Postcolony*. Mbembe also titled his introduction, "Time on the Move" to indicate that writing about Africa is like an exercise in putting time in motion. See Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (London; University of California Press) pages 1-21.

This is why Mbembe calls colonial power "commandment", because at its centre is "an image of the colonised that made of the native the prototype of the *animal*"[14]:

> As an animal, he/she was even totally alien to me. His/her manner of seeing the world, his/her manner of being, was not mine. In him/her, it was impossible to discern any power of transcendence. Encapsulated in himself, he/she was a bundle of drives, but not of *capacities*. In such circumstances the only possible relationship with him/her was one of violence and domination. At the heart of this relationship, the colonised could only be envisaged as the property and *thing* of power."[15]

But the colonised, as an animal, could be sympathised with as you would with an animal, and one could, as with an animal, domesticate the native/colonised. Mbembe adds that in the view of the coloniser, "the native was a great child":

> …the colonised subject was a simple, unambitious creature who liked to be left alone. It was felt that the extraordinary simplicity of his or her existence was evidenced, first of all, by his/her manner of speaking: "no complicated sentence constructions; no tenses, no moods, no persons in verbs; no gender or number in nouns, adjectives; just what is required to express oneself: infinitives, nouns, adverbs, adjectives that are tacked on to one another in simple direct propositions".
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> She/he liked the place where she/he was born… *The native was a great child crushed by long atavism, was incapable of autonomous thought and could make no distinction between vice and virtue.*[16]

In the eyes of the coloniser, the father's absence for the native meant precisely that: he was nonexistent. He did not die; in fact, he was never there. The process of colonisation is therefore not about the native self-constituting through the dead scroll that is law, which is the father's command. Instead, the act of colonising is an imposition of the father. It is an absolute invention of the law in a place where there was none. The colonial father is therefore not "our father" in that we are made in his image. The colonial father is strictly the creator we will never be like; we are not his children

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[14] *Ibid., 26*

[15] Ibid., emphasis in original.

[16] Ibid., 33, my emphasis. Mbembe is quoting a text by E. Ferry, *La France en Afrique,* published in 1905.

in the sense that we are made in his image. We are, rather, his creation, belonging to the realm of things/animals.

Colonisation is an act where the father, who is the coloniser, domesticates the colonised, the animal; he transforms them from the state of being wild animals into animals that can live in proximity to the family, to the human world. It is the technique of conducting the conduct of those who must live with humans, inhabit the same spaces with them. Yet they are not human and presumed unable to be because the colonised is a "great child crushed by long atavism". We shall call this technique *permanent juniorisation*. This means that black people are always already outside the law; they are always already delinquents, like domesticated animals. This is what underscores the image of colonial power that we will be dealing with as we try to understand black youth politics under apartheid.

The idea of the absent father can also underscore what is understood by pre-colonial history, which in essence is figured as non-history – as the absence of the law or a figure of authority that instantiates specific relations in harmony, no matter what those relations are. Is it not true that the account the colonists give of pre-colonial Africa is one of absence of morality, law and order? Africa is, for them, a place of permanent nightmares of brutal violence, and of idleness with no possibility of civilisation. In Fanon's haunting expression, the natives are told that without colonialism or the coloniser, they would degenerate into barbarism:

> The effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive in the native's head the idea that if the settler were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality.[17]

If for the coloniser the father rules by being absent/dead, for the colonised, it is the opposite. The father, who is the coloniser, rules by being present, by being there because without him, things fall back into the wild. Colonisation is that law which is applied to those who are incapable of ruling themselves without the presence of the father. It is how you rule those for whom the father is absent, those who would otherwise degenerate into barbarism because they are incapable of transcending childhood. They are permanently junior and in permanent need of the father's gaze, supervision and tutelage.

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[17] Frantz Fanon, "Wretched of the Earth" (London: Penguin Classics) 2001, 169

At the core of this idea of permanent juniority is precisely the presumed incapacity to grow out of a temporality of youth into a time of self-rule, or a time where we are responsible for ourselves. This is where the identity of the colonised, or the way they relate with themselves, cannot transcend or grow/develop into a temporality in which they rule themselves without the guidance of the other – the coloniser.

On the method

It is impossible to understand the life of black people whose construction within western epistemology is already as non-rational beings, using objective methods that essentially treat society like a laboratory. It is also futile after centuries of black thought to try and prove today that black people are as human as whites. Or to seek after some civilisation that existed in the past thousand years as evidence that blacks have the ability to be civilised. The challenge is less about proving the humanity of blacks, or proving how they are actually the 'same' as whites. Rather, our focus departs from these vantage points, not because they are not important, but they have been exhausted[18]. The point, rather, is to understand how it is that under a system that assaulted the humanity of blacks, subjugating them as things, animals, and as we shall argue, as permanent juniors, they nonetheless attained political subjectivity and freedom.

This treatise, although registered in the politics department of the University of the Witwatersrand, and funded by Institutes[19] generally dominated and associated with sociology and history, will betray traditions of both of these disciplines. It is not a study of the state or of state institutions, but it is a critique of a way of life called colonisation. It is not a study of organisations or movements, but a critique of how people organise themselves or constitute themselves as a collective subject to speak back to power as it subjugates them in the everyday. Nor is it an attempt to state facts, give a timetable and chronology about a people in the sense of the discipline of history or sociology. It is a story about a past of a people and how this past helps us make sense of the ways they confronted themselves and the system that subjugated them.

If anything, in terms of its method and mode of writing, it is an interdisciplinary endeavour par excellence. The reader must therefore extend the horizon of their eye above the disciplines,

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[18] A great example of this kind of enquiry is Cheikh Anta Diop, "The African Origin of Civilisation; Myth or Reality" (USA: Lawrence Hill & Co.) 1974

[19] These are the Society, Work and Development Institute and the History Workshop through South Africa-Swiss Scholarship at Wits University

dismantle themselves from the prejudices and limitations found in each school of thought and be open to experimentation with method. The treatise depends on the full vigour of storytelling, and anchors it in one assumption, namely that when producing human knowledge about human beings we must embrace contingency to the core, and rid ourselves of predictable knowledge systems as if we are studying things – animals, plants, and other entities that are measurable, with a beginning and an end. It does not set out to establish facts about the past; we leave that to historicists. We will simply embrace stories drawn from life history interviews and archives, to flash back at our own era, our today.

Having said that, it is nonetheless important to say something about the tools through which the stories in this work have been collected - particularly their epistemic implication in constructing narratives about black people's experiences under late colonisation. For primary sources, the treatise relies mainly on life history interviews and archives to construct narratives about the past. These are life history interviews with actors who are no longer living in the time under discussion, meaning that it is really their memory of the events and the thoughts they had at the time - and what they make of these thoughts today - that we rely on for a representation of the past.

The power of life history interviews is that they allow us to situate the actors within a rich narrative of their lives as they see it. Analysis drawn from these narratives is much richer as it presents individuals as complex and layered, with multiple stories happening in their lives at the same time, intersecting at different points with others and with the social in general. We therefore see them as not just speaking mouths giving an oral account of the past, but also as existing in a complex way in relation to this past.

The archives used come from a Non-Governmental Organisation (the Peace Corps Archives) whose intention was specifically to construct alternative stories and present alternative voices to those which reflected the official or colonial state perspective. Overall, this does not make either the life history interviews with actors or the Peace Corps archives the more "authentic" historical source. Rather, it means we have been able to use more than one source to flash back at our own time.

In addition, these sources are in no way time machines through which we travel into the past and see it as it truly was. In the end we are, to the best of our ability, *representing* the past.

What we are claiming is not so much that our evidence is more "objective" and less "biased" in portraying what occurred, simply because it is not given by the colonial state records[20]. What makes our narratives significant is not that they best represent the oppressed, excluded and marginalized, and that they do so to the detriment of the narrative of an immoral regime. Late colonisation relied upon the same "modes of evidence" to constitute itself. At times, as Cynthia Kros shows in relation to the constitution of Bantu Education Act[21], its officials interviewed the oppressed in forms of open oral consultations or invited written submissions. These are the very tools of "evidence" we use to construct what may be seen as a counter narrative. Premesh Lalu puts it this way:

> Evidence, whether in the form of the colonial archive or an archive of opposition, does not necessarily provide a window to some prior reality, nor should we only evaluate it in terms of the categories of 'objectivity' and 'bias'.[22]

Thus, as important as it is to produce multiple histories or narratives of one past, what is at stake, at least for this work, is first the choice of grammar, that is, the choice of concepts used to paint and construct meaning from the past. Our point of departure in Chapter Two, for example, is precisely conceived so as to provide a theory of black youth that accounts for the qualifier "black". Secondly, what is at stake for this work is not so much its capacity to fill the gaps in the local or universal histories of township struggles or youth politics in general. Rather, the narratives constructed are explicitly marshalled in the service of a project in critical theory - one that is specifically concerned with black political subjectivity and human freedom.

Although I started this work in 2010, it is now obvious that in the past few years South Africa has witnessed a significant rise of the university student movement that has come to be known as Fees Must Fall (#FeesMustFall). In the spring of the year 2015, many universities across the country were sparked by masses of students protesting against fee increments. These protests not only increased in momentum within the university spaces, they also took to the streets, unannounced, marching to Parliament, to the headquarters of the ruling African National Congress and to the Union Buildings in the capital city - Pretoria. The government responded in two ways; first, they imposed a moratorium on fee increments for the year 2016, and then the state President, Jacob Zuma,

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[20] See Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa; Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009),

[21] Cynthia Kros, *The Seeds of Separate Development: Origins of Bantu Education* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010).

[22] *Idib., 21.*

appointed a commission to determine whether Free Higher Education is possible. The commission was to report back in 2017. Students did not go back to class immediately; their struggle continued to demand that outsourced workers, mainly cleaning, catering, landscaping and security serves, be insourced. In 2016, despite increases in the government loan scheme funding for the poor, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NFSAS), universities and the Department of Higher Education imposed an increment on fees for 2017. Students took to the streets once more, demanding what they referred to as "Free Decolonized Education".

In no way was this work inspired by these developments. It was conceived seven years before them. However, one cannot avoid the reality that as we set to conclude it for examination, many were still observing developments in the Fees Must Fall Movement which had now taken on an explicitly violent turn, with university campuses under constant police occupations set up to suppress the uprising. Hundreds of student activists were arrested and jailed, some denied bail, some suspended from their respective universities, whilst libraries, lecture theatres and other properties in the universities were being torched, including other public property such as police cars and public transport buses. In some instances, shops were looted.

In no way is this work a direct critique and analysis of the rise of the Fees Must Fall student movement and where it might go. Neither can it be counted as a catalyst either for its emergence, or for any of its key activists. Thus, if the culmination of the writing of this work was at the same time or in the same era of the rise of the Fees Must Fall student movement, it must simply be considered a gift of coincidence. Undoubtedly, this study of black youth politics under the transition from apartheid to democratic South Africa will speak to what is unfolding.

Throughout, in each chapter, there is a dynamic interaction between the stories of these anti-apartheid activists and theory or a set of theoretical propositions. What we do is to interrogate theory through story, and interrogate story through theory. It is a treatise on black youth political subjectivity: in the beginning we pose the question around how the youth has been constituted and how they constitute themselves as a distinct political subject category. We do not pretend to give a conclusive answer to this question, but rather provide a preliminary set of proposals that can be taken further. The greatest achievement we can claim though is precisely to have successfully posed the questions.

Chapter Two immediately deals with conceptual work around the question of the black youth, specifically the black youth as a political subject category. It is a radical review of many literatures about the youth, blacks and subject formation. Here we shall argue that no one has provided an adequate conceptual framework for "black youth". It has only thus far been assumed as a subject category. In the process, we establish that there are three significant sites of the production of black youth politics en-masse in the South African context: the first is the schools or university, the second is the liberation movements, and the third is what we call "the streets". These are important sites for the location of the politically conscious black youth collective subject that is seen in South African historiography.

Chapter Three is based on the first site where the politically conscious black youth lived out their political acts as a collective: the school. It looks at the political story of the black youth in a specific high school in Zamdela, Sasolburg. In this chapter we interrogate the Bantu school as a technology of colonial power, focusing on how it was set up, how it functioned, and how political activists emerged and lived out their politics within it. The following chapter (Chapter Four) goes to the "streets" and discusses the crossroads of black youth political activists and black criminal gangs. In this chapter, violence comes to the centre of our discussion, a theme that leads to the chapter that follows. Chapters Four and Five must therefore be read as two sides of one coin - the coin being the "streets". Chapter Five looks at the underground units, the Self-Defence Units of black youth activists in the Vaal. The relationship between the two is about how some black youth activists used violence and turned against society, whilst others did not; we propose a set of explanations to account for these shifts.

The treatise then concludes with a discussion about freedom and time. Much like the story of meeting my father, the concluding chapter is a discussion of what it means to seek freedom under colonisation, here conceptualised as a time that is trapped or a time that traps subjects into perpetual juniority, a time that incapacitates its subjects from any ability to be self-sufficient and move beyond the present into a different, open future. In a way, we echo a sustained reading of black youth politics as about a generational battle with the past; a conflict between the present and the past in which the future is at stake, or at least, a different performance of the present thereof.

In consideration of questions around the black youth and dealing with long term processes of change, the method we identify with most strongly is that of Michel Foucault's "genealogy", precisely because it is an open method. As Foucault indicates, this is about a tracing of concepts,

aesthetics and human pasts – a tracing which gives up on a search for origins as though "things are most precious and essential at birth"[23]. We also move away from a linear notion of time that considers human history as developing in a unitary, linear and progressive way, and one in which its subjects remain consistent and enduring. We look into the past, not to prove that it has passed, and therefore that the future follows, because a present can be layered with countless pasts, presents and futures. Genealogy, says Foucault:

> does not pretend to go back in time to restore unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form to all its vicissitudes. Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is also to discover that truth or being do not lie at the root of what we know and we are, but the exteriority of accidents.[24]

In understanding the black youth political subject category, the nature and place it occupies in the public psyche and that of its actors, we must employ the methodology of deconstructing truths that get embedded in the above formulation of which Foucault is critical. We must look for errors, breaks, discontinuities, and erosions as important moments, and for those accidents that result in what becomes the normal and the valuable of society, a truth and seemingly coherent whole. We will not "confirm [society's] belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities. But the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or point of reference"[25]. "Passions, instincts, cruel subtlety and malice of actors"[26] get probed and highlighted as they manage to reveal hidden and masked forms of identity, of our today, our social, coming out of contingency and accident.

The stories that we have selected all come from a place called the Vaal or the Vaal Triangle, which is a region of areas inclusive of Vereeniging, Vanderbijlpark, and Sasolburg in the South of

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[23] Michel Foucault, "Nietzche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 143.

[24] Ibid., 146.

[25] Ibid., 155.

[26] Ibid.

Johannesburg. It includes Townships like Evaton, Sharpeville, Sebokeng, Boipatong, and Zamdela to mention a few. There has indeed been limited research in this area in most of the disciplines evoked (history, sociology and politics) but studies looking at the phenomenon of black youth politics are even more limited. Yet the Vaal has been politically significant in the history of liberation and black politics in South Africa. Lodge has demonstrated how the Pan African Congress, for instance, was very strong in the Vaal.[27] Glaser specifically foregrounds the Sharpeville uprising as having been centrally organised by the black youth.[28]

Places like Evaton, for instance, are some of the oldest in the area we now call Gauteng. The bus boycotts of the 1940s, which took place prominently in Evaton and Alexandra, appear in Lodge's study of *Black Politics in South Africa Since the 1940s*. The emergence of students' revolts leading broadly to a political collectivism is crucial, as Bundy has demonstrated.[29] Furthermore, in the Vaal in particular, an organisation that represented the interests of school youth – the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) – was the central initiator for what became the 1984 Vaal Uprising, which brought trade unions and social movements into a unified front.[30] Indeed, the Vaal in this sense remains significant despite the fact that it has not received much attention beyond studies of the Sharpeville Massacre and the Vaal Uprising.

To put it in another way, the Vaal was a site of an Event - the Sharpeville Massacre - that ended an era and began one at the same time. If by Event we mean "an occurrence not grounded on sufficient reason", as "something that occurs within the world, but is *a change of the very frame through which we perceive the world and engage in it*"[31], then the Sharpeville massacre was truly eventful because it changed the frame through which the anti-apartheid struggle was perceived and engaged in. After its occurrence, and in its name, the ANC took a decision to take up arms and form a military wing - Umkhonto We Sizwe. It also inaugurated an era in which the apartheid government banned

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[27] Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945* (London ; New York: Longman Group United Kingdom, 1983).

[28] Clive L. Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000).

[29] Colin Bundy, "Street Sociology and Pavement Politics: Aspects of Youth and Student Resistance in Cape Town, 1985," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13, no. 3 (April 1, 1987): 303–30; Colin Bundy, "At War with the Future? Black South African Youth in the 1990s'," in *South Africa: The Political Economy of Transformation*, ed. Stephen Stedman (Boulder. Colorado: Lynn Rienner, 1994).

[30] Tom Lodge et al., *All, Here and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (Cape Town: David Philip, Publishers, 1992).

[31] Zizek, *Event*, 10. Emphasis in original.

political organisations - amongst these were the Pan-Africanist Congress and the African National Congress.[32]

The Vaal is also, in a way, the site of an Event that would culminate in the closure of this period of the banned political organisations and armed struggle: the 1984 Vaal Uprising after which, in 1990, the apartheid regime decided to release all political prisoners and unban anti-apartheid political organisations. The Vaal Uprising was an Event because here students, workers and community members came together marching against the apartheid regime. The movement, which spread across the country, was essentially inaugurated by the event of the Vaal Uprising. Here, the regime responded by imposing two states of emergency that were to last up to 1990. In this period, the anti-apartheid struggle used consumer boycotts and stay-aways from school and work. The frame that changed was precisely the taking over of street order by street committees or units of "people's power" , rendering apartheid authority almost irrelevant. In a way, the Vaal Uprising inaugurated an era of direct attempts by people to run their own political lives. This era was fraught with contradictions, and at times terrors like the vigilante torching of people by community forums in public areas, and often with the participation of rest of the community.[33]

Finally, the Vaal is a site for yet another important Event called the Boipatong Massacre, on the 17th of June 1992. In the Sharpeville Massacre, the state police opened fire at black people and 69 people died[34] with 180 wounded. Unlike the Sharpeville Massacre, the Boipatong massacre was carried out by black people; the hostel dwellers linked to Inkatha who came from KwaMadala Hostel that belonged to the steel company- ISCOR. 45 people were killed and many more maimed. Boipatong was an Event because it was the basis of the collapse of formal negotiations between the apartheid regime and political parties in CODESA (Congress for Democratic South Africa). The ANC withdrew from these negotiations blaming the regime for complicity in the massacre and embarked on mass action to challenge the regime. Essentially, white minority domination - colonisation - ended in South Africa with the most melancholic event – "black on black violence" - the Boipatong Massacre.

What is depressing about this massacre, as an Event, is precisely that it represents a sign of disintegration of the black collective subject as a subject of emancipation: black people were killing

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[32] Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945*, 210.

[33] Tom Lodge et al., *All, Here and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (Cape Town: David Philip, Publishers, 1992).

[34] Ibid., 210.

each other, turning against each other and were seemingly no longer united against the white minority regime.

I grew up and spent my life in the Vaal. My family still lives there. I have crossed paths with some of the characters that we shall explore, and some are directly related to me. Some of the stories I have encountered, and some took place in spaces and places that I have lived in and know intimately. Meeting my father in the archives however was more powerful in exhuming me from a claim of scholastic distance that I had maintained from my objects and subjects of study. In many ways then, this is my story, the story of my people and their confrontation with a past that remains here with us today, in many different layers. This is my relationship with this work; it is also a relationship with myself. Accordingly, the knowledge in this treatise has been produces in dialogues, held in multiple spaces, not always recorded or translated into the English language, and based on who I am to those I spoke to; many of them came to relate with me as simply their *laaitie*[35].

Many of the characters were not happy to put their direct names in this work and others did not even want to be recorded fearing that the stories might be used against them in the future. So, I honoured this where I could. I sat in many social discussions to comprehend these characters beyond the formal interviews. I watched them interact and, on many occasions, unpack the past we are here discussing, in their own languages and idiom, as they either debated the meaning of specific occurrences, laughed about them or used them to insult each other, or even simply to express the melancholic state of politics as they saw it in their present. Some have already passed away, due to illness, others were murdered brutally in shebeen brawls or whilst being mugged by thieves; they never came to see the completion of this work that is based on the many hours, days, and at times months, I spent interacting with them.

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[35] This means younger brother

experienced in my work in the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). Professor Worby is the real reason I managed to re-dedicate myself to finish the whole work whilst at the same time being involved in the founding political activities of the EFF and being a member of Parliament of South Africa. The transition from being a full-time student to being active in politics of this magnitude needed a different form of academic supervision which he modelled and saw through - he provided this and for that I am eternally grateful.

In addition, I am indebted to the critical intellectual input, support and generosity of Shireen Ally, Peter Hudson and Lwazi Lushaba who also read my work and provided critical commentary I would have never, on my own, realised. In a way, Shireen Ally and Peter Hudson are the two individuals from whom I found my identity in engaging complex theory. Without the friendships of Azola Mbebe, Vuyani Pambo, Naadira Munshi, Komnas Poriazis, James Pendlebury, Windsor Leroke, Nicholas Dieltiens, Ahmed Veriava, Prishani Naidoo and the late Folathela Botipe, the navigation through the PhD years is unthinkable; they have provided intellectual, emotional and material support every time I needed it. It is in friendship with Ahmed and Prishani that I became comfortable with doing radical political activism and still confidently claim this very activism as intellectual and worthy of an academic identification. To the SWOP family, Professors Von Holdt, Bezuidenhout, Cock, Webster (and his wife Luli Callinicos) and all the fellows of my generation, Tatenda, Chrispen, Asanda, Katharine and Themba, including the staff, Shameen, Mondli - thank you for always being the family and collective committed absolutely to the development of all. I truly wish SWOP well and an even greater success in a rapidly transforming academy.

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I have uncharacteristically put these acknowledgements as part of the introduction to this treatise because of the very personal nature of this very introduction. These names and people were very

central in how I came to frame and finally bring this work into completion - they belong, not outside of the texture of the work itself, but right within it.

Chapter 2

Permanent Juniority

Ground Notes on the Study of Black Youth Politics

Introduction

What does it mean to be youth, and a black youth activist, in the colony? In the history of South African politics the black youth emerge as a political category which has gained itself a sustained and distinct voice in the political life of society. Indeed, one of the imperative political developments coming out of the liberation struggle is not just a politically conscious black youth – young people who are politically conscious - but a political consciousness or identity that has been constituted as a distinct block in the political spectrum.

There are three broad developments that can be studied under the umbrella of 'black youth politics'. Firstly, masses of young people are politicised or brought into political consciousness, activity and struggle. Here, the young are politically active but do not organise as 'the youth'; meaning they are young, but do not speak, act and believe themselves to be representing or entering politics on the basis of a political consciousness as the youth. Secondly, young people enter politics as young people, that is, they are just not politicised, but carry and retain a political consciousness of their identity as 'the youth' – a political subject category – here there is a sense also of representing, speaking and acting as and for 'the youth'.

In the first instance, they may have a social consciousness as 'youth', meaning they are aware that they are youth or fall under such a social classification but do not come into political activism as such per se. Whereas in the second instance this social identity appears or is evoked as a political category for itself - a political consciousness not merely concerned and shaped by conditions of generational continuity but one that goes beyond. The third development is that this subject category has gained a political life of its own and there is a mode of political organising that constitutes youth wings or leagues in political or socio-political formations.

There is no doubt that the liberation struggle in South Africa cannot be understood without paying equal attention to the black youth, and in particular black youth politics. Some of the most defining moments that have managed to wake the black communities from political apathy have been with the youth at the centre. The radicalisation of the African National Congress and transformation of it into a mass movement is attributed to the birth of the ANC Youth League in 1944. The Pan-

Africanist Movement never had a youth wing because it was understood to be dominated by the youth, in fact, as Lodge demonstrates, the Sharpeville 1960 pass boycott activities that led to the infamous massacre were led by the black youth.[36] There is also no doubt that politics were returned into black communities after the banning of political parties in 1960, by the black youth and student movements from the South African Student Organisation of Steven Biko to the 1976 Soweto Uprising. This is the case up to the 1980s; the black youth was central to the 1984 Vaal Uprising and if apartheid lost the ability to order the lives of the 'natives', it battled mostly with the politicised black youth both in the streets and in the schools.[37]

However, we must ask, what constitutes 'black youth' as a political subject-category and what is the nature of its politics in South Africa? In this chapter, instead of a traditional mode of doing a literature review, we shall schematise and critique existing theoretical approaches to 'youth'. We will then move on to attach to this schematisation a critique of the existing historiography and anthropology of black youth politics in South Africa. We shall show their failure to account in a theory of black youth politics for the 'black' in 'black youth politics', and its relationship to colonial modes of racialised subject construction, as well as the failure to account for youth as a subject category in which there is a theorisation of the ontology of being. We will conclude by provisionally elucidating a set of alternative historico-philosophical propositions to reorient the analysis of black youth politics that accounts for its qualifier 'black'. These propositions are around the theorisation of permanent juniority - a regime of racial subjugation based on a pedagogy of offence and infrastructural violence that makes race as a technique of governance about the distribution of risk, the ultimate of which is death[38].

There is a large body of work concerned with what the youth is as a social category. Most of the existing theoretical frameworks that speak to this question are developed within Euro-American experiences. However, working in South Africa, and perhaps other parts of the global South, the effort to fit the youth into pre-existing sociological frameworks developed in different socio-

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36 Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945* (London ; New York: Longman Group United Kingdom, 1983); Clive L. Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000); Jonathan Hyslop, "State Education Policy and the Social Reproduction of the Urban African Working Class: The Case of the Southern Transvaal 1955–1976," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 446–476.

37 Shaun Johnson, "'The Soldiers of Luthuli': Youth in the Politics of Resistance in South Africa," in *South Africa: No Turning Back* (Springer, 1988), 94–152, http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-349-19499-5_3; Tom Lodge et al., *All, Here and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (Cape Town: David Philip, Publishers, 1992); Ari Sitas, "The Making of the 'comrades' Movement in Natal, 1985–91," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 3 (1992): 629–641; Clive Glaser, "'We Must Infiltrate the Tsotsis': School Politics and Youth Gangs in Soweto, 1968–1976," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998): 301–323.

38 This formulation, as we shall see, is based on the work of Mbembe on Necropolitics, see Mbembe, Achille. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (December 21, 2003): 11–40. doi:10.1215/08992363-15-1-11.

economic contexts seems to fall short. This is more so in particular when taking race as a colonial governmental object of power into cognisance. That is, when we ask what is the theoretical and analytical status of the qualifier "black" in the social category "black youth"?

There are three strands in the South African historiography and anthropology of thought on black youth politics. We shall map them using key texts. The first one conceives of youth as a 'social generation' following Karl Mannheim. Here we shall use Colin Bundy's study of the 1984 Cape Town student uprising[39]. The second paradigm belonging more in anthropology consists of those who conceive of youth as a 'social shifter'. This paradigm, although developed through post-colonial theory, is not dominantly used in South African studies; it forms the conceptual framework of the now influential collection on youth and children in Africa, *Makers and Breakers*[40] and we will use Deborah Durham to speak to it. We then proceed to the third conception of youth belonging to the South African historiography where the black youth is thought of as non-existent or a façade for racial prejudicial public discourse. This perspective attained influence in the early 1990s, and we shall use Jeremy Seekings' work on the 'lost generation' to speak to it[41].

Our aim is to argue for a deepening of the conception of the black youth which takes colonial governmental subjugation into cognisance. In so doing, we bring the tradition of Parsons and Eisenstaedt, using the work of Phil Cohen and insights by Philip Mizen, to highlight the basic composites of what constitutes the modern category of the youth[42]. Then, using Fanon, Mbembe and Monahwana, we propose a conception of the black youth that is based on the ontology of 'subjects' of colonial subjugation and colonial governmental rationality. We shall call this conception of blackness a *state of permanent juniority*; here the black youth are a population 'waiting to wait' as a permanent state of being. That is to say an age category within the black population being made and subjected to permanent juniorisation.

We shall propose further to say that the black youth political rebellion, as seen within South African historiography, may stem from an anxiety – a vulnerability to plenitude – which is rooted in the heightened desire for full identity where blackness is about a state of *incompleteness*. This *vulnerability to plenitude* is partly responsible for a politics that has characterised this category and that the historians

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39 Colin Bundy, "Street Sociology and Pavement Politics: Aspects of Youth and Student Resistance in Cape Town, 1985," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13, no. 3 (April 1, 1987)

40 Filip de Boeck and Alcinda Honwana, eds., *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa* (Dakar, Senegal: Africa World Press, 2005).

41 See Jeremy Seekings, *Heroes or Villains?: Youth Politics in the 1980s* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993).

42 Phil Cohen, *Rethinking the Youth Question* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999)

have merely labelled as "impulsive", "incoherent" and "immature". Thus, we could say that the black adult is supposed to be the subject who has come to terms with juniorisation – a waiting to be that is itself permanent being.

Youth as generation: Mannheim in South Africa

The conception of youth as social generation is influenced by Karl Mannheim, and it is employed by others in sociology, anthropology and social history. Mannheim saw youth not as a "biological given or demographic category determined by date of birth"[43], but rather as a social construct; meaning youth, as a concept, refers to the question of a socially-defined generation as opposed to the concept of adolescence – which is based on puberty and therefore grounded in the realm of the biological and psychological. Mannheim begins his work by delineating "generation as social phenomenon" and as belonging to "formal sociology" in terms of its basic composition.[44] He argues that the "sociological problem of generation begins at that point where the sociological relevance of biological factors is discovered".[45]

For him generations are social groups belonging to a common historic movement or milieu, where each individual in an age cohort is formed by the same historic conjuncture. He perceives of generations as possessing "shared cultural symbolisms"[46]. He insists on a law of generational conflict in which the new members of society or social groups define their distinct identity and difference which disrupts the older members. The youth for him is part of the *generational type*, who experience "fresh contact"[47] with existing cultural and structural conditions. He says:

> The continuous emergence of new human beings certainly results in some loss of accumulated cultural possessions; but, on the other hand, it alone makes fresh selection possible when it becomes necessary; it facilitates re-evaluation of our inventory and teaches us both to forget that which is no longer useful and covet that which has yet to be won.[48]

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[43] Phil Cohen, *Rethinking the Youth Question* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 185.

[44] Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (Routledge & K. Paul, 1952), 287.

[45] Cohen, *Rethinking the Youth Question*, 291.

[46] Ibid., 185.

[47] Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, 294.

[48] Ibid.

As a social generation, "its members do not merely co-exist in time and space"[49]; they must "participate in the common destiny of that historical and social unit".[50]

Others have already spoken to the universalism within this conception of social change and formation,[51] arguing that the idea that new human beings will bring about changes in societal cultures and structures is not a given. Mannheim universalises the notion of generation with this idea of a law and his conception of history imagines a progressive development of human society.[52] Moreover, Mannheim does not explain the historical specificity of the emergence of the youth as a social group in capitalist Europe, that indeed there is an emergence of a new age-based social formation with increasing industrialisation in Europe. It seems that the strength of Mannheim is not that he explained the making and emergence of modern youth, but the idea of youth being a social generation; that is the way in which society enables the continuity of its cultural and social inventory. That the epistemic life of the human species is located in its ability to transfer and reproduce itself from age to age, and thus generation to generation. Hence, the youth is espoused as a generational type who experience new and fresh contact with society's shared cultural symbols. His claim that 'youth' also enables the 'fresh selection' of cultural attributes that make adaptation to new circumstances possible also reveals him to be a functionalist.

However, what is critical here is that it is through Mannheim that we come to understand youth as something to do with the social meaning of time - an epoch, an age, a temporality. Generations of youth do not take shape continuously, but rather in a way that is forced or catalysed by events that are constitutive of a self-identified 'generation' of youth, who in a sense discover that they are "living in a specific time together" because of that catalytic event. This is the reason why Colin Bundy and others in South Africa come to appreciate Mannheim's conception in explaining 'youth based resistance' in South Africa in the 1980s.

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[49] Colin Bundy, "Street Sociology and Pavement Politics: Aspects of Youth and Student Resistance in Cape Town, 1985," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13, no. 3 (April 1, 1987): 305.

[50] Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, 303.

[51] Cohen, *Rethinking the Youth Question*.

[52] Ibid.; Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. 2: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath*, 5th Rev ed. edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

Bundy is looking at the strained schooling system that was beginning to feel the weight of millions of people who needed to be in school in the 1980s[53], in addition to the appalling conditions that characterised the black schooling system itself. Overcrowding, shortage of textbooks, corporal punishment and the demand for Student Representative Councils were to dominate the agenda of these schools' student politics for many years.[54] These conditions, coupled with unemployment and political repression, brought together the black youth into a common experience, such that common meanings increasingly developed. These common meanings also developed through and in resistance.

Bundy, looking specifically at youth politics in 1985 in Cape Town, argues that three main strengths and achievements can be identified. Firstly, students achieved organisational unity across schools in different areas. Secondly, the structures built by students were democratic in character, and political activities like boycotts were democratically maintained throughout their occurrence. Thirdly, "students' political awareness had matured and deepened in several respects".[55] He says:

> They... learned that liberation does not lie with one or two leaders, but can only be achieved through long, hard struggles, led by the working class. They...linked struggles over education with broader political struggles.[56]

He says, quoting one of their pamphlets: "We realise that education can either be an instrument of capitalist domination or of liberation. We must turn our schools into centres of liberation". [57] Bundy insists that these youths sought unity "across generational lines – between students and their parents"; [58] beyond this, he notes their level of awareness: "the maturing recognition... of an objective necessity for an alliance with an organised working class". [59] This idea, (although it was not achieved fully in Cape Town, also perhaps complicated by factors like the closing of schools or that

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[53] For a rich account of the crisis of black education in South Africa see Jonathan Hyslop, *Social Conflicts over African Education in South Africa from the 1940s to 1976*, PhD. Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg, 1990); Hyslop, 'A Destruction Coming in': Bantu Education as Response to Social Crisis', in Philip Bonner, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel, eds., *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993).

[54] Bundy, "Street Sociology and Pavement Politics."

[55] Ibid., 328.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

school populations continuously change) bears witness to the depth of political sophistication these students possessed. However, in sum, concludes Bundy, youth politics carries a dualism:

> On one hand, it is characteristically militant and dynamic; on the other hand, by its nature it is short on theoretical sophistication and experience... in time of crisis [it] is a hybrid of precocity and immaturity.[60]

The concept of social generation, and certainly as applied by Bundy in the South African context is oblivious to the colonial encounter. Bundy does not consider race and its sociological relevance to how the black youth is made and in turn resists domination and repression from generation to generation. The economic and class nuance is overly emphasised above the racial-colonial-apartheid interpellation of natives as black subjects in the experience. The youth's encounter with apartheid and its oppressive multiple technologies (like education, influx control and job reservation systems) as 'black people' is not considered, and one is left to conclude that the only fight taking place is that of a class stratified social generation faced with the schooling system and related crisis. This is a common mistake amongst the historical revisionists of the 1980s and 1990s whose entire project seemingly proceeded from doing history from below and telling the stories, as it were, of the subalterns.

However, by discarding race, Bundy and revisionists often fall into sociological reductionism of a class materialist type, where the social meaning of bodies (race, age, and gender) is treated as epiphenomenal. Here we do not see the body, as we shall later explore it, as an integral part of the object of analysis to provide explanations of social phenomena, particularly in contexts where such has been central to social formation in the colony. Therefore, it seems fair to ask Bundy's reading of black youth politics to begin with a much more sophisticated theory of the making of the black youth. Although important in its explanatory power, any consideration of youth as a socially constructed generation in South Africa needs to confront or factor in the impact of colonisation. This allows us a reading of politics (resistance to power or the struggle for political freedom) as a politics of black people that is informed by this fact of them being colonised, being oppressed because of the colour of their skin.

Youth as a "Social Shifter": *Post-Modern and Post-Colonial Conceptions of Youth*

The second conception of youth can be categorised as falling within the post-modernist perspective, and is contextually engineered to respond to the colonial experience. For this line of thinking, youth should not be considered as a universal category at all; instead we have to think of it "less as a

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[60] Ibid., 330.

specific age group, or cohort, but as a 'social shifter'".[61] This is borrowed from linguistics and refers to a term that does not work as an "absolute referentiality to a fixed context, but one that relates the speaker to a relational, or indexical, context". [62] That is to say, youth is a relational term that works to describe more of a relationship to a context. Thus it is not an objective condition, or if it be a condition, then it is a relational one, one that is not fixed. In a sense, "shifters work metalinguistically, drawing attention to specific relations within a structure of relations, to the structure itself" [63].

However, it seems to me that it is not sufficient to just simply say 'youth' refers to relations to a context. What is the context? Who is relating to it? The context for instance might be schooling, drugs, unemployment and this affects a specific subject. But who are these *subjects*? The social shifter tradition, beyond emphasising the specificity of contextual conjecture, has not told us *who the youth are*. In fact it persuades us just to accept the fluidity of identity; that their age differs everywhere, their identities differ and that gender and sexuality also complicates the ability to speak coherently about the youth groups. But is it indeed the case that we cannot determine the minimum basic composite of this label that everyone uses everywhere?

Another weakness of the social shifter tradition is that it deals with youth without probing the organisation of society through age, particularly in not examining sufficiently how such organisation finds expression with the advent of colonial and capitalist modernity. In addition, Durham leaves out the colonial reality in the continent, which affects rites of passage differently to how these rites are seen in the West. Most importantly, she neglects the question of race and colonial domination with the emergence of the modern youth in the continent. In contrast, we must be able to properly emphasise the violence of capitalism, patriarchy and colonial modernity in the changing scene of African life.

In other words, the social shifter formulation limits our ability to highlight the structural violence inherent in the formation of collective subjects. Workers resist conditions of oppression within a collective subject category that power itself has formulated – that of workers. This is the same with youth. That the experiences of workers differ in Europe and colonised Africa does not make "waged-labour" a social shifter, it just means that we look at differences in how it emerges, shaped and articulated with other social forces at play, such as racism and patriarchy. Therefore,

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[61] Deborah Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa: Introduction to Parts 1 and 2," *Anthropological Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2000): 116.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

solidification of the time between adulthood and childhood through schooling, labour law, and juvenile penitentiaries is critical for our investigation of the making of the 'youth'; and to say this is not to attribute any universality of experience as much as it is to note a historic conjunctural development that has common technologies occurring in specific historical periods. In fact the social shifter paradigm uses youth precisely to account for those lives that are not children, and are also not adult.

Locating the Youth in the History of Modernity

This is where the Parsonian conception and account of youth is stronger in that it is historicised. For Parsons and Eisenstaedt, the youth is a result of modern capitalist industrialisation. "In traditional societies, the family fulfils all the vital functions of reproduction – economic, biological and cultural. It unites education, material production and primary health care in a single social system".[64] However in modern industrial societies, this is no longer the case. The family has been divested of its educational and occupational functions, and these are now organised on a quite different basis, unlike family roles which regulate parent/child interaction. Occupational roles, unlike family roles, are specialised rather than diffused, instrumental rather than expressive, allocated on the basis of achievement rather than ascription, and their performance is judged by universalistic rather than 'particularistic' criteria.[65]

Parsons suggests that the emergence of capitalist modernity, with its rearrangement of life, (individuals, family and society broadly) resulted in the need for extended compulsory schooling. Mass modern schooling for him is not only due to needs of capitalist industrialisation, but also changes in how child care is conceived. The result is a separation of "young people from the world of the family and segregating them from the adult world of work and politics, whilst simultaneously organising them into age grade hierarchies".[66] This "separation, segregation and organisation of society strictly on age hierarchies", results in an age of exemption, thus the emergence of youth cultures\groups which facilitate a sense of emotional solidarity whilst simultaneously "enabling

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[64] Cohen, *Rethinking the Youth Question*, 186.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

young people to master the competitive and instrumental techniques required of adults in the workplace"[67].

The reality is that this account is not one of modernity per se, but of white society under modernity. It is an account of how modernity affected white society. It should be obvious that an account of the rise of industrial capitalism and its implications must equally consider how industrial capitalism is constituted by, and constitutive of, both the colony and the plantation. In all accounts of the rise of this era, including the preceding era of mercantilism, the implications of colonies and plantation slavery for the rise of industrial capitalism are held to be significant.[68] Polanyi gives 1834 as a birthdate for industrial capitalism as a social system and its birthplace as Europe, or to be specific, England.[69] But its genesis must be sought in the conjuncture of much earlier developments, such as the Protestant Reformation and the inauguration of plantation slavery. Interestingly, we can date Max Weber's account of the Reformation and the rise of the Protestant faith to the year 1517, when Martin Luther posted his "Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences". It so happens that 1517 is also the year in which was launched, according to C.L.R. James, "the American slave-trade and slavery."[70] In other words, the inauguration of the conquest of Africa and the Americas for the provision of slaves and other natural resources to Europeans belongs to this same era – the 1500s - when a radical transformation in religious institutions provided fertile ground for the emergence of capitalist dispositions and practices in Europe. Thus, the very attempt to imagine a "great transformation", to use Karl Polanyi's term, in 19th century Europe, *without* taking into account the constitutive role of colonialism and slavery in the rise of industrial capitalism, can serve to sustain conceptions of European supremacy and anti-black racism. The 'modern' is here imagined simply as a break from the 'traditional', where plantation slavery is

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67 Ibid. Cohen argues that this Parsonian take on youth is also rooted in social Darwinian theory, that assumes an evolution from primitivism to modernity. However, Parsons and Eisenstaedt use "traditional societies" to denote societies that are non-industrialised, as opposed to those that are "moving forward". That is to say, societies that are non-industrialised do not necessarily have to become industrialised, although it may be the case that the hailing of capitalist industrialisation as the most efficient of systems, as Weber and most modernists do, might be seen as attributing inferiority to other kinds of societies. In addition, Cohen thinks using Parson's framework would have us see "black youth cultures… not as a response to white racism, but as products of a disjunction between the traditional value orientation of their families, and the 'modern value of industrialism'… which they encounter in white society" (Ibid, 187). That this concept does not carry explanatory power in other contexts is not due to social Darwinism per se, but to the fact that it was posited to have a universalising experience as a product of modernity. See for instance Jean and John Comaroff, Reflections on Youth, From the Past to the Postcolony. In Filip de Boeck and Alcinda Honwana, eds., *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa* (Dakar, Senegal: Africa World Press, 2005)

68 As spelled out so clearly by Eric Williams. See his *Capitalism and Slavery*, 1st edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

69 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (New York: Rinehart, 1944), 87.

70 C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2 edition (New York: Vintage, 1989), 3.

considered irrelevant or a deviation from the development of modernity, and colonialism is thought of as having been a way of layering modern social forms onto "traditional" societies. But Europe was not leaving traditional society behind, moving forward into modernity, so much as it simply imposed this imagined form of living dubbed "traditional" onto colonies and even onto slave communities.

The rise of the black youth, this social category belonging to a prolonged time between childhood and adulthood, is constitutive of plantation and colonial communities to whom modernity is in fact denied. It is no coincidence that Ann Stoler observed how in European discourses on "children's sexuality and the power relations generated" by it, or what Foucault calls "the pedagogization of children's sexuality", the colony and the plantation played a central role. She writes:

> …discourses on children's sexuality found symptomatic resonance in the colonies. But in this force field, questions of racial contagion were more explicitly and centrally framed. These discourses were animated by fears that turned less on children touching their own bodies than on their relationship to those bodies that should not touch them… One of the most common observations about the racial discourse of colonialism is the patriarchal, protective familial metaphors in which it was cast. Students of colonial discourses in Africa, Asia, and the Americas have often commented on a common thread: namely, that racialised Others invariably have been compared and equated with children, a representation that conveniently provided a moral justification for imperial policies of tutelage, discipline and specific paternalistic and maternalistic strategies of custodial control. But this equation of children and primitive, of children and colonised savage was not operative in overtly racist, colonial discourse alone. If we look to the child care manuals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the same equation is present, but the other way around. Children are invariably othered in ways that compare them to lower-order beings, they are animal-like, lack civility, discipline, and sexual restraint; their instincts are base, they are too close to nature, they are, like radicalised others, not fully human beings.[71]

In his discussion of black slavery in the Cape Colony, Robert Shell also explains how it is in the metaphor of the family that the representation of black slaves as perpetual children takes root.[72] Slaves are regarded as children of the slave owner who never grow up, who never become adults.

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[71] Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Duke University Press, 1995). 149

[72] Robert C.-H. Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1994), 222–27.

Perhaps the very rearing of white children is posited in the othering of the black slaves; that they, unlike black slaves, must develop beyond what is taken to characterise childhood - blackness.

We shall return to the implications of how the self-imagination of the West is constitutive of anti-black racism. Suffice it to say that it is impossible to account for "modernity" without also explaining how it is in cohabitation with, and constitutive of, slavery and colonialism. This allows us to consider, for instance, how the transatlantic slavery had a radical effect on the social organisation of "youth", kinship and family in large parts of Africa. Unless we do so or acknowledge this reality, we fall into this Parsonian trap of seeing Africa as a timeless realm of "traditional", "primitive", "pre-modern" or even "non-modern" societies.

The problem with Parsons and Eisenstaedt is precisely their attempt to attribute a universal experience to an age cohort. Indeed, to say "youth", should not be understood to be talking about an experience *per se*, but a condition, the experience of which may be different everywhere. We can still salvage what remains useful from their work by retaining their basic claim, which is that with modernity we see the emergence of an age-cohort – "youth" – that comes about due to institutions of professionalization necessitated by the needs of industrial capitalism and a new idea of child care. Indeed, this time between childhood and adulthood need not be prolonged; rather it is a necessary but not sufficient condition of industrial modernity. It is also formative of a social generation, as people in it can be combined by overarching, broader occurrences and symbolisms in a specific age. This means that this cohort can have distinct experiences as a distinct group. It is this time, this prolonging of time between adulthood and childhood, that we are concerned with and which has come to be identified with capitalist modernity and its societies.

We do not have to think of youth as not being a universal condition to account for experiences in colonised or non-colonised Africa. What may be at play is how the industrial modern time of waiting/preparation is brought into stagnation and challenged by developments outside Euro-American industrial societies. Indeed, problems brought by high levels of unemployment to males wanting to marry or establish families observed through rituals like the payment of *lobola* in South Africa could show industrial modernity's failure or refusal to create sustainable continuity of life for the colonised.

Taken this way, a more fundamental philosophical question arises: what metaphysics of "being" is at work here? Is this a being of the version of history with a primitive beginning and a modern end, or of a version of production where the adult is a finished product? These questions are important as it seems that the question of who the youth are lies at the heart of the question of modern western

being (or of "man" in Enlightenment discourse). On the one hand, processes of colonisation, gerontocracy and patriarchy specifically elucidate this factor. On the other, the above theoretical formulations assume "youth" to be a neutral entity with potential that can be negative or positive. By not questioning the theoretical status of the term, the above theoretical formulations fall into the trap of simply imposing the category and wanting to produce a "better youth" out of people. In addition, the underlying "being" that is interrogated here is one with an "end" in the sense of a finished product, an adult, with a measurable destiny of being.

Philip Mizen, for instance, locates youth in the way the modern state organises age for social order, but also identifies how this is critical for the social relations of production, thus suggesting how it must be understood in relation to other age categories such as child and adult. He wants to deepen the very dominant narrative that is trapped, because of plural social constructions of the meaning of youth, in understanding it simply as "a process of growing up".[73] Going beyond this conception we need to critically consider the role of the capitalist nation state in managing populations and production relations, and he insists that this will result in highlighting the political importance of youth – by showing relations between age, youth, the state and capitalism.

Mizen sees and acknowledges that his insistence to bring age to the centre of understanding "youth" is consistent particularly with the structural-functionalism of Parsons and Eisenstaedt in insisting on attributing divisions of age to youth, but he argues that Parsons and Eisenstaedt "were mistaken to attribute their existence [the divisions of age] to the power of adults over children".[74]

This is very crucial as there are real historical occurrences that help us to speak of modernity: industrialisation, the scientific revolution, and the emergence of the class society, as well as the modern nation state. For those working in Africa, the question of modern youth ought to be considered in light of slavery and colonialism as specific modernising occurrences. It would seem to me that what we have here is the importance of taking "youth" as a problematic condition of modern capitalist and nation-state developments. Through this paradigm a history of the youth is possible in the continent, as an account of how the age cohort emerges, and under what specific conditions.

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[73] Phillip Mizen, "Putting the Politics Back into Youth Studies: Keynesianism, Monetarism and the Changing State of Youth," *Journal of Youth Studies* 5, no. 1 (March 1, 2002): 5–20.

[74] Ibid., 11.

One can agree that "youth" is not a "universal constant"[75] as Mitterauer suggests, or that it is a "social shifter" as per Deborah Durham's formulations, both of which simply are meant to indicate that the way "youth" is practiced and experienced differs from one place to the other, and also that it is not trans-historical, but specific to European capitalist modernity. Conceptions of what age time-line defines "youth" can differ depending on variations in different social meanings of age (for example the age of marriage in some social contexts can be immediately after puberty, whereas in others it can be after university and when "after varsity" is also inconsistent), but that there is this time between childhood and adulthood conceived as "youth" is not in dispute.

This means if we consider youth as a condition, not as a "constant", then we can certainly say it is there in all industrial capitalist, modern-nation state situations as these necessitate the prolonging of schooling, professionalization, skilling as ways also of population control. This is why one can speak of an age cohort (made through schools, universities, juvenile penitentiary) in society excluded/ included/forced into a state of "*temporal exemption"*. Today, in most parts of the capitalist industrialised modern-nation states, schooling is compulsory and is organised through age hierarchies; entrance to the labour market starts at a specific age, thus we can identify basic technologies of inventing this exemption, enforcing and inculcating it in every individual; schools, juvenile penitentiary facilities, universities, health institutions and so on, where the attempts are to capture a specific age group for moulding, preparation into whatever is conceived as a better being/ finished product/citizen – a modern subject (the adult).

This is not to avoid the former question of a process of growing up or to dismiss the fluidity of identity formation, but the suggestion at this stage is to avoid examining it in isolation or to think of it as a question that does not include what, following Mbembe, might be called "the materiality of being".[76] Indeed Mbembe's observation can be applied to the 'social shifter' traditions when he says:

> Concerned with explaining either single and unrepeatable occurrences or symbolic representations, recent historiography, anthropology, and feminist criticism inspired by Foucault, neo-Gramscian paradigms or post-structuralism problematise everything in terms of how identities are "invented", "hybrid", "fluid" and "negotiated". On the pretext of avoiding single-factor explanations of domination, these disciplines have reduced the complex phenomena of the state and power to "discourses" and "representations", forgetting that discourses and representations have materiality. The rediscovery of the

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[75] Michael Mitterauer, *A History of Youth*, trans. Graeme Dunphy (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Pub, 1992).

[76] Achille Mbembé, *On the Postcolony* (University of California Press, 2001), 5.

> subaltern subject and the stress on his/her inventiveness have taken the form of an endless invocation of the notions of "hegemony", "moral economy", "agency", and "resistance".[77]

In short, but astute, ways Mbembe has here captured the danger of "late modern criticism", which as Mizen has indicated, has treated the youth as merely "a process of growing up" but also insisted on its being a hybrid identity without paying attention to the materiality that constructs it. Mbembe insists that for these scholars "everything has become 'network', and no one asks anymore about the market and capitalism as institutions both contingent and violent".[78]

Therefore, the project of studying youth –as the question of being- must take racial domination based on the logics of capitalism, the nation-state and how they come together to construct regimes and subjects into consideration. Race as a technology of power in slave and colonial conditions is therefore important for our considerations of the social formation of youth in Africa and under trans-Atlantic slavery.

In South Africa it was primarily, if not only, Seekings who tried to think about this question of the youth and race. Others did not seek to understand the race or racialised being of the youth they were writing about, observing or studying (in other words, their blackness); instead race was assumed or treated as epiphenomenal. This is not to discount the cutting edge insights they did make about the cohort, but only to suggest that if we read them against their aims and focal points, a different interpretation of power, politics and people is possible.

There is no Youth, but what about Race? *Misplaced perceptions, misplaced interpretations*

Seekings does not necessarily examine the literature on the youth question to arrive at his discussion of its politics and identity. He specifically dismisses the existence of such a category as earlier indicated; in fact for him a politics as "youth politics" is non-existent. The youth "[does] not form a conceptually comparative collective group"[79] as does, say, the working class, whom he thinks have a distinct political behaviour as "a discrete category" – "albeit hardly homogeneous". Seekings argues that the "youth" in South Africa or such a category as used in the South African vocabulary refers to "two stereotypical views"; one is apocalyptic, thinking of the youth as "essentially hostile, identifying the youth with violence and destruction." The other is youth as liberatory, which "is

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid., 6.

[79] Jeremy Seekings, *Heroes or Villains?: Youth Politics in the 1980s* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993).

broadly sympathetic, seeing the youth as the 'comrades' or 'young lions' who selflessly struggled for liberation and democracy".[80]

Thus, he is referring to the black youth and recognises that the literature and public discourse when using the category is referring to a politicised young black subject. He insists that the "category of youth has rarely been used in political discourses" and it came to refer to the "unidentified young people who engaged in morally questionable forms of direct action". It was "reconstructed in the aftermath of, and largely because of, the 1976-77 uprisings".[81]

Thus, for Seekings, the 'youth' are the politicised young black people. In his delineation of the "apocalyptic view of youth", he also notes the relationship between conceptions of youth and racism. He argues that "it combines the racist imageries of African 'idleness' and savagery (feared by white South Africans for so long) with the western tradition of urban male criminality and the associated fear of generational rebellion"[82]. He adds that for those holding the apocalyptic view, 'youth' constitute a group of "deviant, uneducated, irresponsible and uncontrolled" people; to say 'youth' is equal to saying "destructiveness, immaturity, impulsiveness and even susceptibility… to manipulation" and such an image results in "stigmatisation of identity, criminalisation of protest and legitimation of repression". He insists that black youth - and for him these are merely called 'youth' - "has become synonymous with savagery".[83]

Seekings is wrong to attribute the emergence of youth politics to the post 1976 moment. The African National Congress Youth League (ANC YL) was constituted in 1944. However, Seekings' attempt to tackle the question is important as it echoes a key tradition of intellectual attitude in South Africa about race. The point of his book is to show the slide, almost like a Freudian slip, between black and youth in the hegemonic political discourse especially amongst the ruling elite at the time. Both concepts represented an "unfinished product", hence they could be used interchangeably. But Seekings is quick to dismiss this as merely an attitudinal problem of those

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[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid

[83] Seekings, *Heroes or Villains?*, 5.

involved in the discourse where the black youth came to be known primarily as "the lost generation"[84].

Racial categories are for him a reflection of attitude, a false perception that European people have, where they think of natives as innately inferior; and every time Europeans seek to explain what natives are doing, they fall into this prejudice – into notions for instance like "the lost generation". If this were limited to attitude it could easily be dismissed as false, through another book or reference to other works that have arrived at a different conclusion. However, the difference is when a system of power is then constructed on the basis of this prejudice, where subjects of colonial domination are interpellated as subservient beings. That is to say in Seekings there is no attempt to understand the workings of power based on racial domination and subjugation. Race is simply an attitude of white observers as opposed to a living reality and a constructed subject position in a structure of power that materially maintains others as superior beneficiaries whilst it keeps others as inferior and in servitude.

This approach will not help us understand the subjectivisation and subjugation of people as blacks, the inhabitancy of a black subject position in a colonial and apartheid structure which sets off a number of consequences in how the world is experienced by both the subjugated and beneficiaries of subjugation. In reality, we can't understand the very emergence of blackness used as a subject category in the political and cultural fields, whether owned by subjects themselves or evoked to speak about them and their ways of being in the world. The task therefore is first to develop a conceptual framework that accounts for the blackness of the black youth.

The Black Youth and 'Permanent Juniority' – *A New Conception*

Who are the people we come to know as blacks? What about these people is being signified by called them "black"? First, blacks are "the prototype of the animals",[85] that is to say the "thing of power" or upon which power is exercised; a people who are a thing. This is because, as Mbembe argues, in it (the native) the coloniser could not discern the human element – "the power for transcendence".[86]

Transcendence is what makes the human human. It is what distinguishes the human from nature, animals or things. By transcendence we understand that Kant meant the realms of freedom, moral

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[84] See also Bundy, 'At War with the Future? Black South African Youth in the 1990s', in Stedman S ed., South Africa; *The Political Economy of Transformation* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc: United Kingdom, 1994); Everatt, D (ed.) *Creating a Future: Youth Policy for South Africa*, (Ravan Press: Johannesburg, 1993); H. Marais, 'The new barbarians', *Work in Progress*. 90 (1993)

[85] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 26.

[86] Ibid.

reason and capacity for civilisation. Transcendence is what the human is able to access without materiality or sensual perception - experience. In Kant's view, in those he calls "The Negroes", there is no capacity for knowledge beyond that which is given by the body, by sensual perception. As the delineator of reason as belonging to what is essential to humanity, Kant too failed to discern it in the blacks. He says in his works theorising the races of the world:

> The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the ridiculous. Mr. Hume challenges anyone to adduce a single example where a Negro has demonstrated talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who have been transported elsewhere from their countries, although very many of them have been set free, nevertheless not a single one has ever been found who has accomplished something great in art or science or shown any other praiseworthy quality, while among the whites there are always those who rise up from the lowest rabble and through extraordinary gifts earn respect in the world. So essential is the difference between these two human kinds, and it seems to be just as great with regard to the capacities of mind as it is with respect to colour.[87]

Free or unfree from slavery, the negroes are incapable of transcendence. The inability to "rise up from the lowest of rabble through extraordinary gifts" is demonstration of the negro's mental capacities. Immanuel Eze shows us how important the idea of "talent" is to Kant in that it belongs to the regime of the "transcendental" which is constitutive of the human. Here, you also get a sense that it is not "freedom" that constitutes the being of the negroes, since free or unfree the negro still demonstrates no "transcendence". Therefore, the negroes are their bodies, their skin - they are in the realm of thing-hood[88]. Mbembe argues that the ways in which "command" (by which he means colonial mode of rule) works in the colony is predicated on the idea of natives as animals. With a type of Fanonian rigour, he says of the colonised:

> As an animal... his\her manner of being, was not mine [says the white]. In him/her, it was impossible to discern any power of transcendence. Encapsulated in himself or herself, he/she was a bundle of drives, but not of *capacities*. In such circumstances, the only possible relationship with him/her was one of violence and domination. In that relationship, the

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[87] Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[88] For a full discussion of racism in Kant's theory of race and how this relates in trun to his whole project of metaphysics of being see Immanuel Eze's "The Colour of Reason: The Idea of Race in Kant's Anthropology" in Post Colonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader, 1997, Blackwell Publishers, USA

> colonised could only be envisaged as the property and *thing* of power... as such he\she belongs to the *sphere of objects*.[89][Emphases in original]

The objectification of the natives is what underlies the category of blackness under colonial rule. Colonial command, as Mbembe puts it, proceeds from this conception of natives as objects of power/rule; this is not merely the attitude of the coloniser, but something colonial power materially constitutes. For the coloniser, the native belongs to the *sphere of objects* and this is what constitutes the construction and maintenance of racial subjugation and violence under colonial rule. But what exactly is the ontology of this object? Mbembe says it is the "prototype of the animal". We can sense this from the quotation by Mbembe above, but what is this liminal being - between animalhood and humanhood? Notice that Mbembe continues to say that, seeing that transcendence could not be discerned in the native, two traditions of dealing with the native existed. The first envisaged that the native ought to be left alone. Says Mbembe:

> At the heart of that relationship, the colonised could only be envisaged as property… a tool of subordination to the one who fashioned, and could now use and alter, him/her at will. As such, he/she belonged to the sphere of objects. They could be destroyed, as one may kill an animal, cut it up, cook it, and, if needs be, eat it. It is in this respect that, in the colony, the body of the colonised was, in its profanity, assimilated to all other things. For, being simply a "body-thing", the colonised was neither the substratum nor the affirmation of any spirit. As for his/her death, it mattered little if this occurred by suicide, resulted from murder, or was inflicted by power; it had no connection whatsoever with any work that he/she had performed or the universal. His or her corpse remained on the ground in unshakeable rigidity, a material mass and mere inert object, consigned to the role of that which is there for nothing.[90]

Indeed, this could be discerned in the founding moment of the colonial encounter such as we see in South Africa between the Dutch and the Khoi-Khoi peoples of the Cape. The accounts of treatment of native populations in the West Indies or even in North America is driven by this violent belief that natives are objects and perhaps provides justifications for genocide. However, in ruling these populations through slavery and colonisation, there is a second tradition which Mbembe says we can call Bergsonian;

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[89] Ibid, p. 26

[90] Mbembé, *On the Postcolony*, 26–27.

> It rested on the idea that one could, as with an animal, *sympathise* with the colonised, even "love" him or her; thus, one was sad when he/she dies because he/she belonged, up to a point, to a familiar world. Affection for the colonised could also be externalised in gestures: the colonised would have to, in return, render the master or mistress the same affection the master/mistress gave. But, beyond gestures, the master's/mistress' affection for the animal presented itself as an inner force that should govern the animal. In the Bergsonian tradition of colonialism, familiarity and domestication thus became the dominant tropes of servitude. Through the relation of domestication, the master or mistress led the beast to an experience such that, at the end of the day, the animal, while remaining what he/she was - that is, something other than a human being - nevertheless actually entered into the *world for his/her master/mistress*[91]

What we have here is a return to our earlier discussion on the Parsonian tradition and how in its account of the rise of youth as an age cohort under industrial capitalism, it ignored the colony and the plantation. Nothing therefore elucidates what Mbembe means here better than the idea of "perpetual juniority" to account for this liminal space between animalhood and humanhood. This is the central motif even in accounts that portray the colonised as "perpetual children", as seen in Robert Shell's work on slavery in the Cape of Good Hope[92], as well as in Ann Stoler's examination of the "pedagogisation of child sexuality"[93] in colonial societies, as we have seen in my discussion of these authors, above.

This characterisation of natives as "perpetual children" by the coloniser can be seen even under what Mbembe calls "late colonialism".[94] In fact, for Mahmood Mamdani, this is the starting point to thinking about colonial rule in Africa. He opens his seminal study of the colonial system with Jan Smuts' Rhodes Memorial Lecture at Oxford in 1929 in which Smuts deals with the question of how Europeans should rule over African natives. The basic and principle assumption for a good colonial project relies on an understanding of Africans as perpetual children. Mamdani writes:

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[91] Ibid.

[92] See Shell, *Children of Bondage*,

[93] Ann Laura Stoler, "*Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*" 137

[94] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (December 21, 2003): 11–40, doi: 10.1215/08992363-15-1-11.

> "The African", Smuts reminded his British audience, is a special human "type" with "some wonderful characteristics," which he went on the elaborate: "It has largely remained a child type, with a child psychology and outlook.[95]

Mamdani goes on to argue that the type of child the colonialist considered the African to be was "destined to be so perpetually - in the words of Christopher Fyfe, 'Peter Pan children who can never grow up, a child race'".[96] Smuts therefore recommends how a people "with a child psychology" should be ruled since children cannot do anything without authority. He established two approaches, one being "institutional segregation" the other, "territorial segregation". At the core of these systems was the aim of making sure that Africans are preserved in "unity" with their past and not to "de-Africanise" them "into a beast of the field or into a pseudo-European". This is because, being a "child race", they can never be equal to Europeans; but at the same time, they must not be crushed into to living like beasts of the field.

Smuts believed that the two extremes had been attempted already, where the colonial systems either treat Africans like animals or try to integrate them into European civilisation through equal rights - or assimilation. He argued that both were extremes and they were wrong - precisely because he held that the African is something between these two, namely "a child". This idea is yet again consistent with how Cape slaves were considered and ruled as we have earlier mentioned. Shell says, "in every slave's life, usually at the young master's or mistresses maturity, there arose a simultaneous realisation that while the master or mistress is bound for adulthood, the slave - in the settlers' eye - was scheduled for perpetual childhood and dependence, and the demanding obscurity that went with that fate."[97] Shell demonstrates this in showing how slaves would always be made to appear in child-like dress, so as to always mark the distinction between masters/mistresses and slaves. Therefore we can trace the idea in colonial power, from slave times through to apartheid times, where black people are considered as a "child race", a race that will not be adult, and where adulthood represents "independence" or the ability to self-rule/self-determination.

In the *Wretched of the Earth* Fanon had already observed this phenomenon of how colonial rule shifts its methods of rule, and of its object and technologies of command. He writes:

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[95] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton University Press, 1996), 4.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Shell, *Children of Bondage*, 224.

> Today… the colonised countries' national struggle crops up in a completely new international situation. Capitalism, in its early days saw in the colonies a source of raw materials which, once turned into manufactured goods, could be distributed on the European market. After a phase of accumulation of capital, capitalism has today come to modify its conception of the profit-earning capacity of the commercial enterprises. The colonies have become a market. The colonial population is a customer who is ready to buy goods… A blind domination founded on slavery is not economically speaking worthwhile for the bourgeoisie of the mother country. The monopolistic group within this bourgeoisie does not support a government whose policy is solely that of the sword. What the factory-owners and finance magnates of the mother country expects from their government is not that it should decimate the colonial peoples, but that it should safeguard with the help of the economic conventions their own 'legitimate interests'.[98]

Here, Fanon argues that the demands of global capitalism impacted on colonialism to remodel how it rules the natives. Fanon's insight is that this shift lies in colonies being considered as markets by global monopoly capitalism, and thus, natives as "customers"- consumers of the products of capitalist modernity. This is a significant shift underlying how the plantation ought to be distinguished from the colony as sociopolitical spaces of racialisation: under the subject-form of the "customer" the continent is now characterised as a "market", it is no longer just supplier of raw material, including slaves, but it becomes a consumer of finished products; a client of global capital. We cannot imagine slaves participating in the market since they are not paid any wages. However, the black farm and mine workers of the nineteenth century colonial South Africa are wage-labourers who, through their wages, can participate in the buying of goods and services; they remain in the liminal existence informed by notions of permanent juniority, like the "child race" as stated by Jan Smuts.

To further elucidate this subject formation that underlies the discourse of colonial rule, Radhika Mohanram's *Black Body* is also useful. In *Black Body*, Mohanram makes a case for considering place/ landscape for our understanding of identity and identity formation. Her focus is to show that the black body is embedded (in its place/landscape) and immobile whilst the white one is mobile and can inhabit and transform landscapes for its interest. Colonialism for her is "about seizing place, draining it of its resources, its history and the meaning attributed to it by its primary occupants".[99]

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[98] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London; New York, New York: Penguin Classics, 2001), 51.

[99] Radhika Mohanram, *Black Body: Women, Colonialism, and Space*, vol. 6 (University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 200.

She identifies that "the human subject is dichotomised into the mind and the body"[100] and, in essence:

> To the body is connoted such qualities as passion, biology, the inside, otherness, inertness, unchanging, stasis, matter - a more primitive way of being. To the mind is attributed reason, the self, the same, action, movement and intelligence, a more developed way of being.[101]

She adds that:

> This understanding is also metonymically extended to the occupants of lands waiting to be colonised, waiting to be roused from inertia, from the torpor of primitivity. The black body is metonymically linked to the woman's body in the power/knowledge system of Western Enlightenment, progress and modernity. In contrast, black bodies and women's bodies bespeak unevolved entities.[102]

A theory of race must take this social meaning of the body, as black skinned and sexed, but also that those who inhabit black, in particular black female, bodies are unable to transcend them through reason. The body, as black skinned, gendered and untranscendable, is therefore central to the ways in which the conduct of blacks under colonialism is controlled.

From the body, or Kant's "black skin", the coloniser also sees the native as a "child race" as delineated by Smuts. Thus, here the colonist is prepared to accept the proposition of "the soul of blacks" but as immature transcendence, a human-like soul, but always already trapped/limited by the body. But this is absolutely a colonial creation, hence Fanon's insistence that "what we call the black soul is a creation of the white man".[103] The souls of blacks are as perpetual juniors who cannot grow beyond their bodies, they are un-evolved because they are a "child race". That is, blacks are the child form of the "fully human" that is white. This is not so much an age statement, as it is a statement of metaphysics, the metaphysical prognosis of the being of the negro - the ontology of the animalhood of the natives.

As suggested earlier on, this is by way of looking at the question of "youth" as also about the kinds of beings we are. And the question for us begins with this double – "black" and "youth" – it is about

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100 Ibid., 6:199.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid., 6:200.

103 Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

probing what version of humanity is evoked by notions of "being" generated for and in colonisation that goes beyond a treatment of the youth as just a process of "growing up".

If, therefore for whites "youth" means a time of waiting to be adult as extrapolated in the Euro-american literature on the youth above, then for blacks, to be youth is where you "end". This is because in effect to be black is to be a permanent junior in relation to the white. It is to be trapped in the body - to be in a *state of permanent juniority*. Blacks are only ever potential Europeans, the child form, but are not destined to realise full identity - plenitude. So they wait, as a permanent state of being. We could say this "waiting" is about mimicry of the white human form. It could also suggest a return to so-called "customary" practices as Mamdani indicates was the rationale of the bantustans.[104] What is certain is that blackness is a mode of being where you wait to be human as a permanent way of being; this is the mode of being permanently junior.

This is crucial as we return to Kant, particularly in his definition of enlightenment, which as Foucault shows, was about philosophising an event called the present - whose ontological structure Kant comes to read in the same way as he did the event called the "Revolution".[105] We see that blacks, who have already been zoned out of the realm of the transcendental, cannot really be said to experience enlightenment. Kant says enlightenment is "man's release from his self-incurred tutelage".[106] This is so, says Kant, not due to "lack of reason but lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another".[107] Enlightenment is a transcendental experience or a transcendental event.

Immanuel Eze shows us that Kant believed negroes can be educated, or more precisely trained, but only to be slaves or servants.[108] In Jan Smuts's intelligence, the child race could not go on with its affairs without white supervision precisely for these reasons. Tutelage is therefore not self-imposed, but a necessity for the blacks. They are not lazy to use reason nor are they afraid. Kant may have lamented of how idle and lazy they are, but this is not in relation to their use of reason. They simply are naturally incapable of exercising full reason - that kind of reason which is self-sufficient. Blacks

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[104] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, 1st edition (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[105] Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the College de France, 1982-1983*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2011).

[106] Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?," *On History*, 1784, 3–10.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, "The Color of Reason: The Idea of 'Race' in Kant's Anthropology," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Blackwell, 1997).

can only imitate, like slaves, but it is not in their nature, on their own, to "do" enlightenment. Smuts even warns against experiments that have all failed because they sought to consider the black as equal to whites. The solution is thus permanent white supervision.

At the centre of the juniority of the blacks is therefore precisely the double that being youth carries. On one the hand, it is that you are not yet able to rule or take care of yourself. This underlines the apartheid ideology of separate development, as Mamdani demonstrates in *Citizen and Subject,* which gave blacks some relative autonomy to run their own affairs, but not without white supervision in the bantustans. In fact, this is where colonialism allows/forces blacks to be "primitive", using their bodies as a symbolic marker, a means through which they are included, by way of exclusion, into modernity. On the other, is the patronising sense of apartheid, which began to unleash schooling and housing for blacks on a massive scale whilst at the same time refusing black people access to the central political and economic resources as equal citizens in community with whites.

Indeed, with the idea of "youth", white bodies/youth can one day be adults; the desire and conditions are created to escape the body, transcend it, and experience enlightenment – overcome the cowardice and laziness that has resulted in self-imposed tutelage if we stick strictly to the Kantian formula. However, for the black youth, this is where you end-up: you are young, and black, and conditions are produced to incapacitate you in relation to the experience of enlightenment. Blacks know what being fully human is – much like the dog knows its master – but in their case they know what it is required to make the transition, but they cannot make it, for as black-skinned, native or non-white, the system asphyxiates and mis-recognises their humanity; meaning for black people tutelage is a permanent necessity – so that being black is reduced to being your body.

We can therefore re-read black youth politics using this formulation and ask, how are these juniors/ blacks constituted as "youth"? Through what technologies is their conduct conducted as "youth"? What, if you like, is the ontology of the tutelage that must preside or constitute a permanent junior? What is resistance, or how is resistance to be understood under these conditions? How do the natives resist, and through what technologies do they speak back to this power that relates to them in this way? How creative do they become in re-inventing new relations with each other that "transcend" the relations of subjugation?

Black Youth Politics: *Permanent Juniority and Resistance*

Fanon characterises the structural violence of native towns under colonial power in very strong terms. As he writes:

> The town belonging to the colonised people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there; it matters not where, not how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live on top of each other and their huts are built on top of one another. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs.[109]

This is the basic form of infrastructural violence blacks living under colonisation experience. Fanon goes further to compare the native town with the settler's town, and says the settler's town "is a well-fed town, an easy going town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler's town is a town of white people, of foreigners".[110] This describes the condition of many poor people under industrialisation in most parts of the world at some point, or any kind of people who live next to the flourishing of the ruling classes. However, in the colonial situation, the image of poverty is systemically, materially, and institutionally imposed on black bodies.

The rise of the African Youth movement in the twentieth century must be understood in the context of the social crisis of the type that Fanon describes above that faced South Africa at the time. The implications of this social crisis had to do with the large urban population migration. The youth here emerged as highly problematic to the establishment through a discourse that would be called "juvenile delinquency".[111] This would be their image – as criminal, unemployed, violent, illiterate, idle and dangerous youth and these remain their characteristic features with HIV/AIDS as an addition today – a "dangerous and perishing"[112] population.

The rise of the youth political movements (this includes students) therefore must be seen as a response to this, also as a way to provide a counter social formation to criminal gangs which were

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[109] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 30.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Clive Glaser, "When Are They Going to Fight? Tsotsis, Youth Politics and the PAC," in *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962*, ed. Philip L. Bonner, Peter Delius, and Deborah Posel (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993).

[112] Mary Carpenter, *Reformatory Schools, for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes, and for Juvenile Offenders* (Edinburgh: C. Gilpin, 1851).

the popular formations amongst young people. Glaser and many others argue that the basic activity that constituted the life of the children and young adults of the Townships in the Rand from the 1930 was gang culture - a violent, hyper-masculine, yet anti-white culture that they call "tsotsi", which appears as the life-rubric of Township life[113]. The second response to the social crisis described above is the state's Verwoerd education project (Bantu Education Act, 1953), which not only made schooling compulsory for the African child but increased material access to it.

However, more crucial is that the black youth here constituted themselves in gangs, refusing integration into the "proletariat category" – proletarianisation as the process of transforming people from peasants, or anything else, into proletarians: the workers. Glaser demonstrates that these gangs challenged people beyond state authorities; it was also a challenge for black communities themselves. He argues that as much as these conditions rendered young people a target of criminal and gang activities, "tsosti" emerged as a sub-culture, something of a self-creation on the part of the youth. He presents these criminal and gang activities as something far more nuanced than merely being a consequence of conditions of precariousness prevailing in the Townships. He sees it as being resistant to white culture and characterised by "unarticulated, incoherent and inconsistent"[114] political resistance. He insists that the primary concern was to "survive on the streets, to forge personal and status within a harsh and brutal subculture"[115]. In many ways, argues Glaser, the youth were more attracted or based in this culture than in the Congress Youth League and its activities, at least for most part of the 1940s and early 1950s[116].

It seems to me that racial stratification and the violent conditions of state law enforcement and infrastructure imposed by the colonial authorities are what accounts for the impulse of the rejection of "white values" expressed by these gangs. These are what explain those who see themselves as people who must reject White Rule. Indeed, the Congress Youth League itself rises in the name of African self-sufficiency and sought to mobilise the youth into political confrontation; something that can be thought of as an extension of the impulse expressed already within gangs. Glaser tells us that

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[113] For more on crime in black communities see Philip Bonner, "Family, Crime and Political Consciousness on the East Rand 1939-1955," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14, 3, 1988; P. La Hausse , "Mayihlome": Towards an Understanding of Amalaita Gangs in Durban, 1900-1930", in Clingman S (ed.), *Regions and Repertoires: Topics in South African Politics and Culture,* Johannesburg, 1991; W Scharf , "The Resurgence of Urban Street Gangs and Community Responses in Cape Town during the Late Eighties", in D Hansson and D Van Zyl Smit (eds.), *Towards Justice: Crime and State Control in South Africa,* (Cape Town, 1990).

[114] Ibid, p. 300

[115] Ibid

[116] Congress Youth League is short for African National Congress Youth League, sometimes referred with its acronym ANC YL

part of what the African youth saw themselves opposing was a complicity of the elderly who went to look for jobs, and who were therefore seen as wanting to be part of the system[117]. This idea of wanting to be in the system epitomised by "job seeking", is critical for many reasons particularly for how capitalism's mode of social inclusion is the "job" itself[118].

In addition, we can see this tension play out consistently within black youth politics during the century; that is, a kind of parental complacency with respect to white values and, opposed to it, a rebellion that rejects parents and the system of colonial rule. For the youth leaguers, juvenile delinquency, which was primarily understood as criminality, had to be given a political programme or content, whereas for the state it had to be crushed. Apartheid therefore sought to respond to these two forces, namely gangs (which represented criminal resistance) and political formation (which represented political resistance). To this end, the state unfolded mass schooling, as Hyslop has demonstrated.[119] It is critical to highlight that this reading is not possible unless you take racial domination seriously; this attention to subject formation is the step that Hyslop and Glaser cannot take us to, and this is the point that this study seeks to make.

For instance, Hyslop tried to account for the Youth Uprising of June 1976 by stressing the expansion of education by the apartheid regime. Here, the regime basically moved the black youth from the streets into the schooling system, which provided precisely the conditions for a collective political identity to emerge and do so in the way that it did. For Hyslop, population control is the core of apartheid's expansion of schooling to the bantus, of course including the economic needs for semi-skilled blacks. His analysis is emphatic of the population control crisis, although acknowledging that there is a brutality to Bantu Education itself that is violent to the humanity of blacks. However, to understand the student movement that rises we have to take a step further from where Hyslop leaves us. It is deeply important to say that the schools provided the premises for collective identity to be formed by the youth, but this is neither the only factor at play here, nor the most crucial; the content of Bantu Education must be elucidated to make sense of developments.

The apartheid school and university "education" project sought to form a docile subject who would be domesticated, dumbed and doomed to perpetual servitude under white rule. The ideological, structural and political conditions that shaped the system explicitly aimed to create a "black

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[117] Ibid

[118] Franco Barchiesi's recent work on precariousness shows how post-apartheid South African politics are centered on the idea of job creation, equated with the ability of the ANC to deliver freedom.

[119] Jonathan Hyslop, "'A Destruction Coming In': Bantu Education as Response to Social Crisis," in *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962*, eds. Philip L. Bonner, Peter Delius, and Deborah Posel (Ravan Press, 1993).

person"; to instil in the native such a soul – a subservient soul. This is the *pedagogical offence* upon black people, which Cynthia Kros in her work on Bantu Education, says "has culturally and spiritually impoverished the entire Black community, at all levels of educational achievement, and … in this sense it has successfully served its principal function of buttressing the apartheid system and maintaining white domination"[120].

Bantu Education was seen partly as a way of ordering the black youth, moving them from both the danger of criminalisation and politicisation (resistance), and of creating a subject that complied with the Apartheid order. This power to order the black youth was vested in the school: on one hand as subservient manual labour and on the other as inferior beings by human standards; that is to say as inferior labour whose human potentiality – or specifically, whose cultural and spiritual potentiality - would be forever juniorised. This too has implications for how we read the emergent resistance, its ideological and cultural-creative powers for emancipation.

Nevertheless, after the crushing of the Congress Youth League and the Pan-African Congress activities with and within the black youth constituency, there emerged the independent university political students' movement in the 1960s. Most important of these is the South African Student Organisation (SASO) which is known to have developed out of a conference of the predominantly white National Union of South African Student (NUSAS) as a rejection of white domination – a statement of autonomy on the part of the black students[121].

SASO and thus the Black Consciousness movement made a fundamentally new analysis of oppression which is still broadly understated. They were interested in building self-reliance on the part of the blacks; dealing with the "self-rejection" they saw blacks to be entangled in – which serviced the oppressor with a sense of their compliance with their subjugation. They saw self-rejection as a means of reproducing and maintaining black people's subservience to white supremacy; the idea that "I want to be white" which I can never attain because I can never be white skinned, mobilises me to conduct myself for my own subjugation. This way of relating to myself is the subjective basis for the objective condition of my oppression. Thus, for Biko the student

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[120] Cynthia Kros, *The Seeds of Separate Development: Origins of Bantu Education* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010).

[121] There is no space here to examine in full the literature analysing this movement. Suffice to say that philosophically what Biko does when he reworks blackness stands out as fundamentally new in how we think of resistance. If we are constituted by power, and our very resistance is almost anticipated in it, then how will we ever be free? Biko's answer was counter-subject formation: from blacks as those who reject being black and seek whiteness (which they never attain) to the embrace of blackness as a way to reject self-rejection. (This I have realised from a conversation with Ahmed Veriava.)

movement reinvented blackness; blacks were now conceived to be those who reject the usage of their pigmentation (bodies) as a means of their oppression.[122]

There is no doubt that the rise of the independent black student movement was made possible by the university, and it is certainly unthinkable without the technology of power that the university represents. It is really the activists of university students' politics in the 1970s who would end up as teachers in the schools within Townships, preaching these ideas to school learners, but also who would encourage resistance to authoritarian disciplinary techniques of Bantu Education and apartheid in general.[123] The student riots of 1976 are not to be isolated from this influence, as many scholars have argued (Lodge, 1983; Badaat, 2010; Hyslop, 1994; Glaser, 2000).[124] However, Bantu Education pedagogy, which sought to produce a permanent subservient class in the interests of white minority rule, the conditions of overcrowding, shortage of text books, corporal punishment and the demand for SRCs increasingly dominated the agenda of these schools' student politics for many years.[125] Therefore, the self-reference of these students and youths as "black youth" is not misplaced consciousness, it is a response to the project of creating out of them *permanent juniors.* Their politics could also not be limited to students interests, or "youth" interests such as sports, art, recreation, jobs or education. An important lesson is that they believed and acted their politics in the interest of a collective subject - the black people as a whole.

Black conduct was also constituted under conditions of the militarisation of society. The literature discussing black youth politics and violence in South Africa does not often relate the concerned violence and virile/masculine domination to the very conception of youth and race that are at the centre of apartheid population control and governmental rationality. Jaclyn Cock's introduction to the collection *War and Society* for instance shows us that South Africa became a militarised society under apartheid rule, specifically in the years of mounting resistance by black people - the 1980s. Militarisation, Cock says, refers to "the spread of militarism as an ideology and an expansion of the power and influence of the military as a social institution"[126]

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[122] Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like: Selected Writings*, 1st edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2002).

[123] Tshepo Moloi, "'Black Student Politics in South Africa', 1990 - 1996," in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 6 (1990 - 1996), Part 2* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, n.d.), 1183–1235.

[124] Lodge, Tom. *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945*. London ; New York: Longman Group United Kingdom, 1983; Hyslop, Jonathan. "'A Destruction Coming In': Bantu Education as Response to Social Crisis." In *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962*, edited by Philip L. Bonner, Peter Delius, and Deborah Posel. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993); Glaser, Clive *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000. Saleem Badaat, *Black Man You Are On Your Own*, South Africa; Real African Publishers, 2010

[125] Bundy, "Street Sociology and Pavement Politics."

[126] Jacklyn Cock and Laurie Nathan, *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (New Africa Books, 1989).

The apartheid state militarised all of society, where the black population was governed through military might, with the white youth increasingly forced to enter conscriptions that often became very traumatic. At the core of this militarism was the power to decide who lives or dies and blacks were those to whom the distribution of the risk of death, and not life (Biopolitics), as a form of governance, were subjected. Here, Mbembe's concept of *Necropolitics*, which refers to forms of governmental rationality that have to do with distributing risk, like in camps, in the slave plantation and in the colony, is even more useful as he actually takes the subject of militarism or military rule at the centre, and the theme of death as the construct of political rule, seriously; the governing of the dead – of those who can be killed without sacrifice[127].

Mbembe takes death as the modus operandi or the *raison d'être* of the governance of the apartheid state. Black people are those who deserve to die.[128] What this means is that *command* in the colony is about distributing all risk, the ultimate of which is death, on the colonised. It is not just about how the actual soldier took control of schools in Townships as Cock observes, but that the whole daily governance of the blacks relied on the fact that blacks are those who deserved to die.

Thus, during resistance, we witness a spectre of the military as if the state is only now exercising a state of emergency in which law is suspended in relation to the blacks. But the way the police maintain order on all other occasions is consistent with this idea - a sense that law can be suspended at anytime with respect to anyone black. In the majority of the 1980s many Townships were under military occupation, and the idea that black people "can be killed without sacrifice"[129] became more vivid; there they live and there they die. How did blacks come to be treated this way? How is it that following upon their resistance, apartheid killed them with impunity?

(Un)-Reason and Colonial Rule

To understand this, we have to accept, as Mbembe argues, that at the founding of modernity there were multiple forms of sovereignty and not just those expressed by the typology of reason and unreason. Mbembe wants us to deepen our conception of colonial and slave rule of Africans in ways that allow us to make sense of the terror that is colonial rule, and one should add, its everydayness. The colonial relation is not understandable through the frameworks of the rule of reason. The setting of modernity already situated Africans outside of the framework of reason;

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127 A. Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture*, 15, 1, (2003) p. 11-40 this formulation of a life that can be killed without being sacrificed is originally worked out by G. Agamben in his work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).

128 Mbembe, "Necropolitics."

129 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford University Press, 1998).

which makes them the absolute enemy because the European could not find any commonality with them, any common human element as elucidated above in the discussion on Kant's transcendence.

Here we must return to Kant's Enlightenment and the juxtaposition that Foucault impressed on Kant's Enlightenment and Revolution[130]. In discussion of these two events, which for Kant were constitutive of his present, Foucault argues that here we come to know of a method of enquiry which is not about "the analytic of truth but… what could be called an ontology of the present, of present reality, an ontology of modernity, an ontology of ourselves".[131] Kant had hoped to found a critical philosophical tradition in which the central question is about "the conditions of possibility of a true knowledge"[132] that is, knowledge in general - transcendental philosophy as such. In the juxtaposition of Enlightenment and Revolution is a new method of philosophising in which we ask what is the present, and ask about ourselves in this present.[133]

It is noteworthy that even as Foucault mentions the paper in which Kant delineates non-Europeans as outside modernity, and as inferior (*Definition of the Concept of Race*[134]), he does not speak about it in relation to the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, it is possible that in this method of philosophising where we do an "ontology of the present" we can escape the entrapments of totalisation that comes with the other philosophical tradition where we seek for conditions for knowledge of truth in general. Both Kant and Foucault omit, or ignore, the Haitian Revolution in which black slaves established the first modern black republic - where they constituted a modern constitution long before Kant's Germany (then part of Prussia).

It is difficult to work out, at least for Foucault, why the slave revolution of the proportions of Haiti did not constitute that which is in the present for Kant, or an object of relevance as he undertook to do an ontology of the present. We should wonder what Foucault would say about this omission in Kant, even for his own mediation about the "government of self and others" seeing that he points out that in the same journal where Kant's essay on Enlightenment appears, the racist paper in which Kant degrades black people was also published in a matter of months[135]. Mbembe already makes the claim that for Europeans, blacks do not form the other self - the alter ego as it were. So,

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130 See Kant, *An Answer to the Question; "What Is Enlightenment?"*, Penguin Books, 2009

131 Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*.

132 Ibid., 20.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid., 7

135 Ibid.

we can only imagine what it would mean if Foucault had to consider this radical or absolute relationship between the Haitian Slaves and the French and what the practice of self, or the experience of the self of the revolting slaves, tells us about revolutionary subjectivity.

In fact, in keeping with Kant's methodology, we may have to ask what that present, the Haitian Revolution (he was obviously alive during its period) meant to Kant as the unaffected observer. Did it create an enthusiasm in him as did the French Revolution or did it terrify him seeing that he held such violent views about blacks? Suffice to to say, in imagining the talent or transcendental capacity of whites, Kant did juxtapose this with non-Europeans and at times, directly with Africans, as stated earlier.

How can an ontology of the present be done in the case of those who are declared incapable of both Enlightenment and Revolution? Is it possible that even in the philosophical tradition that Foucault wants to elucidate, the blacks of Haiti are not part of "the ontology of the present"? They indeed exist in a different time, the time we call the colony or colonialism. How do we read their sign? How are slave revolutions or decolonisation, or the revolts and rebellions of slaves in the United States of America's decolonisation to be read? How is the political subject of decolonisation, and the mode of being political of those who exist in a present called colonisation, or subject of decolonisation to be understood?

Are the Haitians part of "the self" that constitutes itself through the courage to speak truth to power? What is the ontological status of their revolution? Is it a Revolution? Is revolution precisely that "escape" or "way out" which is made by the subject who courageously dares to use their reason? The subject who, after apparently "allowing" their own domination due to their laziness and cowardice, now decides to be courageous and dares to use reason; to self-determine, to guide themselves and demand a political constitution that avoids "destructive war". Foucault goes back to Ancient Greece to evoke the practice of Parrhesia, a practice of speech in which one decides to speak freely, truthfully, to power knowing that what they say risks death, but speak it anyway. This courage, the practice of the truth-speaking self that faces the risk of death, mobilises the unaffected observer to feel enthusiasm, the enthusiasm for the idea that freedom, self-rule, is possible. This, we could say, is an ontology of ourselves. This free speaking at the risk of death is the mode of being, a mode of political subjectivity, that Foucault underlines as essential for modern politics - for democracy.

Kant did refer to the free blacks in his work on the definitions of races. Using David Hume, he says that even freed black slaves demonstrate no capacity for transcendence[136]. However, Foucault's point is perhaps that Kant arrives here, in this anti-black racism which we see dominating the colonial logic of power, due to his project's being rooted in the transcendental philosophical tradition. In the essay on Enlightenment, Kant gave insight to a different possible method or tradition of philosophy whose question is not deciding what humanity is once and for all and a priori: that the sign of the progress of humanity - that it is morally improving - lies in an ontology of the present, a modernity, a today. What is it today, in our present, that tells us that humanity is progressing? It is the courage, demonstrated in the revolution and in the fight against tyranny where people say we shall choose the terms of our own constitution.

In Haiti, a different form of tyranny existed, even under the direction of the French Revolutionary hero Napoleon Bonaparte, which refused to see slaves as equal to the whites - or more precisely as human. Soon after the hero of the Haitian Revolution, Toussaint Louverture, declared an end to slavery, Napoleon went to crush this initiative, and sought to restore the slavery of black people. In response to this, a full revolution that resulted in the defeat of France was launched; Haiti became the first successful slave revolt known in human history.

Multiple rational modes of governing are therefore possible within modernity. One such mode of sovereignty is precisely colonialism. The point is to see how right at the birth of the new political subject of modernity, the subject of enlightenment, this very subject sustains and continues to crush the humanity of black people - within the very enlightenment order of things. Jan Smuts characterises the enlightened location of the black subject as a permanent child. Thus, if we keep true to this method of enquiry, then we can understand when Mbembe reaches for and develops further the idea of sovereignty established by Karl Schmitt (as revived by Agamben[137]) - that the sovereign is the one who has the power to decide on the state of exception.[138] Underlying this for Mbembe are decisions over the limits of death, the right to kill or wage war. This is first monopolised by the state which decides what counts as terror internal to its political community and in relation to other states. By definition the state is the community of subjects conceived through the prism of the rule of reason. Traditional and dominant western conceptions of sovereignty thus focus on the consciousness, self-mastery, and self-limitation of subjects and imply that political

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[136] Kant, Immanuel. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004

[137] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

[138]Karl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, accessed January 6, 2017, http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/C/bo5458073.html.

communities are thus communities of people of reason whose relationship to terror (war) is filtered or held at bay by the idea of reason – as the civilised.[139]

Mbembe says, "the centrality of the state in the calculus of war derives from the fact that the state is the model of political unity, a principle of rational organisation, the embodiment of the idea of the universal, and a moral sign."[140] It is territorial and contains an outside of itself where its power stops and violence or terror starts: violence with other states and violence against citizens who traverse laws.

However, the colonised do not exist in another "civilised state" such that war with them can be reached in the same way that peace is constituted with "civilised states". Colonial conquest is not about conquering enemies that you can in turn civilise into equal citizens of your ultimate state. Modern colonial conquest is about conquering absolute enemies, and because they are outside the realm of the human, the colony is the exception upon which the limits over death are constantly tested. They exist outside the frontier; here is not the beginning of another state, but the beginning of the zone where death can be exercised without limits. Mbembe writes:

> In the same context, colonies are similar to the frontiers. They are inhabited by "savages." The colonies are not organised in a state form and have not created a human world. Their armies do not form a distinct entity, and their wars are not wars between regular armies. They do not imply the mobilisation of sovereign subjects (citizens) who respect each other as enemies. They do not establish a distinction between combatants and noncombatants, or again between an "enemy" and a "criminal." It is thus impossible to conclude peace with them. In sum, colonies are zones in which war and disorder, internal and external figures of the political, stand side by side or alternate with each other. As such, the colonies are the location par excellence where the controls and guarantees of judicial order can be suspended—the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of "civilisation".[141]

The coloniser arrives at this because of the denial of the humanity of the colonised; for the coloniser, the colonised are savages. War with savages does not arrive at peaceful resolution; to be in peace with savages is to be in war. This is so under apartheid, where colonial occupation invented townships and homelands as "states of exception". As Mbembe writes:

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[139] Mbembe, "Necropolitics."

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid., 24.

> [As] a sociopolitical, cultural, and economic formation, the township was a peculiar spatial institution scientifically planned for the purposes of control. The functioning of the homelands and townships entailed severe restrictions on production for the market by blacks in white areas, the terminating of land ownership by blacks except in reserved areas, the illegalisation of black residence on white farms (except as servants in the employ of whites), the control of urban influx, and later, the denial of citizenship to Africans.[142]

Our examination of black politics as a politics entangled with a mode of power we call "permanent juniorisation" takes seriously and as foundational this formulation of the mode of being of power that we call colonialism, which Mbembe terms necropower.

The Ontology of the Gender of Resistance Politics

The black youth is cut and united in yet another social phenomenon: gender. Indeed, the politics of black youth drank from society's gender problem, with its masculine type taking the hegemonic form; that is, its privileging of men over women. The Australian sociologist, R Connell, has already indicated that there is no one form of masculinity functioning in society, rather there are competing and "hegemonic masculinities" often correlating with dominant ideologies and classes.[143] "Hegemonic masculinity", the type that rules over other masculinities, "does not depend on brute force for its efficacy, but on a range of mechanisms which create a gender consensus that legitimates the power of men."[144]

This characterisation is useful perhaps when looking at the situation of black youth politics in the liberation struggle, but only to an extent until we take seriously the notion of virility that informs state power in the colonial situation, in the governance of the blacks. Masculinity, argues Robert Morell, refers to "a specific gender identity, belonging to a specific male person. While this identity is acquired in social contexts and circumstances, it is 'owned' by an individual".[145] He adds:

> It bears the marks and characteristics of the history which formed it – frequently with salient childhood experiences imparting a particular set of prejudices and preferences, joys and terrors... [It] is not inherited nor is it acquired in a one-off way. It is constructed in the context of class, race and other factors which are interpreted through the prism of age. Boys

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[142] Ibid., 26.

[143] Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities*, 2 edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[144] Robert Morrell, ed., *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg : London ; New York: Zed Books, 2001).

[145] Ibid., 8.

> develop a masculine gender identity which is deficient relative to the adult masculinity of men. The stages by which boys become men – manhood – are a source of anxiety and a rite of passage. There is no set or prescribed procedure but the determination to become 'a man' is a powerful feature of masculinity[146].

Historians of black youth politics in South Africa have lamented how masculine domination is a problem in the way black youth political history has been written. For instance, Monique Marks laments the way that even "academic definitions of comrades negate the existence of women"[147]. This is particularly expressed when it comes to violence, in that violence is often portrayed so as to marginalise the popular participation of women and underplays their contribution. Marks then shows that in her study of black youth politics in Diepkloof, Soweto for instance, women did show their willingness to participate in political violence. This is attested to as well by Phindile Kunene in her own documentation of black politics in Phomolong. She states that, "unlike other places, in Phomolong, women's participation did not decline with the increase in political violence"[148]. She shows how in the late 1980s women participated in consumer boycotts that often turned violent.

Despite the novelty and importance of their argument, it is hard to accept that they have simply discovered and corrected an error in the way that the history of violence in South Africa has been written. In fact, in both Marks' and Kunene's studies, men continue to be more central actors in the enactment of violence and politics in general. Therefore, one cannot help but assume that they are giving prominence to exceptional cases. Marks even asserts, in the same work, that "women comrades mostly appeared to be spectators, rather than direct participants in acts of violence"[149]. Actors who were at the forefront of youth political activities and who were central to strategic decision-making within them in her work are predominantly male. This is also seen in other work, like that of Tshepo Moloi looking at Kroonstad[150] which includes cases of criminal youth gangs. Even Kunene, in her presentation of confrontations between the activists of Phomolong Young

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146 Ibid.

147 Monique Marks, *"Young Warriors", (*Johannesburg; Wits Press, 2001), 102.

148 Phindile Kunene, *"From Apartheid to Democracy: A Historical Analysis of Local Struggles in Phomolong Township, Free State: 1985-2005".* University of the Witwatersrand, MA Thesis., 144

149 Marks, *Youth Worriers.,* 104

150 *See* Tshepo Moloi, "'*Black Student Politics in South Africa', 1990 - 1996,*" in The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 6 (1990 - 1996), Part 2 (Pretoria: Unisa Press, n.d.), 1183–1235, Also Tshepo Moloi, *"Black Politics in Kroonstad: Political Mobilisation, Protests, Local Government, and Generational Struggles", 1976-1995,* University of the Witwatersrand, PhD Thesis.

Congress (PYCO) and what they called "Bontate"[151] (meaning "the fathers"), gives greatest prominence to male confrontations with one another, marked by age: the elder men formed a vigilante group, which also became associated with Inkatha, in order to tramp down on youth activists. This is despite the role of older women who facilitated peace during intra-community violence, or organised political funerals, including making sure to do prison visits or providing hiding spaces and helping men to escape police arrests. On the firing line of violent exchange, men occupied a predominant role[152].

What we should not do, therefore, is to elevate the exceptional cases of women's participation in violence as 'proof' or 'evidence' that women played a major role in popular political violence. This means accepting that it is not so much that narratives of resistance politics in South Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s - which is the era of vigilantism, criminal gangs and self-defence units[153] - necessarily erase the crucial role played by women, as claimed by Marks and Kunene. Rather, the point is precisely that politics, in particular black youth politics in that era, were a site of masculine domination. Women were indeed present, but their presence was marginalised by male domination. As a result, we ought to account for this dominance of the masculine figure, in particular when it comes to political violence, by marshalling a radical gender critique.

Thus, it suffices to say that when resistance politics took the form of a war or battle with the state, they privileged men or the male figure over women and a specific violent way of "being a man" and of being "a comrade" took root. Indeed, the double modality of masculine expression which Xaba describes as "struggle masculinity" and "street masculinity" (or as tsotsi culture seen in Glaser's work) emerges strongly within the context of black youth political life. Xaba delineates three types of male gender power - struggle masculinity, street masculinity and post-struggle masculinity:

> Struggle masculinity... its main characteristics were opposition to the apartheid system (which included Bantu Education, exploitation of workers and communities, high rents and rates, and suppression of protest) and political militancy. Because many older African people (particularly men) were perceived to be compliant with apartheid, such opposition assumed a posture which was anti-authority... Post-struggle masculinity... seeks to supplant struggle masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa. Its main characteristics are respect for 'law and

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151 Kunene Phindile, *"From Apartheid to Democracy"*., 137

152 See Jeremy Seekings,"*Gender Ideology and Township in the 1980s"*, Agenda, No.10.

153 On the violence of this era also see Ari Sitas, "*The Making of the Comrades' Movement in Natal: 1985-91"* (Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol.18, No.3) pages 629-641; Jeremy Seekings, "*Vigilantes and the State: Probing the Link*s" (Work In Progress, Vol. 40, 1986)

order', the restoration of 'public order', the resumption of paying for services, respect for state institutions, co-operation with police, and fighting crime.[154]

Struggle masculinity, even its supposed dubious opposite – street masculinity, is therefore made out of the image of power which organises existence, distributes life and death, peace and violence in apartheid society. Mbembe insists that actually "male domination derives in large measure from the power and the spectacle of the phallus – not so much from the threat to life during war as from the individual male's ability to demonstrate his virility at the expense of a woman and to obtain its validation from the subjugated woman herself"[155] – So that beyond the obvious violent exchange of white men and black men, is the daily reality of this ability to "demonstrate virility" by males defending concerned women, or the figure of "the people" or "the land" whose image/imagery is always of a female .[156]

The virility of apartheid domination spoke in the interests of its "legitimate subjects", those to whom it distributed life, the whites whose very privilege was being threatened by black resistance politics: the youth, labour, and the community at large. This phantasmic power, therefore, saw an obligation to "kill" – to put to an end, in defence of "her" white people, who lived so that blacks can die; and the blacks died so that they (whites) can live. Here the black youth was no exception; in fact it seems they attained a central figure as "dangerous and perishing" sections of the black community - the "lost generation".

To consolidate necropolitics we must add that apartheid's virile domination was not only through the guns and corporal punishments – "the masculine spectacle"; it also embedded the blacks in structural violence, as earlier indicated. The very Township – the space-less place - is, as Fanon put it, where blacks "are born... it matters little where and how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how".[157] This double, the bodily and structural/social space of violence, combining to form apartheid *command*, imbues the native, saturates them with violence, seeking to produce them as the living dead, who die multiple deaths all the time[158]. But it also puts them in permanent positions of

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[154] Thokozani Xaba, "Masculinity and Its Malcontents: Confrontation between Street Masculinity and 'post-Struggle Masculinity," in *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, ed. Robert Morrell (Pietermaritzburg : London ; New York: Zed Books, 2001).

[155] Mbembé, *On the Postcolony*, 13.

[156] Consider, for example, references to "she" when speaking of land, country or nations. See the discussion by Radhika in Mohanram in *Black Body: Women, Colonialism, and Space*. Vol. 6. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999)

[157] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 30.

[158] See Biko, 1996; Mbembe, 2001, 2007 for the delineation of death and risk as reserved for black people

juniority in relation to the whites, permanent juniors who therefore have to depend on whites to run their affairs, because they are incapable of self-rule; that is, they know not how to rule themselves, instead they self-destruct, thus they need permanent tutelage. In sum, the point of all these conditions, the pedagogical offence, militarism and the infrastructural assaults ensured that the human potentiality of blacks is buttressed and maintained at permanent bay from perceived humanness.

Conclusion

In this chapter we explored the relationship between "youth" and "blackness". We brought a conversation between the literatures on the construction of racial subjects under colonial rule (what we might call, following Mbembe – *"necropower"*) and those on the category of youth. We looked at this with the historical and sociological archive on youth politics in South Africa at the centre to elucidate the conceptual status thereof. We argued that by taking the presumption of colonial governmental rationality, as explicated by Mbembe, together with the insights offered by Mohanram, we can see how the black youth denotes a population waiting to be in *permanent juniority – the state brought about by subjugating natives to permanent tutelage through a regime of racial subjugation based on infrastructural violence, militarism and pedagogical offence*. The colonial encounter is therefore a construction of a legal regime based on the distribution of risk – the culmination of which is death; it operates by saturating the native – who in the final analysis belongs to *the sphere of objects* - with and through violence. Colonial subjugation therefore makes this impulsiveness, incompleteness and immaturity permanent, and in service of white rule. The black youth is a population in waiting, but they wait to wait as a permanent state of being.

We shall proceed to examine black youth politics with this conceptual framework in mind, tracing how they developed in the Vaal under late colonialism. We are looking to construct a new reading of these politics with a keen interest in the idea of what kind of being is under contestation and in what ways it is contested. We are equally interested in what lessons it carries for our understanding of freedom or emancipation under colonisation and, to be specific, under decolonisation. The next three chapters are based on what we may call three sites out of which black youth politics have emerged in the historiography of the liberation struggle in South Africa: one - the school; two - the streets; and three- the movement (or the party). Here, we shall enquire into a mode of being that emerged, a practice of self, of living or subjectivity, of that disrupted colonial power - necropower. In keeping with Fanon, it could be said, we will be looking at an event we call decolonisation.

Chapter 3

Against the Pedagogy of Offence

Black Youth Politics and the Bantu School

Introduction

On the 11th of February 1990 student activists from the African National Congress-linked student organisation, the Congress of South African Students, known by its acronym as COSAS, received information that President F W De Klerk had released Nelson Mandela from 27 years of imprisonment. This was the branch of Sasolburg, Zamdela Secondary School named Nkgopoleng. The morning of the 12th was a normal school day, a Monday. The branch leadership asked the school management to allow them to announce to the assembly that Mandela had been released.

Sabata Lebone, who was a member of COSAS and had been the one that briefed the Branch Executive Committee about the release of Mandela, took the platform at the school assembly and asked for a rendering of Nkosi Sikelela. At the end of the song he shouted "Nelson Mandela o lokollotswe"[159], which is Sesotho for Nelson Mandela has been released. All students broke into ululation and song, and marched throughout the small township of Sasolburg, Zamdela singing songs like "uMandela uzobusa" [160]

Schooling was interrupted, and all other schools followed suit as the Nkgopoleng Secondary School students marched to all schools. Everyone converged at one point – the filling station at the entrance of Zamdela. Some forcefully took buses from the road with the intention of going to Soweto where it was said that Mandela would be addressing people.

This was one high school, in one township, but everywhere in the country people took to the streets celebrating the release of Mandela. This release was a marker of significant change that swept through the country resulting in a political pact that saw the white minority racist regime that De Klerk represented transformed to an inclusive politically democratic South Africa. Here, in this high school, were politically conscious black youth activists to whom the event spoke volumes. It probably strengthened their confidence in their own political activism and beliefs.

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[159] Ketso Makume, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

[160] Makume, interview.

At this stage of the anti-colonial struggle the school, as a technology and site of colonial sociability had occupied the centre. To be specific, this was the Apartheid School, the school for blacks in a system of racial segregation whose basic modus operandi was about securing white domination, privilege and supremacy. Since the advent of mass apartheid education as inaugurated by the Bantu Education Act of 1953, very few political events with meaningful impact within the black community took place without the contribution of the school-going populations. From the pass boycotts of the 1950s which resulted in the Sharpeville massacre, to the school boycotts in the fight against introduction of Bantu education, to the 1976 Soweto uprising, and above all to the theatre of social movements of the 1980s centred on rents, rates, consumer boycotts and boycotts of tricameral parliament elections, demands for better wages and better school conditions; the school going population was undoubtedly central to liberation politics[161].

Indeed, there is no doubt that black youth politics spread and became a major part of the South African political reality with the advent of mass education. Jonathan Hyslop demonstrated this fact and attributed it to the apartheid state's attempt at "population control", the idea of ordering delinquent dangerous black youths, as well as the industrial need for semi-skilled labour. Following this rolling out of mass schooling, there emerged a collective political subject, the black youth, which became a political phenomenon of great proportions. The apartheid bantu school became the site of the generation and regeneration of this collective political subject[162], which went on to become key to the political life of townships.

For instance, according to the Race Relations Survey of 1984, the event now know as the Vaal Uprising involved 93,000 pupils who stayed-away from school. The event drew upon a broader political program that carried education, residential and worker demands. It left about 60 people dead and resulted in widespread solidarity boycotts in the Pretoria, Witwatersrand and Vereeneging areas[163].

Unlike bantu universities, the bantu school was located within the community; it formed part of the architectural outlook of the township, and thus its life forms. To the bantu school was bestowed that parental responsibility over the children; in fact Tom Lodge argues that part of the reason why many parents were receptive to bantu schools in the 1950s, the very apartheid mass education

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[161] See Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945* (London ; New York: Longman Group United Kingdom, 1983).

[162]Jonathan Hyslop, "'A Destruction Coming In': Bantu Education as Response to Social Crisis," in *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962*, eds. Philip L. Bonner, Peter Delius, and Deborah Posel (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993).

[163] Carole Cooper et al., "Race Relations Survey: 1984" (South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1985), Digital Innovation South Africa, http://www.aluka.org/stable/10.5555/al.sff.document.boo19850000.042.000.

project, was due to this very reason - that it took care of children whilst parents were at work[164]. No other state institution - neither the prisons, the hospitals, nor the universities - housed as many black people in an institutional form as the apartheid bantu schools.

According to the Race Relations Survey, the school-going black population stood at 5,547,467 for Africans located in 16745 primary and secondary schools in homelands and urban townships in the year 1983. The then minister of Education and Training Mr. Barend du Plessis reported to the apartheid parliament that "the number of African school children had increased from some 800,000 in the 1950s to more than 5 million"[165] in 1984. In the same year teachers in all African schools were standing at 129,822; this alone must tell us how critical the apartheid school was both in terms of population control and the impact, volume and spread of apartheid socialisation[166]. Would an exponential increase in the number of school pupils over three decades not be evidence of the state's progressive commitment to 'uplifting' blacks and including them in the socio-political order, as apartheid state ideologues often argued?

The point with these numbers is to underscore the colonial question we are concerned with. As already demonstrated in the chapter on "permanent juniorisation", the most critical thing about the argument in favour of colonisation, with all its historic evolution, is that colonisation was about securing white privilege and supremacy. Core to colonisation is the idea, as Mbembe puts it, of the distribution of risk, the ultimate of which is death. Meaning, the form of power that is colonial has to do not with the distribution of life, but of risks - risky jobs, risky living conditions, where risk is the reserve of the native population. The blacks are ruled this way, as those to whom society's risks must be allocated and distributed. This means if there is shortage of food, this "shortage" must be allocated to them; if there is a shortage of electricity, it must be allocated to them.

Colonial rule does this because of its basic assumption about the humanity of the African natives. That is, Africans are in a state of perpetual atavism. If Rene Descartes' interpretation of what happened in the scientific revolution is true, that is, that humanity rediscovered itself as autonomous (or a world deserted or emptied) from God and thus the new foundation of its existence had to be consciousness of consciousness, in the classical sense of "I am thinking therefore I exist"[167], then blacks, including those under the Dutch East Indian Company and ultimately the European

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[164] Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945*.

[165] Cooper et al., "Race Relations Survey."

[166] Ibid.

[167] Rene Descartes, A Discourse on the Method, Translated by Ian Maclean (Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2006) 28

colonisers are incapable of constituting life on the basis of the "cogito ergo sum". They are incapable of the "consciousness of consciousness" – that defining characteristic of the self-reflexive and autonomous subject of modernity to whom law is only legitimate if it is consented to, meaning that those who rule over them must always seek their consent for their legitimacy to rule.

In this spectacular, supersonic, civilisation characterised by permanent revolutions of industry and technology, where "all that is solid melts into air"[168] and everything is in a constant state of flux, the African native is the responsibility of the coloniser. The African forms part of "things", the "natural things" which the coloniser must rule, civilise, and develop - and this is the mission divinely bestowed on Europeans by divine universal reason. Therefore, that which rules over the native must be imposed because the native does not know or cannot know what is good for it, precisely because the native is not the subject of modernity in the Cartesian, even in the Kantian sense. The native is but an object of law, to be commanded.[169] This is the philosophical foundation for thinking about what form the school must take. But what does it mean to make the school and the students into an object of law? As Kant put it, you train them[170], not educate them, much like a dog that must be trained to guard the house.

Set in opposition to this, the school of western modernity creates the modern subject to the extent that it is a subject with a self, a self that knows itself and can relate with and define itself outside other relations like family, ethnicity, religion or nation. It is the reason Foucault includes the school as part of those institutions that flow from the panopticon signifying the transformation of how power relates to its subjects of rule. For Foucault, the modern school, in particular mass schooling, signifies the disciplinary society alongside the hospitals and the prisons.[171] Schooling is also directly linked to the industrial labour needs of modern capitalism as it prepares the necessary skills to advance industry.

In the colony, the school is part of the colonial economy of power that maintains white privilege and supremacy. We know from the numbers demonstrated above that it is indeed the single most important state institution of socialisation. People are admitted at a tender age and over time it inculcates in them their place within society. First, it is the production site of those upon whom law is superimposed. If the modern school is about the preparation of the citizen/subject of modernity,

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[168] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Penguin, 2002).

[169] See previous chapter on this discussion of colonial rule.

[170] See Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, "The Color of Reason: The Idea of 'Race' in Kant's Anthropology," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (London: Blackwell, 1997).

[171]See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage Books, 1977).

the democratic subject with a consciousness of consciousness, the Bantu school does the opposite - it prepares natives to be the objects and not "subjects" of law. What makes it bantu, or colonial, is that it serves as the locomotive platform of the permanent juniorisation of the native population, both in its materiality and in its pedagogies.

Many scholars have indeed examined the capitalist modern school and its shortcomings within the broader project of modernity. First, there are those like Mary Carpenter who through her work and activism advocated for reformatory schools whose point of departure is to separate juvenile offenders from adult offenders through a reformatory school in mid-nineteenth century Britain. Here, you see more clearly the link between schooling the poor working class delinquent youth and prisons. Schooling as essential to moulding, reforming, what Carpenter referred to as "dangerous and perishing classes".[172] But there is also work that looks at how schools play a central role in reproducing capitalist class divisions in society like Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis' collection *Schooling in Capitalist America* and Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour.*[173] For Hyslop, as I have already said, the school as seen in the setting of apartheid was about population control.

This means that for us, simply saying the modern school is about producing semi-skilled workers, reproducing class divisions, or controlling the "dangerous" populations, is not enough. We must take a step further by considering the nature of society we are dealing with and that is the society of what Mbembe calls "late colonisation". This helps us to account for the qualifier "bantu" in "Bantu school". Through the theorisation of what the black youth means we have to locate "bantu" or "apartheid" in "school" because we are interested in decolonisation under late colonialism in our reading of politics[174]. We must account for the liberation politics in the school, not as school, but from the doctrinal and pedagogical practices of it as an apartheid school, a technology that forms part of producing the "bantu". The ideological, structural and political conditions that shaped the system explicitly aimed to create a "black person" to instill in the native such a soul – a subservient soul. This is the *pedagogical offence* upon black people, what Cynthia Kros says "has culturally and spiritually impoverished the entire Black community, at all levels of educational achievement, and

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[172] Mary Carpenter, *Reformatory Schools, for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes, and for Juvenile Offenders* (Edinburgh: C. Gilpin, 1851), https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=gbJXAAAAcAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA117&dq=Reformatory+Schools+for+the+Children+of+the+Perishing+and+Dangerous+Classes&ots=_sPKwcXPkH&sig=7K8TADpOnUhKVR3uQPElfX99hUM.

[173] *Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life (Haymarket Books, 2011); Paul E. Willis, Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs (Columbia University Press, 1977).*

[174] In a way this is what Timothy Mitchelle does in his work on education in colonial Egypt in his work *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge University Press, 1988) 63-94

that in this sense it has successfully served its principal function of buttressing the apartheid system and maintaining white domination."[175]

Cynthia Kros' work, *The Seeds of Separate Development*, clearly demonstrates how the ideas that culminated in the Bantu Education Act of 1953 were anchored in the identity of the natives as inferior to whites. She shows us how "separate development" found expression in a modern rationalised and systematised way, in education of the black people. The emphasis, she argues, was to make sure that the way Bantus were educated did not "separate" them from their cultures, customs and traditions. Additionally, they must not, as Verwoed argued in the introduction of the Bill, be misled into creating an impression that they can be equal to Europeans; in fact their place in European community was not to be "above the level of certain forms of labour"[176]. The Bantu school was meant to help the bantu know its place; it is the machinery of what we shall term the pedagogical offence on the "person" or the "humanity" of the black people. Pedagogy is precisely the teaching, assessment and behavioural methods, together with the spatial organisation that is brought about by the architecture of the Bantu school.

The emergence of black youth politics out of this platform is thus the phenomenon we are concerned with, one that must be assessed in light of the reality of what the apartheid/Bantu school is. Our main question is therefore to find what tools black youth used, and in what ways, to reconstitute themselves as a politically conscious subject. How did a collective political subject that confronted the injustice of apartheid across the country and mobilised across society perform in this one school? Hyslop only tells us that this subject emerged; what this chapter does is to show us *its everydayness, its way and manner of being in the world*. It does so through an ethnographic account of this subject as it existed in a Bantu school, in confrontation with the system that produced and in turn got produced by the Bantu school. This chapter does this using life history interviews with student activists, the principal and teachers, as well as delving into the school archives. It tries to tell the story of the lived experience and highlight the everydayness, where possible, of this collective political subject from when the school was formed in 1978 until 1993.

This is less a history of the political organisations in the school or of the school itself than a story of how students lived out their political identity over a long period of time and within a place we call a 'bantu school' coming up against the pedagogy of offence. In what follows, we step back, as if we too were in their school, in their present. We enter tell the story of those who were doing an

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[175] Cynthia Kros, *The Seeds of Separate Development: Origins of Bantu Education* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010), 114.

[176] Ibid.

ontology of the present, we work with and against them. This is how, as we have argued through Foucault in the previous chapter, we do a study of the political subject through the ones who do an ontology of their present.

Remembering: *The setting of Nkgopoleng*

Nkgopoleng Senior Secondary school is the first secondary or high school in Zamdela, but not the first school in the township. Like in many black townships, the first was a primary school called Community, which is now known as Tsatsi Primary school. Nkgopoleng was opened in 1977 as a Zamdela school for bantu people, in a township that was thoroughly planned by apartheid and built around the activities of the chemical-industrial pride of the apartheid regime, Sasol.

Nkgopoleng - a Sesotho word for "remember me"; but who is being remembered? The school's name suggests that it is a monument. We know that authority likes to craft itself, its ideas, its spectacles through architecture, writing itself into spaces, in order to inspire, inculcate and ferment its values, ideas or even its identity. This, somehow, also guarantees its longevity, its grip on a longer future; perhaps it is how it gains historic recognition. Authority is empty without recognition, even if such recognition is of itself, like Narcissus, the self-obsessed figure who falls in love with an image of himself. And so it was in Zamdela: a school is built, a school for bantu which must memorialise someone. But who is it and what did he seek in this memorial?

It is said that it was Sasol that built the school, partly through the efforts of the community school board, which lobbied for a secondary school to be built to meet the growing need for a high school in the community. The need was so critical that many primary school pupils would drop out, arguing that there was no need to continue since there was no high school. However, it was really due to the efforts of an executive of the firm who was nearing retirement called Mr. Stegmann. It is said he wanted to be remembered as having been central in negotiating with the firm to build natives a school. "Remember Stegmann" is therefore what the school's full name should be; a memory, that memory of it being built by this industrial pride of the apartheid regime, perhaps, in the end, a memory of the benevolence of the white minority regime's firm toward the natives.[177] Although you will not find Stegmann's name mentioned by those who are in the school now, all people know that Nkgopoleng is the heritage of Sasol Firm.

Like many Bantu schools, Nkgopoleng is U-shaped, with classroom rows facing each other in two parallel lines and the principal's office located in the middle end, facing them. Each classroom is 7.5

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[177] "Molebogeng_book_of_nkgopoleng_school.pdf," accessed January 14, 2017, http://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/molebogeng_book_of_nkgopoleng_school.pdf.

meters in length; that is the distance from the back wall to the chalkboard wall. Each is 6 meters in width, which is the distance between the entrance door wall to the opposite wall of big windows. With desks seating two chairs in each, one could accommodate a maximum of 30 pupils, yet classes were often way above that in size, going as high as 50 pupils, with students sitting three to four per desk, some on the floor.

The principal's office faces both the two rows of classrooms as well as the gate - so that the gaze of authority achieves a double purpose. This is the architecture of surveillance which in turn creates a sense of self-surveillance on the part of students and teachers. The school also has a library and a science lab; in later years, more classes were built, parallel to the back of the already existing classroom rows, creating a sense of continuity.

The students' toilets are a bit secluded, a few meters from the main classroom building complexes, creating a sense of escape, both in that they are meters away from the main complexes and do not face the principal's office nor are they in his or her sight. Whereas the main classrooms have big windows across the left hand wall, and small, elevated windows on the right hand side from the same angle facing the chalkboard, the toilets only have small windows. The big windows in the classrooms provide lots of natural light, but there is not much natural light that comes into the toilets. In fact, they are often dark inside since they are also internally compartmentalised into smaller cubicles. If am in the toilet, you cannot immediately tell what I am doing in the same way you can if I am inside a classroom.

The teachers' toilets are however attached to the building of the school principal together with a staff room. This architecture, whether intended or not, speaks volumes about the controls on human life and movement. It creates a sense of the ever-present gaze of authority, only temporarily suspended at the toilets. Individuals feel the gaze of authority at all times, everywhere within the school. The location of the principal's office gives an aura of monitoring movements on and off the school campus, whilst the toilets provide an escape, the escape for the release of human waste or, as many learners would do, for dodging classes or smoking.

In discussions about the building of Nkgopoleng, it is not clear if the architecture of the school was of any consideration or if it was simply assumed that any school should look like this. We know that this is one township that apartheid planned from scratch, including its white areas; we also know that apartheid was obsessed with planning due to its commitment to the idea of racial separation and control. Needless to say, the architecture of the bantu school does not look all that unique or

different from white schools except that it is often "spaceless"; much smaller and often unable to cater for the number of natives.

Nkgopoleng students wear uniform, blue shirts and grey pants for boys, grey skirts for girls and sometimes black gym-dresses, whilst other boys wear black pants. All students wear black shoes. The alternate shirt is a white shirt; most Bantu schools have a white shirt in their uniform collection. The school gate closes and opens according to a timetable; in the morning, lunch-time and when the school day is done. Arriving late or not wearing proper uniform is considered ill-discipline and infractions are punishable with lashes - corporal punishment - at least most of the time.

Infractions vary from noise making, not doing homework, not wearing school uniform, not arriving on time or even failing at schoolwork. One can be punished for disrespect of any sort, such as speaking back to the teacher. There is also a policing of language; one cannot use "tsotsi taal" (which is a street language associated with street criminals) when addressing teachers or speaking in class. One also cannot curse or use vulgar words - the language must at all times be "clean". Students are also not allowed to refer to teachers by name, the teacher must always be referred to with a title like Mister, Mistress or Madam; most of the time Afrikaans is used for male teachers - Meneer.

In one instance in 1983 a traffic cop filed a complaint with the principal that boys belonging to the school had cursed at him, or used vulgar language during the weekend.[178] The principal announced this in the assembly and reprimanded the young minds for disrespect, demanding proper conduct that better reflects the reputation of the school. This is very usual; the community could appeal to the school authority to discipline the youth for their conduct even beyond the schoolyard.

The school keeps what they call a "Logbook" in which major events of the day are recorded, mainly by the principal and department inspectors (i.e. Department of Education and Training). It has had this book since its formation in 1977. Its records vary from accounts of major student insubordination, teacher problems to reports about teaching progress and other achievements. It is this book which mainly gives the perspective of the principal and the department, where in a very short, hand written form, they record what happens, in the manner they see it, with dates, times, and names.

According to this book, 1981 marks the year of the first political acts, with school disruptions by students being the highest between 1990 and 1994. In this period, different principals recorded 24

[178] "Nkgopoleng Log Book," 1977.

school disruptions that were related to student political activism, some lasting for a week or two, whilst other disruptions lasted only for a day[179].

The Logbook also carries stories, in a timeline-like form, of teachers, students, parents as well as community members in so far as it relates to the school. Here the evidence of the impact of student politics appears fully acknowledged, sometimes directly, but at times indirectly. The logbook also provides a sense of the varying number of students and teachers over a long period of time and one is able to get the sense of growth that the school experienced. For instance on 23 January 1978 it is recorded that:

> School reopened today. 120 pupils were admitted to school. Miss B Rampai reported for work. The total strength of the school was as follows:
>
> Teachers: 13
>
> Form I: 258
>
> Form II: 201
>
> Form III: 185
>
> Total number of pupils 644.[180]

In January of 1981, the records show that there were 821 students, 23 teachers with a "students teacher ratio of 1:36".[181] The following year in January, the school recorded 487 boys and 513 girls, totaling 1000. By the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, the school was recording more than 1200 students with very little facilities to accommodate them[182]. In fact, at one point, there was a protest when some refused to be accommodated in the nearest primary school. The school even attempted to have a group of students start school when others had finished at 14h00.

The students were divided according to grades, or standards as they were known then, and also ages. It is, as Bourdieu puts it, a class community par excellence[183]. We know that age segregation is very critical to the management and functioning of modern schooling for the monitoring of

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[179] Ibid.

[180] Ibid.23 January 1978 .

[181] Ibid. January 1981.

[182] Ibid.1987-1993.

[183] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier, 1 edition (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990).

generations and generational continuity. In fact, at the formation of the school there was a sense that many of the students were way above the average age and teachers were also often younger. This is attributed to the fact that when the school was established, people who only had primary education went back to enrol in order to further their studies. A similar problem happened with the back to school campaigns of the late 1980s to early 1990s that took the average age of students to above normal, making teachers relatively young.[184]

This presented many problems, one of which was discipline; how do you punish a person who is possibly someone's wife, father or even husband? How do you take a stick and punish someone who is possibly your age or old enough to be your wife or husband? Mr Ndaba, who arrived in Nkgopoleng in the mid-1980s and became Principal in 1991, tells of an instance where a girl student was having an affair with a male teacher. When the parents of the girl were called in to discuss the matter with the hope that a directive would be given that she is to disengage from such with immediate effect, the mother simply asked if the teacher is married. The principal and the Head Of Department answered that the teacher was not married, to which the mother then asked what was the problem with the affair[185].

Nkgopoleng, as a school, is also a place of multiple assessments, evaluations and grading with the teacher at the centre of determining who passes and fails. The process is an individualising process with everything aimed at the ability of the students owning up to their actions, their passing and failing, their percentage of the mark, their exercise books, and examination script. Whilst there are sports and cultural activities, as well as all kinds of entertainment where students work as a collective, what matters in the end, what makes a school a school, is the individual assessment and evaluation; the kind of assessment that determines progress within the school is based on the individual, so that progression from one standard/grade to the next is what is most critical and one should progress before they are too old to be in the school and in that grade.

Assessments have the ability to therefore break student collective solidarity and perhaps this is the point of departure to understand campaigns like "Pass-One-Pass-All". This was when township students demanded that if one student passes, then the whole class must pass. This challenge, if taken seriously, could actually be directed towards the very fundamental oppressions of apartheid, or towards that pedagogy that capitalism relies on, which is individualised progress. In 1982 for instance, you get the sense of how critical the assessment is from the Logbook. It is recorded that in

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[184] "Molebogeng_book_of_nkgopoleng_school.pdf."

[185] Jeremiah Ndaba, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2015; Anonymous Teacher, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

the first six months of the year 260 tests had been administered across all grades from Standard 6 to Standard 10, covering 12 subjects: Sesotho, Afrikaans, English, Mathematics, General Science, Biology, Geography, Physics, Accounting, History, House-craft, Woodwork. The record also gives very interesting detail where students in Standards 10 and 9 wrote five tests in house-craft, four English tests for Standards 6 and 9, two tests for Woodwork in Standards 8, 7 and 6, and one Geography test in Standard 8 to mention a few.[186]

This is the preparation of subjects for labour, the modern kind of industrial labour which is about assembly lines, timetables, uniforms and the individual wage. It is about the society of individual responsibility, that anti-structural ideology of individual abilities and self-ownership. However it is more than that; natives are also in the process of permanent juniorisation, being prepared as objects of superimposed law; apartheid law. Here, apartheid was brewing its internal contradiction in so far as subjectivity is concerned. It was socialising blacks to relate to themselves as subjects; calling on them to own themselves, yet seeking to integrate them in society as objects of white rule, that they must accept white leadership as natural. This creates a longing for fullness, for plenitude, in those whose wings get cut off by all systemic limitations on career fields and ultimately are convinced that they are not equal to whites - this describes that vulnerability to plenitude, the heightened liability to the desire for full identity.

You are socialised to realise yourself, see yourself. At this moment of looking at yourself, if you do so through the marks, then perhaps you are able, at all times, to pass with very high marks. In your silence, you interrogate yourself. You know that for the maths they teach, you are not even studying that hard to get 100% of the answers correct. What being in a Bantu school means is that at that moment, pedagogical offence steps in to tell you, remind you, that you have a set place in society; jobs you cannot dream of because you are not white. The offence is precisely at this - Verwoed put it even more succinctly when introducing the Bantu Education Bill for adoption in Parliament:

> There is no place for him (the bantu) in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour… For that reason it is no avail for him to receive training which has as its aim absorption in the European community… Until now he has been subject to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to gaze.[187]

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[186] "Nkgopoleng Log Book" 1982.

[187] Kros, *The Seeds of Separate Development*, 114.

Nkgopoleng had an assembly each Monday and Friday morning where all teachers, students and the principal gather ceremoniously. Here they sing, pray and receive the principal's address. Teachers are often selected by the principal to lead the prayer, but at times they get a priest to do the prayer and also give a short sermon. The students stand according to grades, and in straight lines separated according to gender and according to the grades they belong to. A single grade can have three classes, standard 6 A, B and C which represent subject choices - A for science students, B for history students and C for commerce students. Therefore, at the assembly they take the form of the classes they belong to and teachers line up in front facing the learners. The principal can use this platform to encourage learning, give announcements such as which teachers are responsible for what. Students at times render items like song or poetry with the principal's permission.

Each class has a dedicated teacher who is responsible for monitoring the attendance of students, payments of fees or other related matters, as well as general discipline. The teacher and the principal are also in a relationship of authority with each other. The teacher is monitored by the principal. He/she must report on time, dress well and prepare for lessons. For instance, in the Logbook the principal records the absence of teachers, their preparedness, duties, defiance and progress. In January of 1984, the principal records that 16 teachers arrived late at work, and in 1985 there is record of a teacher, Mr. Sello, who used to dodge school, leaving during the long break and arriving just before the school would close. The principal's record states:

> Mr. Sello P was absent from school after long break. On my investigation I found that he had been away since long break. He arrived back at the end of the end of the 9th period (14h20). He has been previously reprimanded for being out of school premises … no tangible excuse.[188]

Mr. Sello could have been attending to private matters on repeated occasions, or could simply have been having an affair in a nearby area with a parent of a student, no one knows. But in the late 1980s up to the early 1990s there is a rise in reports of teachers who are either not teaching, arriving late, missing classes for days, even a whole week, or coming to school dressed unprofessionally or drunk. In October of 1989, one Mr. W Dlamini had been absent from school for five days, from 25 October to 30 October. When Mr. Dlamini finally did arrive, he arrived late and arrived drunk. The principal writes that Mr. Dlamini arrived with a "medical certificate"[189] in the name of Dr. Dlamini A K. He further left school without permission. The principal then states that he has given Mr.

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[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid.

Dlamini "leave forms and warned that should such a situation arise again he will be discharged from work"[190]. The principal also reports an incident in August of 1989 where teachers were neglecting their duties:

> Today during period no:8 I took a round to check on period attendance and proper utilisation thereof. I found Mr. Motaung standing outside his class 9F and no didactic situation was prevailing. Mr. Matsaneng and Mr. Takalani who were on none teaching period must have seen me approaching and they told Mr. Motaung to go into the classroom and teach. As he did not see me coming he remarked that it was not their business and they must go report him to the principal. Mr. Motaung is instructed to stay in his class and teach for the whole duration of the period.[191]

A district department official also writes that he had visited the school in August of 1989 and found teachers not professionally dressed. He states that "they come to school dressed in trek-suites [track-suits] and this has negative bearing on the pupils who also do not put on school uniform on Wednesdays. The principal is instructed to address this sad state of affairs immediately."[192]

These kinds of reports escalate in the late 1980s: at times you would have no political activity, but also no learning simply due to teachers not executing their work. In February of 1989 one Mr. Motloung had been absenting himself each month end for five days. The suspicion is that his absenteeism is linked to his salary as he becomes absent just after salary day and does not give any reasons. Mr. Rathebe on the other hand is never at school Mondays and Tuesdays; the principal says in his case, it has become "customary". This does not change as Mr. Rathebe goes on to be absent even after a warning from the principal; in the first term of 1986 he had been absent for 16 days, and this conduct continued way into the second semester of 1987.

There is also evidence of teachers' neglect of their work. In the same year (1986), Mr. Serobe is "instructed to bring his workbook to date" and make sure that syllabus, subject policy and subject meeting minutes are always kept in the workbook to facilitate control. Mr. Maguma is also reprimanded and reminded of his conditions of service as he has neglected the teaching of his subject, Biology. He is also instructed to bring his subject book up to date, which had not been submitted for much of the year.

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[190] Ibid.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Ibid.

In the early 1990s there is indeed evidence of unionisation amongst teachers who belonged to the South African Democratic Teachers Union and who would participate, at times with the help of student activists, in direct political actions like wage strikes. However, as we shall see later, the conditions of teachers who are neglecting their work, who are customarily absent, and yet beat students for many infractions and grade students, deciding on whether they proceed to the next grade or not, are important to how they in turn will be undermined by students. This authority of the teacher is also a mode of self-sabotage**.**

Emergence of Organised Student Politics

In 1990 on February 16th the principal records that he was addressing students in one of the Fridays in the assembly, when an incident of defiance occurred from one of the activists. He records that:

> I today instructed pupils to utilise their school teaching time and further indicated that athletics competitions were no longer taking place as preplanned, but Kuphutsa Stephen hauled at me saying that athletics were still on. This type of behaviour is not tolerated.[193]

This is during the same week as the release of Nelson Mandela: in a similar assembly just four days before, his release was announced by a student activist of COSAS, an event we now know that spoke volumes beyond Nkgopoleng. However, here in this school yard, was a generation of the black youth which formed part of great activities that left a lasting impact on the community of Zamdela; the first generation of organised gangs were in this school, the first underground units of the ANC that undermined the regime, robbing police and police stations, were in this school; the builders of the ANC, PAC and AZAPO branches following the unbanning of political parties were in this school. On this campus, right in this yard with its buildings and resources is where they forged their political identities, where they tested their convictions against authority and power as represented by the school management, and ultimately the system of apartheid rule.

These activists stood with a decade-long historic cloud that authorities were fully aware of: that Nkgopoleng houses fearless and politically conscious youth. In 1981, during the community rent boycotts, students organised a march on 30th April which ended in chaos where public property was vandalised; the glass windows of the primary schools in Zamdela were broken by protestors using stones, and two local councillors' homes were torched. This led to the arrest of many students. Nkgopoleng was shutdown until the 4th of May 1981. Lassy Radebe, who was a first year student

[193] Ibid.

that year recalls that this act was what made him question the world and what baptised him into political consciousness. He states that:

> Things started in 1981, that ignited my political activity. There were guys arrested, charged with treason in Zamdela. Richard Mofokeng, his brother, Mokete… they were more than 10 and were trailed in Stoffback etc…[194]

These activists were arrested behind the Sasolburg Primary School with explosives, allegedly planning to attack Sasol and nearby factories. In Nkgopoleng, on the 4th of May 1981, students attacked the principal's office (a Mr. Mosoge at the time), demanding that he calls the station commander over to address them since they were demanding the release of their comrades. Mr. Mosoge complied and called the station commander who arrived with other police just after 13h00. The police commander had barely started speaking when students threw stones at the rest of the police, saying police had come prepared to assault them. Police responded with teargas, rubber bullets and sjamboks.

This incident led to the resignation of Mr. Mosoge as principal of Nkgopoleng, and his deputy, Mr. Samuel Ramantsi who held a post-graduate honours degree from the University of South Africa, took the reins. Ramantsi was a strict man whose immediate aim was to restore discipline in the school. He was well known for his unrelenting usage of corporal punishment where he would use a cane to administer lashes without counting limits. Normally, the administration of lashes had counts, particularly in relation to the nature and extent of the transgression. However, Ramantsi was notorious and feared because he could beat a student until he felt it was enough; his lashes would run way up to 30 on the body of one student.

Within two weeks of his assumption of school leadership, he had written a new code of conduct for both students and teachers. The brilliance of Ramantsi was in involving parents and students in enforcing the discipline of the school. He also introduced the prefect system and used the most ill-disciplined students to marshall the rest into discipline. Molebogeng Motosane, one of the former students who wrote a long essay on the history of the school, attests that "the first head prefect under Ramantsi was a boy who never wore school uniform, never combed his hair and always loitered in school campus. His deputy had the same characteristics."[195]

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[194] Lasy Radebe, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2015.

[195] "Nkgopoleng Log Book."

Ramantsi also used the students who were most capable of physical violence to be prefects; he took "delinquents" who used to smoke dagga in the schoolyard and the boy's toilets and who were often bullies. This is very similar to how prisons are often administered by warders; prison warders rely on gangs and gang lords within the prison to maintain prison order.[196]

At this stage Nkgopoleng was the only high school in Zamdela. Ramantsi made sure to set it up as an engine of the community as a whole. He involved other primary schools, community businesses and parent organisations in a vision of producing learners that are disciplined, skilled and of whom the entire community would be proud. He got taverns and shebeens to disallow selling alcohol to students and children; learners were not allowed to smoke anywhere, even beyond the school campus. He allowed the community to raise the ill-discipline of students outside the school with him because his policy intimated that a student must carry themselves with discipline at all times, everywhere they are.

During his tenure he also got Nkgopoleng adopted by the African Explosives and Chemicals Industry (AECI) and other surrounding industries which provided the school with infrastructural support like the provision of photocopy machines, typewriters and production of large quantities of documentation and correspondence. The industrial council was also providing training for teachers as well as financial support for the running of the school.

Ramantsi was also a soccer fanatic, thus he rallied the students to different sporting codes. It was again during his term that the Nkgopoleng soccer team played in provincial and national tournaments that brought great pride to the community. Not only did the school have a great soccer team, they also had a talented softball team, which managed to put the school on the national map. It represented West Vaal region and won in the finals against University of the North. At this stage Nkgopoleng was considered a technicon-school; thus it would compete with colleges and universities.

The foundations of the school choir that won the national finals in 1986 and went to Italy on a tour, on an invite by Pope John Paul II, are traced in the period when Ramansti ran the school. Through his efforts, and those of Mr. Hlahani, who was a teacher responsible for the school choir, they managed to establish a musical culture in Nkgopoleng, even ensuring that the regional competitions of 1983 were held in Zamdela. Ramantsi's term was held in high regard until he passed away due to abdominal cancer in 1983. The school found it very hard to replace him; in fact between 1983 and 1986 there were three heads of the school.

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[196] Jonny Steinberg, *The Number: One Man's Search for Identity in the Cape Underworld and Prison Gangs* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Pub., 2004).

Ramantsi's successful effort to restore discipline and school pride should have generated little by way of fertile ground for political movements to take hold. Nevertheless, as we shall see, this is not the case.

The Azanian Student Movement (AZASM) was the first to formally launch a branch in Nkgopoleng; it started in 1984, the same year of the Vaal Uprising. The following year, in 1985, Congress of South African Student (COSAS) launched. The life of COSAS was however short-lived because it got banned in the state of emergency of 1986; but its activists continued to mobilise under the banner of the Vaal Student Congress, and its extension, the Vaal Youth Congress.

This was the first time since the founding of the school that students formally identified and organised in terms of these organisations. It was the first time that they constituted themselves using these identities of a politically conscious student form. There is no evidence that in both cases it had anything to do with teachers as, for instance, in the cases of 1976 where some teachers directly influenced the political thinking that led students to challenge apartheid[197].

For example, Ketso Makume, who was part of the generation that started COSAS in Nkgopoleng, knew about Mandela from his grandmother who used to pray for his release and that of all Robben Island political prisoners. This made Makume an easy recruit for the underground structures of the ANC. Lassy Radebe, on the other hand, another AZASM founder member, was drawn into politics by an event, as indicated earlier, which made him look for a political formation that only organised for blacks. He was advised by someone in a taxi he took to look for AZASM. Radebe's search for a political formation made him pass through an Inkatha rally where he could not really dismiss the party on the basis of its political discourse at the time, but became uncomfortable because it had policemen that were leaders in it.

In Nkgopoleng the first major student political battle, which is more associated with AZASM than with COSAS, was the battle for a "democratically elected SRC" in 1985. Although student representation was an initiative of Mr. Ramantsi already in 1981, by 1985 there seems to have been no sign that there was any student representative structure. The group of AZASM students approached the management demanding that there be a democratically elected SRC.

The management quickly agreed and set up a prefect system. This was probably their understanding of what an SRC is. The school was at this stage, under the headship of Mr. Hlahane who was there during the days of Mr. Ramantsi and therefore probably thought that the students meant a prefect system. Political activists rejected it; in fact, Lassy Radebe recalls that they told the

[197] See Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945*.

management that "we want a democratically elected SRC, run by us as students, as opposed to this one that is controlled by school management… we wanted our own SRC with a constitution and then we therefore started to demand that this one be disbanded"[198].

On their own, they conducted elections which took class representatives of girls and boys from each of the classes per grade. They then gathered them under one roof and a contestation for 15 SRC positions was held where all students would vote, class by class. Positions included the executive (President, Vice President, Secretary, Vice Secretary, Treasurer) and ten additional portfolios (sports, arts, health, entertainment, education, religious affairs etc.). The first democratically elected President of this SRC was Thabiso Mokoena. AZASM dominated the SRC. Being identified with Steve Biko, AZASM was a black consciousness movement and emphasised the upliftment of levels of political consciousness with black pride at the centre. Lassy Radebe explains how they would conduct key activities:

> The key thing then was celebrating key national events… We approached the school management to celebrate key national events like June 16, Sharpeville etc, then they said they do not know about these things. They would resist, but in the end we would get permission… We ask to be given about an hour so that we conscientise students about what happened on that day, give the students an opportunity to ask questions.[199]

Here, black pride went beyond an aesthetic question about one needing to distinguish themselves from whites through to an active rejection of whitening beautification – when blacks make their hair soft, use skin whitening creams, and aspire to the type of beauty that is influenced by how white bodies look. Indeed, black is beautiful constituted what AZASM would preach, discouraging students from looking down at their own natural features: the simple, yet powerful idea that one should not seek an escape from their body.

Black pride, as a political idea, was also part of the demand for the self-determination of black people. If one is proud of themselves, one therefore resists everything that seeks to turn them into inferior beings, in particular the usage of their skin colour as a mark of servitude. The demand for a democratically elected student body was itself a political act and a statement of pride where students wanted to be part of deciding how they are taught, what they are taught, and who they are taught by.

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[198] Radebe, interview.

[199] Ibid.

The politics of black consciousness as it emerged in universities may have been about an immediate rejection of white supremacy represented by white students who wanted to speak on behalf of blacks – a certain representative politics that re-inscribed black dependency on whites in that white representatives became a mouthpiece of black students to white management[200]. How could white students speak for blacks when they do not know what it is to live inside black bodies? Thus blacks, in an anti-black racist world, sought to form themselves as blacks and speak for this collective identity.

In a bantu school, unlike universities, there were no whites immediately present, embodied in their white corporeal materiality. Thus, white supremacy was experienced differently in the everydayness of blacks. One didn't need to fight against the liberal white student and their patronising cultural supremacy, insisting they can logically understand your struggle and speak for you or stand in the picket lines with you. There was no white teacher who might be policing your intellectual development along white cultural lines like in the Lovedale Institute in the 1940s[201]. Here is Verwoed's Bantu School in the proper separatist ideology of apartheid; no sense of confusing blacks by allowing them to "gaze" at the European with the hope of becoming like them or sharing their values.

So the question is, how did an ideology based on the experiences of black students in white universities work in experiences of black students in Bantu schools? Because in many ways, Bantu schools were black led - there was no immediate problem of the white liberal or the white authoritarian for that matter. Although they were created by a white system, from a student viewpoint or "gaze", whites were not an immediate presence with which they had to deal.

This is to say that in the townships, white bodies are not immediate to the lived experiences of the people. In fact, going to town or the city where white people live is a life changing experience. One can grow up to be a teenager without seeing white bodies, except if these whites arrive in police form. Thus, whites manifest in police uniforms to arrest, assault or kill delinquents. Conscious black people know that whites are a problem, and mass media penetrates the cultural aspirations of township folks because that which is good is always white. For instance, activists attest that it was the era of perms; the hair softening and styling that is directly about imitation of white hair. It is there in the townships where people appreciate soft hair and or no hair for men that black pride addressed itself to this aesthetic self-rejection.

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[200] See Steve Biko, *I Write What I like* (Cambridge, 20050

[201] See a discussion of a student riot in Lovedale Institute in Kros, *The Seeds of Separate Development*, 73–83.

However, in the townships black people live amongst themselves, with themselves and against themselves. The system of oppression is represented even by those who run the school, by the very building of the school, the councillors, the police stations, the municipal offices, all of which are mainly ran by black people. This means that the system used black bodies to manage other black bodies; and at least until the state of emergency was imposed, those other black bodies targeted the black bodies of their immediate oppressors when fighting the system.

Soon after the first SRC was democratically elected, and before the partial state of emergency in July of 1985, there was a rumour that a female teacher whose husband was a member of the SAP Special Branch, Mrs. Makiri, had been selling-out activists to the police. Activists started demanding her expulsion from school. AZASM and COSAS combined because some of the activists were arrested by special branch police for questioning about things they suspect could only have been told by a teacher. Thus, class boycotts were initiated demanding her expulsion from school.

Following this, on the 9th of May the same year, police arrived in numbers, surrounded the school and gave an order that students must return to their classes. They gave the principal three minutes to put the school into order; Mr. Hlahani tried to negotiate but in no time the police had broken the school chains and entered with sjamboks, teargas, dogs and seized on everyone, teacher and student alike. Activists fought back with stones and later, petrol bombs.

Many activists of Nkgopoleng would spend time in and out of prison, some to the maximum of three months, particularly during the states of emergency first declared in 1985, and again in 1986, lasting four years until June of 1990. In this period police became part of guaranteeing order in the schools and, in many ways, being an activist meant you frequented prison as well as school, were arrested many times, detained without trial, tortured, raped, interrogated, released and arrested all over again. It is said that just between 1984 and 1986 alone 40% or 11,000 political prisoners and detainees arrested during this time were of the school-going population. An estimated "18,000 children had been arrested and awaiting trial in police cells for alleged offences connected"[202] to the resistance and anti-apartheid movement.

If before the state of emergency white bodies were a distant reality in that they were not a constant presence in a Bantu school, this changed radically as many youths fell victim to their violence, monitoring, torture and imprisonment. When townships erupted they invited direct white supervision.

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[202] Victoria Brittain and Abdul Minty, eds., *Children of Resistance: Conference Proceedings* (London: Kliptown Books Ltd, 1988), 14.

April 1986 is therefore an unforgettable event. In many ways it was because this was the first time Nkgopoleng students acted on their own to mete out violence against police, torching the homes of local policemen. These were black policemen and it was the black students who acted against them. "Seven to ten, or maybe even twenty"[203] brave activists collectively and secretly decided that this must be done because they had sold-out their comrades. They mobilised the rest of the students and it was done.

Zamdela: April, 1986

It was a morning of a normal school day. They arrived at school and started a toyi-toyi. At the school gates, from inside the school, chants and songs, ululations and the whistlings started, with slogans, marching rhythmically in a circle, closing in, opening out whilst they exchanged a person in the middle or two at the same time agitating and fuelling the energy of the group. Two to three songs later, almost spontaneously, yet so programmatically, there are now a hundred people, more and more are joining as the rhythm gains sound, energy, power. The writing is on the wall, everybody is being mobilised into a defiance, a protest action with constant shouts of "join, join, join" in the struggle - umzabalazo. No teacher dares disrupt or interrupt this moment, or any elder for that matter. This is the space of decision, introspection and heightened sentimentalisms of nostalgia, sadness, anger and creeping excitement. You either join or be relegated into observer status. These are war chants, with sentimental and dramatic vivid expressions of each word sung and/or uttered - from rifles like AK 47, Bazooka and Makarov to the hails of enemy, the boers, the whites and the sell-outs, izimpimpi. Ideas of land, exile, power, the people, freedom, justice, Africa, forefathers, blood, fire, the mother, father, the future, the promise, darkness, the night, the morning and the leader, the hero, the coward, the brave and the deserted or the suffering; all this, or some of these map and paint the contingent rhythmic choreography of the toyi-toyi songs - and we all know it is time for defiance, it is time for protest!

Here, almost only two percent know why things have suddenly conspired in the production of this mood, but it does not matter, the mood rises. The school campus is now a war camp, soldiers are about to march out. They all know, "we are at war with the system", and attacks must be meted anytime, anywhere and by anyone. This is the way of the toyi-toyi, it cooks the moods of defiance, boiling them deep in the spirits of the African child who is like clay in the hands of song and dance, surrendering that stubborn will to be moulded in emotion and motion, taking the whole body by force. But where are we going, what are we defying today? They pick up stones, untie shirts, rolling up their sleeves, tying jerseys across the neck, some across the waist, some folding them over their knuckles to form a boxing glove, some form the amandla fists rhythmically thrown in the ever thin and dusty air. But where, what or who is being defied today?

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[203] Ramafikeng Ntebe, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

Somehow, as the mood and the energy rises, right at the hour of a normal morning school time, the toyi-toyi creates a shadow of sacredness that begins to surround the group of students. This is that picture of black teenage bodies in school uniform pressed into each other making rhythmic chants, stomping their feet and singing at different but audible volumes in the dust, with their sweat and the smell. There is a sense of sacredness there. Some are interrogating their thoughts, some introspecting their defiance, and others surrendering to whatever action is being taken. Some will regret, others will tire and fall, some will end up in prison whilst others only enjoy the chant, the song, but safely disappear.

With the emotional slogan of song, a poetry, a spoken rhythmic speech will announce the course of action, and why it is, and to achieve what end. This will not happen once, it will happen many times. Here, right in the performance of toyi-toyi, is political conscientisation, explanation and education; a new song, with the message of that hour, the mission of that hour, will rise, and rise as though the whole body of the African child is rhythmically going for protest. It works like a spiritual moment, like surrendering to a spirit, a possession and if you are not careful, some do get possessed by spirits here - it is the toyi-toyi, inyamazane.

All this does not take long, around thirty or sixty minutes. They march out and the central agitators carrying the necessary weaponry, petrol bombs, toss them on the windows which shatter into fire as the chants march on. Three police homes later, police vans and fire fighters are speeding into the township. Students, armed only with stones and sticks fight back, fighting men in uniform who are armed with sjamboks, teargas, guns and dogs - this is the struggle, the fight and Zamdela is now covered in dark smoke.

Fanon says "any study of the colonial world" must take what he calls "the phenomenon of the dance and of possessions"[204] very seriously. In the discussion of decolonisation, Fanon talks about the form of colonial violence we find under the skin of the native, bottled up or asphyxiated there due to oppression. This is when the native, beaten up, humiliated in the everyday by the white system, in its language, segregation of space, emasculation and physical daily blows develops a muscular tension. Fanon writes:

> In the colonial world, the emotional sensitivity of the native is kept on the surface of his skin like an open sore which flinches from the caustic agent: and the psyche shrinks back, obliterates itself and finds outlet in macular demonstrations which have caused very wise men to say that the native is a hysterical type… we see the native's emotional sensibility exhausting itself in dances which are more or less ecstatic… The native's relaxation takes precisely the form of a muscular orgy in which the most acute aggressivity and the most

[204] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London; New York, New York: Penguin Classics, 2001), 44.

> impelling violence are canalised, transformed and conjured away. The cycle of the dance a permissive circle; it protects and permits.[205]

This is important to understand because as Fanon explains, it is how the natives release the tensions, muscular tension created by a emotional repression under colonial oppression. Men and women of the village escape near the river, and partake of this muscular orgy, "under the solemn eye of the tribe" they "fling themselves into a seemingly unorganised pantomime, which is in the head, bending of the spinal column, throwing of the whole body backward - may be deciphered as an open book the huge effort of a community to exorcise itself, to explain itself". He writes:

> There are no limits - inside the circle. The hillock up which you have toiled as if to be nearer to the moon; the river bank down which you slip as if to show the connection between the dance and ablutions, cleaning and purification - these are sacred places. There are no limits - for in reality your purpose in coming together is to allow the accumulated libido, the hampered aggressivity, to dissolve as in a volcanic eruption. Symbolical killings, fantastic rides, imaginary mass murders - all must be brought out. The evil humors are undammed - all must flow away with a din as of molten lava. One step further and you are completely possessed. In fact these are actually organised seances of possession and exorcism… When they set out, the men and women were impatient, stamping their feet in a state of nervous excitement; they return, peace has been restored to the village; it is once more calm and unmoved.[206]

This is how natives escape, momentarily, the inevitable, a confrontation with the system. But, continues Fanon:

> during the struggle for freedom, a marked alienation from these practices is observed. The native's back is to the wall, the knife at his throat (or, more precisely the electrode at his genitals): he will have no more call for his fantasies. After centuries of unreality, having allowed the most outlandish phantoms, at long last the native, gun in hand, stands face to face with the only forces that contend for his life - the forces of colonialism.[207]

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[205] Ibid.

[206] Ibid., 45.

[207] Ibid.

Part of the wallowing in the most outlandish phantoms are the "zombies… horses with two heads, the dead who rise again, and the djinns who run into your body while you yawn"[208]. In the end, as we see in this schoolyard, "the native discovers reality and transforms it into the pattern of his customs, into the practice of violence and into his plan for freedom"[209]. The new dance is called toyi-toyi, and it is now in service of decolonisation, of the struggle for freedom. It is not how the natives escape or avoid the confrontation. It is how they announce to themselves, how they spiritualise the confrontation, how they transform it into combat mode to release and direct muscular tension where is ought to be, toward the insurrection. Not a single white person witnessing this for the first time does not feel the heavy rush of fear down their spinal cord, consumed by this spectre, they may even explode in eternal guilt. The approaching toyi-toyi of black youths has real potential to cause so much fear that a well-trained white apartheid solider will pull a trigger in an unexpected explosion of fear, mixed with rapid palpitations.

This is how AZASM and COSAS came into being, but in only one year of their existence, a few months after winning the SRC battle, a state of emergency was declared and it meant permanent or constant police presence/supervision of the school. Some of the activists fled Zamdela, some went to Soweto, seeking to go to exile and join the armed liberation forces. Other students got arrested, detained without trial, particularly senior students. This bankrupted Nkgopoleng of experienced activists, but also made political organising increasingly precarious.

A few AZASM students, about nine boys who were central to the burning of the police houses, took a decision to leave the country. They went to Soweto with the hope of finding connections to skip the country - to go into exile and join the armed liberation forces of the Pan-Africanist Congress - the Azanian Peoples Liberation Army - APLA. They arrived in Soweto and were linked to Libon Mabaso's political ground forces, whilst awaiting plans to help them go to exile.

Ramantsi, only fourteen years old then, was amongst the boys who were there, known for his bravery and capacity to always explore the limits of authority. He and a few others started participating in the activities of a gang linked to Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) known as Kabasa. This placed him right at the centre of the ongoing infighting that was happening in Soweto between the African National Congress linked United Democratic Front and AZAPO for territorial

[208] Ibid., 43

[209] Ibid., 45

and turf control. "I realised that we were killing each other" he explains, "we would kidnap some of the varara [ANC alligned people] people, torture them, stab them and they would do the same"[210].

One evening the Kabasa group were ambushed by the vararas and he was chased for hours until he managed to lose the group. That day, because of the many times that night he could have ended up in the hands of his enemy, it dawned on him that he could actually die, as many youths had, because of this war. He returned home and his father took him to the initiation school. Police had been looking for him and when he finally came back his father explained that they must allow him to finish the ritual of initiation and then be subjected to interrogation.

Initiation, or *lebollo* in Sesotho, is itself a process of making a man out of a boy using the process of cutting off their foreskin and its healing process to speak to his conscience and make a man out of him. From school to gangs, to initiation, these spaces involve multiple processes of masculinisation, contested and at times contradictory. Upon washing off *letsoku*, a red mud that boys who come out of initiation put on, Ramansti was handed to the police, and kept in prison for no more than a week under interrogation. One after another, they ask you questions, beat you up, torture you, deny you food and it does not matter how much you cry, they are doing their work. They want to know where the rest of the boys are, "where did I run to, and whose orders we were implementing by burning the police houses"[211]. By the time Ramantsi goes back to class, he has seen it all: death, torture, imprisonment, isolation, initiation and war; so too have many males of his generation.

The Cost of Schooling, Corporal Punishment and the Sexual Policing of Teachers

Three most important challenges formed the central agenda of student activists in Nkgopoleng. One was the fees: school tuition fees, fees for sport activities or other extramural activities and fees for writing the matriculation exams. The second was corporal punishment and the third, was the sexual policing of teachers.

There was always a project within the political vision of a free South Africa, espoused by progressive movements, that there should be free quality education[212]. At times, in Nkgopoleng students would raise the question so sharply that it frustrated teachers and the school management. For instance, the manner of engagement that AZASM often relied on and indeed preferred was an intellectual

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[210] Ramantsi, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

[211] Ibid.

[212] See Badaat, *Black Man You Are On Your Own*, South Africa; Real African Publishers, 2010, Pithouse, *Asinamali: University Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa,* Trenton; African World Press, 2006

discombobulation of the teachers. They prided themselves on winning negotiations where they put teachers down through a show of superior logic and information.

One of the teachers tells of a discussion they raised over what really constituted the price of tuition fees. They asked how the school arrives at a price, demanding that they break it down. They asked how much it is for books, how much it is for maintenance etcetera. The teacher says they had never thought of it that way, and it forced them as the management to plan carefully. He adds that AZASM students often shocked them at how much they knew, about the country, continent and the world. He says there was a sense from all teachers that AZASM students were attending political schools elsewhere which made them really sharp[213]. He says that when finally the fee was eradicated, students then demanded to be paid back the money that they had previously paid for fees. Above all, AZASM also housed great debaters, with impeccable oratory skills who liked reading a lot; for him, with AZASM you always had to know your story or they would embarrass you as a teacher.

Fees also related to school trips. In 1987 Mr. F. N. M. Maguma tried to arrange a trip to Durban for his class. Mr. Maguma wrote letters to parents which authorised the trip and thus got learners to legitimately request money from parents. The trip was to cost R55.00 and all interested students had to pay half, R27.50 as deposit before 15 September 1978. But the trip seems to have had nothing to do with school work since Mr. Maguma did not inform the principal or the school management. Thus, by early November it was clear that the trip was not going to happen as only few students had paid. The matter was brought to the attention of the principal through a petition written by affected students who were demanding that Mr. Maguma pay them back. The matter was settled by Mr. Maguma paying all students the money by 30 November that same year[214].

A petition, boycott, or even a march served as tools to challenge the authorities around different fee requirements. A critical student emerged and, without doubt in the times when AZASM was most influential in campus, this was a very argumentative student who was always ready to question, through discourse, the authority of the school. In many ways, this is part of what began to erode the authority of the Bantu school teacher, due to their incapacity to deal with critical students. One of the COSAS activists attests that AZASM comrades were very good and used to read a lot, "like newspapers and some of the material that was banned one could find with them."[215].

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[213] Anonymous Teacher, interview.

[214] "Nkgopoleng Log Book."

[215] Makume, interview.

This is hard because the bantu teacher comes out of a training that uses what was called Fundamental Pedagogics, which assumes a suspicious attitude towards the child in the belief that he or she is up to no good. For this teaching approach, the child is born a sinner, born a delinquent; the child is simply an aberration. Therefore, teaching becomes about transmission and discipline, with corporal punishment used to correct infractions. The child must be filled with information; hence the learning practices in bantu schools often prioritise memorisation (recitation and repetition) as opposed to comprehension and critique.[216]

The demand for a democratic SRC in this school was not met with too much resistance. Students simply conducted these activities themselves and would only ask a teacher who was often sympathetic to preside over elections. The tradition was that SRC elections would be preceded by a debate for each portfolio of the 15-member cabinet. This is a school which already had a strong debating culture. The school's debating team used to contest other schools from the rest of the region and was known to be one of the best. At this time, like sports competitions, debating competitions attracted a lot of participation from the rest of the students. Speaking good English was a marvel; debaters knew this and capitalised on using big words to speak with.

This is why SRCs became critical – they tapped into the already vibrant debating culture. Thus, the contests of COSAS and AZASM were often conducted through a blood sport of exchanging and contesting ideas. Each group convinces students that as a collective they must have a say in how they are being educated, and that they will fight for consultation on all matters including making sure that school is free, sports activities are free, concerts are allowed and there are trips to distant schools, for instance to schools in Qwaqwa.

The organisations used the commemorations of key political events like the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 as well as the 1976 Student Uprising in Soweto, which was known as June 16, for mobilisation. The commemoration of these key events often meant students would request that the last hour of the school day be dedicated to mark the historic moment. Principals and the school management often knew that if they did not grant permission, the school would be disrupted nonetheless. Activists would then get a keynote speaker to come and explain the relevance and importance of the day, also as a way of creating awareness of the need to dismantle the system. At times, it was simply through a symposium where a debate on the contestation of some idea would take place.

It is critical to see that both June 16 and Sharpeville were the most known and celebrated political events. Without a doubt both promoted the ideas associated much more with black consciousness

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[216] See Enslin, P.: 1987, 'Apartheid Ideology in South African Education', *The Philosophical Forum* XVIII(2–3)5 105–;114, Higgs, P.: 1994a, 'Towards a Paradigm Shift in Fundamental Pedagogics', *South African Journal of Education* 14(1), 13–21.

than COSAS. Thus, symbolically, they gave an opportunity for the advancement and dissemination of AZASM ideas. This partly explains why throughout the 1980s AZASM was the strongest in the school, winning all SRC elections until 1992.

They would battle for the ideas of the Freedom Charter, in particular the clause that states "South Africa belongs to all who live in it". The black consciousness students would insist that whites must go back to Europe because they despise blacks. They acquired a nickname, *amazimzim*, from the acronym of their organisation AZASM, and COSAS students who defended the charter, often emphasising the importance of resolving conflict through a greater humanity that should be attained by both blacks and whites, were called *vararas*. What is essential to understand is that a critical autonomous subject emerged who celebrated critique; this alone tempered the authority of the bantu teacher who was not groomed to deal with student critique or a critical student.

The political movement about the demands for better education, rents, rates and services eroded the authority of principals and teachers as managers of Bantu schools. This is so in particular because teachers were never seen on the picket lines; at least in Nkgopoleng none are known who involved themselves in the liberation struggle. In Nkgopoleng most teachers were under-qualified. Even those who were qualified were not taught to deal with critical students, and many activists began to see through them. The teachers often responded with corporal punishment, but increasingly, probably due to the fact that students were engaged in physical confrontations with the police, students began to fight back when teachers administered corporal punishment on them. So, first, teachers are not as knowledgeable about political ideas and developments as students are, and second they are not politically involved in a situation where police and the system are bullying young kids who are demanding freedom. Thirdly, they beat up students, just like the police, in order to correct misbehaviour. In fact one of the teachers recollected that it was often said "when teachers lose the argument, they reach for the stick"[217].

In 1983, the Minister of Education and Training, Mr. Barend du Plessis, reported in parliament that "the median age of matriculants in white-designated areas was 19 years and 10 months, while half of the approximately 40,000 teachers employed by his department were below the age of 30" with 78% of the teaching staff under-qualified. This means that most of the time the black teacher teaching in the bantu school is not actually competent in their subject, beats you up, and believes that you are a suspicious delinquent whose mind must be filled with information.

[217] Anonymous Teacher, interview.

The principals also attested that the young age of teachers presented difficulties, particularly with regards to sexual affairs with students. In one instance (already alluded to above) they had evidence and a confession that a certain teacher was dating one of the girls; when the parents were called in to discuss the matter, the principal says the mother of the girl asked if the teacher was married. Upon the principal indicating that the teacher was not married, the mother simply asked; "then what is the problem?" Student activists would pick up these issues, but in their eyes teachers having sexual relations with students was seen as disruptive to the learning of the students[218]. Worse, this presented more difficulty if the student who was having sexual relations with the teacher was also being pursued by one of the students.

One of the COSAS activists attested that the sexual policing of teachers was actually anti-women students. She says if as a woman you are found to have been involved with a teacher, activists would beat you up, believing this was a way of disciplining you. She says at times the way you would be discovered as a woman student involved with a teacher would be as a result of the fact that one of the male activists was interested in you romantically and thus discovered the relationship. The beating up of women students would therefore itself be a masculine contestation of the female body between males: one the student, the other a teacher[219].

The SRC therefore represented a platform not just to challenge school management, but to raise levels of political consciousness as well. COSAS was always on the back foot, at least until 1990 when Mandela was released from prison. A couple of circumstances conspired to produce the fall of AZASM on this campus; one was the gigantic figure of Mandela and the ANC who were then gaining hegemony on the political landscape. One of the AZASM comrades says, "everyone was slowly turning to the ANC because of people loved Mandela and were jealous about it."[220] However, he says the fact that AZAPO decided not to participate in the negotiations itself meant that they were distanced from what many in society saw as an important process.

It is in these years that the contests between AZASM and COSAS took a violent form with activists fighting for turf and control. In 1991 there was a discussion about the constitution where COSAS and AZASM differed about the inclusion of students in the school management, the governing body, which also included parent representatives. When the constitution was presented, one of the COSAS comrades took the copy and tore it into pieces in front of all the other students. This lead

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[218] Ndaba, interview.

[219] Anonymous Student Activist, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

[220] Stephen Khuphuza, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

to a physical confrontation between the two groups where some reached for spades and rakes to use in the fight. The teachers intervened and calm was restored, leading to COSAS being defeated in the discussions.

The groups would come together against the system. This was demonstrated when the then apartheid Minister of Education Sam De Beer came to Sasolburg to open a new school called Iketsetseng in 1992. COSAS led the march to disrupt the opening ceremony, leaving food, chairs and tables in mayhem. All comrades believed that townships must be no-go areas for apartheid politicians. In the presence of all media personnel Nkgopoleng students went to Iketsetseng as though they had come to join the opening event, only to start singing and chanting inside and turning tables over, throwing food and successfully disrupting the minister from cutting the ribbon. Here, all students participated, even AZASM affiliated comrades.

This capacity for disruption could also be meted against each other and often spilt into the streets, where members of AZASM and COSAS physically fought each other, even torching each other's homes. The fight became about territorial control and dominance. It was not until the *zimzims* realised that the *vararas*, who had become involved in some underground activities of sabotage starting from 1991, were armed with guns, that the fight begun to subside, luckily without any casualties. However, some say it was the Zamdela Ministers' Association (ZAMA) that helped bring about calm.

They call it "the seven-day war"[221]. It took place during the December school vacations of 1991. The tensions might have started on campus over the contestations around the SRC and control of the school, but after school, outside school, and over the holidays, they took a gang-like form. Sections of the township began to be declared no go areas for different groups, because activists in the school political formations were linked to the youth movements of the ANC and AZAPO.

However, the biggest, longest-lasting effect of the fight was perhaps on women. A comrade who would date a girl from a different political affiliation or an area dominated by the opposing group would be targeted and dispossessed of the girl. A *zimzim* comrade, Matela Stephen Kuphuza, once dated a girl from the *varara* dominated area in Chris Hani, an informal settlement then in Sasolburg. Two *varara* boys saw them standing together by the shops and basically told him to leave the area, forcefully taking his girl from him. Khuphuza believes that it was because one of them had actually wanted the girl for some time[222].

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[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid.

He says he did not resist, allowing them to take her without a fight. This is the same Khuphuza who earlier on the principal had written about in the logbook, saying that he shouted back at him during an assembly. However, confronted by these two boys he left the scene in humiliation and never told anyone a word. The varara boys then took her forcefully by the hand and left. He says that after a week, he returned to reconnect with the girl after realising that during school hours the same people were not greeting him with tension anymore as they would before. He says he went back because he loved her and they simply continued with the relationship from where they left off[223].

Khuphuza says they never did anything to her, or even beat her up. This might be true, but it is also possible that the girl preferred not to tell the truth. Khuphuza was one of the *zimzim* comrades who never believed that the political contestations between AZASM and COSAS should take violent form. He says he always discouraged it and never saw the point because half the time, there were no real differences and people fought simply because they belonged to different formations. As a true black consciousness adherent, he says it was disintegrating black unity itself[224].

Some of the more senior comrades in COSAS also felt the same, like Toto Makume, whom he knew and interacted with. Khuphuza believes that the younger *vararas* who took his girl from him may have been advised by their comrades to not trouble him as he is actually a good *zimzim*. His girl was not politically active and girls like her were often used to mark territory for these masculine contestations.[225]

A similar, but more dramatic, case was of a *varara* comrade who was dating a taxi driver in 1992. During a school trip where Nkgopoleng went to Qwaqwa, in a form of a double date, she, her boyfriend, and another couple went independently to the destination where Nkgopoleng was visiting another school for a sports challenge, debate and other extramural activities. This was the year when COSAS was in charge of the SRC in 1992.

When they arrived she tells of a story where her boyfriend later in the day suddenly changed and became moody and grumpy. She says the next thing the *zimzims* arrived, physically assaulted her boyfriend and his male friend, and then took her forcefully. They went into the school bus that was dominated by *zimzim* comrades and there she was unequivocally told that from that day she was to no longer to date her boyfriend; that her new boyfriend was to be one of the *zimzim* boys[226].

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[223] Ibid

[224] Ibid.

[225] Ibid.

[226]Anonymous Student Activist, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2012.

They took her back to her home and from the following day the *zimzim* boy came over and they were to be in a relationship for close to five years. In the interview she says it means this was basically a forced relationship, where the boy physically abused her until she ran away to live in Vereeniging. She speaks of how she feared the boy, because he used to beat her up, but he was also known to be very good with fights amongst boys; a generally fearless person.

She says she silently left active politics and did not tell her *varara* comrades because she feared it would result in her home being torched. She stayed with a man she did not like, but only feared; she went to parties with him, she slept with him, she persevered through many physical abuses until she left town without telling him, only to come back more than a decade later. She describes him as a very jealous man who often got into fights even with men that would simply be speaking with her. In fact, the entire *zimzim* cohort of his friends were known to be capable fighters who never hesitated to pursue what they wanted using force[227].

Her description of *varara* comrades, her own comrades, is that they were not known to be very interested in girls, just politics. She says they were snot-faced boys, who were often not well dressed. *Zimzims* on the other hand were clean and paid attention to dating. In fact, amongst *vararas* there is an open admission, which even became an undeclared program of action for COSAS males, that they too should start to recruited beautiful girls into the organisation, even dating them if needs be, to make the organisation more attractive[228].

This is how she left politics, why she decided not to be active anymore, when her very recruitment came with an unsaid sexual proposal. She says this is how male comrades, even to this day, recruit women to join the organisation.

Many of the COSAS comrades today claim no knowledge of this, yet they did not express any shock that such could occur. The explanation of territorial control, which also meant marking territory by controlling where one dates is something that goes back to tsotsi culture in Zamdela, where if you reside in Tswape you would not be allowed to date a girl from Protema simply because you are not from there. The contestations of COSAS and AZASM therefore used the same technologies to mark territory and turf.

It was not until 1992 that COSAS began to gain complete hegemony in Nkgopoleng and in many ways the general hegemony of the ANC in society contributed to this. COSAS comrades had been

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[227] Ibid.

[228] Ibid.

working on finding a way to win total victory. In their view many initiatives beyond the rising brand of the ANC helped them. One was the study groups where key comrades, who were very smart, would tutor students on difficult subjects like Maths, Biology, Accounting and Science. These attracted students, changing their image as people who did not like school.

Secondly, COSAS began to recruit the best soccer players, one by one, the best athletes, into their ranks, including forwarding them for SRC contestation. There was a class called Standard 9F which was known to house extremely disruptive students, often those students who disrupted without a cause. The class was feared even by teachers; the boys in it were also known criminals in the township, belonging to some of the notorious gangs. During the contests of 1991 that saw Ramafikeng Nthebe become president of SRC, Standard 9F was declared a no-go area for SRC contests. The COSAS comrades however forced their way into the class and campaigned against the wishes of the dominant boys in that class. This created a perception that AZASM was linked to these disruptive boys, many of whom were also linked to crime outside the school. This was also in a time when a gang called the BZ was on the rise, notorious for risky crimes to the point of even fighting the police. Thus, when the COSAS boys showed bravery by dismissing these feared Standard 9F boys in the school, many celebrated them and it contributed to their growth in numbers. The other factor which helped them was their dedication to reading so that they became informed and good debaters. This they perfected in the elections of 1992 when they won all 15 positions of the SRC. Many activists of AZASM attest that indeed this was when COSAS became the best in their own right.

It is equally possible that at this stage many of the activists that were also leading the liberation struggle outside campus were the very key COSAS comrades; they were the ones facing imprisonment and police harassment for fighting the system. In 1993 for instance when Ketso Makume was arrested, accused of killing a police man, during his court appearances, the whole school would march to the court in solidarity. This was also the case when Mbuyiselo Mguni and three of his comrades were arrested in relation to breaking into police stations, and arming the underground units of the ANC following the Boipatong Massacre.

COSAS managed to sustain its presence in this campus due to the ability to organise even under these risky conditions of gun fights with the regime and, as we shall see in the next two chapters, thugs on the streets. The school, the technology that should be subjugating the native, is here totally transformed into an arena of political struggle. Enrolling your children into it is like entering them into the river Jordan where activists call for them to come into baptism, like John the Baptist.

Through many political activities, mainly the protest, they pull you deep into this river, with its streaming waters that consume you from head to toe, only to pull you out as a new being; a conscious black youth - ready to determine the terms of your existence, with the preparedness to risk your body, your life in a fight for freedom.

Historical Antecedents of the Bantu School

To appreciate the modern institutionalised education of the native in South Africa - the Bantu school as reformed by apartheid architects – we can usefully juxtapose it with two earlier moments – the mission school as it emerged in the mid-twentieth century, and the founding moment of white colonial settlement some three centuries earlier in the Cape of Good Hope. Cynthia Kros, in her seminal work on the reformation of African Education, tells a story of a student riot that took place at Lovedale Institute in 1946. On the one hand, Kros wants us to appreciate the significance of the "school riot" in the debates that would constitute the reformation of African people's education by apartheid architects. On the other hand, she wants to argue that the school revolts we saw in 1976 or later in the twentieth century had "precedents in the earlier part of the century"[229].

Kros says the revolt in Lovedale was part of "the rising tide of African militancy"[230]. Lovedale was a mission school in which a different pedagogical and spatial reality existed and which had been in existence since the 1800s. It is what the apartheid architects used, critiqued and reformed to invent the new Bantu school. Here, Kros is saying the "school riot" was already part of the mission schools' experience because of "the rising tide of African militancy". In a way, she is intimating that the apartheid architects needed a "school" that could stand against the "rising tide of African militancy" and which did not conform to the demands of this militancy - the central demand of this rising African militancy being the franchise: one-man/woman-one-vote. In setting the Commission of Inquiry into Native Education or, as it came to be called, the Eiselen Commission, apartheid sought to elaborate the "ideology for total separation or apartheid"[231].

Eiselen, the leader of this Commission, saw the education of Africans as "an integral element of African subordination"[232]. If we had to enumerate the key ideological difference between missionary education and bantu education, it is that although they both share anti-black racism, they differ in that the ideology of mission schools is about "civilising the African" who one day will

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[229] Kros, *The Seeds of Separate Development*, 73.

[230] Ibid.

[231] Ibid., 84.

[232] Ibid.

be able to live and share in European civilisation, in the same space and places but not as equals. The African can be educated and transformed into something that can accept the superiority of the European living in the same space, place and time.

The Bantu school belongs to separatist ideology where natives should only come into the white world strictly as foreigners. It is part of the racial purity ideology - keep Africans to their African customs, traditions, religion and culture. Africans must not be mislead into desiring the European life or mislead into thinking they can be the same and equal to whites. They must be taken to the "reserves", kept on their own - they must live in a different space, place and time (that of the primitive). Interaction with them is strictly through "manual labour". This is bodily labour, the labour of the hands - it is the labour that requires less conceptual and theoretical work. It is, in the end, cheap labour, because you bring the body to do what it did not think for itself.

This is where "risk" comes in: the risk of life underground in the mines, in the farms, in the building of roads, skyscrapers, bridges and locomotives. Manual labour is the labour of putting the body at risk everyday, even for domestic workers. Here apartheid is fully conscious of placing the native in its trajectory of colonial capitalist modernity and development. To do this perfectly, the African must remain a foreigner or migrant to whom the state has no duty, and who also has no duty to the state. The African, then, falls perfectly outside the frontier - the native is the one who can be killed with impunity. This is the ideological thrust of the Bantu school - it is a "reserve" school. The apartheid architect does not want to patronise the African or Native and the native is fully aware that the apartheid ideologue wants them out!

So, let us re-emphasise this: through an insertion of the school riot at Lovedale in her book about how Bantu Education policy was being developed by its architects, Kros is therefore saying to us that "school" as a technology of socialisation already become an important platform of "African militancy". She is saying to us that "the Lovedale riot of 1946" was "one of an escalating number of such incidents at African educational institutions in the decade between 1936 and the mid 1940s". But let us go further into the "past" to the founding moment when the ship arrives at the Cape of Good Hope and juxtapose this moment with Nkgopoleng - the Bantu school under late colonialism.

Shell and Dick bring us to this moment in a lively way through the reading of the life of Jan Smiesing, who was a black slave teacher in what is considered the first western schooling of natives in South Africa. The school was formed in April of 1658, just four years after the arrival of the first white settler community through the Vereenigde Oostindesche Compagnie (VOC) of the

Netherlands. They say that "through this institution many hundreds of lodge slaves were destined to receive a local-VOC-approved-identity, which consisted of becoming a Christian in the Reformed Faith, acquiring literacy in Dutch and learning some skills useful for the Company's settlement."[233]

Education, at this stage coupled with Christian instruction, was a form of subjectivisation, a way of producing a relationship that slaves must have with themselves which in turn reproduced the slave-master relations they were in. This was all in service of "the company's settlement", and later the settlement of the white community itself. Education in many ways served the same end as baptism, because the baptism of slaves, which later was abandoned by many settler communities, always presented complexities in that it offered the baptised slaves certain rights and access to limited forms of equality with their masters, such as inheritance, burial or bearing of testimony in a court of law. However, this never meant equity in the general social relations of a racist slave-master society.

Nevertheless, already at this founding moment of colonial racism the institution of the school plays a central role in the reproduction of colonialism. Indeed, Jan Smiesing managed to rise in levels of education until he became the schoolmaster; but he was still a slave, presiding over the education of other slaves. His ability to read and write, his ability to administer healing to people, and his sincere commitment to the Christian faith did not transform the social relations that colonisation had set up; that as a non-European here, in the colony, he was incontrovertibly a slave.

The desire for plenitude, demonstrated by his dedication to the very mediocre slave education he was offered, was always trapped by colonial racial relations whose idea of non-Europeans is that they are non-human. Smiesing was a permanent junior. The pursuit of freedom or manumission for Smiesing meant he worked hard within the system's laws, not by contesting it in a way that would disrupt the entire anti-black slavery of his time. His story, as told by Shell and Dick, signifies a person who stayed obedient to the system and trusted its promise of freedom despite the fact that by the time he was given freedom he had children and was an adult above 50 years of age.

In his examination of the first colonial society which practiced slavery from 1653 to 1838, Robert Shell deals with the idea of slaves as permanent children. He indicated how they were treated throughout their lives, from dress codes and permanent patronising dependence even to the extent that their mistakes were owned by the masters in relation to the authorities. The chances that this would change when they gained freedom from slavery are, as Shell argues, almost impossible. Shell

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[233] Nigel Worden, Robert Shell, and Archie Dick, eds., "Jan Smiesing, Slave Lodge Schoolmaster and Healer, 1697-1734," in *Cape Town Between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2012), 129.

shows how even those slaves born in the master's house who attained intimate bonds with their master, or were even baptised, never gained equality in society.[234]

The AZASM and COSAS activists were not slaves in the sense that Smiesing was, but they were in a subservient position and still existed as "kaffirs" under late colonialism. Their education was meant to socially integrate them into apartheid as subservient blacks who had to accept their place in the modern colonial capitalist world. They were inserted into apartheid mass schooling, as Hyslop argues, to control them as a generation, as a population, ordering their lives away from evolving into the dangerous unemployed, illiterate heathen tsotsies of the 1940s. Like the VOC company slaves, they were to acquire literacy in European languages and learn some skills useful for the "Company's settlement", for the settled European communities. But, unlike Smiesing, they used the very technologies of their subjugation, their very chains, to rebel against the system beyond the school. They irrupted the system that produced the Bantu school, and which the Bantu school also sought to reproduce by producing them.

Indeed, the Bantu school, as a technology of subjugation and subjectivisation was not only useful to the apartheid regime. It served as an important platform for political subject formation, producing a collective political subject with the nuances and complexities it showed. This underscored the idea that power exists in the inter-relational space. If apartheid sought to socialise blacks into accepting its anti-human thesis about their being, then it always had a risk of creating its own contradiction, tension, and at times in ways that reaffirmed it, renegotiated it, reformed it or traversed way past its immediate purposes. This risk was precisely due to what they denied, that blacks are human.

Conclusion

The Bantu school, was the site of the production of the inferior black, where in a gradual, modest, everydayness that comes with 12 years of assessments, assemblies, and routines, day after day, it became one of the greatest tools of apartheid power. It is hard to undo such a monster, with its differentiated ages, sexes, classrooms, grades or standards. It emulates the slave lodge school, which on one hand educated blacks and on the other sent them into the plantation in an everyday exercise of power. It is like creating a pain and then inserting it in the everydayness of life until it is unimaginable to think of life without it. The promises that they educate us because they love us, that they care about our development, and that through this education we might gain manumission, these promises were a given, but equality was not.

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[234] Robert C.-H. Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1994), 222.

Under late colonisation it is the promise of employment, of a job, the idea that we will become artisans, teachers, nurses, doctors; thus, we need not to rebel but rather to focus on developing ourselves. Otherwise, we will not be employable, and then end up like the hopeless, immoral tsotsies. We know that anyone can challenge authority, and this is why there is corporal punishment to maintain order.

The first overtly political rebellion in Nkgopoleng followed the rent boycotts of 1981 when Nkgopoleng students marched in solidarity with parents. This practice can indeed be traced to the 1950s and is possibly linked to parents themselves since the demand did not have anything to do directly with the school. However, when some of the students got arrested, perhaps out of friendships learners made amongst each other, they forced the principal to call the police in a demand for the release of their fellow students. Many believe that students acted under the influence of parents or that Mr Samuel Ramantsi, who became principal following the resignation of the then principal also instigated this in order to emerge as a successor.

This collective political act was soon suppressed by the leadership of Ramantsi himself, who re-ordered the school. The school did not see any student politics until he passed on in 1983. The Vaal Uprising of 1984 also means that society in general was increasingly politicised, but also the activists that entered Nkgopoleng individually began to politically question the world and the system, on the one hand simply because the political environment was heightened and created a sense of legitimacy in challenging apartheid authorities. But on the other hand, there were active underground recruitments happening which attracted a few students that then initiated political formations on campus - AZASM and COSAS.

Once these were initiated, activists slowly worked on politicising students, both on a daily basis, but also through commemorations like June 16 and Sharpeville Day or independence days of other African countries. From 1984 when the first political formation emerged, AZASM, to 1986 with COSAS also present, they were crushed by the police with many of them frequenting prison and facing police harassment. To be assaulted by the police as a student activist became the order of the day and at times attracted public admiration for being brave.

The release of Mandela and unbanning of political parties affirmed their convictions and they increased their offensive against the system. In a way, the activities of the political collective did not have an uninterrupted evolution, fluctuating with the times and in relation to the state's own suppression which turned townships into police societies under military supervision as though they were war zones.

Through AZASM and COSAS, and ultimately the SRC, students also created a counter-authority within the school. This was their own collective political centre of power which the management had to often negotiate with. Through these formations they constructed a way of relating to themselves as beings with a will, because inside these formations are collective discussions which produce resolutions, rules and order that then gets collectively implemented. So, from within the bantu authority that is predicated on the idea that students are simply the object of rules emerged a student with a will, a will that escalated and was in an antagonistic relationship not only with the school authority, but with the police and the system as well. This is a will that also perceived itself to be in pursuit of the transformation of the political system as a whole, its horizon going beyond the school yard to Pretoria itself to partake in the dream of a black government of the people in substitution for the white oppressive regime - a government that would be based on the will of the people in the way the SRC was, right here in the school.

This is not automatic that the institution of the school can provide for the mobilisation and emergence of a distinct political subject, distinct in that it names itself outside the identities given by the apartheid regime. You can have a Jan Smiesing who will not rebel or revolt. What we discover about Nkgopoleng are the factors that conspired, in a perfect historic contingency, to produce how students began to identify themselves in the way they did; as active participants, as opposed to mere followers, in their education, in how the school was run, much like the students of the 1946 Lovedale riot. They rendered the apartheid school dysfunctional, at least in its bantu form, and a generation of docile blacks refused to emerge. The very pedagogical foundations which we find in the slave lodge school were disrupted, exposed and challenged; these are preparing/training manual labourers whose place in the world is as an inferior to whites. If this pedagogy intended a spiritual offence on the black child, reducing it to docility with the interests of white minority rule - an unquestioning spirit as it were, then we know that there emerged a political consciousness of refusal. To be a black youth meant to be a student that questioned authority, and a pedagogical authority that did not create conditions for its own questioning simply fell apart, or into countless stalemates.

How do you teach those who believe that they have a will, and that the legitimacy of your authority over them must be based on their consent? Also, how do you teach people whose spirit has been mobilised against their position in the system as inferior if you are a bantu teacher? The system simply gave you corporal punishment, but can you be better at physically assaulting them than the police or army?

Finally, can these activists who fought against the colonial pedagogy of offence in South Africa, here in Nkgopoleng, Sasolburg, say they are no longer slaves or Kaffirs? Does the emergence of black

political consciousness within a Bantu school signify freedom? We can ask this question because we can take the Bantu school as a capitalist institution, yet one of advanced colonial design, as the super advanced version of the Slave Lodge school concerned with teaching slaves how best to be slaves - slaves that can read and write, but who do so understanding their basic relationship to the colonial master-class. If this is the case, do COSAS and AZASM activists, here in the schoolyard, represent a break from that? If so, for what exactly are they freed?

If apartheid schooling was about the perpetual reproduction of a dumming down of the cultural spirit of the blacks, a technology of permanent juniorisation, then the politics of the black youth constitute a refusal of such an acculturation. However, in terms of the broader transformation of how emancipatory education can be conceived, this is just a beginning. The long beginning started, as Cyntha Kros points out, in the early 1930s up to the black consciousness of SASO students which later ignited the school-going populations in the 1970s with a realisation of the need to rally all blacks in "the fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being".[235] This beginning became a long beginning of countless refusals, rejections, a path of countless "no"s, in a long journey of emancipation, freedom or declination, but without which one may never even attain a single yes.

It seems to me that the story of Nkgopoleng tells us that a truly new school, a new pedagogy, would only survive if it is prepared to teach critical minds, questioning minds, and minds that always explore the limits of power - the human minds. Only when teachers who live with the same "refusal" of the student activists in their bellies take a stand in front of our classrooms will a new educational relationship emerge, a more human pedagogical relation. A pedagogical relation which is at the same time a freedom affair; because to educate is to free - it is about releasing the human - it is performing enlightenment over and over again.

Otherwise we only indoctrinate the human spirit which in turn is made incapable of transcending history through creative life inventions. To "do" education is to create the community of self-sufficiency, is to produce the comrades where there is collective ownership of the knowing that is taking place. Till then, the South African school will never go beyond the long stalemate created by black youth politics under late colonialism. It will not transcend the long beginning, the long refusal; life cannot be only a no, it is also a yes; but yes to what? To subjugation, to manual cheap labour? This is the question upon which a new education system can perhaps depend.

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[235] Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 1978), 52–53.

The crucial lesson we find from this chapter is that students raised the bar beyond the schoolyard to speak for all black people. In their labour of liberation, right here in Nkgopoleng, they were liberating blacks and refused to be limited to the identity of a "student" or of "youth".

Chapter 4

What Death Does a Corpse Die?

Colonial Delinquency and Township Gangs

In early June 1993, an Inkatha mass funeral took place in Evaton. This was by the same Inkatha group – largely known as occupants of the KwaMadala Hostel - that belonged to the steel factory in the Vaal, Iscor. This is the group that was implicated in the brutal Boipatong massacre of 17 June 1992, in which 45 people died. People gathered in the Evaton cemetery, and Inkatha buried one of their own, Ismael Bojosi, of whom it is said, on the 27th of May, "…was shot from a moving car while driving through the [then] informal settlement Orange Farm"[236].

Inkatha was advised not to march through the ANC dominated township for the funeral procession. Ismael's sister, Bertha Bojosi says "they [the hostel dwellers] wanted to bury him in Evaton. I told them I had already arranged for him to be buried in Rus-er-Vaal, near Vereeniging".[237] But they wanted to bury him in Evaton, because the family of Bojosi had been buried there and Ismael lived all his life in the Evaton, Sebokeng area.

The burial went smoothly, without incident. However, Bertha Bojosi says that no more than an hour after their arrival at the KwaMadala Hostel after leaving the cemetery, an induna at the hostel gates reported that a message had been received; Bojosi's body has been exhumed by community members who then torched it. A second funeral was arranged, and in it, all members of Inkatha from around the reef townships came to put Ismael Bojosi to rest. According to Peace Action (an NGO that monitored violence across townships on the Reef) about 200 youths stood outside the cemetery and as the Inkatha group dispersed, they threw stones at them and tensions built, resulting in the death of a 15 year-old who was shot by some of the Inkatha members. Later that week, Bojosi was exhumed for the second time; his body was tied to the cemetery fences and remained there for several days.[238]

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[236] Peace Action (Organization), ed., "Peace Action Records," 1995 1990, ZA HPRA AG2515, Historical Papers Research Archive, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, http://historicalpapers-atom.wits.ac.za/peace-action-records June1993 report.

[237] Bertha Disebo Bojosi, Interview, Peace core archives

[238] Peace Action (Organization), "Peace Action Records" June 1993 report.

There is no image that better characterises the threat to peaceful coexistence from the waving ugly head of violent terror and war than the exhumed and torched corpse of Ismael Bojosi, tied to the graveyard fence. At the transition to new South Africa, or more specifically during the negotiations for a democratic South Africa, the images of terror that most threatened black redemption were not those inflicted directly by whites, such as the torture of school children, mass imprisonment, or assassinated bodies of leaders like Chris Hani.

What threatened the most brutal terror, what threatened to keep the long and cold winter nights of violence and general instability, were those images that spoke to terrors unleashed by blacks on other blacks. Indeed, this became **the** buzz phrase of the early 1990s, "black on black violence"; the massacres of Sebokeng, Boipatong, Bisho, the necklacing of informers, detracting from the internal political collectives or working with the police in general, or even the old black women accused of witchcraft.

The type of white grotesque orgies of violence seen in the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, the 1976 Soweto student massacre, and the torture and murder of popular figures like Steve Biko had made way for self-inflicted political mass terror – black on black violence. On the one hand this spoke of self-negation, not the noble self-sacrifices we might attribute to the suicide bombers of Palestine, but the empty self-destructive undoing of the very collective political subject of emancipation – black people. Its de-sacralisation, im-purification and il-legitimation.

On the other hand, this seemed to prove an important colonial logic that Fanon spells out in the *Wretched of the Earth;* the idea that blacks can't rule themselves, that they are incapable of self-conduct without white supervision. Here colonial violence is so complete that it leaves natives believing that "if the settlers would leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality".[239] Is it possible that the colonial encounter unleashed a violence so complete, that it reduces the natives in such a way that their form of autonomous action is only constituted of self-destruction, making self-rule a permanently violent exercise, if not impossible?

Returning to Bojosi's corpse, one wonders, what death does a corpse die? What do we call a funeral that reburies such a body, exhumed and upon which pain was re-inflicted? And what does such a body itself represent - the one that lived in it, the one that exhumes it, the one that buried it, or all of them? What spiritual/religious rituals deal with such a loss (loss of the body, burial and grave), trauma and humiliation? What meaning of death does this give us and what does it tell us about the

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[239] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London; New York, New York: Penguin Classics, 2001), 169.

life that a corpse lives, the place dead bodies occupy in the social imagination and memory of a society?

To be sure the act of exhuming Bojosi's body, in daylight or under the cover of night's shadow, should be seen as the desacralization of the grave and the graveyard. It is an attempt at destabilising, at testing the fear the grave propels subjects to have about death. If the grave stands for death, or the dead, and had thus been treated with sacredness, then this is the violation of that taboo – a prohibition the tomb has over the use of the dead body. And if so, what do we call the act that stretches the limits of taboo, and provokes the dead beyond the grave, fetching them from within soil and stone, inflicting pain on them by burning and tying them for display on the graveyard fence – doing all of this to death itself?[240]

What purpose does exhuming a body dug six feet underground, after a funeral serve? The process of accepting what was to be no more; the non-being of the being that was – and then burning it and hanging it on a fence? Can this tell us anything about the power over death? Is this the defeat of death, or a certain meaning of death where the idea that it is over for the human body when it has reached the grave, is overturned? Here death has surely refused to stay six feet underground, buried under soil and stone. It has refused a once off burial, and to stay in the grave. Is the disinterment and burning of Bojosi's corpse an assertion of control over death, its terms and its ethical significance? Is it an attempt at the resymbolisation of death in the ethical structure of life or what living itself means? These questions will be the hovering spirit of our conversation in this and the next chapter in an attempt to understand colonial violence.

Who was Bojosi? Why is he important for our study of the black youth and politics? Bojosi is believed to be one of the gang members of the Vaal. In fact, he is believed to have belonged to the gang that threatened the most terror on activists, the gang that transformed from being concerned only with crime to giving itself to killing anti-apartheid activists in the Vaal, known simply as the Khethisi gang. We will use life history interviews with some of those involved in his gang and other similar gangs like his in the Vaal, as well as archival material on this subject to discuss the question of criminal violence in the colony. It is perhaps in this sphere of black society where crime and liberation struggle meet and almost look identical that the logic of colonial violence is best expressed. This intersection between crime and liberation struggle will therefore be our focus in this chapter. In keeping with Chapter Two, it is the aim of this chapter to understand colonial delinquency and crime which appear under apartheid to be identical with the black youth, as one of the important socialising forces for the black youth under apartheid.

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[240] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (December 21, 2003): 16, doi:10.1215/08992363-15-1-11.

The Question of Colonisation and Crime

Fanon, and following him Mbembe, already argued that violence and terror in the colony are the normal order of things[241]. In many ways to say colonisation is to say violence because they are synonymous; colonisation is the face that violence takes in Europe's rule of native populations. At first colonial power does this in the ways in which it invents spaces, races and hierarchies amongst peoples, differentiating them according to all sorts of identities and uses, for the sole "purpose of control"[242]. For Fanon, the language of rule is brute force; violence – or war – permeates all of social life; that is, it is the way of life or living between the settler and the native simply because for the settler the native is not human, s/he is not the subject of civility or law.[243] The only way to relate with the native is thus by absolute force, violence or terror.

Secondly, the colonial situation in turn creates relations of violence between the natives themselves. Fanon's critique of the colony sustains a balanced articulation of how colonial power creates normalised relations of violence and terror between the coloniser and the colonised, as well as amongst the colonised. It seems to me that it is precisely Fanon's interest in what he calls "true decolonisation"[244] that makes him sustain a critique of terror in the colonial situation that looks both at violent relations between the coloniser and the colonised, as well as how these relations are articulated amongst the colonised themselves. He writes:

> …the settler-native relationship is a mass relationship. The settler pits brute force against the weight of numbers. He is an exhibitionist. His preoccupation with security makes him remind the native out loud that there he alone is master. The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of outlet; the native is trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism. But we have seen that inwardly the settler can only achieve a pseudo-petrification. The native's macular tension finds outlet *regularly*[245] in bloodthirsty explosions - in tribal warfare, in feuds between septs and in quarrels between individuals.[246]

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241 See Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth, and* Mbembe, "Necropolitics."

242 Mbembe, *Necropolitics*. 26

243 See Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*; Mbembe, "Necropolitics"; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Frantz Fanon and C.L.R. James on Intellectualism and Enlightened Rationality," *Caribbean Studies* 33, no. 2 (2005): 149–94.

244 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 46.

245 My emphasis

246 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 41.

It is therefore in this space of relations between native and native that colonial settler power redirects the violence that should be accrued to it. In Fanon, already at an early stage of his critique, he tells us that the native "is overpowered but not tamed; he is treated as an inferior but he is not convinced of his inferiority."[247] This accounts for the native's permanent dream or wish to retaliate. The "symbols of social order - the police, the bugle-calls in the barracks, military parades, and the waving flags", says Fanon, "are at one and the same time inhibitory and stimulating; for they do not convey the message 'Don't dare to budge'; rather, they cry out 'Get ready to attack'."[248] So in the person of the native is also built an active anticipation, a waiting that someday the settler will lower its guard and the native will attack.

However, in the mean time, the aggressiveness is redirected to other natives in the reserves and in the townships. Here, the colonised turn on themselves, they "manifest aggressiveness which has been deposited in [their] bones against [their] own people". "This is the period when the niggers beat each other up, and the police and magistrates do not know which way to turn when faced with the astonishing waves of crime".[249]

Fanon locates crime as part of the ways in which natives turn on each other, and as a space in which to learn about the violence of colonial power itself, the redirected violence of the colony. Here, in chapter one of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon only hints at this and promises to deal with it later in Chapter Five. Nevertheless, we come to learn that crime amongst the colonised, the crime that the colonised commit against each other is part of the "native's macular tension" which "finds outlet *regularly"* (my emphasis) in and amongst the colonised. Crime is part of how the colonised comes up "against his own people" - it is the everyday (regular) outlet of macular tension created by the condition of inability or impotency experienced in violent relations with the coloniser.

This violence, which we may call redirected violence, and which Fanon says "finds outlet regularly in bloodthirsty explosions" is categorised in three ways; one is in "tribal warfare", the second is "in feuds between septs", and the third "in quarrels between individuals". These are outlets; they are not a confrontation of the problem of oppression but its avoidance. Fanon argues:

> While the settler or the policeman has the right the live-long day to strike the native, insult him and to make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his knife at the

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[247] Ibid., 40.

[248] Ibid., 41.

[249] Ibid.

> slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-a-vis his brother.[250]

Colonial crime between the colonised is cast in this central motif of colonial power to subject the colonised into terror. Fanon goes further to locate colonial crime amongst the colonised, and indeed other categories of native to native violence, in "patterns of conduct" which he says are those of "the death reflex when faced with danger, a suicidal behaviour which proves to the settler (whose existence and domination is by them all the more justified) that these men are not reasonable human beings."[251] He also calls them patterns of avoidance, avoiding the obvious or inevitable confrontation with the oppressor. "As if plunging into a fraternal blood-bath"[252], these patterns allow natives to avoid or ignore the obstacle, putting off the real confrontation with colonial authorities. Suicidal because to turn on your own is to turn on yourself, and a death reflex because under colonisation natives are the living dead and when they strike back, or act, its like a corpse which still moves after death; those kicks of a decapitated animal after slaughter.

Perhaps this is how the significance of Bojosi's body could be understood: as making the dead speak, bringing them above ground after not only declared dead, but after burial, to communicate with one another. This is not like the case of Lazarus whose dead body is called forth by Jesus in a transcendental interpellation bringing it back to life. Bojosi is also not Jesus who resurrects after the terrifying violence of crucifixion, nether is he a zombie. Religion and superstition indeed have their place in the patterns of avoidance in the colony. However, here, the symbolic representation carried by the "death reflex" is to understand the extent of the native on native violence. When Bojosi is resurfaced from the grave, it is not a religious act. It is a violent and physical act in which he is being refused a decent burial or even the very grave- that place where the black dead settle under conditions of general colonial landlesness in the colony.

However, right here, precisely in this rubble, pain and interexchange of death are the signs of the subject of decolonisation. Here is the sign of native action, that the native still "acts", that they are not dead or totally instrumentalised. Fanon says this is how we know that colonisation has only achieved a pseudo-petrification; that its terror has not turned the native into a stone. The colonialist could not empty the violent response of the colonised; they, the colonialists, survive only by redirecting this violence between the colonised. It is there, although produced each day, banked in

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250 Ibid., 42.

251 ibid.

252 Ibid.

the macular tension of the native, but finds regular outburst amongst the colonised. This violence, Fanon says, tells us and the coloniser that the day of reckoning will come, spontaneously, by accident or in an organised overthrow. Colonial crime therefore is located in this sphere, as a testimony of colonialism's pseudo-petrification. Colonial crime is a testament that colonialism has only achieved pseudo-petrification.

This redirection of violence is not a unique situation of colonisation, it is also part of the western sociological reality or the sociological reality of modernity as seen in the white countries. It is the modus operandi of western modernity; it is a modernity rooted, shaped and sustained by violence. It is Michel Foucault who famously critiqued modern power using the image of the *panopticon*[253], to foreground what he calls the "punitive society".[254] The panopticon represents a moment in the transformation of governing when the legitimacy of the power to rule had to shift from God to the people. This "the people" had a will, a popular will, and it is on this will that new rulers would build the new juridical forms. Discipline, or if you like, the prison, was transformed into a means of self-conduct, that is, into an institution producing subjects of self-surveillance who conduct themselves. Punishment, as a form of discipline, takes on a mode of soft physical control, thus differing from absolute physical torture and spectacle that characterised something like the scaffold.

Foucault speaks of the many transformations of the penal system, with the prison at its centre, and expresses surprise that the failure of prisons in transforming behaviour – rehabilitation – did not result in them being done away with. He says perhaps it is not in how prisons can work best, but it is in why, having failed to uproot delinquency, they have persisted that we can find the answer. He suggests that it is because prisons produce specific forms of delinquency that can be redirected at the most vulnerable classes, and over a long period of time they produce an underclass through which illegality is constantly being shaped. But what is the place of delinquency in colonial systems of rule? How, if the subjects involved are denied human attributes, do we understand the violence of social deviance and crime in a situation where we are not dealing with subjects of "law" in that we can say they are committing "illegal" acts?

Following Fanon, I suggest that in the colony, we must also look at crime between the colonised first as representing the redirected violence which should be directed at the oppressor. Secondly, we can look at crime to observe the everydayness or the everyday outbursts of this "redirected violence". Explosions precisely because even if they are set in the scenes of everyday human exchanges, they

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253 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage Books, 1977).

254 Michel Foucault, *The Punitive Society: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1972-1973*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell, 1st ed. 2015 edition (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

are nonetheless explosions; where individual natives explode with the otherwise suppressed anger and macular tensions accrued in the confrontation with colonial power. This colonial power is not only in accordance with law enforcement, but, as explained in Chapters Two and Three, it also constitutes a spatial and infrastructural violence.

Finally, we can also look at this crime to see an inspiration or what Fanon calls "a blueprint"[255] for a confrontation with the oppressor in the decolonisation struggle. In many ways, the gangster comes up against the colonialist, in fact the doing crime is itself a decision to defy or break a law that is imposed on you and your people, even if it is a law about not performing certain criminal acts against your people. The gangster, though, chooses this confrontation with the colonialist as a way of life or living. Fanon writes that "people make use of certain episodes in the life of the community in order to hold themselves ready and to keep alive their revolutionary zeal."[256]

He gives an example of a gangster "who holds up the police set on to track him down for days on the end, or who dies in single combat after having killed four or five policemen, or who commits suicide in order not to give away his accomplices - these types light the way for the people, form the blue prints for action and become heroes."[257] Fanon is conscious that acts of violence get to be distinguished; that a conscious people who have chosen to confront the oppressor or engage in the struggle for decolonisation draw what he calls the "demarcation line" between those acts the gangster engaged in against colonisers and those the gangster engaged in against the colonised. He argues "it's a waste of breath to say that such and such a hero is a thief, a scoundrel or a reprobate. If the act for which he is prosecuted by the colonial authorities is an act exclusively directed against a colonialist person or colonialist property, the demarcation line is definite and manifest"[258].

However, the "demarcation line" comes when the thief, scoundrel or reprobate is being used as a hero for collective revolutionary zeal. Nevertheless, what is important for Fanon, and for us, is the extent to which the gangster's confrontation with the colonialist authorities signifies or provides a "blueprint", a testament that the system can indeed be confronted, fought with or destabilised. Here, the community comes into this realisation through the acts of criminals and their fearlessness, bravery and defiance of the colonial authorities. This is evidenced in their commitment to their fellow accomplices to the point of committing suicide to avoid selling them out under interrogation.

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[255]Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 40

[256] Ibid., 54

[257] Ibid

[258] Ibid

Even more importantly, colonial crime, even when it happens among the colonised, points to colonial power itself as much as it also represents the fact that the colonised have not attained total petrification. However, the question remains as to how, if the subjects involved are denied human attributes, do we understand the violence of social deviance and crime in a situation where we are not dealing with subjects of "law" in that we can say they are committing "illegal" acts?

The history of gangs and crime in black South Africa has indeed been the subject of many scholars. However as we shall see later, from scholars concerned with delinquency in the Cape frontier in the 18th century to those concerned with the crossroads of crime, liberation politics and gangs in the late twentieth century, none pose the question of colonisation and crime, taking into consideration "what it means to break a law" that is superimposed, that regards you already as its object; as non-human. This will be the focus in this chapter. We shall interrogate this question through the examination of black youth gangs at the crossroads of liberation struggle and crime, holding, as Fanon does, to the quest for "true decolonisation". Mbembe too hints at this, in his essay on Necropolitics, when dealing with the "suicide-bomber" and the quest for freedom in "death worlds"[259]. Political violence is critical, and much more so when looked at through the prism of those that confront the political system itself. For us, colonial crime is an important pathway into the examination of political violence and the struggle for decolonisation, in the confrontation of with colonial authority and its many terrors.

My argument here seeks to advocate for a version of criminality and delinquency that diverges from assessments based on frameworks founded in rationalistic conceptions of order and disorder by and for the self-reflexive autonomous subject birthed at the altar of enlightenment thought. In short, that figure of sovereignty constituted through the rule of reason, which is "the truth of the subject"[260]. This framework would have us understand Township crime as breaking laws or orders constituted through the social contract of the governed and the governing; however, colonial power is precisely that form of power that rules *without* consent. Its juridical structure is superimposed, meaning that law is not founded upon a "social contract"[261]; thus, we need a different model to understand a means of ruling those upon whom law is forced because they do not form part of the

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259 Mbembe, *Necropolitics*., 40

260 Ibid., 13

261 *I use Social Contract to precisely have the ready think of the Social Contract tradition as inaugurated in the nineteenth century by writers like Thoman Hobbes in his classic work, Leviathan. Here, social contract is the avoidance of state of nature in which people are apolitical and asocial. Hobbes' "state of nature" leads to a war of all against all, thus, to avoid this, people enter "social contract". Colonisation is not a social contract situation, there is not contract, it is absolute conquest. For a full view on this see Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (Wordsworth Editions, 2014)*

legitimate political community; they are part of things with whom the relationship is one of absolute war or violence.

This we see, for instance, in ground breaking studies like that of Robert Gordon's *The Bushman Myth* where he traces similar processes of dehumanisation, criminalisation and the classification of "Bushmen" as "vagabonds" by German colonial forces in Namibia so as to legitimise hunting them down like wild game.[262] I need not repeat these examples in full here. To arrive at this new analysis or critique we will do a reassessment of stories of gangs and gang formation in the colony in South Africa. We will do this by first demonstrating in some detail how delinquency has thus far been understood within South African socio-historical and anthropological meditations and scholarship. Here, we find at least two narrative tropes about *crime in the colony*. The first is the inquiry into black criminality that probes whether criminal gangs have revolutionary potentiality – the *Lumpenproletariat* as they are called.[263] This approach locates black gangs in the negative. They are called "anti-social" because as we shall see, these gangs "feed on their own communities" and bask in terrorising other blacks. The second is the inquiry that goes beyond concerns with social revolution – but which is still within the "anti-social bandit narrative trope" - into counter-cultural hegemony and resistance; meaning they think about gangs and the ways in which they managed to provide alternative cultural expression that permeated society in light of oppression. The common thread, however, in both narrative tropes is the concern with violence – in particular how blacks unleash terror on each other, without equally interrogating colonialism as foundational to such. Above all, these narrative tropes are still marshalled within the conception of the political that we are seeking to disarticulate, one that posits the centrality of reason in reading the political.

Secondly, I will add new empirical findings that further illustrate the transition-era violence and the black youth gangs in it to enrich and complicate further this story of colonial delinquency and violence. As argued in Chapter Two, through crime as a phenomenon, black lives are shaped as permanently junior - what I refer to as *permanent juniorisation.* This theme of colonial crime, the black youth and liberation will continue in the next chapter, but here we focus primarily on 'crime'. How do we understand the delinquency of the black youth as constituted in penal regimes of permanent juniorisation?

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262 Robert J. Gordon and Stuart Sholto-Douglas, *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass*, 2nd edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000).

263 Charles Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914* (Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2001), 368.

Anti-Social Bandits: *From Nigel Penn's Droster Gangs to Van Onselen's New Nineveh*

It could be said that the history of colonial delinquency and criminality in South Africa begins in the Cape Colony. We must begin here, at the founding moment of colonial rule in South Africa, to highlight the long history of crime under the colonial condition. And it is with Nigel Penn that we find insights into some of the early stories of the delinquents and the formations of some of the first gangs in and around the Cape colonial frontier. This is by way of demonstrating that crime has been the problem of the settler community right from the founding moment of colonisation - that it is constitutive of colonial settlement itself in how it redirects native violence in and amongst natives. Penn wants to explore, as he says, "how certain individuals… fell (a)foul of the law of the colonial government and neither suffered nor sought to avoid punishment"[264].

The period that Penn is dealing with is one where the Cape European colony was still expanding and its boundaries (the frontier) had not yet closed up. Here, outside the colony remained a jungle, inhabited by savages; from the Khoikhoi and San communities to the Bantu up north, east and west of the frontier. This provides more of a hybrid geopolitical reality in which internal to the colony you find slaves whose political and social reality is shaped by the plantation as a political entity. Outside the colony, at the frontier, are the "free" Khoisan communities faced with an increasingly expanding European settlement - they are the "savages" whose relationship with the colony is one of absolute violence (permanent war). Here we find those necropolitical images of sovereignty articulated by the death worlds of both the plantation and the colony; of the slave and the master and of the coloniser and the savage.

Penn's brilliant study offers stories of *Droster* gangs that troubled both colonisers and the frontier communities of the Khoikhoi and Xhosa people. The very term, *Droster* means the runaways – which includes both slaves and company servants. Penn uses the term "fugitives" to describe these runaways who set out to find life outside the colony and often settled in the mountains and wild veld of the frontier feeding on colonists, the colonised, and frontier communities alike. Some took off with the aim to return to whatever home they came from.

This is important because it tells us that Penn does not believe these are social bandits in the Eric Hobsbawn sense. But like Van Onselen's "Regiments of the Hills", these are anti-social bandits. This is the central conceptual prism through which colonial criminality is seen by most South African scholars and runs like a common thread in the historiography on crime and gangs up to discussions about the Tsotsi gangs and comrade-Tsotsi characters of township stories offered by

264 Nigel Penn, *The Forgotten Frontier: Colonist and Khoisan on the Cape's Northern Frontier in the 18th Century* (Athens : Cape Town: Ohio University Press, 2005), 3.

Glaser and others. To set the scene, Penn describes in very vivid terms the way runaway slaves were punished within Cape colonial law enforcement:

> It was resolved to punish recaptives with a beating with rods, the amputation of an ear and the attachment of chains to their persons. These measures were to be enforced until an improvement in circumstances was noted. By October 1702, however, runaways were still so prevalent that the Company post-holders along the colony's frontier were instructed to a man every day to look for fugitives slaves and shoot them if necessary. The situation had obviously improved by June 1711, for on this date the punishment for the recaptives was upgraded so as to cause more terror amongst the slaves and to act as a deterrent. A first offender would not only be whipped but branded on the cheek. For the second escape attempt the punishment would include branding on the other cheek and, if a man was unlucky enough to be caught for the third time, he could expect to have his ears and nose cut off. These punishments were, however, contingent on the captive's not having committed any death-deserving crimes (such as theft) during his flight. If he had done so, he could expect no mercy.[265]

This is colonial law par-excellence: *pure force*! The droster phenomenon, however, increased to the extent that it mutated into the huge groups of the Oorlams who "were larger, more successful versions of the droster gangs".[266] Perhaps the most useful story to illustrate the lives of these gangs is one where 10 slaves escaped in December of 1707 "who deserted their masters in Cape Town and decided to proceed to Madagascar. Penn tells us that "two of the slaves were women – Marie of Madagascar (or Big Marie) and Marie of Bengal (or little Marie) – who each had an infant with them".[267] They also included a 16 year old girl named "Jannetje of the Cape."[268] In addition, the group was armed with knives and guns.

The group never made it to Madagascar, but they engaged in various murders and theft activities on their way before being captured at "Saldanha Bay by the Company's post-holder with the help of the local Khoikhoi".[269] At Groene Kloof, as they were heading to the beach northwards, "the group observed a European man in the veld with a gun over his shoulders and two dogs at his side" who

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[265] Ibid., 74.

[266] Ibid., 95.

[267] Ibid., 82.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid., 84.

was to be their victim. They resolved to approach him, trick him through kind requests for water and tobacco then kill him using knives. They stabbed him in the face repeatedly, opening his stomach and disposing it of its insides and mutilating his body parts.[270]

Most members of the group actively participated, including Big Marie. Penn tells of the instance at which the European man was captured and then Jannetje, wanting to save his life, jumped on his legs and lied about a group of men approaching. But this did not stop the group from brutally murdering the man in that powerful, irresistible outburst of macular tension that Fanon speaks of, facing the possible master. When asked why they unleashed such barbarous murder, they argued that they wanted it to look like he had been killed by wild animals.[271] This of course would later be their fate on the colonial punishment platforms: to be killed like animals.

Penn tells us as well that droster gangs received different treatment from frontier communities largely due to the ability of the colonisers to instil fear in any group helping them, but also because drosters would steal from these communities to survive, if they refused to be integrated. He quotes Mentzel, writing in the 1730s:

> 'Towards runaway slaves belonging to the colonists, the Hottentots feel a disgust which is not only inborn, but also founded on common sense. They know very well that a runaway slave can only preserve his life by robbing them of their cattle. Therefore, if they catch one of them, they hand them over to the nearest colonist, who then takes him away and surrenders him to the authorities. But should a fugitive slave succeed in reaching the Kaffirs [the Xhosa of the Eastern Cape], he would be protected against all danger, for they never give the slave up, because they become their best fighters, more courageous than the Kaffirs themselves… It is the aim of all such slaves, who band themselves together and plot to desert, to join up with the Kaffirs'.[272]

The discussion of these gangs is strictly distinguished from the discussion of what Penn attributes as the status of "social banditry". Here, he tells the story of Estienne Barbier who was "an eighteenth-century Cape social bandit"[273]. His review of what constitutes social banditry, a concept he takes from Eric Hobsbawm, reshaped by other scholars, differs from the emphasis on the destructiveness of the drosters, in that for Penn, social bandits are not always destructive to the groups they emerge

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[270] Ibid.

[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid., 77.

[273] Ibid.

from, whether peasants, slaves, natives or working class. This is the fundamental thread that makes the colonial criminality of gangs like the drosters anti-social: unlike social banditry, which is a source of protest, they do not seek reform and they are destructive to other 'blacks', feeding off of them despite the fact that, according to Penn:

> Some of the drosters may have had no other wish than to be accepted as new members of a protective Khoikhoi group though they were not always assured of a friendly welcome. The Company, in any event, worked hard to ensure that the neighbouring Khoikhoi would return colonial property. Groups such as the Chariguriqua, for instance, who had won the reputation of welcoming runaway slaves, were made to suffer the consequences of their misplaced generosity. The mixture of bribery and threats which were employed is well illustrated in the Council Policy's instructions of 1696.[274]

Estienne Barbier on the other hand was a different kind of fugitive - a European who, after failing to uproot or successfully challenging the corruption of the officials and elite of the Cape Colonial administration, went on to form a gang constituted by poor independent colonist farmers. Penn explains that "in order to produce sufficient wheat and vegetables, the Company had been obliged to create a class of independent farmers - the free burghers - and grant them land enough on which to grow their crops."[275] It is these independent farmers or free burghers who failed to keep up with the demand of the colonial authority's share of their crops on one hand, and on the other were prohibited from trading in livestock because the VOC wanted to preserve monopoly of livestock trade directly with the Khoikhoi, that constituted Barbier's followers. Penn writes that:

> …it was feared that if the colonists were allowed untrammelled access to Khoikhoi flocks and herds, not only might they push the prices up, but they might also strip the Khoikhoi of their livestock altogether and destroy the source of supply. A further undesirable consequence of permitting free burghers to enter the livestock trade would be that it would encourage private expeditions to journey into the interior where, beyond the Company's surveillance, they might indulge in acts of lawlessness. Even if the colonists did not prove to be a disruptive force, too great an emphasis on pastoral pursuits would jeopardise the entire settlement: in place of a class of sedentary agriculturalists, there would be a class of roving herders, continually in search of better nourishment for their animals.[276]

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[274] Ibid., 74–75.

[275] Ibid., 27.

[276] Ibid., 28.

Barbier's gang did the exact opposite, going on expeditions, trading with the Khoikhoi, but also robbing them and killing them; and in protest the colonial authorities, they would rob also the rich and elite colonists, whilst publishing their demands for transformation. In one defining moment, Estienne Barbier and his followers pinned a letter on the church door calling for different reforms that were favourable to the poor such as disputing the "payment of 24 rix dollars per annum for a loan farm. According to Barbier and his constituents, this payment was ruining the farmers." Also, "hundreds of young men and women (according to Barbier) found themselves unable to contemplate marriage, either because they had to no prospects of being able to afford a farm or because they would have to repay too much to the Governor."[277]

Equally, Barbier's letter expressed frustration with the Khoisan community at the frontier who were troubling the frontier colonists and farmers with robberies. He says the spate of Khoi robberies were encouraged by the Governor who "chose to believe the words of 'unbaptised hottentots, who know nothing of salvation or damnation' and stole the cattle of the colonists so as to distribute them amongst their 'hottentot cronies'".[278] Estienne Barbier was as a result declared a state enemy, to be captured and brought to the authorities dead or alive. He however commanded so much public sympathy amongst the poor and the widows that it proved hard to pin him down and arrest him. He also was surrounded by a gang who were all instigating for reforms and an armed rebellion.

The Cape Colonial authorities increasingly faced "a more serious problem than Barbier. Indeed, the scale of Khoisan attacks on farms in the northern frontier regions was growing."[279] This led the authorities to therefore form commandos to take on this challenge. The government offered many of the riders pardons which separated Barbier from his followers who were much more interested in crushing Khoisan rebellion. Barbier was thus apprehended and brutally punished; "found guilty of seven charges most of which, since they were aimed at upsetting the political and civil order, were considered to be worthy of punishment by death. The incitement of armed rebellion amongst the people against their 'lawful authorities' was the key issue."[280] Penn narrates his death in detail. It took place:

> on 14 November 1739. It was a Saturday and the crowd around the scaffold was so dense… after a short prayer Barbier was stripped, bound on a cross. His right hand, then his head

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[277] Nigel Penn, *Rogues, Rebels and Runaways: Eighteenth-Century Cape Characters*, (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1999), 116.

[278] Ibid., 117.

[279] Ibid., 120.

[280] Ibid.

were chopped off. His body was quartered. His head and hand were laid on a stake and placed at the Roode Zands Kloof. The four quarters of his body were hung in four different places next to the busiest roads of the colony.[281]

This public execution is precisely how power here manifested itself, as a juridical articulation; how law is asserted and makes itself into an authority. His body, reduced to bare life, stands as the image of the enemy of the state. It is how colonial power defines itself: included in the law is how you execute, exclude those who rebel or seek to undo the law. That is what the body of Barbier and his execution represent. Significant, though, is that their problems of poverty, generational continuity of the youth, the inability to keep up with the colonial taxes meant that they had to feed on the Khoikhoi communities - the violence that ought to be directed at the colonial authorities was meted against the "savages". Even as Barbier was executed, the broader resolution of the core problem directly contributed to the frontier war of 1739 against the KhoiKhoi people. In essence, this means we can say their delinquency was directly responsible, amongst other factors, for open war with the "savages" of the northern Cape frontier. The colonial government used delinquency and delinquents to not only find solutions to the deprivation of colonists, but to keep them within its gaze and loyal to its ends.

Slaves, who are sub-citizens and non-human, in fact who are the property of the colony and colonists, do not have the same claim as Barbier to the colonist political community. Theirs is an existence which begins and ends in the exception, in the outside, even as they exist within the colony. Their rebellion could not lead to any expansion in the interest of material benefit in the way we see with the delinquents of the free burgher communities. Perhaps if taken in the same way as the livestock of the colonists in the increasing robberies or violent resistance of the Khoi against the colonists, would colonial authorities come in to unleash open war. In fact, as explained earlier, if slaves, as property of the company, were integrated or protected by the KhoiKhoi communities, colonial authorities often did come for them and subject these communities to enough violence to make sure they never integrate them again.

Thus, internal forms of resistance characteristic to social banditry, in a racist colonial system of rule, only gave the options of flight or suicide for slaves. Barbier and his fellows are only social bandits because they occupy common social ground, common values, language and the common political. That gives them the option of establishing themselves further into the frontier, demanding political reforms, or pushing the colonial power to expand for more resources, more land. What Barbier disrupted is precisely the redirection of delinquency into the most vulnerable in colonial society -

[281] Ibid., 126.

the poor - by re-channelling it back to the rich and ruling elite in the colony, whilst at the same time keeping it within the KhoiKhoi. Indeed, the manner of the colonial expansion was with and through the very delinquent gangs who can be pardoned if they cooperate with the interests of the colony. In turn, they also benefit their own existence by redirecting lack and poverty into war with savages; redirecting the risk of death and starvation they face into war with the Khoikhoi. Their leader, Barbier, is punished as human; his torture is the torture of a human being, of a respected other, with whom the colonial governor - who orders his execution - shares a humanity.

The drosters on the other hand are a colonial property that took off; this act cannot be read in the normative sense of political community and coexistence. They are neither social nor anti-social. They exist in permanent antagonism of the very nomos of sociability that constitutes the sociability of the colonists. Slaves are those who in life live without the right over their bodies, without political rights, and who have been alienated from their original homes - unlike free burghers, they are not here seeking to discover and conquer land and make new homes. They are a possession of the colonists - suffering what Mbembe calls a triple loss, and says they attain a perfect existence of the "figure of a shadow"[282]. They exist as shadows, the shadow of the master, the shadow of the colonists and the shadow of the colonial empire itself. To kill them is an act of absolute violence expressed towards a thing, like an animal. The question therefore remains as to how do we read their supposed rebellion- or this flight - seeing that the social bandit framework is, at least, limited?

What is noteworthy here with these eighteenth century gangs, is that firstly, they were of mixed genders, with even children on board. Women slaves constituted part of the "runaways" and the activities of gangs throughout their escapes. This is a feature that disappears with the later underclass city gangs described from the studies of Van Onselen in Cape Town and to those of later urban settlements in Johannesburg Townships that Glaser studies. Secondly, escape is seen precisely as a critical mode of resistance, defying the death-lives they live as properties, perhaps sometimes to join the fighting Xhosa groups who faced the colonisers head on. We will return to this later on, but what is critical to note is that the prism of social banditry leaves these groups as mere fugitives - anti-social bandits, i.e. described by what they are not as opposed to what they are. For Penn, they are made precisely by their law-breaking, yet they do not confront law in the same way that colonists do. To slaves, it is pure command.

The internal sociality of the runaways is also of less importance to Penn. Given the fact that most of them were not blacks of South Africa, feeding off of native communities could not be simply read as anti-solidarity. Shared pigmentation is not a necessary condition for black solidarity, as history

[282] Mbembe, "Necropolitics.",. 21

demonstrates. For instance, slavery itself depended on blacks capturing blacks and selling them to colonisers. In addition, because the story of Estienne Barbier is taken to be the 'normal' in how social banditry is read as "social", *anti*-socialness is thought of in light of the slaves' lack of ability to think of the liberation of the entire slave community. This could incorrectly imply that all those slavers whose escape was successful were "anti-social" simply because they did not think of the rest of the slave community.

To appreciate the significance of the plantation as a geopolitical space of absolute impossibility of sociability between the mater and the slave, Mbembe reaches for an example on communication. Using Gilroy, he challenges us that it is almost impossible to conceive of reciprocity and recognition in the plantation. "Rebellion and suicide, flight and silent mourning"[283] says Gilroy are the only acts that allow the slave recognition, the only acts that make them differ with things in that they can take their own lives, or out of their own volition, plan and execute an escape. Otherwise, as Mbembe explains, the slave is kept alive in the plantation, but in a state of injury - a form of death-in-life. Fanon however, would have us recognise this act of "flight" and "suicide" which gains the slave recognition as a sign that slavery and colonisation only attained a pseudo-petrifaction[284].

The social banditry conceptual framework fails because it works within the normative political critique which privileges reason as the modus operandi of the subject, the sovereign and the political. Yet our model is rooted in necropolitical conceptions of politics as not being about reason and unreason, but about deciding who lives and dies, or even worse, who lives as if dead. Here, death is not so much that which provides the meaning of life. Death is life in excess, it is rotten life, withdrawn completely from the terrain of reason. Slaves are those for whom risk is reserved, they are the rot, the waste of the colonial life itself. Political existence here, in the plantation, is permanent war: the death of a slave can be decided anytime, even if it means that the slaves call on death through suicide. This suicide is, as Fanon puts it, the "death-reflex" that demonstrates even in this near-death existence that the slave still "acts"!

This history of colonial criminality is further advanced in Van Onselen's classic study of the underclass of the industrialised Witwatersrand.[285] This line of inquiry has also been brilliantly

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[283] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 57.

[284] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*

[285] Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh*.

pursued by Jonny Steinberg in his novel-biography, *The Number*,[286] which discusses the contemporary mutation of the gang that started in the late nineteenth-century, simply known then as *Umkhosi Wezintaba,* the regiments of the hills.[287] Delinquency is understood yet again through the conceptual prism of "social banditry" in those conditions when the colony has not only closed up, but also under the conditions of rapid colonial capitalist industrialisation. Certainly, the means of punishment and killing become more civilised with a much stronger control by the state over its populations. The prison, as a technique of socialisation, attains the centre of how delinquency is shaped and reshaped. The expanding capitalist industrialisation also means that alongside the farms rise those men dominating the spaceless spaces of mining industrialism called the hostels, as well as ghettos.

Van Onselen's character, Mzoozepi Mathebula who ends up with the name of Jan Note, begins a gang that evolved with the changing conditions of industrialisation and the resulting organisation of populations and spaces, the management of delinquency and illegality through the prisons, standing police and courts – the larger colonial penal system. Umkhosi Wezintaba transforms from the Shabalawawa group of "some 200 men, women and children"[288] who lived on the hills south of the city, engaged largely in highway robbery of thousands of African migrants, particularly miners. Van Onselen says of the group:

> Although much of this early activity of the organisation was essentially of anti-social nature, it was not exclusively so – a fact which testifies to Note's influence and the more broadly based notions of justice which concerned the Regiment of the Hills during its formative years. In June 1896, for example, a country correspondent of the Natal Witness recounted how certain Zulu speakers who had worked in Johannesburg had reported to him how Africans there had formed themselves into a 'secret society' in order to protect themselves against injustices.[289]

Furthermore Van Onselen notes that the founding ideological current was an explicit political resistance. Using the Bible, Jan Note is quoted to have referred to the book of Nahman in the Old

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[286] Jonny Steinberg, *The Number: One Man's Search for Identity in the Cape Underworld and Prison Gangs* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Pub., 2004).

[287] Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh*, 368–97.

[288] Ibid., 372.

[289] Ibid., 374.

Testament and said it was "about the great state of Nineveh which rebelled against the Lord and I selected that name for my gang as rebels against the Government's law"[290].

He goes on to say, "most of Note's men led a parasitic existence which relied on the regular robbery of small bands of migrant workers making their way through the countryside"[291]. The gang's evolution though appeared restricted to the prisons for the remainder of the nineteenth century until spilling into the townships in the early twentieth century, due largely to the dramatic and rapidly changing world of industrial South Africa. This changing environment, it could be said, was largely responsible for the gender and family-based transformation of gangs into a largely man-dominated phenomenon. As Van Onselen demonstrates:

> The web of coercive legislation and its supporting institutions of compounds, courts and prisons, besides reducing the mobility of black workers, also had some unintended consequences. Constant infractions of the pass laws in an industrial system with an increased law-enforcement capacity produced a labouring population characterised by its high degree of nominal 'criminal' experience, ensuring that the working class had great familiarity with the two similar institutions of prison and compounds. Labourers and lumpenproletarians were forced to rub shoulders to a greater extent than they might otherwise have done. The pass laws and the newly efficient police system drew all Africans, law-abiding and law-evading alike, into the Witwatersrand complex and kept them there. It was perhaps predictable, therefore, that when Note's organisation re-emerged after the war it was more urban-based than before and that its natural home would be the prison-compound complex.[292]

Van Onselen also concludes that these were anti-social bandits which, in terms of their youth and other social characteristics, could not be distinguished from those termed "social bandits" as conceptualised by Hobsbawm and others. He notes, following Hosbawm's delineation of key features of banditry that;

> …the age and social groups recruited into the 'social banditry' and the 'Regiment of the Hills' also bear comparison. In the case of the latter, these similarities are brought into even sharper relief if they are set in the light of Mzoozepi's earlier experiences, the shattered Zulu

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[290] Ibid., 373.

[291] Ibid., 375–76.

[292] Ibid., 377.

> military system and the rapid expansion of European commercial agriculture in Natal at the turn of the century.[293]

However, their "parasitic existence" disqualifies them from earning the status of "social bandits". Let us continue with the interrogation of the socio-historic narrative, which really holds on to this prism although providing key insights into understanding colonial criminality. Suffice it to say that the holding of the European experience as the mirror for what happens in the colony is a problematic practice that has often resulted in missing the nuanced lessons the lives and conditions of the colonised have to offer in understanding the human condition. We shall return later to the concept of "social banditry" which is held as a **mirror** casting conceptual light in the reading of the colonial criminal gangs.

Cultural Hegemony and Violence: *From the Number Prison Gangs to the Township Gangs - Bo-Tsotsi and the com-Tsotsies*

We must begin with Steinberg's work, *The Number*, which although it does not fit precisely into the historiography we are concerned with here, is nonetheless an important contribution based on actual life history. Without delving into the historic particularities of Mzoozepi's evolved gangs and how they functioned in prison over the course of the 20th century, the interesting fact about Steinberg's story is how the narrative gives an impression that the Number gang, rather than the government, actually maintained prison order over this period.

Magadien Wentzel, the central character in this work of literary non-fiction, laments how from the 1990s the gang got diluted and spilled into the streets of Cape Town with crime lords falsely claiming to be Number generals. Noteworthy is that one comes out of the text wishing that the Number gang could return to its former glory so as to ensure order in the prison system. We learn from this account that the system uses gangs to order the lives of the condemned, another important reason for why, following Foucault, prisons continue to exist despite failing to resolve delinquency. They exist to create an underclass, to which certain infractions are channelled and order is constantly being redefined and shaped.[294]

Since the white supremacist state need not care for black lives, it would not invest much in rehabilitation, even though it proves to not truly transform individuals and reduce delinquency. Instead, it rules over black prisoners (who do not have human rights) through the gangs; meaning

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293 Ibid., 395–96.

294 Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the College de France, 1982-1983*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2011).

this is why gangs persisted and were allowed to flourish in prisons. It remains to be explored as to how prisons, and specifically colonial prisons, presume the "non-human" status of blacks, enable racial rule, and help to constantly reorder and redefine the very colonial order and dis-order of things.

However, for our study, the gangs of 1940s that appear centrally in the work of Clive Glaser are even closer to our discussion. Something much more critical happens in this era: the face of delinquency attains that of the black youth. Glaser gives a background to this phenomenon by showing how urban industrialisation had affected the family, unemployment and schooling in African communities in ways that signified the sociological birth of the first generation of youth delinquency that would mark South African reality to this day. Says Glaser, "from the 1930s to 1960, roughly one-third of the African children of school-going age on the Witwatersrand attended school. In 1937 the Bantu World claimed that of the 90,000 African children of school-going age on the Reef only 18,000 were in school."[295] Given the fact that the urban African parent would be at work, unable to supervise their children, these would be left on their own, and without schooling. "Roughly 47% of the males were neither in school nor employed… the equivalent figure for females was higher than 68%".[296]

"African urban juvenile unemployment, like inadequate schooling, started to attract major public and administrative attention from the mid-1930" explains Glaser. "Crime, often organised in gangs, provided an alternative means of subsistence for urban youths. The need to find alternative employment was therefore less urgent… Gang life seemed attractive; it offered companionship, a sense of belonging, and a possible means of income"[297]. Tsotsi is a form of technology of self that works to respond to the vulnerability to plenitude. They use it to negotiate the process of permanent juniorisation. The tsotsi refuse proletarianisation either in job-seeking or going to school; they refuse that socialisation of waiting to wait as a permanent form of being where blacks are never equal to whites - they exist, no matter what they do, as permanently juniors to whites, and in service of the white community.

These are the tsotsi of the Reef Townships. We have already discussed these gangs in Chapter Two on *Permanent Juniorisation,* and noted their rise and culmination into what Glaser refers to as "com-Tsotsi" - the notion of comrades who are criminals and who used the liberation struggle for criminal

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[295] Clive L. Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 32.

[296] Clive L. Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 32.

[297] Ibid., 33,41.

gain. The emphasis of both Glaser's approach and that of narrative tropes found in the works of Steinberg, Marks (2001), Bonner (1993), and Guy and Thabane (1987) is to shift from concern with delinquency, illegality and colonialism/apartheid to a focus on culture, the ways in which oppressed people on the fringes of colonial society are able to build alternative cultural forms that spread across communities.[298] And Glaser's work in particular points to this prism of gang and youth gang studies. It is indeed a slight diversion from the strict concern with their revolutionary capacity as we see in the work of Van Onselen; nevertheless all discuss, through these gangs, what has come to be known as "the culture of violence" among black people.

What is also significant about the 1940s is the land occupation movement that Lodge refers to as the "squatters' movement". This began in March 1944 in what is now called Soweto - the same year as the birth of the African National Congress Youth League. This movement was led by James Mpanza who had served a prison sentence after being convicted of murder. Lodge writes: "housing shortage and consequent overcrowding was only one of the several factors underlying the sudden emergence of the squatters communities on the outskirts of Johannesburg which ultimately were to number some 90 000 inhabitants."[299] They were led, not by "urban congressmen", but by Mpanza whom Lodge describes as "much closer to the syncretic proletarian culture of the township"[300]. This syncretic proletarian culture gave Mpanza, whose life had been shaped in delinquency, an advantage to be at the centre of a movement responding to the most significant needs of black people in the urban space: land and housing. Mpanza is, to this day, considered the father of Soweto.

Nevertheless, from Barbier in the Cape Colony, there is already an articulation of delinquency with "generation" in that one of the key grievances is that young men and women are unable to marry and establish themselves due to the high costs of leasing farm lands. The articulation of delinquency with the young, that is, the conditions under which crime comes to attain an identity almost identical with the youth, was beginning to take shape. Under the conditions of twentieth century colonial industrial capitalism this becomes the image of the black youth. State control is articulated precisely by technologies of population control such as prisons and schools, and the migrant labour and pass laws regulating native movements across divided geopolitical spaces of the township and

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298 Steinberg, *The Number*; Philip L. Bonner, "The Russians on the Reef, 1947-57: Urbanisation, Gang Warfare and Ethnicisation," in *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962*, ed. Philip Bonner, Deborah Posel, and Peter Delius (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993); J Guy and M Thabane, "The Ma-Rashea: A Participants Perspective," in *Class, Community and Conflict*, ed. Belinda Bozzoli (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987). Monique Marks, "Young Worriers", (Johannesburg; Wits Press, 2001)

299 Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), 15

300 Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945* (London ; New York: Longman Group United Kingdom, 1983), 16.

homelands. The usage of age and race in the control of population gives rise to a generation we can call the black youth who attain an image of delinquency, whose culture is tsotsi - a violent, hyper-masculine way of life that relies on crime for survival.

One of the important scholars who has looked at the question of the culture of violence and the black youth closely, with "violence" as a starting point, is Gary Kynoch, who looks, as we do here, at those Township Gangs that cross roads of liberation struggle with crime.[301] Accepting the alternative and indeed the counter-hegemonic cultural heritage of the tsotsi gangs, our focus with youth politics and youth gangs is to think through the question of the violence of colonisation as it relates to delinquency. Kynoch takes on the problem of violence in South African Townships as an odd phenomenon; that is, as something that is unique to the South African situation. High levels of violence persisted beyond democratisation, which points to the failure of the process of democratisation itself in eliminating long established urban practices steeped in violence. He situates this transition violence within a long twentieth century history of "repressed racial policing", politicised hostilities, and weakening "law and order structures", thus proving that violence has long been normalised in South Africa. He says, for instance,

> Decades of social and economic deprivation, combined with repressive policing, criminal predation and a corresponding reliance on vigilantism, produced environments in which violence frequently became a normative means of pursuing material interests, resolving conflicts and seeking justice.[302]

Kynoch also points out the ways in which at the end of the 19th century, the state invested in combating crime within the white settler communities:

> Legislation to eradicate organised criminal activity was introduced, and between 1898 and 1910 hundreds of white gangsters were imprisoned and deported. In contrast, the densely populated, impoverished, and ethnically diverse black settlements that had mushroomed on the fringes of mine properties and white neighbourhoods enjoyed no such protection. Policing of black areas was, for the most part, limited to the enforcement of pass regulations and liquor raids and, as long as violent crime was contained within the townships and posed

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301 Gary Kynoch, *We Are Fighting the World: A History of the Marashea Gangs in South Africa, 1947-1999*, 1 edition (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005).

302 Ibid., 497.

> no threat to whites, it was largely ignored. This early pattern persisted throughout the century.[303]

Violent culture is then demonstrated through a study of gangs that persisted during the transition era, either trapped in or existing in the liminal space between politics and crime. Amongst the gangs that Kynoch looks at are the two that we also studied in the Vaal. One is what came to be known at the Khethisi gang to which Bojosi was believed to belong to, and the other is the Self Defence Unit turned criminal gang called the Germans in Sharpeville.

There is no evidence that he specifically had conversations with any of the people that belonged to these gangs, as he relies largely on the Peace Action archives and newspaper reports. The narratives do not probe how these gangs were formed and how their members themselves understand their own stories and what they did. They are merely discussed to prove the point of the existence of a "culture of violence" but not to understand how "culture", being what subjects construct and are constructed by, is made sense of by those who inhabit it. In a way, Kynoch, like Penn, had no access to his characters except through the archive. Yet, unlike Penn, his characters were alive in his time.

This is an important aspect of understanding how a phenomenon such as violence becomes "culture"; that is, something subjects accept as what defines the ways they understand themselves, the ways they inhabit their worlds and how they engage in a normal habit of living. We will therefore try to re-enter the narratives from this stand-point as we rely on interviews with gang members. We will also discuss the important shifts observed in this era of criminals that go into politics and activists that choose at some point to turn from their politics into crime. Put differently, the most significant question about the liminal space of resistance and crime, politics and delinquency, which we probed with participants is this: Why did those who rose in political organisational statures by wielding violence in defence of the community then turn and feed on those very same communities? What explains a comrade turning into a criminal, and a criminal turning into a comrade?

We will also depart from the previously discussed concern with whether these are social or anti-social gangs/bandits; this starting point is, if anything, limiting in understanding gang and gang life under colonial conditions precisely because of the necropolitical conditions of the oppressed. The question that is of importance is how we make sense of life amongst the oppressed, when it is the modus operandi of colonial existence itself to redirect violence in that space between native and native. We will pay close attention to how colonial violence finds expression in that sphere of black

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[303] Ibid.

society – as crime. Our purpose here is to assess these blurred lines of liberation struggle and crime. Nowhere are they more clearly expressed than in the 1990s transition era of "comrade tsotsi", here where Bojosi's exhumed body lies, torched and tied to the greybeard fence. We do so through the experiences of those who formed part of the stories, the characters themselves. At this point it should be clear that we are postponing the need to unpack what we mean by crime under the colony, or more precisely delinquency; perhaps because it is in the experiences themselves that it is most clear.

Vaal Triangle: the murder capital of South Africa

The Vaal Triangle houses some of the oldest townships on the Reef. Evaton is, in particular, more than a hundred years old now. By extension, the tsotsi culture, gangs, crime, and political activism found a home in these areas. One striking factor about the Vaal is that it came to be known as "South Africa's Murder Hotspot" as the City Press headlines read in 1993.[304] The paper reported that over 400 people were murdered in the six months prior to the date of the article – 18 January 1993. Peace Action also attested to this, stating that:

> Criminals are able to operate with impunity and achieve enormous power. Township communities are forced to deal with criminals themselves or become victims to thugs. Residents begin to meet out rough 'justice' and some alleged criminals are violently 'punished' for their misdemeanours. A cycle of violence and revenge becomes entrenched in all aspects of township life. It has become urgent that justice through the courts is seen to be done so that faith in the judicial system can be restored and people will no longer feel the need to use extra-judicial means to address their problems.[305]

This is the Vaal, particularly during the transition era. In addition to the general deterioration of the law, was the growing illegitimacy of comrades. A growing phenomenon was that, as City Press reported, "the ANC aligned Self Defence Units in the area have become a law unto themselves. They rape, kill and rob residents"[306]. We will look at the Khethisi gang in as far as it relates to Bojosi to enrich this story from the way Kynoch narrates it. We will then speak to the BZ gang from Zamdela who like the Germans, were a gang that evolved from comrades into criminals.

The Gangs of the Vaal; *exploring the liminal space of politics and crime*

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304 Stan Mhlongo, "South Africa's Murder Hotspot," *City Press*, 1993.

305 Peace Action (Organisation), "Peace Action Records" June 1993.

306 Mhlongo, "South Africa's Murder Hotspot."

The Khethisi gang, which was notorious for hunting and killing activists from the early 1990s until Khethisi's death in 1993, is said to have been a gang that merely used to be involved in the main with the illegal trading of marijuana. The story of Khethisi is discussed well in Kynoch's study, narrating how Khethisi ended up, although Kynloch's study is not inclusive of all its members. What is left out is a group called "Five Star" which was how the Khethisi gang first came to be known. The Five Star gang included a group of young men who belonged to a soccer club by the same name that used to spend time together, drinking and keeping close friendship.

The group of these young men was known to be very lavish in terms of their lifestyle; most of them had cars, and were involved in the taxi industry, dressed expensively, partied expensively and played soccer well too. According to one of their members, Tilly Bojosi, Khethisi, who lived in the Sebokeng Zone 7 area, used to spend a lot of time with them at a house that came to be known and associated with them.[307] Tilly Bojosi knew the Khethisi family well and had on occasion interacted with them and their business. However, most importantly, his brother, Ismael Bojosi was married to Khethisi's sister, although they later divorced.[308]

The ANC-dominated Sebokeng Zone 7, where the gang was based, had a crime prevention unit that was led by Christopher Nangalembe who was later brutally killed, and at whose night vigil the tragic Sebokeng massacre happened. The story of the transition of Khethisi and Five Star members perhaps begins when Nangalembe claimed to possess evidence that Khethisi had forced a woman to drink poison which later killed her. A former member of the actual Khethisi gang, Adam Mboyane, is said to have explained that the first time comrades (who at this stage were those involved in the crime combating unit) interacted with him was after the alleged murder of a boy which they attributed to Khethisi. He was arrested for this and released on bail.[309]

One night there was a fight in a night club known as Ramsay's Inn in Zone 7, where someone was stabbed. The comrades suspected that Khethisi and his gang were central to the fight. They believed that it would lead into a gang war, since the person who had been stabbed belonged to another gang; thus the unit summoned Khethisi and his group to a meeting.

In this meeting it was clarified that the fight had been caused by another gang known as Cameroon squad, which had ANC members amongst its membership. Not so long after, two boys confessed to having caused the fight with this squad, and the Khethisi gang was cleared. The Independent Board

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307 Tilly Bojosi, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

308 *Ibid.*

309 Peace Action (Organisation), "Peace Action Records" June 1993.

of Investigation (another NGO that monitored violence in the townships around the Reef), using the testimony of a former member of the Khethisi gang, reports that a 22-year-old boy then asked for permission to search the members of the Khethisi gang, amongst whom were Themba Mabote, Sipho Majozi, Zandi Mamatu and Sello Ndhlovu, who all agreed except Khethisi.[310]

The comrades searched all of them, including Mboyane, but Khethisi refused. It is said that a group of comrades then searched him forcefully and found a loaded gun. The night would end up with Khethisi being shot in his right hip and others escaping. The houses of others were then torched, including the burning of Themba Mabote's mother who was an Inkatha organiser.

Tilly Bojosi indicated that whilst Khethisi was in hospital his friends wanted revenge, not only for his shooting but also because some of their houses were burned due to their being linked to Inkatha. Tilly Bojosi says he had tried to warn them off seeking revenge as it would lead to a bloodbath.[311] However, on the other side, it is said that Victor Mthembu, who was a resident at KwaMadala Hostel, tried to recruit these disgruntled men to the work of fighting 'comrades'[312].

Mthembu belonged to the Inkatha group that resided at KwaMadada Hostel. It is around this time that Christopher Nangelembe died; he was kidnapped, killed, and dumped far away from his home. "His corpse was found the following day, next to a rubbish dump in Vanderbijlpark"[313] an IBI report stated. The murder spread anger amongst ANC supporters, and the youth in particular came to support the family, but in this night vigil that was held for Nangalembe, the tragic Sebokeng Massacre of 1991 unfolded in which 48 people were killed. A group of people emerging from cars indiscriminately opened fire on the people attending the vigil. Tilly Bojosi recalls an instance during a conversation in one of the usual drinking sessions when one elderly man made an allusion to mass murder, which he suspects was reference to this massacre prior to it happening. He says the man said: "They are like flies that come in numbers after you drop meat on the ground around it. When you want to get them in numbers then, that is what you do and know they will come."[314]

Following this massacre the residents went on a spree burning the houses of the Five Star members, whether they were known to be linked to Inkatha or not. Bojosi reports that they tried to have the

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310 "Independent Board of Inquiry (IBIIR) 1989-1996" (Johannesburg: Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand, 2012).

311 Bojosi, interview, 2013.

312 Ibid.

313 "Independent Board of Inquiry (IBIIR) 1989-1996."

314 Bojosi, interview, 2013.

National Office of the ANC involved to spare them from murder, to correct the misconception that they were associated to the Khethisi gang or Inkatha, but without much avail. The record of the letter written to the ANC is also available at the Peace Action archives and Bojosi states that the meeting indeed took place. The letter appeals to the ANC to help make sure that Five Star members are not falsely linked to the activities of the Khethisi gang. In the letter, the Bojosi brothers and other Five Star members clearly distinguish themselves from the Khethisi gang.

Tilly Bojosi explains that Khethisi ended up in KwaMadala Hostel, not because he was a member of Inkatha, but because Inkatha was one group that was willing to fight the comrades in an organised form. His brother, who was married to Khethisi's sister, also fled to KwaMadala and worked with Inkatha because he, in particular, was being hunted as someone who would lead comrades to Khethisi. He was being hunted by comrades also due to his association by marriage, despite the fact that at that time he had divorced. Bojosi would end up in the grave, after both the Sebokeng and Boipatong massacres, his body exhumed twice, perhaps marking the anger deriving from the societal grief for the mass black on black murders.

Bojosi was probably never a Khethisi group member, nor was he in a gang. Nonetheless, he ended up living in KwaMadala with Inkatha members, even helping them with administrative tasks since, according to his brother, as he had some basic legal experience. He never joined Inkatha formally, but he worked with the group and it is no mistake that the group he was working with unleashed the mass murder of Boipatong. For this reason, and perhaps because of many other violent repressions and exchanges between comrades, Inkatha, and criminal gangs, his corpse bore the scars and routes of these three intersections of township violence. It is therefore in an attempt to revenge the Boipatong massacre that Bojosi was exhumed after burial and his body torched by comrades.

This complicated network, journey and story of violent exchange is also found in the case of the BZ of Zamdela. This gang, which included all in all sixty some youths, all men and mostly high school drop-outs, started out in the ANC-linked Pioneer Movement which targeted youths under the age of 16 years. It was used to politicise them in the 1980s; the Pioneer Movement members mostly participated in the big political meetings and demonstrations as marshals, and also as foot soldiers for direct, and often violent, protest action. For instance they would be at the forefront of staging targets - this is when bakeries, trucks of merchandise and other goods deliveries to inner township shops would be stopped, looted and at times torched in consistency with consumer boycotts. They would also be central to the closing down and torching of government facilities during or even after demonstrations.

In Zamdela, these were particularly critical in the late 1980s land occupation struggle of the residents of the then informal settlement called "Chris Hani". Relying on interviews with four of these members that had been with the gang from its origins through to its end, as well as some of the ANC activists that crossed paths with them, I will tell the story of the notorious BZ, focusing on how it emerged and some of its activities. I will place emphasis on how the members of the BZ now reflect on this past and what they think constitutes the shift from activism to gangsterism.

The story of the BZ gang in Zamdela, Sasolburg

Towards the late 1980s, a group of young men used to spend time around Protema tennis courts, next to Malakabeng Primary School. They would play soccer, and smoke benzene. This is why they came to call themselves the BZ – from benzene, which is how they abbreviated what they liked to smoke. The group's genesis is right here, in the streets and smoking of benzene, chilling at the tennis courts, mostly playing informal soccer. Increasingly, being courageous and street cleverness became most of what defined the group, that is to say, being able to actually spend time with them and be identified with them. Later, the group came to be known as Batho ba Zamdela, (People of Zamdela), a name that came up in a community justice meeting when one of their central members had been caught stealing and was about to be tortured. When they asked him what BZ stood for, Stone Makgema said "Batho ba Zamdela", in an attempt to win the community's sympathy.

In our interview, we asked how the BZ was structured, particularly the anatomy of its hierarchy. Stone Makgema, one of the very central members, said:

> BZ never had a leader… it was like a movement. But there were elders in BZ, one would not do anything before consulting other people, but those people were not even chosen; we just knew that they were bigger BZs…[315]

When asked about the unchosen, yet seemingly clear hierarchy, that is, "what determined a big BZ member, is it the fact that you came in first, or that you can use a knife well?", Stone Makgema replied:

> I think age determined it, and the toughness of how you engaged in some other activities… like when we fight with other people, the way you stand up… that strength, and the way a person has the courage to act gave them some sort of respect. But it was not formal that so and so is a champ… But there were elders.[316]

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[315] Stone Magema, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, n.d.

[316] Ibid.

This, however, developed over a long time. The group was comprised of people that specialised in different things; some were good in robbery and fighting (using fists or the knife) others in usage and knowledge of guns. This very ability for courageous violent acts, the ability to start and intensify trouble, to push the limits of order, is what marked them and made them important for political activism. Moscow Msimanga for instance indicated that:

> 'There was nothing ANC or COSAS did without us. If there was a shortage anywhere, the likes of Toto would fetch us and say we need your presence in this, or it is your presence that is needed in such and such a place.[317]

The other important factor about the anatomy of the group was solidarity. If you beat any of them, they all came for you. As Joshua "Roto" Letsela puts it, "it does not matter what he did. We come to avenge him".[318] BZ would do this, so as to earn the respect of the thug community and that of society. A member always represents them wherever he is, and if you beat him you must know they will come for you because each member carries the respect of the group.

But what made the BZ feed on the community, what made them shift away from fighting for the freedom of the black collective? They knew that this fight was the reason they were to put pressure on the system, the police, in order to contribute to efforts of liberation, so why did they turn against the community? These are not people who went into crime like the legend of Collin Chauke, former uMkhonto weSizwe member, who went for big bank robberies. The BZ pick-pocketed ordinary community members, they harassed the elderly and women in particular; in essence they were a menace to society.

We can make one preliminary observation at this point, that in the shift from pioneers to destroyers violence is the common factor. It serves, in the first place, as a tool to intensify liberation struggle, but after the shift it represented the use of terror for purposes of criminality and personal status. Nevertheless, how do they justify this? What rationale did they attribute to this shift?

They often recount when they had been on the courts by Malakabeng Primary school for a long time, hungry, they began to initiate 'targets' on their own, without organisational instructions. They would capture a bakery, or raid a shop, but for self-interest. All these efforts demonstrated a lot of skill, because they would take goods and sell them, or eat them themselves. The skills to capture the tractor or take a car radio and turn it into something useful in a household, and even the courage

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[317] Moses (Moscow) Msimanga, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

[318] Joshua Letsela, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

demonstrated in doing something dangerous, like beating an elderly man that may have been respected by the community, all spoke about what they were capable of. It earned them "respect" because people feared them.[319] It also suggests a capacity to disregard a moral order that valued propriety, dignity, civility and respect for age.

As they realised their power, the fear they were causing in the collective consciousness of their community grew, and they began to do more to take from people. Being young and being men, they desired to dress smartly; to be in attendance as VIPs at parties; they wanted the most beautiful girls and the best parties; they wanted the most because it was considered "best". Glaser calls this "being manly"; a woman taking the centre stage for one's masculine performance and identity.[320]

They narrate one event where there was a beauty pageant planned by the high school Student Representative Council and its authorities. They entered the event and went on stage, causing havoc and stopping the event, demanding that girls come with them by force. On many occasions, people were scared of them and they often did little to stop them because whoever resisted would be targeted and put in their place by the entire gang.[321] This masculine, anti-women, rape-culture practice is also seen with the Germans gang in Sharpeville which took girls by force from a school bus, holding them hostage for days whilst raping and torturing them.

The personal glory, the resources, and the respect that comes with being in a gang, all of which are usually noted factors in many gang studies, were central to how the shift that is discussed above happened. One can begin to anticipate that there would soon be a crossroads for "comrades" who may still be toeing the strict party line. An event that is noted as the turning point for how they began to clash with comrades was when there was a robbery in Nkgopoleng High School. Here wheelbarrows, garden tools, sporting wear and the keys to the school classrooms were stolen over one weekend in early 1990. A tip then came the next Monday after the assembly that the BZ boys were the ones that did it. "This thing turned there, this is where the flop happened… when they targeted all of us, even those that did not form part of the robbery"[322], says Joshua "Roto" Letsela.

Toto Makume, who was chair of COSAS in Nkgopoleng at the time as well as SRC President, attests to this event. In his account, they managed to get the culprits, as well as the stolen goods, but only after a very long interrogation of the BZ members who then gave up the information of where

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319 BZ, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

320 Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi*, Chapter One-Being Manly: Themes in the History of Urban Youth Gangs.

321 BZ, interview.

322 Letsela, interview.

they had hidden the stolen goods. In Toto's narrative, as the student leadership, they asked students to wait at the school and he took a delegation of a few to look for the BZ members concerned.[323]

In his account, he did this because as a comrade he knew these boys and thought they could just get them to surrender the goods without much strife, particularly when they realised that the whole school might come for them. Toto Makume says he told other members of the SRC that they should tell students that they know where the things are and they will be going to get them. He says, "my mistake was to confide in the SRC as to who the goods were with"[324]. So, the information came out and the students gathered in an assembly demanding to go get the goods along with the student leadership.

He had to go and explain to the crowd that they would be taking the leadership and police to get the goods, so he encouraged students to go back to classes. On their way they met a boy called Fusi, one of the names they had received in the tip, indicating that he would know where the goods were. They stopped him and asked him, telling him that the tip says Nkosana, also called Scotch, and Ponono had the stolen goods and he could tell them where they were.[325]

Makume remembers Fusi refusing vehemently and even threatening violence. One of the SRC delegation members then left running to school and told students that one of the BZ members had stabbed the SRC President. This is because during the altercation, the member of the BZ told the SRC president, Toto Makume, that he was no longer the boss and he could "stab him down". The altercation led to the information that the other members of the group were at the athletics stadium where another high school was in a training session. Here, Scotch and Fusi were present. As the delegation arrived, Scotch cursed at the President of the SRC telling him he was too young and he would be put in his place. Toto Makume explains that "he cursed me by my mother".[326]

In the townships, anyone who curses the other by their mother invites a fight. It is a basic indication that they undermine you completely; they have no respect at all for you. This is the phenomenology of an insult –calling anyone by their mother's genitalia means war. However, as they spoke, students arrived in a large group singing and chanting, demanding their goods with the impression that the SRC president, Toto Makume, had been stabbed.

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323 Ketso Makume, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

324 Ibid.

325 Ibid.

326 Ibid.

Realising that things were under control, they calmed down and allowed the leadership to interrogate the four members of the BZ. During the interrogation, the four asked that the students be sent away and a delegation of five would then speak to them, but collectively students refused and said they are not going anywhere without recovering the stolen goods. In fact, they could not go back because classes were locked, and the keys were taken along with the stolen goods. The four were beaten as they gave contradictory accounts, until one of them confessed and led them to the stolen goods.

The goods were recovered, the four were further beaten up, and furthermore, on the way from the place of the recovered goods students, in huge numbers, went by beating each member of the BZ that was met on the way. Toto Makume therefore confirms that it is indeed this that brought the friction between the gang and the "comrades", particularly those ANC-related. The gang was destabilised after this for some time. Toto Makume says the students did this because of the historic activities of the gang up to that point. It is also possible that some among them had been victims of the gang at one stage or the other.

This incident isolated the BZ from COSAS, and some of its members moved to the Pan African Student Organisation (PASO; a rival to COSAS) and others just became politically indifferent. Peace Action reports that the gang gained momentum once more during 1993.[327] In our observation of the political developments in Sasolburg, the rise of the BZ coincides with the police crackdown on the comrades who had been active in the 1990s, and who now were involved in the ANC underground activities of sabotage, something we will closely look at in the next chapter.

The BZ had gained hegemony and notoriety, terrorising not only their community, but the surrounding communities as well. Peace Action reports that:

> On Saturday December 4 a member of the SAP flying Squad, nineteen year old Mugnus Oberholzer, stopped a car which had gone through a red traffic light. Unwittingly he had stopped a group of BZ gang members. When the driver could not produce any identification, Mugnus radioed for back up. A BZ gang member then shot him in the leg and mouth with a 9mm pistol. They then stole his car and weapons including an R5 rifle and teargas canister. The police car was later found abandoned. When they arrived back in Sharpeville the BZ gang hijacked a minibus taxi and shot the driver.
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> On Sunday 5 December, the gang continued its violent activities. They attempted to rob patrons of a tavern in Sharpeville in order to buy petrol. However, they faced residents and

[327] Peace Action (Organisation), "Peace Action Records"1993 reports.

> two BZ gang members were injured. These included the 24 year old Thabo Memella and a twenty year old Motsomi Senokoane both of whom were hospitalised for gun wounds.
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> As a result of their criminal activities, BZ gang members were alienated by COSAS. During the on-going conflict that followed the formation of the BZ gang, two members were killed by the South African Police and another member allegedly killed by the COSAS youth.[328]

It is perhaps because of the killing of this BZ member by the COSAS or ANC-linked comrades that the situation began to calm down on the part of the BZ; this is the point that the elders in the BZ attest as the apex and past a point of return. The member who was killed was Fusi. He was shot several times, hiding under a bed after running away from a group of comrades who had taken it upon themselves to put a stop to the BZ in a war of shooting, death, and the spilling of blood.[329]

One of the COSAS members who also formed part of the underground missions of the ANC had this to say:

> I think also the police… you know, in terms of handling the situation itself they were not up to the challenge. Maybe it is because of the killing of their colleague by the gangster. Maybe they just thought let us just leave this matter, let them deal with comrades and comrades will deal with them differently. Had the intervention of the police been visible then, we could at least have avoided that situation. But remember the more they went to houses of comrades it is the more they gained momentum. And the group is growing bigger and bigger and they believe they are in control. What do you do? Leave the township? We stay here, our parents are here; our families are here. And this is a gangster for God's sake.[330]

All these individuals are now stable, with families, employed and living normal lives. The former BZ members today in Sasol have initiated a program trying to reach out to young people to discourage gangsterism which continues to be rife in the community. Many of course speak highly within the thugs' community of the days of the BZ. Those of the youth who like bravery seem to be inspired by the BZ legend and want to emulate them in their own gangsterism.

Two conclusions can be drawn about gangs and gang formation in the townships: the first is that they are not always formations engaged in crime; thus it is critical to go beyond the criminal space to see how gangs are formed and brought back to this space. Secondly, masculine formation, what

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328 Ibid. November and December reports.

329 Ibid.

330 Mbuyiselo Mnguni, interview with Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

Glaser calls "being manly", seems to be the one thread that is a constitutive phenomenon of any kind of gang under industrialisation.

This is critical because in the gang lineage, as we have traced it since the Cape Colony, the place of women is essential. Those gangs that developed under early industrialisation, like the Jan Note gang, were a community with women and children; but this does not make it less a space of masculine patriarchal domination. It is shaped still by violent masculinity, but it seems one that is family based, that protects women and children as with the Cape frontier gangs. These are criminal families that organise themselves in gang form.

The spread of compounds in industrialised mining and urban imprisonment contributed to gangsterism being exclusively male and thus, it seems, to its becoming much more violent to women. During the transition, the manly mark of gangsterism in the townships persists and it too is shaped by rape. Rape functions as the ultimate expression of man's imposition on women, his ultimate waving of the phallus at the expense of the woman. Rape for gangsters is also normal, almost even celebrated – normalised; they take women, they do not cajole them. And at some point this becomes the hegemonic masculinity all over the community, even for those not involved in direct crime. Sexual imposition becomes the only life of sexuality, until girls and women accept it, expect it and at times defend it[331].

The violence of gangsters however is still something of man against man; death is most often exchanged amongst men, high levels of murder are between men, or amongst men. Man eats man.

A Reconsideration of Criminality in the Colony: Colonial Delinquency

But how should we understand the acts of these men if indeed they function under the rule that conceives and (dis)orders their lives as non-human, as waste? What, as we posed the question in the beginning, is the place of delinquency in colonial systems of rule? How, if the subjects involved are denied human attributes, do we understand social deviance and criminality? We pose these questions because we do not want to dismiss race; that is, we do not want to degenerate into that narrative that simply says the racial regime was based on a false proposition that blacks are inferior and then continue reading the acts and experiences in the colonial situation through the prism of rationalism. Race is certainly a technology used in dividing populations on the basis of who deserves to live and who deserves to die. Mbembe argues:

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331 *Here I am thinking of how within institutions like slavery and marriage, rape even goes to the extant of being expected. In relation to marriage in particular, the silencing of women happens even by other women, like mothers, indadvertedly defending the indefensible violent abuse of women. For a discussion of rape along these lines see Pumla Gqola, Rape: A South African Nightmare (Johannesburg; MFBoobs Joburg, 2015)*

> More than class-thinking (the ideology that defines history as an economic struggle of classes), race has been the ever present shadow in Western political thought and practice, especially when it comes to imagining the inhumanity of, or rule over, foreign people… In the political economy of biopower, the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death and to make possible the murderous functions of the state.[332]

It is with the black body of Bojosi - the exhumed, burned black body of Bojosi - that we must begin to highlight this redirected terror of the colony amongst the natives. There was no police investigation to find out why his body was treated that way. This is the image we work with, the image of "violence" - "black on black" violence. Unlike other forms of "black on black" violence – xenophobic violence, ethnic violence, protest violence, which are in most cases events – with crime and delinquency we find the normalcy of colonial "black on black" violence. It is the everydayness of collective auto-destruction, to use Fanon's formulation.

As stated in the beginning, it is in his chapter on War and Mental Disorders of *The Wretched of the Earth*, where Fanon deals with the phenomenon of crime in the colonial situation. Fanon takes on the topic directly, but it is something which he deliberately separates from the violence he deals with in the first and second chapters of the book. In Chapter One, Fanon writes:

> The colonised man will first manifest his aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people. This is the period when the niggers eat each other up, and the police and magistrates do not know which way to turn to when faced with the astonishing waves of crime… we shall see later how this phenomenon should be judged.[333]

He then dedicated the last pages of the penultimate chapter to deal with criminality. Fanon unpacks how criminality in the colony has been understood by social analysts as a result of the way the nervous system of the colonised is built; in other words it is to say natives are naturally criminal. He then goes on to develop his own interpretation of why violent crime is the normal scene of the colonial situation. Fanon attributes it to the colonial situation itself, the humiliation, the poverty and the repression:

> Every colony tends to turn into a huge farmyard, where the only law is that of the knife… anything can be done for a loaf of bread or a miserable sheep. The relations of man with matter, within the word outside and with history are in the colonial period relations with

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[332] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 17.

[333] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*., 40

> food. For a colonised man, in a contest of oppression… living does not mean embodying moral values or taking his place in the coherent and fruitful development of the world. To live means to keep on existing. Every date is a victory; not the result of work, but a victory felt as a triumph of life. Thus to steal dates or to allow one's sheep to eat the neighbour's grass is not a question of the negation of the property of others, not the transgression of a law, nor lack of respect. These are attempts at murder… The fact is that the only perspective is that belly which is more and more sunken, which is certainly less and less demanding, but which must be contented all the same. Who is going to take the punishment? The French are down in the plain with the police, the army and the tanks. On the mountain there are only Algerians. Up above there is Heaven with the promise of a world beyond the grave; down below are the French with their very concrete promises of prison, beating-up and executions. You are forced to come up against yourself. *Here we discover that kernel of hatred of self which is characterised of racial conflict in segregated societies*."[334] (My emphasis)

This is the underlying logic of violent crime, its substance, under colonial conditions, the kernel of hatred of the self. Fanon comes to deal with crime here, as opposed to in the first chapter, because with colonial crime we do not understand rapture or an implosion. We understand that sphere of colonial society in which natives normally act out "hatred of the self" in the everyday. One could say it is the sphere of colonial society where "hatred of the self" does not come out in bursts or implosions; it is where it lives and breathes in the everyday – it takes the form of a spirit, a culture in a way of living.

The figure of the subject that we deal with is not that of the "rational subject" that would have us ask for "revolution" in the traditional enlightenment sense of holding the self-mastering subject to account for their own actions. We must also resist the temptation to view this as a surprise and leave it there, that natives eat each other up; we assume this as part of human acts and simply depart from the prism obsessed with the "rational" as the alpha and omega of understanding the human condition; meaning we depart from the entangled dichotomy of reason and unreason, where social critique is about finding reason or unreason everywhere.

It is with Mbembe (using Bataille) that we learn that at the dawn of modernity lies the multiple genesis of the sovereign, and not just one.[335] Thus, the necropolitical subject of rule, a death worker that tests limits of taboos – it is s/he that can stretch the limits of the prohibition over death, as

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[334] Ibid., 248–50.

[335] Mbembe, "Necropolitics."

Bataille teaches us.[336] This is our figure of power, the one that goes into the graveyard and returns the corpse to the surface to live another life; to torture and terrify in death, and to do this with impunity.

Delinquency in the colonial situation has nothing to do with breaking the law; there is no "law" for natives except pure force to keep them away from whites and their properties, and law between natives is pure force – *the knife*. Thus gangs and criminality must be assessed in light of this space with no death limits – the space of normal refusal to accept the limits of death. Death is pushed, turned and toyed with. The police and thus "the law" ends here, where crime begins and natives finish each other off.

Criminality is part of the spaces in which a certain form of colonial violence finds expression; it is not just where all injunctions are redirected from white society. But there is no attempt to understand why subjects act the way they do, there is no attempt to investigate and pretend that you rehabilitate the native; the native is a permanent junior to whom crime or dishonesty, the eating of his/her neighbor, becomes normalised. The native is not in pursuit of high values; s/he is reduced to his/her stomach, who lives to fulfil it and who will stop at nothing to do this. What is this form of violence? We may call it colonial delinquency or criminality.

Beyond the death camps, where civil law is suspended - meaning you are in fact killing those who would under normal circumstances be considered subjects under the law - there is the colonial Township. In the colonial Township, law is not suspended, it is simply not there. The relations are not between legal subjects, because with legal subjects we assume that we can hold you accountable. To hold you accountable is to ask you to provide a rationale for what you do, premised on the fact that you understand the limits. No, the colonised sphere is the sphere whose only limits are those of life and death. Death can be decided anywhere anytime, and it matters little how, why and by whom. Criminality is therefore that space where the exchange of death has no limitations. The BZ, Khethisi and the comrades can even eat each other up like cannibals. It is simply normal.

If we observe carefully, colonisation creates criminality as the only way to live for black people with all its restrictions and bans on natives. You live with the guilt of having stolen, taken what is not yours, of being where you are not supposed to be, for longer than you are supposed to be there, or sexually desiring a white person; it is a guilt-creating force, reducing natives to a guilty existence. Everyone, therefore is a criminal, or at least a potential criminal in the township; this is the permanent condition of those who live there. The gangs and the tsotsis take up the logic of this

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[336] Georges Bataille, *The Bataille Reader*, ed. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson (Oxford, UK ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997).

identity to its fullest, its violence and terror which, through them, finds normalcy – it finds its normal inertia in crime. There are no sinners and the righteous amongst the native; "criminal" is their shared subject position which in turn reveals colonial power itself, the bankruptcy of its civilising project.

When Fanon says "hatred of self" he means two things. One is that, failing to direct anger where it should go, towards colonial power, the natives are angry with themselves and with other natives. This means the violence deposited each day with the brute force that characterises colonial command finds regular outburst with other natives. Secondly – and this Fanon develops in *Black Skins, White Masks* – is a low self-esteem that comes with a value system where all that is good, beautiful, celebrated, or prosperous looks white. Black people engage in all types of strange acts: skin whitening, hair softening, posh accents and high European languages.[337] This is all in service of trying to escape the skin that is their burden. It is the social economy of self-hate and self-rejection. So, township crime is also the space of the normalised life of self-hate, self-annihilation, and self-mutilation. It is the space where suicide is not an option for the tsotsi in the sense of hanging one's self on a tree like the slave; you hang the other, as many times as possible, so you can watch yourself hanging, kicking, suffocating, and dying.

With colonial delinquency we find this other face of redirected colonial violence; this is what interpretations of criminal gangs have not understood or interrogated. Left with nothing to hate, that is to say to express anger at, the native lives as an angry being, hating himself/herself; it is in crime where this self-hatred becomes the absolute work of destruction, of self-destruction. To take from the other is to commit murder, Fanon says; so that the colonial delinquent is driven by murder, a death urge where they stop at nothing to fulfil the belly or defend their personality, for theirs is the work of self-hatred.[338] The colonial delinquent also operates without limits; unlike the colonial riders or the bandits we see in the story of Barbier, s/he is not fighting to exist, or to create life or a moral world, to create products, or to set them free – the colonial delinquent is involved with death; it is to do the work of death; it is to live with death, as if you will not die, an act in death, a death-act, a death-reflex; it is the normalisation of acting out the hating of one's self.

It is a very powerful thing for everyone in the township to be a criminal or sinner. The difference is that the gangs accept this about their existence and go on to live it to the fullest. They therefore live

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337 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox, Revised edition (New York : Berkeley, Calif.: Grove Press, 2008).

338 Fanon uses a phrase found in the New Testament "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" – 1 John 3v15. This is informative because the discussion here is about hate and love. We will explore this using Maldarado Torres in the next chapter as he zooms into the idea of Fanon as the philosopher of Love.

the life of a hero – a fearless figure (that refuses to accept the fear/limit that death would have us have): fearless of prison, of police, of whites and of the grave. You actually can do anything, including doing things to death; you can push it, poke it, and hang it on a fence. You also do not accept taboo – sexual taboo. You rape, from the child to the elderly; you live as if you will not die or are already dead, without the fear of death; there is no punishment for you; there is nothing that can hold you accountable; it is to accept this manner of existence.

All other natives occupy this subject position, the death form of life. The difference with the tsotsi is the "decision" to drive the logic to fulfilment, in turn exposing colonial power itself. Criminal gangs are not exclusively youth, but that they attain this image in this socio-political space of the reserve called the Township is because colonial capitalism had perfected the age hierarchy that comes with the needs of population control. The anxiety for plenitude, for full identity, also not exclusive to young people, made crime or being a criminal attain a fashionability.

So then, this is the life and death of the corpse. Digging up, burning, hanging Bojosi's corpse is a way of demonstrating that death, even the claim of a dead person who has been murdered, has no hold on you, does not hold you in fear. It is merely a body. It requires no reverence. Indeed, it is not sacred. Here colonial or necropower is exposed in Bojosi's exhumed body; it tells you what all black people are under apartheid. It exposes colonial power itself as the work of death, as the reduction of people into death-like lives; the bare indignity of anti-black racism.

Conclusion

We started with this analysis by explicating that the regular violent outbursts are in the end nothing but avoidance patterns of behaviour. So, the criminal gang is an avoider, engaged in an act of looking away. Nietzsche once described humanity, which he says is an aberration, as an act of God looking away from himself[339]. The criminal gang who goes against his people is avoiding, and to avoid means you know what the cause of your problems is, but you look away and when you do, you meet the native or yourself. There is no emptiness; even if you close your eyes as a form of looking away, or avoiding, you might meet/see the zombies, four legged animals that Fanon says are scarier than the colonists that are responsible for your oppression. From here, you may run to the Church, where, says Fanon, you may be taught in that doctrine of fatality that "removes all blame from the oppressor; the cause of misfortunes and of poverty is attributed to God; He is Fate. In this way the individual accepts the disintegration ordained by God, bows down before the settler and his lot, and

339 *See Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1997)*

by a kind of interior destabilisation acquires a stony calm"[340]: petrification. The criminal gang can also be scarier than the whites, such that one's path towards decolonisation may have to go past or confront them in order to rise and confront the colonists.

How then do other natives overcome avoidance, and charge towards those responsible for the misery that is black life, those who have Christianised us, reducing us completely to our bodies? Is the very Paul of Romans our means to the solution? Who is Paul's messiah and can he wear a black body, resurrect, transform himself into holy spirit so that we can live in love, awaiting the God given and coming paradise? In the next chapter, we shall therefore interrogate another form of violence, when the political activists in criminal form (Mandela was a criminal prisoner who was incarcerated for 27 years after all), who manage to defeat the seduction of feeding on the community, set out to push the limits of the oppressive system. We try think about another form of violence, which is the work of love, to work against the hatred of self in a death form of existence – meaning that violence of decolonisation described by Fanon in Chapter One of the *Wretched of the Earth*, when you love so much that you kill, so that you may live; using violence which is your very life to unleash a new world, only because as with colonisation, "decolonisation" is the work of death.

340 Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 42

Chapter 5

In the Name of Love

VALIMO and the Underground War of the early 1990s

Introduction

If the body of Bojosi represents the work of self-hate, the normalcy of colonial violence and the intersection between political struggle and crime, then the question is what of love? Love in the colony is already a counter-current, even in its everydayness. Taking into consideration that colonisation permeates all of the native's social life; to love is already a political act that cannot be read outside the totalising system of oppression.

Loving, like hating, is steeped in violence. Therefore one cannot act out of love without a confrontation with violence; in fact no act is possible in the colony without violence. Even a thing as simple as eating is a confrontation with violence. In this chapter we shall deal with the question of loving in the colony as an act that is already political, or as a political act. We shall talk about the acts of an underground unit of the congress movement called the Vaal Liberation Movement, or in short, VALIMO. We shall examine this unit to seek love, to search for love, to find love, and to understand love in the colony. Thus, we shall be telling a love story, a story of those acts in the colony that are acts of love.

What, though, is this that we call love? To love and be loved? Indeed, any scholar having to deal with the colonial condition with seriousness must come up against this question time and time again. This is because the colonial condition creates an existential hate, that is an existence of hatred of the self, as Fanon puts it, and as we have extrapolated in the previous chapter. In this chapter we shall use Fanon again to illustrate the question of love. We shall start with locating love in an intellectual tradition of meditating on decolonisation and what colonisation does with its objects of rule. Then we shall go to VALIMO and its work in Sasolburg. We will discuss two missions that they were involved in: the robbing of police stations to arm self-defence units, and combating Inkatha and its early plans of invasion of Sasolburg hostels.

Fanon: the philosopher of love and the philosophy of love

In *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon writes: "… Man is a yes. I will never stop reiterating that. Yes to life. Yes to love. Yes to generosity. But man is also a no. No to exploitation of man. No to the butchery of what is most human in man: freedom."[341]

It is Maldonado-Torres who takes seriously the theoretical and philosophical implications of what Fanon means here. Maldonado-Torres presents him in a series of thinkers he says are *Against War.*[342] By now we know that war is indeed Fanon's most important subject and we know this because the *Wretched of the Earth* is a treatise against colonisation as a system that makes war a permanent normal order of the colonised. It is a treatise against the greatest human attempt at normalising the conditions of war and inserting them into the everydayness of the colonised.

The best extrapolations of this we have already discussed through Mbembe's *Necropolitics* in the previous chapter. And many indeed have had to confront war and write about the horror of human life confronted with violence in the Jewish camps of World War II where all Jews had been sentenced to death in the holocaust. Mbembe helps us to capture this state of the translation of war into the everydayness of human life in one word – necropolitics [343] - that "commanding" that is taking place in the slave plantations, in the war camps, in the refugee camps, under colonisation, under apartheid and in the occupied Palestinian territories by the racist state of Israel. Yet, still we must ask what a revolutionary must be under conditions of a state of permanent war? What should this revolutionary believe in, and in what way does such a revolutionary engage in the action of the identified revolution?

Through Maldonado-Torres' reading of Fanon we discover a powerful response and one that must be repeated in even more vividness through the acts of VALIMO; and that is that the revolutionary of decolonisation is one who is armed with love, with a relationship that is a permanent and constant giving of oneself. The revolutionary act under the conditions of colonisation is the act of love – to love and create a world of freedom.

Maldonado-Torres begins his exegesis by borrowing from Axel Honneth's critique of Hegel's innovative redirection of modern political philosophy from its concerns with self-preservation as

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[341] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox, Revised edition (New York : Berkeley, Calif.: Grove Press, 2008), 197.

[342] *Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity (North Carolina: Duke University Press Books, 1994).*

[343] Also see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1st edition (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973); Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, 1 edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). etc

found in Hobbes and Machiavelli. For Honneth, it is Hegel who interprets the origins of social conflict as having to do with the struggle for recognition, which he bases in the analogy of master and slave. Torres says "the idea that subjects struggle to gain recognition as persons… introduces an intersubjective conception of selfhood that was absent in the vocabulary and presuppositions of early modern political theory"[344]

Hegel, in so doing, "paves way for an examination of the moral content of social struggle… [requiring] social and political philosophy [to] turn to empirical social sciences in order to examine carefully the motivations behind different social movements and groups"[345]. Hegel however does not pursue this path of social examination; instead he focuses on "philosophy of consciousness and its trademark, the concept of Geist or Spirit"[346].

Maldonado-Torres insists that it is not the phenomenology of consciousness that we ought to be concerned with in order to understand social conflict, but the phenomenology of the social; the lived experience of a people. Finally, Maldonado-Torres says that for "Honneth, recognition takes place in three spheres: love, rights, and social esteem" [347] and here is his point of departure, because the object of Fanon's enquiry does not allow him to make those distinctions. In the colony, "what happens in the level of the private and the intimate is fundamentally linked to social structures and to colonial cultural formations and forms of value."[348]

Maldonado-Torres then turns to Fanon's critique of the Hegelian conception of the dialectic between master and slave. For Fanon, the master does not seek the affirmation and recognition of the slave under conditions of colonialism. Instead, the "master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition, but work" [349], says Fanon. He proceeds to say:

> In the same way, the slave here is in no way identifiable with the slave who loses himself in the object and finds in his work the source of his liberation. The Negro wants to be like the master. Therefore, he is less independent than the Hegelian slave. In Hegel the slave turns

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[344] Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 125.

[345] Ibid.

[346] Ibid.

[347] Ibid., 127.

[348] Ibid.

[349] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 220,221.

> away from the master and turns towards the object. Here the slave turns towards the master and abandons the object. [350]

In essence, Fanon is trying to demonstrate that the system of master and slave in the colony is steeped in mutual exclusivity; black skins will never be white. Colonisation mobilised the pigmentation of the natives as a means of their oppression; as Steve Biko puts it[351], you are a slave because you are black, so that it is has to do with something you cannot change. In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon says "the look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession – all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible."[352]

Fanon also takes on Marx's dialectics of class struggle as it has to be applied in the colony and says it must be radically refined. He writes:

> The serf is in essence different from the knight, but a reference to divine right is necessary to legitimise this statutory difference. In the colonies, the foreigner coming from another country imposes his rule by means of guns and machines. In defiance of his successful transplantation, in spite of his appropriation, the settler still remains a foreigner. It is neither the act of owning factories, nor estates, nor bank balances which distinguish the governing classes. The governing race is first and foremost those who came from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, 'the others'[353].

Maldonado-Torres goes back to the beginning of *Black Skins White Masks* to emphasise Fanon's central question of recognition, namely, "what does the black man want?". The answer, which is also found in *The Wretched of the Earth,* is that it is to be human, and being human comes with ending the colonial condition. This desire of black people is therefore a claim to subjectivity. Maldonado-Torres goes further, to properly lead us into the innovation in Fanon's critique, and takes us to his introduction in *Black Skins White Masks* where Fanon talks about the shout. Fanon says, "these things I am going to say, not shout. For it is a long time since shouting has gone out of my life".[354]

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[350]Ibid.

[351] See Biko, *I Write What I Like* (Johannesburg: Heinemann, 1987)

[352] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London; New York, New York: Penguin Classics, 2001), 30.

[353] Ibid., 31.

[354] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 7.

Maldonado-Torres shows us that Fanon's shout, or more precisely, the cry, is a potent phenomenological moment in the lived experience of black existence and desire. Fanon has been crying, shouting, and *Black Skins White Masks* is the result of this long time of crying. The cry, says Maldonado-Torres, "is indeed, precisely that, a sound uttered as a call for attention, as a demand for immediate action or remedy"[355]. The condition of black people is not that they are only sentenced to death, but that they cannot demand anything. They are black, and this is what makes them subservient. This is not an unsatisfied or unfulfilled recognition, but the very fact that it is impossible to be recognised. You are not misrecognised; you are simply invisible to the humanising gaze. "Why write this book?" asks Fanon, "No one has asked for it. Especially those to whom it is directed"[356]. Maldonado-Torres leads us to the ultimate answer: there seems to be no reason, he says. "Black Skins, White Masks is a gift… that the explosion may come one day and that a world of love may finally emerge"[357].

Fanon writes "was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the You?" and Maldonado-Torres wants us to see that under the death sentence Fanon, who has been crying and trying to do the impossible, finally finds something to do; and that in his final hour he decided to live for the other. To give himself, to give a gift to the "other". This other is his brother, who next to him is "living his neurosis to its extreme"[358].

At this point, Maldonado-Torres returns to Hegel to elucidate the genius of Fanon. He says for Hegel, "freedom is the fundamental element in the economy of self-possession"[359]. The idea here is that humans are in and of themselves free, which must lead us to condemn slavery. However, since humans are free in and of themselves, another interpretation is that those who are slaves are slaves by their own willing or doing. However, for Fanon, the slavery of the colonised is not of their doing, placing responsibility squarely in the hands of Europeans. It would be impossible to say a slave's oppression or tutelage is self-imposed due to laziness and cowardice; the slave is under slavery because of the violence of the master.

An even deeper discovery about the black condition is that:

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[355] Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 133.

[356] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 7.

[357] Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 141.

[358] Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, 7

[359] Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 141

> …one of the main challenges confronted by blacks in a racial society is not only that they are not recognised as people who can possess things, but that they are not recognised as people who can give things. Demands to be able to give are, in this respect, more radical than demands for possession. The master, under pressure, can allow the slave to have 'things', but he will not recognise that he needs what the slave has. For the master, whatever the slave touched decreases in quality and value.[360]

Maldonado-Torres argues that the act of giving is very dangerous for the coloniser as it requires an openness that they fundamentally resist. There is nothing that the slave can add in value to the value and self-worth of the master. The master is the master, not because he has a slave, but as Mbembe puts it, he is taking care of things as it is his duty as a human being to preside over nature, over objects. This has reworked the understanding of the colonial condition as that which creates "privileged givers while others do not even have bread to eat or to give". [361] Maldonado-Torres says that for Fanon, "giving and loving are the fundamental traits of the very humanity of the human".[362]

This means the slave's struggle is precisely located in the pre-imminently human act of "having to give", and the impossibility of giving, because you have nothing to give. The essence of human recognition lies not so much in the demand to "see me that I have a possession" as it is to "see me that I can give to you", or "I can give".

> The telos of whatever 'I have' is not accumulation but the enactment of intersubjective contact through giving and receiving… the ultimate telos of the struggle for liberation is the creation of a community wherein people can give themselves completely as who they are and others are receptive of this gift.[363]

Fanon's act of writing *Black Skins, White Masks* is a gift of himself, it is the gift to the brother, the slave. Maldonado-Torres calls this a loving subjectivity, that point when you stop crying to be seen as an equal, stop crying to be affirmed as human by the white world and demanding respect, but where you simply look to another side and now live for your brother, another slave. Indeed, equality, justice and rights are critical, but the revolutionary subjectivity is a loving subjectivity where the ultimate human need is to be received as a gift, as that which you are by others. This is to love; to

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[360] Ibid., 146.

[361] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 1st edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[362] Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 151.

[363] Ibid., 151–52.

exist absolutely for the other, "a simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself"[364].

This formulation immediately takes us to Foucault's work on revolution. What we find here is a theory of revolutionary subjectivity which Foucault extracts from examining the ancient Greek practice called *Parresia* – the practice of self where one confronts power with the full knowledge that this confrontation will lead to punishment, the ultimate of which is death; but one does it anyway. This practice leads Foucault to a new understanding of how power functions with subjects of its subjugation; that is, it relies on a relationship that people must have with themselves which reproduces the relationship they have with power. So that to disrupt power, one must disrupt the relationship they have with themselves.[365]

Colonial governmental rationality relies on blacks relating to themselves as blacks in order to reproduce their relationship with colonial power as permanent subservient beings - a process we have called permanent juniorisation.[366] In South Africa, we need not travel to ancient Greece to discover this revolutionary practice; we only have to go to black youth politics and the philosophical practice of Black Consciousness. You can fight for the wage increase, or ownership of the means of production, but if that process is not articulated by a parallel transformation of a relationship to self, you will not transcend to new power relations.[367]

Apartheid constellates on native self-hate, the negating power of impossible native desire to be the white: this white is a full adult, a human. Love, articulated not as self-preservation but as self-giving, necessitates a disruption because the white world cannot receive gifts; it is predicated on accumulation and self-preservation. However, right there in the colony, in the space of black on black relations, a gift of the self – love – is possible. In a way, colonisation depends on black people relating to other black people in a way that always needs external supervision from the white world for orderly social relations to occur. By looking to each other, in the motif of a loving subjectivity, the gift of the self, colonial power is not only disrupted and undermined, but overcome. This idea of revolutionary subjectivity is assessed on the basis of the practice of a giving self where the reward is precisely that which you have given to the other.

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[364] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 232.

[365] Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the College de France, 1982-1983*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2011).

[366] See chapter two of this thesis.

[367]Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*.

In the previous chapter we ended on an explanation of what Fanon calls the kernel of hatred of self in that colonial spacio-reality of redirected violence - the native town (or Township). Unable to confront the coloniser, the natives are forced to come up against themselves; it is here, Fanon says, that we discover that kernel of hatred of self characterised by racist societies. We situated this hatred of the self, or hostility to self, as created by the colonial condition of firstly producing a general existence of guilt on the part of the natives. The natives are oppressed because they are black-skinned; the reason why they suffer no matter how much perfect work they do, of how much education they accrue, or how much skill they can display in sports, is because they are black-skinned. Their bodies, which represent putrefaction, are the reason for their death existence; bodies that they cannot undo - they live to rot, to die. Thus, they live as permanent criminals whose first transgression is this crime of their being black.

This colonial condition for black people does not, however, achieve perfect petrification - only a false one, according to Fanon. In crime amongst the natives, we find the expression of hatred of self where natives finish each other. However, as much as they do so, these acts of violence, which in themselves are "death-reflexes", are a sign that they are not dead or completely petrified. This coming up against oneself, the hatred of the self, is itself a sign, a blueprint for "true decolonisation". The question is, when the natives finally organise themselves to confront the empire in violence, is a relationship that enables this act of decolonisation one of love as explicated by Maldonado Torres? One of giving oneself, one of living for the other? Is it possible that it can still constitute a coming up against oneself or a native to native violence? Can giving oneself for the other also mean a violence against the very people for whom you seek liberation?

On this foundation we shall now read the politics of VALIMO and we shall do so without assuming a distant position because the story is right at home – my home.

The Vaal Liberation Movement

One morning in 1993, just after four in the morning, two of my uncles, one in his late teens and the other early thirties lay asleep on the dining room floor. It must have been summer because it was bright outside though the sun had not come up yet. My grandfather (my mother's uncle) and I were in the main bedroom. I was half-asleep, perhaps contemplating waking up for the normal school day. My aunt and cousins were asleep in the other bedroom of the typical apartheid four-roomed house in Zamdela, Sasolburg.

My half-asleep contemplation is uprooted by a roaring sound of repeatedly arriving engines, maybe buses, trucks, with their tyres scratching against the street sands and car doors opening and closing, one after the other, as if to surround the house with an enigmatic abruptness of locomotive noises. My heart begins to beat against my chest as a hurried horde

of footsteps all over the house with echoing bangs of doors and windows is followed by the multiple choruses of demands to "Wake up, wake up, and open the house!"

These are men in uniform who ride with loud, barking dogs. Before I realise, my shirtless grandfather is already out of the bedroom, doors are open, white and black men in uniform swarm the house; it is the police, they are looking for Toto.

Blankets are thrown off and my two uncles in the dining room floor are being questioned. The police ask for their names; one replies "Nkosiphi James Maguma" and the other, "I am Ketso Maguma". The police seem to not know what the person they are in search of looks like. So they accept the answers and leave the house as if to depart; as they walk outside they say, "Tell Toto to come and hand himself in at the police station, tell him we are looking for him", they are talking to my grandfather who goes along with them. In no more than two minutes, they return rushing into the dining room with him amongst them, and he points them to Ketso Maguma, "this is Toto".

What follows are loud sounds of claps and beatings, "Dress up, you think we are fools?". The first hit, he later recalls, "was by a non-uniform wearing black policeman"[368]*. They were kicking him, beating him whilst taking him to the vans; for us, the last we heard of him were screams of Toto bitterly crying. This is one of the toughest guys in the township. Many fear him: he is a leader of the youth in the neighbourhood, the dangerous, politically active youth.*

Ketso "Toto" Makume was a member of a unit belonging to the Vaal Liberation Movement - VALIMO. VALIMO was based in the townships of the Vaal, from Evaton to Sasolburg, just after the Vaal River. He was one of the key ANC Youth League leaders, and a former COSAS branch chair and SRC President of Nkgopoleng Secondary School; the first and oldest high school of Sasolburg (see Chapter Two). Police called him Gaddafi; it is said because he was stubborn. They have been looking for him. It was known by the family and relatives. They come for him each time there were major political or politically linked activities in the township. His sister recalls how the white Afrikaner cop would always arrive in an entourage of police cars – "Waar is Gaddafi?" But this time they got him after he was involved in an embarrassing crime that left South African security forces deeply humiliated by the activities of his unit. Toto was accused of robbing a police station, as well as having killed a cop.

Police had been robbed before, perhaps on their way to or from work. Or perhaps even during patrols where they would be outnumbered by the black youth who would beat them up and take their weapons. Indeed, there used to be such missions, even in Sasolburg where they target police,

[368] Ketso Makume, Interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

"drunken police; black and white"[369]. But to take a police station down; that is, to enter it, close cops up inside a cell, with tied hands and feet, and then cover up their mouths, this was not only unheard of, but humiliating to a government whose fundamental relationship with natives was one of pure force. It was like silencing the system where it mattered the most.

The story, and let it be said, not the history, is that VALIMO was an initiative, at least in Sasolburg, of one Alfonse Qhoane who came to Sasolburg from Kimberley, via Soweto, in the late 1980s. He had gotten his underground training in Soweto from MK militias essentially as an intelligence gatherer and was later sent to Sasolburg on an undercover mission to collect information so that Sasol could be bombed. This never happened, though, as soon after his arrival, the release of political prisoners signalled a change of tactics.

Nevertheless, VALIMO was spread across the Vaal, but without any central command that held it and its activities together. Many of the politicised youth in Sebokeng, Evaton, Sharpville, and Boipatong claim to have belonged to the units of VALIMO in the early 1990s. It is not clear how VALIMO started, who named it, where and when. What is clear though is that it was a name describing missions of Self-Defence Units that could not be openly associated with the ANC so as to not bring it into disrepute.

Many locate its origins in Evaton and Sebokeng just after the Sebokeng Massacre of Zone 7, which subsequently got linked to Khethisi and his gang in 1991. VALIMO therefore emerged as a mission, perhaps a call to different comrades everywhere to hunt Khethisi and his gang and eliminate them. Alfonse Qhoane explains:

> I learned about Khethisi before the Zone 7 shooting, because by then it was… I learned about it via the KwamaDala Hostel. But information was not so clear, we were informed that there is somebody by the name of Khethisi who is leading those groups. But we never came to know about it until the Zone 7 shootings of the innocent. That is when we actually believed that they were there, because everybody knew who he was. But the only difficult part for us is that he never got arrested you see… Now we believed that we needed to take the law into our own hands. So there were different detachments that were actually lined up for that activity. Whoever gets him first, they must eliminate him; that was the mandate.[370]

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[369] Ibid.

[370] Alfonse Qhoane, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

Some speak of VALIMO as a direct response to the spread of Inkatha in the Vaal which was in clashes with comrades on the ground, often resulting in mass deaths. As Qhoane explains, the Khethisi gang was also later linked to and understood as an Inkatha gang. It is not until the Boipatong Massacre of June 1992 that perhaps VALIMO reached its pinnacle, escalating activities to wage an "unofficial" underground war.

This war had to be underground and mostly "unofficial" because of what was called the Pretoria Minute. This is the decision of August 6th, 1990 to suspend the armed struggle, as the Pretoria Minute states: "The ANC announced that it was now suspending all armed actions with immediate effect. As a result of this, no further armed actions and related activities by the ANC and its military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe will take place."[371]

No later than five months after this announcement, on the 12th of January 1991, the Sebokeng massacre occurred where more than 30 people lost their lives. It was followed by the Boipatong Massacre on 17 June 1992, a day after the anniversary of the June 16 Soweto Youth Uprising of 1976. These two massacres were cataclysmic events of proportional spectacle carried out under the cover of darkness on an unarmed, largely unaware, innocent and often politically uninvolved people.

In Boipatong people were slaughtered, shot at, and at times stoned and stabbed to death. The Vaal and indeed other PWV massacres were those impassioned orgies of violence where the perpetrators practiced intimate forms of pleasure with death and the exchanging of death. It was not like the killing of shots fired from a distance as happened in the massacres by apartheid police in Sharpeville 1960 and Soweto 1976, but close range shooting using multiple bullets until the body loses form. Mostly, perpetrators used machetes, axes, spears and sticks; to engage in such a massacre you cannot afford to lack an intimate passion, at least of one form or the other, with violence, with death itself. Most of all, and dare I say, these were acts of black people carried out on other black people.

This is not to say the colonial security forces did not infuse themselves with the body (or bodies) of their victims; they did. In the prison cells and torture centres, you see the whites beat blacks up, tear their skins open until bones show, throw their bodies in the sea by the hundreds, burn them, bury them in one big grave, or even feed them to animals. However, in the colony, it matters that death is carried out by a black on another black because both the subject and object of liberation is "black". Here, blackness or race occupies a central place in all that actors do politically.

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[371] http://africanhistory.about.com/od/apartheiddocuments/a/TextPretoriaMin.htm accessed 15 Jan. 17

This means that a liberation fighter, that fighter who carries upon himself or herself the task of creating a world of freedom, is fighting both for the house nigger and the nigger in the plantation; both the nigger in the army of the master and the one right next to him/her on the picket-lines; the comrade in arms, even the comrade that betrays the cause, eating it up, that one who goes on filling his stomach with the cause until there is nothing left of it to eat, and even more painfully, that male comrade who rapes the cause, rapes the female comrades, rapes the madams and the black women in the community. This is that comrade who discharges all his phallic violent pleasure at each and every resisting woman he asks for sex, until he asks no more, and then takes, and takes, takes even life, killing or leaving their victim to die.

Mandela conceived of the mission of MK to engage the system, to confront a system that knows no other language but that of violence against "a defenceless and an unarmed people"[372]. But the system fights with all it has against the liberation fighter, such that the category of enemy can extend to include the situation of the rank and file in the townships. When you confront the system you must expect it to undo everything because it is not only its police, its army, its laws and regulations, its wages, houses or lack thereof that you confront; it is also its blacks, the very blacks that the liberation fighter shares with the system, who can be used both by the system and by the liberation struggle.

How dare one ask, then, people who face such horror and terror to put down arms? What does a liberation fighter do in Boipatong when waking up in the morning to the aftermath of an orgy of violence so spectacular, so thorough, and so bloody, smoky and intimate? Boipatong is fairly small, one of the smallest if not the smallest of all, Vaal townships at the time; a mere total of 4.31 km^2. The massacre of 48 people in a small place like that has a suffocating psychological impact. What do the sounds of calls for peace feel like in a place like that, after an event like that? This fighter knows, because he lives in Boipatong, that marching to the white man asking for protection is not going to help. She or he also knows that there is no peace that the white man can provide in a situation of black on black violence. It matters little at this level that it was sponsored by white police; all that is true to the ordinary person here is the evident work of hatred by Inkatha, or *Mazulu* as they called them.

The previous chapter sought to demonstrate that "black on black violence" in the colony is already a white sponsored, white created phenomenon. The reading of the Boipatong massacre as white sponsored, as though all other violence is not, misses the fundamental nature of the black condition, and lived experience in the colony. The liberation fighter has to confront this reality, experienced

[372] BBC Interview with Nelson Mandela, 1960 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAhmMYzWVPM

precisely in this way – as violence from another black person. This is the greatest manifestation of the system's oppression of black people a liberation fighter can ever experience; when the system is embodied by blacks, when they claim it as theirs, and it claims them back in a mutual interpellation that is prepared to defend the status quo at all costs.

If we pursue this logic, then it is also true that the liberation fighter is as vulnerable to the system as the rest of those she fights for. There is no strong wall between worlds in the colony; all existence hangs on a string and the fighter must carry the revolution right on top of this thin string of existence where things constantly fall apart. This is precisely the string upon which we must test Maldonado-Torres and Fanon, and imagine this complexity of the colonial situation and the task that faces the liberation fighter. We must do so with and against them. The question is, what is it to have a loving subjectivity, and how do you fight for Inkatha too? How do you do so in the very day-to-day practice of the liberation struggle?

Let us return to VALIMO. VALIMO (and not MK) was a war movement. This is a new phenomenon produced by the peculiar circumstances of South Africa's transition; a war movement, as opposed to a tightly or centrally organised army with a central command structure and soldiers. Here, different Self-Defence Units and underground missions across the Vaal are linked up, at least in the minimum by naming their activities VALIMO, united by one mission – to defend their communities from the evident political violence threatening to undo the liberation movement. It is almost the name of the mission itself, the name of different war activities that share one mission and are located in the Vaal – to liberate the Vaal from political violence and allow the imminent emergence of a democratic society called freedom. The Vaal was under attack, a sort of attack that was threatening to hold the country in another long night of terror, maybe even of greater proportions than apartheid; and it had to be defended. VALIMO was that defence: the new shield of the people.

In Sasolburg, Alfonse Qhoane established the first units of VALIMO which engaged in different missions in and around Sasolburg. For him, the Inkatha activities, particularly the Boipatong massacre, could be considered the central reason why they had to initiate and intensify VALIMO in Sasolburg beyond the hunting of Khethisi and his gang.

Qhoane arrived in Sasolburg and settled in Thembalethu Hostel in Zamdela, where he worked for the apartheid's African Explosives and Chemical Industries (AECI). AECI formed part of a chain of companies that worked with coal, synthetics, chemicals and weapons in Sasolburg. He was there on a mission to collect intelligence for a unit based in Soweto, a unit of MK that was planning to

bomb Sasol firms. This meant that he had to lay low, keep a low profile and not be known as a politically active and conscious person. This mission was however aborted due to national political events following the release of key political prisoners in the late 1980s. For Alfonse though, it meant finding a different mission, hence soon after that he formed a soccer team for the youth with the intention of identifying who was politically active in Sasolburg. The club was called Thembalethu Cosmos. Qhoane was looking for men; all places he searched indicate that he sought for a group of men; he was looking for fighters, and his idea of who can fight obviously denoted masculine virility. Among the boys that came to join, none were directly involved in political activities, but some led him to activists of COSAS, ANCYL and the Pioneer Movement. He also met some in entertainment centres, not in Sasolburg only, but also in Sharpeville and Sebokeng, as it was the norm for many comrades to move in and around the Vaal.

No less than two years after his arrival in Sasolburg, Alfonse found a house in a place called Success, which formed a new section of Zamdela. He was not intending to get centrally involved with the activities of the Sasolburg comrades per se, but there was a rising threat that Inkatha, which had taken over the KwamaDala Hostel in 1990, near Boipatong, was planning to come to Sasol too. According to the information they were receiving from comrades in Sebokeng and Evaton, it had started in Evaton, and then went to Sebokeng, Sharpeville, and Boipatong, and so it was rational to assume that Sasolburg would be the next stop since it was nearby. He then planned to establish an underground unit that would get ready to confront Inkatha. Such information would not be the subject of formal meetings of the ANC or its related structures; most of the time it emerged in conversations taking place in beer halls or related spaces. An instruction like this is an instruction to males – fighting, politicised males – who in the process arouse each other's masculine virility through fantasies of heroism, bravery, and death.

Alfonse's unit had to be trained, armed and always ahead of all the moves of the enemy. In Sasol it found an already politicised army of high school-going youth who welcomed the task in full force. This was the congress youth who are the heritage of 1976 and its Black Consciousness movement. Not all comrades got pulled into the underground work though, but the key was to identify individuals to form part of small units of four or five people, who could meet the requirements of doing secret activities with discipline. In his words, Alfonse says:

> I assess their analytical way of thinking, because remember I said I linked up with them at different entertainment centres… Toto and them came to me and then we were discussing school things. Started with school things, their books, doing their homeworks with them, then we would cook together there you know, and then we would do the civic stuff you

> know… try to see how we group the people around a common thing you know, say let's go and take that land, you know, to gain confidence of comrades… so we went for that, and then somebody was killed for that land of Chris Hani, finally we got that land and then we were a unit now. You know being a unit now, you know you needed to check amongst them who can do what.[373]

Alfonse managed to get around him people like Toto, Bhuddus, Paki, Steven, Phajane, Smodern, Dallus, Fish, Rangwane, Fole, Lucky, Thandu, Levi, the Slender brothers, and many others. Alfonse and his group also integrated two returning MK comrades within their unit, "Commander Banda" and Cijimpi who was a brother to Smodern. Many of these used to be marshals, which is why there was an initial coordination with Shaka Radebe who led the marshals the congress movement used during stay-aways, defiance campaigns, or mass meetings of several political activities. Being a marshal perhaps served as testing ground of bravery, a particularly attractive feature for any form of confrontation in society.

The unit of Sasolburg, a unit of organised armed violence, therefore explicitly adopted the name "Vaal Liberation Movement" (VALIMO). It engaged in many missions; primarily, these were missions of war against war. We shall focus only on three of them: the first is the robbing of a police station; the second is the dismantling of the BZ gang; and the last is eliminating and preventing the return of Inkatha in Sasolburg.

Arming VALIMO: the Heilbron Police Station

Many describe Phajane as "ntwa dumela" [374] which is Sesotho for cantankerous (in IsiZulu you would say "mpiyakhe"), those people who are temperamental and easily provoked into physical confrontation. They almost always look for a fight; for Phajane it was a physical fight. Born in 1972, Phajane was only 20 years old at the time, a member of COSAS and a loyal soldier. He was always there; you could rely on him when brave things needed to be done. Phajane knew it, priding himself on this feature and says, "once a fight breaks, only few people can stop me."[375] He identifies Toto as one of them because Toto was a "bull fighter""[376] himself. He is very close with him, but many of the comrades trust and relate to Toto more as their commissar, the guru of political consciousness.

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[373] Qhoane, interview.

[374] Molifi Sekere, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

[375] Phajane, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, n.d.

[376] Makume, interview.

It is no secret that comrades fight for what they believe in. As I recounted in Chapter Three, they had already confronted *amaZimzim* in 1990, the AZAPO-linked school youth who were mainly staying in Protema (a section in Zamdela). Somehow, the active ANC members or *amaVarara*, were mainly from Tswape, which is separated by a street from Protema, the main and busiest street in Zamdela. They say that, from long ago, AZAPO people liked to use big English words and dress very much like hippies, whereas the congress people were mostly amaPantsula.

Like it or not, these nuances are significant. Within the tsotsi culture, a Panstula likes to carry a knife all the time, plays the game of dice, and speaks Tsotsitaal a lot. AmaIvy people like bell-bottoms, curl their hair or perm it, or if not then shave it stylishly and listen primarily to soul music. AmaPantsula like their head bald; if they leave it, they wear a beanie and at this time, kwaito was their thing, both as music and culture. Sasolburg was dominated by and large at this time, at least politically, by *AmaZimzim;* it is said that this was the case with tsotsi activites too.

Phajane belonged to the old Sasol boys who are Pantsula and wore his identity as a congress youth with great pride, also because his elder brother used to be politically active. This is the case with many of the youths of VALIMO; they are Pantsula. Toto, on the other hand, saw himself as an Evaton boy and grew up admiring the Evaton lifestyle of his cousin-brothers. His main influence as a young man in his early teens was the notorious Jabulani Mcentral, who was a tsotsi from Central, a section in Evaton. Mcentral was known for his ability to stand his ground as a single man in a time when being tsotsi meant belonging to a gang. Toto admired his fighting skill and, most of all, the respect he commanded from people, which was due to his bravery. Toto recalls in particular Jabulani commanding respect in a shebeen in Zone 13, Sebokeng. He had visited his aunt and not far from her house there was a shebeen called emaSwatini, which was known to be very dangerous. Jabulani would get there and everyone would stand in awe and greet him, and he would be the boss of the day.

Toto once witnessed him in a physical confrontation with a notorious Sebokeng gang located in Zones 7, 11 and 13 called the Wild Geese. The Wild Geese were known for their brutality and spread, and everyone feared them. They had a uniform they called amaThanda Kitchen which they all wore and no one in the township was allowed to wear unless they were a member of their gang. Mcentral had worn it on one occasion in Zone 13. The Wild Geese of Zone 13 were passing by when they saw him and as they approached, everyone was going inside and locking their houses. Mcentral did not and Toto stood inside the yard, and so they asked him why he was wearing amaThanda Kitchen when he is not a member of the Wild Geese[377].

[377] Interview with Ketso Makume

Jabulani Mcentral took the lid of a dustbin, one of those made out of steel, because he knew there was going to be a confrontation. It is said that he told them to pass by and not start a fight because they were not going to win. But it was the Wild Geese – they win everything – so they fought him, only to all be beaten up by one man. Jabulani was later assisted by a neighbour, who knew him well and joined the fight when he was already way ahead. They chased them, and terminally hurt some, as it was a fight of fists and knives. For Toto, this was both scary and inspiring. After that day, he was not going to ever leave a fight until a little Jabulani inside of him won it.

Levy also hailed from Evaton; born in 1974, he falsified his identity to reflect a date of birth in 1972 in order to go to exile and join Mkhonto weSizwe in 1987. His journey was through Swaziland, Mozambique and then Tanzania, where he was enrolled in Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College until he reached Standard 7. Levy came back in 1990 following the unbanning of political organisations. He arrived in Evaton, Cheap Side, to find his family relocated to Sasolburg, in Success. He arrived to a mother who made him promise not to get involved with politics whatsoever, but after eight months or so, comrades had discovered that he had returned from exile, particularly as an MK member. They arrived at his home, led by Toto, and asked for him.

Levy knew guns. This is in fact the first thing he brought to comrades – an interest in guns. He says many political confrontations, both with police and other elements were through petrol bombs and stones, but for him, if "we must be fighting, we must use guns"[378]. Toto and the rest told him to go back to school, which they facilitated, and he was enrolled for Standard 8 after he passed an aptitude test. His arrival amongst the young lions of Sasolburg only contributed to their already burning desire to be at the forefront of the struggle, to bring down the system as foot soldiers of the revolution.

Levy says that he himself, Phajane, Bhuddas and Steven were somewhere in Sebokeng when they were told of a sell-out comrade who had caused a lot of cadres to be arrested and even killed. This comrade was said to have run away and there was information that he was in Heilbron. Levy does not recall why they immediately volunteered to hunt him and eliminate him. He suspects that it must have been due to the fact that Sebokeng comrades could not fetch him themselves as he knew them. He also says that perhaps they felt the pressure to prove that they "were brave"[379], and so volunteered themselves for the mission.

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[378] Levy, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

[379] Ibid.

In the recollection of Phajane, he says they must have been coming back from a rally that Winnie Mandela addressed after the Boipatong massacre. He particularly recalls that Mama Mandela said "police are failing to protect us, and they have the guns, so we rather take those guns and protect ourselves"[380]. For the Zamdela guerrillas, it meant immediate action. Levy's recollection of a conversation with comrades happened either before or after this rally. Such a conversation is confirmed by both parties, including by their counterpart, Bhuddas.

The four – Phajane, Bhuddas, Steven and Levy – left Sebokeng with one mission already in mind, to hunt the sell-out; but a second mission that had to be formulated – how to disarm the police, and arm the people's fighters. In Sasolburg, VALIMO had a form of a headquarters which was called Torture House. This was the house and home of Qhoane; the four therefore met there together with him. It was a house of war strategy, hiding, and also where spies and detractors were questioned, and sometimes tortured. Torture house earned its name though, not necessarily because of physical torture, but because comrades felt your mind would be tortured by the levels of discussion and critique that happened there.

Qhoane and the four comrades brainstormed ideas including identifying careless drunk police who could be disarmed of their firearms, or house breaking to get money and purchase arms. But the idea that appealed to them most had to do with identifying isolated and small police stations in farm areas that could be robbed. The stations in particular had to be in places that would not trace them back to Sasolburg. The group then agreed on a police station in Heilbron, since they had a mission to complete there too.

The idea was that four comrades would advance: Phajane (20), Bhuddas (19), Steven (22) and Levy (23). Then transportation would follow and collect them in Heilbron Township. The transport is very important because it means finding a very good driver in terms of speed and cool headedness when coming to being questioned by police, and someone who knows the area very well. So a driver was identified who already owned a car that could be used.

The comrades were to first study the activity at the police station: how many police are around at different time periods, patrol times, and the different times when there are more civilians than officers; in other words, some form of intelligence gathering. Upon properly observing the patterns, the comrades found a suitable time in which to take the police station.

There were principles that guided such a mission. One was not to tell anyone, including other comrades in the VALIMO unit. A second principle was not to harm the police or anyone unless it

[380] Mbuyiselwa Mnguni, interview by Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.

was absolutely necessary. Above all, it was absolutely necessary for death to be avoided at all costs. Thirdly, between that time and a specified period of time after the robbing, no one was to go anywhere without the knowledge of the rest of the unit. Finally, whatever happens, when caught, comrades must not compromise the rest of the missions.

Phajane, Bhuddas, Steven and Levy then set off to Heilbron, which is no more than an hour from Sasolburg. Phajane had a relative that side, and Bhuddas had an idea of Heilbron as he had stayed there for a while in the past. Upon arrival, they claimed to the local comrades that they were looking for a sell-out cadre who had compromised comrades in Sebokeng. This suspected comrade was indeed in Heilbron, and they indicated that they first wanted to observe him before taking him back to Sebokeng to account for his actions. This is how they managed to ensure they would be there at the right time for the police station mission, although this too was in the plan.

The comrades also attended a community meeting that took place in the afternoon where issues of this community were being discussed. Levy recalls that Phajane even stood to make contributions in the meeting, as is typical of comrades to always contribute in political discussions. But Levy is of the opinion that it was because Phajane generally liked to speak, and at the time he actually made very valid contributions, although they were supposed to keep a low profile.

They had guns with them – a 7.65, and a dysfunctional CZ gun that had been borrowed from Cijimpi by Steven. The targeted police station is just outside the township and was at the time responsible for overseeing the township. They arrived on the 8th of July, twenty-one days after the Boipatong massacre of 17 June 1992. They arrived in the late morning and spent some time at a comrade by the name of Tapole's place, who was going to provide accommodation for the four of them. This was a Wednesday, and the idea was to observe the police station on the 9th, take it on the 10th and depart from Heilbron with the sell-out comrade on the same day, which was a Friday, the day their transport was also meant to collect them.

Their pretext was a bus that used to stop near the police station going to Qwaqwa at 20h00. So, they planned to enter the police station and ask about the time of the bus. On the same day of their arrival, they stood outside and saw a van leave the police station; they then all entered, although only three of them were supposed to do so. They found two cops on duty, both black. Here they immediately thought "we can overpower" [381] them and take off. They entered and asked about the bus, then indicated to each other, drew guns, pointed at the police and asked them to surrender. One of the policemen tried to push Steve, but he kicked him back and pointed a gun right at his

[381] Levy, interview with Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013

head. Having thus disarmed the two policemen, Phajane says they indicated to them that, "We have nothing against you. The intention is clear, we need these guns to protect our people; we are not going to harm you guys as long as you cooperate with us. And then they obliged"[382].

They took the guns and ammunition; two C75 pistols, and two pump-action guns. The two carrying pump guns, Phajane and Steven, took the road to Sandasville, and the others carrying the C75 pistols took an opposite direction. They reunited later through Steven who came to fetch Levy and Bhuddus, and they decided not to go into the township but to immediately walk to Sasolburg by foot.

They stayed as much as possible away from the main roads, but got lost as a result. At around three in the morning, Bhuddas led them to a relative who was based on a farm. They spent the rest of the night and the whole day there, with the exception of Bhuddas who went to Sasolburg in the morning to fetch transport, which was meant to have collected them on the Friday from the township. They brought all the guns and the ammunition back to Sasolburg, and reported to Qhoane in Torture House; the guns were then hidden in different places.

Steven returned the borrowed gun to Cijimpi and indicated to him, although indirectly, that they were thankful for his help, and if he needed any help next time, he should give them a shout. This handing over of the gun by Steven happened a few days after the successful mission.

Seven days later, or so they think, Cijimpi asked Steven to go to Sebokeng to fetch children for him, and gave him a gun. It seems Cijimpi was related somehow to Steven, perhaps dating his sister, but they shared some familial bond such that he could send only Steven for this task. Before departing, Steven went to Torture House to report that he will be making this trip, but was then asked to leave the gun behind. Comrades argued that it was unnecessary for him to have this gun with him, but he left with it. On his way back, using public transport, there was a road block; police were searching all taxis. They got to him, and arrested him. They told him he was a suspect in a robbery of a police station in Heilbron. Steven came back with Fish from Sebokeng, who then travelled the rest of the trip with the children and took them to Steven's home, where Cijimpi was. Police then took Steven along to show them where the rest of his comrades were.

Meanwhile, at Torture House, comrades were waiting for Steven to come back so as to participate in a traditional healers' ceremony that was supposed to cleanse and strengthen them from being ever linked to the case. However, as time passed, they realised that Steven was not arriving and they needed to proceed with the ritual as the traditional healer had come from far. Bhuddas then took off

[382] Interview with Mbuyiselo Mnguni

to look for Steven but before arriving at his home he got attacked by a dog on the road. He returned to Torture House to show Phajane who then treated the wound. Had it not been for the dog, Bhuddas could have found out that Steven had been arrested and gone into hiding. Instead, comrades at Torture House decided to proceed with the ritual with the traditional healer without Steven.

The guns were hidden in different places, some in the houses of relatives to Levy, others with Steven. It seems all this time Steven was leading police to the places where the guns he hid were. Phajane and Bhuddas knew where the rest were, and so police were demanding that Steven lead them to where they were. At Torture House, lights were out; candles on the floor, comrades were naked and going around jumping in the bath full of steaming boiled water. The traditional healer also needed each of their underwear to tie a knot out of them and bury it far off in the fields where it would not be found. This would ensure that they were not discovered at all.

Here, we are at the doorstep of the native spiritual world of the colonised, the spirituality of the blacks; what Fanon calls "the native occult sphere"[383]. Fanon says for the colonised this sphere belongs to the community, "which is entirely under magical jurisdiction"[384]. He counts this as part of the avoidance patterns of the colonised; "the supernatural, magical powers reveal themselves as essentially personal; the settlers' powers are infinitely shrunken, stamped with their alien origin. We no longer really need to fight against them since what counts is the frightening enemy created by the myths"[385], says Fanon.

In Sasolburg, Zamdela, this world is built in an architecture of all sorts of prohibitions, frightening mythical figures and planes. In the house one must not make a broom face down because it will attract the witches who will use it to ride to different destinations in the heart of night. You must never sleep with your shoes placed right on your head side, because you might wake up and sleep walk. During the day you step on all sorts of roads, territories and grounds upon which some may have been killed or where death blood was spilled. There, on those grounds and waysides, the dead may have breathed the last breath into the soil particles that lay there, and now they carry the energy of their last breath - their last cry, which rests there in silent whispers longing for peace, maybe even revenge. Their souls, the bodiless being of humans, may have not been collected through ritual and laid to rest. Your shoes then steps on such soil, and soil particles remain on your

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[383] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 63.

[384] Ibid.

[385] Ibid., 43.

shoes when you travel during the day or even during the night. Thus, placed by your head side when you sleep, you will inhale the soil particles, or even connect, through the countless breaths of your deep sleep, to the last breath of stranded, strangled, strained and stoned souls that will ride on you seeking to return home, to be unified with their own or lead you to a destination of evil ends.

Death, in this occult sphere, is a transformation plane into such a spirit world that is always with us. The dead travel on this plane, to and fro, between their world and ours. The newly dead have to be joined with their families or relatives who have died long before them (the ancestors) through funeral ritual. To rest in peace is to go to your ancestors who will guide your spirit, so that it finds rest in unity with the ones that have died before you. If you die and your body is not buried through the family ritual that directs your spirit to your ancestors, you soul may be stranded or even captured and used by witches as a zombie. The witches, those who use spirits to terrify or cause harm to others, hunt in the dead of night too, for more tools to use for one end or another. At all times, one must guard against them, above all so that they do not apprehend you and turn you into a zombie. Around this time called night, this colour called dark, around the great heavy shadow, are built terrifying myths that capture, recapture, create and recreate death and the dead in their image; in the image of the night and the darkness, this is their world, there they rise - they awake and cohabit the streets, valleys, grounds and skies with us. They contest our dreams and sleep, seeking to live, command and contest us beyond the grave.

It must cause concern that the apartheid state television content also released, in the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s, many television horror series that played into this magical terrifying native occult sphere; television stories like Lesilo Rula for the Sotho audiences, Ululu Ubuyile and Hlala Kwabafeleyo for the Nguni audiences to mention a few. A film and television critique of the ways in which the timing and symbolic content, as well as the captivating power of the TV set at this time, all conspired to produce a terrified native to whom this world comes to displace the oppression of the whites, relegating it to the sphere of the secondary where the primary and important enemy is one created by myths, as Fanon indicated. These television series played into imageries of ghosts, the living dead, witchcraft and superstition as found in the everyday life of the natives. They painted worlds where colonial power is almost absent, also portraying communities without riots and protests, or any political content in a time of great political upheaval.

In Zamdela, even more prohibitions prevail in this occult sphere, recreating and building the terror of nights for the natives in the very sphere of the everyday. You must not cut your hair at night because your hair will be taken by zombies or witches who will use it to make you mad, or use it to bewitch the rest of your family. At night, if you hear a knock at the door, never say come in. You

must ask who it is: if you say come in without asking who it is, a zombie might come in, only to terrify you at the dead of night, when we sleep the deepest. One must also never cross over urine or a place of urination; you will get sick on your feet. When there is a newborn baby, an infant, all who arrive at home must never get inside the house immediately. They must cool their feet by sitting outside for a few minutes because they will bring in spirits that the baby is still too weak to fight. One must also not travel a lot at night, because things of the night follow you and when we open for you, they enter as well only to attack us during the dead of night. The list goes on and it must at some point be collected into an encyclopaedia of native spiritual ritual and law if the native spiritual world is to be taken seriously. This is the Zamdela occult sphere that defines, builds an imagery and image of the night, death and spirits all in an architectural plane of prohibitions that cause fear.[386]

During this time there also used to be a strong belief that just behind Community Primary school, where there is a playground with all sorts of climbers, a merry-go-round, a swingset, chin-up bars, slides, a seesaw, there was a child who plays with children there (a zombie kid) that hurts children and causes fatal accidents. Many parents therefore prohibit children from playing there. However, because many of the parents are at work during the day, children often defy them and go there in big groups hoping the child-zombie will not appear or if it does they, being in big numbers, will fight it[387].

Around 1993 even up to 1994, many primary schools cried about a terrifying zombie called Pinky-Pinky that inhabited the girls toilets. It targeted the pink underwear wearing girls. Pinky-Pinky even had a song, and all primary school kids knew it:

> My name is Pinky-Pinky,
> I live in Toilets

Pinky-Pinky was so terrifying that no amount of corporal punishment would stop kids from disrupting a school during teaching hours should they be convinced that it had struck one of them. It would be such mayhem, with some running to their homes, whilst others took stones throwing them at the suspected toilet. Pinky-Pinky also moved from school to school, hunting young schoolgirls wearing pink underwear.

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[386] *Ketso Makume, Interview with Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013.*

[387] *Ibid.*

There was also a belief that a chain-zombie existed (a monkey zombie that travelled in the dead of night with a chain). Some called it "monga motse" - the home owner or the neighbourhood owner. The Home-Owner was not a child myth; it was everyone's myth - young and old. When it comes, it goes from house to house as dogs bark at it, but the barking sounds of the dogs that day is as though they are seeing the full-moon. In the morning, there is actual evidence of the chain trails in the whole neighbourhood on the sandy streets and yard grounds. More strongly, all native folks talked of zombies that walk on top of roofs at night, terrifying the family, denying them peaceful sleep and rest. Also, there are ghosts that hypnotise or manipulate people who travel at night. They will think they are in company of actual people, going to a party or a shebeen, only to wake up in graveyards in the morning[388].

In Zamdela, young people are also taught a culture of respecting funerals. When a funeral procession passes on the road, particularly when they see the coffin wagon, they must sit down or squat, so that the dead do not take them along with them. During the struggle for freedom, all these rituals of prohibition experience breakdowns, they fracture and at times attain new forms - but they certainly do not disappear. During funeral processions, the youth could no longer sit down because the police could hunt them, and activists could be arrested as police know they may find them at funerals. At times during funerals there might be a clash with police, teargas and sjamboks; so there would be no time to sit and observe the ritual here[389].

Ketso Makume adds that during the struggle "darkness becomes one of your best comrades because it was easier to operate in the dark than during the day."[390] In the dark of night one can hide from police or informers and participate in protest graffiti or writing on the walls to announce the dates and times of action that on particular a day there would be a stay-away, or a consumer boycott. Rubbing over street names and house numbers with paint during a rent boycott so that when the administration comes to try and collect or enquire who did not pay, they get lost or fail because they depend on street addresses. For SDUs (Self-Defense Units), the digging of street trenches, putting rocks and stones on the entrance and main roads to make sure that cars cannot travel, particularly the police and military, is also done at night. This therefore makes police travel on foot or drive inside the neighbourhoods on much smaller roads, making fighting with them using stones and petrol bombs easier and more effective.

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[388] *Ibid.*

[389] *Ibid.*

[390] Ibid.

As stated earlier, the work of freedom and the struggle for liberation did not mean that the sacredness over the shadows, darkness, night and how they work as images, imageries and planes of death, witches and evil, suddenly disappeared. Fanon simply points to them, in the manner of the making or recalling of all these myths, in the ways in which individuals entangle themselves in them, giving them a "certificate of qualification" about their distinctive command over their spirituality, and also providing a sign that colonial petrification is not final. The natives fear these myths, their own created myths, more than the white colonists that terrorise them. When the struggle for freedom attains a mass character, involving the community as a whole, they do not break with this fear as such. It comes with them in the confrontation with naked white terror and the political terror with each other – the black on black violence.

To violate these prohibitions – and natives do violate them even before the hour of the struggle for freedom – to defy the fear and limits of the idea of the night, as built by these myths, one may need a traditional doctor or wizard. All kinds of ritual performances are entered into to navigate the violation of such prohibitions. If indeed the ghost of someone known to have died troubles people, and in Zamdela the road from Sasolburg to Parys is believed to be full of such ghosts, the concerned family must go and collect their lost soul and rededicate it to the ancestors. One can only imagine if the soul that is troubling people is the soul of a comrade or a very notorious gangster. There are also cleansing rituals for those who have been to the graveyards, who have seen ghosts, or who have crossed paths with witches. Thus, for a criminal, a police officer, a comrade, a security guard, or a mineworker whose work is in the belly of the earth, they are in a permanent confrontation with the darkness. They navigate the night with spiritual strengthening to confront and do the work of night, of shadows, and of the darkness. It is the same with the spirit mediums that were central to the guerrilla wars that led to independence in Zimbabwe.[391] Even those who simply bow down, and say a prayer, do so informed by such a terror about the night.

It is therefore not surprising that after taking a police station, this unit consulted a traditional healer not only to hide them from possible arrests, but also to cleanse them, protecting them from the forces of the dark and night they may have encountered on the journey. Thus, as the ceremony commenced at Torture House, whilst butt-naked, under candle light, jumping over steaming hot waters in the big bath dishes inside the house, bright lights from outside hit through the windows riding on the marching footsteps all around the house, with barking dogs; they knew it was the police. They say the first person to jump in hysteria was the traditional healer himself – shouting in

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[391] *See David Lan, Guns and Rain; Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe (Great Britain: James Currey, 1985)*

Sepedi, “Ke maporisa!”[392] - It's the police! Indeed, the police were all over knocking violently, demanding them to open the house as they poured in with guns pointing at them. Comrades voluntarily came out, surrendering with their hands sky up, wearing only pants, without anything else[393].

They asked them for their names, let go of the traditional healer, and also of Qhoane. They came to Bhuddus, asked for his names and he surrendered. They came to Phajane, asked him who he was, and he replied “Mbuyiselo Mguni”. They proceeded to Levy, but because he had no guns with him, and had not been mentioned by Steven, they let him go. Soon after that, one policeman who knew Phajane immediately called him by his name, and they quickly asked him why he is lying about his name. He replied that he could not say who he was without knowing why they were looking for him. They then asked, “Where are the guns?”, of which he denied any knowledge[394].

At that moment, Levy was standing amongst the community crowd that were spectators of the unfolding drama of half-naked men being beaten up and interrogated by the police, with their house being extensively searched, using dogs in the process. A policeman went to listen to something at the back of one of the police vans, and soon after a group of them went to capture Levy; it seems it was on the advice of Steven, who was in the back of that van. Comrades describe how they were beaten up, as some confessed where the guns were, until they were all found by the police.

They were moved from prison to prison for a period of about 8 months, and also attended trial, where they were all found guilty and sentenced to 2000 hours of imprisonment, a sentence they would carry out over weekends until they finished. They were called the Sasol Four, and demonstrations were organised to have them released, primarily by Nkgopoleng high school students.

Not long after the mission of the Sasol Four, Toto, Sampi, Piet and Thando went for another police station by Vereeniging road, the road leading to Sasolburg. This was a successful mission for which no one was arrested until later in 1993. Here, comrades executed the mission with much more care, in stages and with great precision. One of them entered the police station to ask for a sleep over, after they had been observing the movements for a full day. That night, one of them slept over inside the police station as though they were stranded travellers, and just after midnight, the rest arrived and found two police men, a black man and a white man.

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[392] *Mbuyiselwa Mguni, interview with Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, 2013*

[393] *Ibid.*

[394] *Ibid.*

They pointed guns at them, and the one comrade inside the station pretending to be a stranded traveller then collected the ammunition and the guns, handing them over the counter to the others. They tied the police up, closed them up in a cell, and took one of the radios to make sure they know their moves. It is said that the defeated, handcuffed police found help a little less than an hour after the comrades had fled the scene. Comrades then proceeded to Zamdela by foot, arriving two hours later and hid the guns in different places. In both missions, there were never any deaths, or serious harm caused to any policeman or comrade.

There were several other missions that VALIMO worked on, like robbing houses of privileged white people. With each white house, you would be guaranteed to find guns. Moreover, you find money and valuable things to sell and make money from. The units of Toto, Levy, Phajane, and many comrades, engaged in these activities, which had them earn the same amount of money, or even more in some instances, than the gangs in the townships. The key emphasis for them is that they were simultaneously engaged in other political activities during the day in the community fighting for services, better wages, participating in rallies, stay-aways and boycotts which would result in them frequenting prisons. Each time a violent, politically-linked event happened to police, they would be the first to be picked up by police.

In and out of imprisonment, the political hegemony of the politicised youth of Sasolburg was undermined and made way for the re-domination of the BZ gang. This was indeed the case in the period of the states of emergency in the mid 1980s. "The government sent in troops to restore and protect community councils" [395] that were set up by the apartheid regime and were being opposed by the liberation movement. This, Glaser writes:

> led to virtual war in numerous townships between 1984 and 1986. Two more states of emergency were declared; the first in 1985 and the second, more severe and extensive, in 1986. Under the emergency measures, the security forces detained, or sent into flight, layers of political leadership down to the street level. [396]

In other townships, the dispensing of activists or comrades – and in most cases this meant the layer of political leadership that commanded a good sense of what needs to be done – meant that the SDUs degenerated into gangs. So, what we imagine emerging are two alternatives: either criminal gangs would regain hegemony, as used to be the case before the advent of 1976 Student Uprising;

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[395] Clive L. Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 188.

[396] Ibid.

or, the already formed political structures like Self-Defence Units would become criminal due to a lack of political guidance. [397]

In the early 1990s, particularly after the unbanning of political parties and the return of exiles, new dynamics formed within communities and on the streets. In Sharpeville, the ANC aligned-SDUs, which were formed in the 1980s, welcomed Umkhonto We Sizwe soldiers from exile and integrated them into the units as the fights with Inkatha were escalating. This however was also responsible for how these SDUs began to fracture and fight against each other, in as much as they were confronting Inkatha. Maloisane Moeketsi, who wrote an Honours Degree research on these units, but who was also a member of the infamous Germans (an SDU-turned-criminal gang) writes that the MK soldiers opposed taking political instructions and being guided by civilian political activists who were within the formal structures of the ANC. This led to some SDUs taking the side of MK soldiers and others taking the sides of those in the leadership of formal ANC structures. Moeketsi also writes that:

> In the absence of clear-guidelines from the ANC control, many youths who claimed to be members of the ANC became involved in criminal activities which were motivated by personal gain. They were dubbed 'comtsotsi', tsotsis or criminals pretending to be comrades. While claiming to be members of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the comtsotsis formed vicious gangs which burned at random houses of people believed to be members or the supporters of the IFP, stole and hijacked cars, raped girls, collected protection fees from households…[398]

Moeketsi tells of a story of a police reservist, S Sekuta, who was suspected of having assisted in the killing of two key activists by police, Rangwane Emphraim Lefiedi and Thabo Mosebi. Moeketsi describes that:

> The policeman was burnt alive and killed cruelly. His body dragged around the streets of Sharpeville until it ended at Paneng for its necklacing. The aim for dragging the victim's body around the townships was to show the community what happens to people who betrayed its struggle.[399]

The SDUs were armed with guns, which in his account were supplied by MK soldiers since the 1980s via Mozambique. However, "the youth who had guns used them mostly to disarm and attack

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[397] Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi* particularly Chapter 7, pages 159-185.

[398] M Moeketsi, "An Investigation into the Formation of Self-Defense Units in Sharpeville: 1990-1994" (Honours Thesis, University of the North West, 2002).

[399] Ibid., 62.

cold drink trucks, furniture and food trucks."[400] In this situation of armed SDUs, which always live in the liminal space of comradeship and tsotsi pursuits, the situation of death-exchange worsened when they turned on each other. In a mediation process that was led by Winnie Mandela, the SDUs blamed each other for the terror, saying that they were the ones "harassing the community by raping, hijacking people's cars, stealing people's expensive clothes during the night."[401] However the defining event which exposed the Germans SDU, uncovering it completely as a criminal gang, was when they hijacked a school bus from Boipatong. Most German SDU activists were arrested, others fled Sharpeville only to be apprehended in Sebokeng and brought back to Sharpeville. These activists were handed over to another rival SDU, namely the Slovo Camp SDU. It is said that four activists were handed over to be questioned about the school bus hijacking:

> They were questioned by the Slovo Camp activists, tortured and killed execution style just outside Sharpeville at a place knowns as Ka-Moloreng (Dumping Place). The killings did not stop the violence, instead the [SDUs] sought revenge. This led to a more intensified violence than ever before as no one was able to walk freely as before, for instance, during the night, rape and theft became very common. [402]

The story of the BZ has already been laid out in the previous chapter – how it developed, its activities, and how it spread. It is noteworthy that amongst the comrades who decided, upon return from prison, to confront the BZ were those who formed part of the robbing of the first police station. Records do not put faces and names to the dramatic wars of gangs and comrades in this area, but these VALIMO units were at the centre of it all. The Peace Action records note that:

> As a result of their criminal activities, BZ gang members were alienated by COSAS. During the on-going conflict that followed the formation of the BZ gang, two members were killed by the South African Police and another member was allegedly killed by the COSAS youth…[403]

The killing of a BZ member by COSAS youth was confirmed by both the VALIMO and BZ members. It was confirmed that it indeed occurred in a confrontation between the two groups. Interestingly, the arrival of the BZ gang in Sharpeville is understood to be as a result of being pushed by VALIMO from Sasolburg. Moloisane Moeketsi attests to this and recalls how they as the

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[400] Ibid.

[401] Ibid.

[402] Ibid., 64.

[403] Peace Action (Organization), "Peace Action Records"1993 reports

German gang had to reconcile their reputation in society by capturing BZ and surrendering its members to the community.

The Germans were much like the BZ, but at an advanced stage; the Germans were a Self Defence Unit which fed on the community, engaged in a political war with Inkatha at the same time as with other Self Defence Units in Sharpeville. The BZ members were exiled to Sharpeville, but once arrived there they continued with criminal activities. It is said that at one point they robbed and destroyed shops owned by members of the community. The community immediately blamed the Germans for this and chased them out of the community. Moloisane Moeketsi explains how having to find the people responsible for this was important for them to be allowed back into Sharpeville.

He tells of a story of how they collected information and discovered where people who might have been involved were living within the community. They tracked them, followed them around and broke into their homes, finding guns and ammunition, as well as some of the groceries that were taken from the shops. The Germans caught and interrogated two of them who confessed to belonging to the BZ gang and that some of the people who were with them are in Sasolburg, Zamdela.

Some of the Germans then drove to Zamdela and captured the rest of the BZ gang members who were part of the robbery in Sharpeville and surrendered them to the community. This is not after beating them up terribly. The BZ, both in Sasolburg and in Sharpeville, was known to be linked to the PAC. Makume indicates that the PAC leadership was engaged in bringing the BZ into order, and had been commissioned to do such by the local ANC leaders in previous times. However, an understanding was at some point reached that the BZ, although initially protected by PAC, was getting out of hand. The story is laid out by Kynoch, as indicted earlier.

Toto, Phajane, Levy and the BZ members interviewed for this chapter also narrate stories where a confrontation broke out in which there was a gun battle between the two groups in Zamdela. Levy and Phajane spoke about how they pursued the BZ members from Zamdela to Thembalethu where they exchanged fire, resulting in the death of Fusi. According to Levy, Tso, Matela, Sampu, and Levy himself had already initiated a process of destroying the BZ. He explains how upon their return from prison they found the BZ gang domineering and engaged in very dangerous things, armed and terrorising the community. For them, it became a political duty to destroy the BZ gang.

The Legend of Eliminating Inkatha

There were never massacres, mass killings or mass attacks in Sasolburg attributed to Inkatha. There was no organised formation or even any proud association with it. One of the BZ members interestingly reflected on why, as a gang, they never got linked to Inkatha:

> You see if Inkatha was available to us, maybe we would have joined it because they were known to distribute and arm gangs to fight the ANC people… I mean at some point the ANC guys were more armed and we hated them… though we started in COSAS, we were later PAC, and this is how it is known, we are PAC people. So, I cannot say we would have not taken arms from Inkatha, we never came across them. We only heard about their presence in places like Sebokeng[404].

Indeed, Inkatha was unheard of in Sasolburg. Amongst comrades though, there is a legend, a kind of an unspoken myth that everyone believes and only shares with you if you are trustworthy. It is very hard to trace how true the legend is and who might have been party to it. In all the interviews we conducted, none wanted to speak about it, either to confirm or deny it. They simply laugh or dismiss it as a myth, without actually entertaining it. Yet the story is there and has survived this far. It is the story of how Inkatha was aborted before it even found form in Sasolburg. They say it indeed arrived and sought to find a way of mobilising, but they got rid of it and did so decisively.

The story is that VALIMO received intelligence that in Thembalethu Hostel there were migrant workers from KwaZulu Natal who had arrived, and were living in the hostel but not working anywhere. This was a group of eight or so people. The information was that at night, they held meetings studying who was politically linked and in what way, including plotting to establish a base amongst hostel dwellers. It is a well-known pattern, as comrades explained, of how Inkatha emerged everywhere; it exploited gang wars of comrades and criminals, or "tribal" divisions, or hostel and township settlement divisions.

An underground unit back in early 1991 learned about this and followed this group, its individuals, and those that accommodated it, for a period of two weeks or so. Upon satisfying themselves that these were members of Inkatha, they concluded that they were up to no good in the hostel. A plan was devised to capture them, interrogate them and eliminate them. This unit would then depart Sasolburg immediately and possibly find residence elsewhere or return after many years; some say three years, but many say they never actually came back. No one knows how many they were in the unit, but others say the unit was purposefully constituted by people who were not from Zamdela. They would execute the mission, with great precision and speed, and get out of Zamdela.

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[404] Interview with Stone Makgema, 2012

One evening, on an evening when the Inkatha group was gathering in one of the hostel rooms, there was a knock on the door. It does not look like the Inkatha people realised that they were under surveillance, or even suspected that they were, because they merely opened the door to find out who the knocker wanted. It is said that this group was armed. Comrades stormed the room with guns and demanded total surrender. The story is that the Inkatha group cooperated and were tied up and taken in the back of the van. The owner of the room was the first to confess that the guns were for the group, but they refused to admit what they were going to use the guns for.

They were asked about the fact that they do not work in any of the Sasol firms, that they have never been seen asking or looking for jobs. Their responses were not coherent on these three facts: they have guns, they are not working and sit around the whole day, and they have never been seen anywhere looking for jobs. The group was taken to the Vaal River where they were shot in the back of their heads, execution style. They made them kneel, put a pillow around the gun, placed it at the back of their head, and shot them so that the one part of the bullet immediately falls into the river and the other on the floor where it could immediately be picked up and also tossed into the river.

They shot the first two, and as they prepared to shoot the third, other comrades were throwing the bodies of the first two into the river. With each, they ask do you want to say something, and one of them then asked to speak. They promised him to spare his life if he confessed. He then confirmed that they were members of Inkatha who intended to establish a base in Sasolburg. The comrades did not spare his life, they eliminated all of them in the same style and then disappeared from Sasolburg. Perhaps they were invited by one of the units or some of the leaders; nevertheless, people speak about it as a myth, possibly because no one ever wants to be associated with it.

Why conclude the story of VALIMO with a myth or a legend? Myths occupy a great deal of power in war time. It is how histories sometimes are carried forward, from generation to generation, but even more importantly, they inspire their audiences into action, in this case brave action. Inkatha in the Vaal was the enemy, make no mistake, and so it was also in Sasolburg. Through this myth we find a legend of how Inkatha never found ground or managed to establish itself in Zamdela. In Zamdela, many battles that were fought were with the police, and mainly with criminals. This legend also carries a story about death, about killing, and this is really how comrades decide to talk about decisions to eliminate elements that were identified as enemies, despite the fact that there was a commitment never to kill. This legend is how they narrate those stories where they took a decision to kill, unless such a killing occurred accidentally, as they claimed with the killing of Fusi of the BZ (which was later placed in the hands of Levy, although he was acquitted for lack of evidence).

However, even more crucial in this legend is the ability to give a historic account without placing names and identities of the perpetrators and their victims. The details of it may be hard to verify precisely because it is to function as a legend.

The Subject Category of Com-tsotsi

What made these comrades, the VALIMO comrades, resist degeneration into purely criminal activity in the way the Germans or the BZ did? In their explanation, they argue that it is their explicit political role, the constant attendance of political gatherings and continuous linking of their missions to the broader developments of the struggle that served as key anchors that kept them away from abandoning the meaning of their mission. That is, it is the very rituals of doing the struggle for freedom that made them not betray the very struggle. If anything, the comrades and gangs are engaged in the same activity of defying the laws, violent exchanges with the police, with the community, and with each other, and they all admire traits like bravery or courage, that ability to be fearless and a constant pressure to prove it by pushing the limits of power, or authority – in other words, through militancy.

In their political activities, comrades betray their parents. No comrade asks their parents permission to participate in the struggle. Most of the time, the parents and adults discourage them. It is even possible that at times, when other people in the community give police information about comrades it is out of dislike for the ways in which they disrupt public order; the imposition of stay-aways and consumer boycotts. The historian Nicholus Haysom notes that;

> There has been a dramatic emergence in 1985 of the incidence of intergenerational tensions. Tensions between parents and children have been founded on a resentment of the prominent role youth play in the formulating of strategies and making decisions for the community coupled with concerns about increasing disrespect… resentment was also founded on the way the youth chose to enforce discipline in the community - notably the 'peoples courts' and the floggings administered there - as well as the enforcement of the consumer boycotts of the white shops. This included making returning residents eat their purchases including detergents, soap, raw meat etc.[405]

Whilst many scholars of township political violence paid attention to class and state factors[406] and to what constituted vigilantism, it is Nicholas Haysom and Phindile Kunene who demonstrate how

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[405] *Nicholus Haysom*

[406] *See Moloi, Seekings*

central to vigilantism is the phenomenon of intergenerational conflict; parents against children. Most importantly, Kunene, taking the cue from Haysom, highlights this as a threat to the patriarchal order, the authority and dominance of the father, resulting in a violent exchange between sons and fathers[407]. She says:

> Phomolong was a case of fathers against sons. These kinship relations explain why the group became known as Bontate – which means "the fathers" in Sesotho. Almost all the youth activists from PYCO, leading and implementing the consumer and rent boycotts, as well as calling for the resignation of councillors were related to the members of this vigilante group. Bontate and PYCO differed on several issues. One area of disagreement was on the disruption of schooling as a result of PYCO's political activity. As such, Bontate portrayed itself as a champion of education, and an enforcer of "discipline" and "respect" amongst youth. This group of 'Bontate' patrolled the township streets at night with knobkerries and sjamboks and imposed an eight o'clock curfew in the community.[408]

The road is therefore fraught with internal strife within the black community itself, which is why there would be reports that the youth was intimidating people, adults in particular, to participate during community political actions like consumer boycotts or stay-aways. In addition, pressure for the struggle for freedom came from the children, and not the parents, as Lodge explains: [409]

> The momentum for action came from the bottom levels of the [UDM] and from its youngest members. It was the children who built the roadblocks, children who led the crowd to the administrative buildings, children who delegated spokespersons, and children who in 1984 told the older folk that things would not be different, that people would not run away as they had in 1960. [410]

It is Glaser who takes us through the emergence of the African youth as a collective political subject. Glaser points to how only school-going youths were politicised within the youth category in general and that what became the Congress Youth League of the ANC in 1944 found its origins in the high school and university-going populations. The ANCYL therefore largely maintained its base with the school-going youths way after its formation. Glaser identifies gangs and tsotsi culture as the most

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[407] *In fact, Howard*

[408] *Kunene,*

[409] Tom Lodge et al., *All, Here and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (Cape Town: David Philip, Publishers, 1992), 58–127.

[410] Ibid., 76.

important form of social collective identity amongst the urban African youths in the PWV area. This was constituted largely by the unemployed, illiterate and semi-illiterate youth and Glaser argues that as a culture, it was street based and men-dominated – a masculine outburst really.

The view of the ANCYL on these street youths was negative and only interested in them on the basis of rehabilitation as opposed to mobilising them. Also, politically, ANCYL's non-violent stance seemed unattractive to the tsotsis; in essence, for the ANCYL, tsotsis were a menace to society. In many ways, they shared the official apartheid state line on these youths. Glaser points to this "failure (and unwillingness) of most of the Congress politicians to tune into the cultural wavelength of the gang world"[411]; a culture we should call tsotsi culture. Says Glaser:

> As a constituency, the tsotsi were regarded more as menace to the community than as a potential support base. In fact, the ANC was sympathetic towards, and often even helped to organise, local civil guards dedicated to combating tsotsi crime.[412]

In the 1930s to 1950s, the high school going populations were really small, and regarded as elite[413]. The majority of the urban African youths were certainly unemployed, and the men socialised in a street culture of gangs, the tsotsis. We must open up this identity beyond its largely criminal elements. Yes, there were gangs who thrived on stealing, rape, gambling and refusal of authority and the work ethic. However, when Gail Gerhart says "if any single group could be described as PAC in orientation, it would be the broad category of Africans known in some contexts as 'location boys' and in some others as tsotsi"[414] she is speaking of something that itself was already crossing the boundaries of school and street.

Indeed, it is the Pan Africanist Congress of Josias Madzunya and Potlako Leballo, who were expelled from the ANC, and of Robert Sobukwe, that actively saw the gangs and tsotsi youth as a base for political mobilisation. Sobukwe is reported to have even said that PAC's basic assumption is

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411 Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi*, 78.

412 Ibid., 82.

413 *It is important to mention that overall in this thesis, I have not concentrated on the intellectual, university youth although this idea of being educated was also central to the very performance of youth political identity. Needless to say, I have placed greatest emphasis on inner township black mass youth movements which were mostly composed of school going youth. In many ways, the point is not so much to document the history of this category as it developed or evolved. Rather, we elevate and privilege specific, but rich, narratives to service a theory of black youth political subjectivity. Therefore throughout the thesis, mention of the ANC YL and PAC or SASO refers to these youth, whose contribution is well acknowledged; however, emphasis is placed on the phenomenon as it was seen in the late 1970s up to the early 1990s in the black townships – the political mobilisation of mass black youth.*

414 Gail Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 223–24.

that "the illiterate and semi-illiterate masses of the African populace are the key, the core and the cornerstone of the struggle for democracy in this country"[415]

Tsotsi identity, if we should keep strictly to the narrative of its descriptions in Glaser's study as well as with how our own characters in this chapter and the previous one speak of it, including its Mapantsula tenant, is a way of being of the youth in the urban townships that does not have to be criminal. Of course, it includes being criminal, but largely it is about being street wise, a way to survive on the street, its language, its dress codes, and the refusal of work.

In the PAC this identity found its open association with formal political organisation as such; this is despite the fact that Glaser warns us not to think of it as apolitical. He writes:

> [I]t would b incorrect to assume that the tsotsis lacked political consciousness. Through everyday experiences of poverty, discrimination, blocked social mobility, and police harassment, tsotsis developed an antipathy to the establishment and to institutions of authority. Above all, tsotsis were politicised by the pass laws. Young men, more than any other section of the township community, were victimised by pass law implementation.[416]

He adds that:

> Tsotsi resistance reflected not an organised response but a spontaneous anger against the enforcement of laws that impinged on their freedom and movement within their own territories. In 1946 tsotsis were at the forefront of the riots in Krugersdorp and Newclare, which were sparked off by police entering townships to deal with pass and beer brewing offences. There was another battle between tsotsi and police, which lasted a day and a night, in Newclare in February 1950. During Sophiatown removals there were several violent engagements between street gangs and police. In one incident in Moroka in 1958, tsotsis even invaded the local police station to release a fellow gang member arrested for assault. In April 1959 Orlando tsotsis threatened to break up the opening ceremony for the new Orlando Stadium, apparently because control of the stadium was given to the Johannesburg Bantu Football Association rather than to the local soccer organisation. To the tsotis this represented an invasion of local "sovereignty"[417]

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[415] Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi*, 85.

[416] Ibid., 81.

[417] Ibid., 82.

The PAC's militancy was already informed by the Africanists who were well versed in the streets and with these ways of being with the illiterate, semi-illiterate, unemployed masses:

> Beyond the schools, the PAC did break new ground. For the first time, a resistance movement made a substantial impression on the Witwatersrand's tsotsi constituency… From the time of the Africanists breakaway in late 1958, Africanists and later PAC activists conducted intensive door-to-door campaigning. They went scouting on the weekends, attempting to politicise school students and gangsters alike. [418]

From its launching conference, to its pass campaigns and rallies, the PAC was youth based, and it attracted, from the streets to the schools, populations of African youth that were either already militant or that it made militant. In the 1980s, the student organisation COSAS "played a vital role in organising unemployed youth by establishing youth congresses, which had a primary political purpose."[419]

But what really is the difference between the two forms of politicisation – resistance movements and the tsotsi gangs constituency? And why is it that the PAC succeeded in joining these two forces that had been held in hostility even in the days of James Mpanza of the squatter's movements? The significant difference, beyond the command of English signifying literacy, non-violence, or even the shared militancy, opposition to apartheid or the state, is the proposition of change. The resistance movement is interested in marshalling the energies of everyone towards appropriation of the state apparatuses in favour of sovereignty of the blacks. The tsotsis are not always interested in state capture, in appropriation of the state apparatus. It could be that this stems from being invested in the rejection of the "work ethic" that Glaser speaks of. A tsotsi is really not interested in the modern discipline of work; here, in a deeper sense, is the very idea of modern citizenry and the modern state's way of social inclusion. It is how you make a claim on the state, through a tax and thus make demands on it, hold it accountable in how it rules, which it should do, but in your interests.

The internalisation of a work ethic – although Glaser does not interrogate this – again represents a form of Christianisation if our usage is consistent with how Max Weber coined it. It signifies an important ideological ground, an attitude in Weberian terms, for the success of capitalism as such; as a mode of production in which production comes to be about profit for profit's sake. Workers in turn view their work as an end in itself, the craft as an end in itself, as a calling in which they demonstrate their godliness - hence they lose themselves in the product. Could it be that tsotsis'

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[418] Ibid., 86.

[419] Ibid., 36.

rejection of a "work ethic" is indeed the rejection of believing you are destined to be a rock drill operator and thus this is your contribution to the common good? Is it a challenge that in the first place there is no "common" in the world, only self-interest? Or that colonial society is not a "common" - but a antithetical existence in which whites exploit black people? Could it also be that the rejection of "work", as we see in Weber's assessment of the Baptists, can yield an attitude of indifference to political office as such, because perhaps being a politician is itself a form of "work ethic"?[420] Could it be that the implication is therefore that the ANCYL congress men or even the PAC embraced the idea of the "work ethic", that hard work must pay, and that it only is unfair because of apartheid?

To fully interrogate the ethical complexity of subjects of oppression, we perhaps must start here, in this conception of rejection of "work". Glaser says tsotsis despise their parents for going to work or looking for jobs. They do not want to call anyone boss. So, a tsotsi does not really have to be part of a gang; it is simply this insistence that I will survive without work, without going to call someone a boss; through street cleverness, I will survive.

Subjectivity describes a relationship that individuals construct with themselves, the technologies used to make that relationship; but it also is a relationship that power contests.[421] Power is there and it is part of what individuals use to think of themselves. Glaser attests that the state feared the politicisation of the tsotsi constituency. He says "the urban youth, particularly the tsotsi element, appeared to be the primary targets of the post-Sharpeville state of emergency." He says "the PAC itself recognised this… the government took a line that the massive demonstrations were organised by the tsotsis. The [PAC] task force was described as a tsotsi element."[422] The massive roll- out of Bantu Schools in 1960s to 1970s is itself a response to this, using the school as a technology of socialisation against the street as a dominant form of socialisation. So apartheid sought to remove the urban youths from the streets instead of transforming the street as a spacio-reality and therefore as a force of socialisation in itself. Tsotsis are unpredictable, even if there are only two of them, idling on the streets. They are dangerous essentially *because* they are idling; they embrace and pride themselves in idling. Glaser blames the regime as the one responsible for the phenomenon of urban black youth unemployment, as the reason why the black youth is not employed or lack "work". Although Glaser laments this failure, he also draws attention to a July 1950 memorandum from the Native Youth Board, which states that:

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[420] *See Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (London: Routledge Classics 2001)*

[421] *See Foucault, The Government of Self and Others*

[422] Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi.*, 88.

> 'The Employment Officers of the Board have… discovered that numbers of Native lads are not in school, nor are they interested in obtaining a employment. The lads, most of whom are city born, lounge about the Township, live on their parents, act as "runners" for Chinese "Fah Fee" game, sell articles on the Orlando/Pimville trains, gamble with dice or cards, engage in smuggling dagga or liquor, pick pocket and drift into crime.' [423]

He goes on to quote from an official letter written by W.J.P. Carr to the Johannesburg Regional Employment Commissioner in 1955:

> 'Native juveniles who are urbanised are often unreliable, work-shy and selective in their choice of a job - many prefer to exist by gambling and other nefarious means, and make little or no contribution to the maintenance of their families… Employers because of these facts, are unwilling to employ native juveniles'. [424]

At the same time, Glaser notes that one of the other reasons for this reluctance to hire juveniles was that employers,

> despite influx control legislation, preferred to employ migrants rather than local youths. Migrants tended to be more acquiescent, 'respectful', and reliable than their urban counterparts Furthermore, they were prepared to accept lower wages. Employers of both industrial and domestic labour tended to feel this way.[425]

These youths became politicised, which was what the government had feared throughout. In Zamdela too, the tsotsi becomes a comrade, and the comrade becomes the tsotsi. In fact Glaser points to the Sharpeville moment of 1960 as the opening for the historic emergence of the com-tsotsi social category. He says that "during March and April 1960 the Johannesburg townships had their first experience of what became known as the com-tsotsis during the 1980s." [426] We see this in Zamdela and Sharpeville in our own study.

Is it not the case though that this identity of idleness is identified with the child-race as a whole – the African? Is it not in Kant that we find this sense of how the African is essentially idle when he writes:

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[423] *Ibid.*

[424] *Ibid.*

[425] Ibid., 32–33.

[426] Ibid., 90.

> All inhabitants of the hottest zones are, without exceptions, idle. With some, this laziness is off set by government and force... The aroused power of imagination has the effect that he [the inhabitant] often attempts to do something; but the heat soon passes and reluctance soon assumes its old position.[427]

In fact, Hannah Arendt says of South Africa in *Origins of Totalitarianism* that:

> ...slavery, though it domesticated a certain part of the population, never got hold of all of them, so the Boers were never able to forget their first horrible fright before a species of men whom human pride and the sense of human dignity couldn't allow them to accept as fellow-men. This fright of something like oneself that still under no circumstances ought to be like oneself remained at the basis of slavery and became the basis of a race society.[428]

Arendt continues:

> What made them different from other human beings was not at all the colour of their skin but the fact that they behaved like a part of nature, that they treated nature as their undisputed master, that they had not created a human world, a human reality, and that therefore nature had remained, in all its majesty, the only overwhelming reality - compared to which they appeared to be phantoms, unreal and ghostlike. They were as it were, "natural" human beings who lacked the specifically human character, the specifically human reality, so that when European men massacred them they somehow were not aware that they had committed murder.[429]

This sense of naturalness, of oneness with nature or being overwhelmed by nature is consistent with why Kant sets natives aside as idle and lazy. Modernity's fear of the idle and lazy runs deeper than we can extrapolate here, but suffice to say that this is the image of the natives which we find even in studies of crime or delinquency in general. But with Africans, it is indeed as if idleness and laziness are natural.

In keeping with the Aristotelian proposition that man is a rational animal, an animal with a soul,[430] we could add that the original entrance of evil into the world or of sin or death where the 'body

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[427] See Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, "The Color of Reason: The Idea of 'Race' in Kant's Anthropology," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Blackwell, 1997), 116.

[428] *Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism.*

[429] Ibid.

[430] *See Aristotle, On the soul (Penguin Classics, 1987)*

hating existence' is the foundation of our conception of good and evil, of ethics, is in colonisation. We could read the com-tsotsi as existing in a state of nature displaying the very basics of communion with nature; being defeated/overwhelmed by the body, by nature. That here, humanity is in its proper original position of idleness, of boredom. Zizek says it is precisely this sense of idleness and laziness that we need to think through a universal human subjectivity, a nothingness or a void out of which springs the essence of the human – acedia . Using Kiekergaard's classical quotation about boredom, Zizek leads us to a materialist conception of subjectivity. In *Either/Or*, Part 1, Kiekergaard says:

> It is very curious that boredom, which itself has such a calm and sedate nature, can have such a capacity to initiate motion. The effect that boredom brings about is absolutely magical, but this effect is one not of attraction but repulsion… Since boredom advances and boredom is the root of all evil, no wonder, then, that the world goes backwards, that evil spreads. This can be traced back to the very beginning of the world. The gods were bored; therefore they created human beings. Adam was bored because he was alone; therefore Eve was created. Since that moment, boredom entered the world and grew in quantity in the exact proportion to the growth of population. Adam was bored alone; then Adam and Even were bored en famille. After that, the populations of the world increased and the nations were bored en masse. To amuse themselves, they hit upon the notion of building a tower so high that it would reach the sky. This notion is just as boring as the tower was high and is a terrible demonstration of how boredom had gained the upper hand. Then they were dispersed around the world, just as people now travel abroad, but they continue to be bored. And what consequence this boredom had: humankind stood tall and fell far, first through Eve, then from the Babylonian tower.[431]

Here, reason is no longer the starting point, but this empty feeling, this state of boredom upon which the essence of the human hangs. Zizek, faithful to his Hegelian self, turn this on its head and says it is creation, eventfulness, adventure, the pursuit of surprise, that characterises capitalist modernity that is boring. Marshal Berman is the one who brings to our attention how the Communist Manifesto exposes capitalism's impatience with orthodoxy, with ritual, with process, with solidity. In his *All that is Solid, Melts into Air*, we learn about the insatiable capitalist hunger for constant transformation of products; and Zizek would argue that this is all in response to boredom –

[431] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 51.

that capitalist consumerism finds its basis in the human condition of boredom, and that this is what drives modernity – creation. [432]

The European gaze on the natives was traumatised by boredom; that natives looked like they were bored, and embraced boredom. Yet, Zizek would argue, the Europeans, here, were projecting their own emptiness, their own boredom that had driven them from Europe to the African continent in the first place - in adventure and conquest. The European was so bored of all his achievements, culture, logic, of all their civilisation that they came to Africa at the Cape of Good Hope, running away from boredom, the evil, perhaps looking for, hoping for, the good? That they may finally not be bored. Here, they imposed an evil so totalising, so inhuman, that, after all, the native could not even remember its own original position. This is the injustice of colonial power, of the colonial path towards civilisation, a boredom-fighting civilisation.

Destructive Masculinity and the Loving Subjectivity

In our own study, detailed in this and the previous chapter, we notice that the lived experience of these youths already transcends the limits imposed by body-age (nature) and its structuring by the apartheid schooling system. That is, that the civilising mission vested in the technology of the school does not produce the subject of domination apartheid conceives of for the blacks. Instead, the blacks fall back to the streets, embracing the dangerous ideology of the tsotsi, fighting to be idle. It is as if they simply took the tsotsis and put them inside the classrooms of Bantu schools, and reproduced many PACs in the 1980s. In Zamdela and Sharpeville the most vicious criminal gangs are produced by the school-going population, its drop-outs and its political organisations. The com-tsotsi therefore represents colonial power itself, that it is essentially a fight with boredom, that the life condition of explosions, adventures and constant innovation, is itself an effort to find a way out of this void, this boredom.

To fully appreciate this reality – what helps us to understand whether violence is deployed ethically or not in the struggle and on the picket lines – we must take the com-tsotsi as a social category seriously. Here, we cannot simply say that one is a comrade because he does not steal, or kill, or rape. No, comrades in the 1980s killed and engaged in theft in the cause of freedom. They killed other black people, or necklaced spies within the black community, or torched the houses of

[432] Slavoj Zizek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards A New Foundation Of Dialectical Materialism* (New York: Verso, 2015).

suspected collaborators, they also raped or were complicit in a general anti-women masculine culture. This made the path truly liminal in terms of what was wrong and what was right; VALIMO units in Sasolburg, convinced that they had extracted enough evidence out of their targets, executed them and threw their bodies into the river. This was the same with the SDUs in Sharpeville: they captured the Germans and upon extracting confessions, they executed them.

Thus, we are really at the heart of the question of ethics in the colony, as regards the colonised - in this death world of the living dead, of those whose existence is under the constant, permanent violence of oppression, of absolute bodily reduction. What is it that makes the com-tsotsi turn against self-hate - turn against the hostility of the self that colonisation brings? Or act in its motion of hatred of the self? What makes the com-tsotsi tread the path of good and evil in ways that allowed them to conduct the struggle without betraying their own mission and undoing the very subject of their liberation and freedom - the black people? The answer to this begins with understanding that this notion or category of the com-tsotsi represents a choice, an inner choice that is primarily an ethical choice around a string of existence, which at times can be invisible.

Consider the story we began to relay in Chapter Three of this work. There we have a case of a *varara* comrade who was dating a taxi driver in 1992. During a Nkgopoleng school trip to Qwaqwa, she, her boyfriend and another couple went, in a form of a double date, independently to the destination where Nkgopoleng was visiting another school for a sports challenge, a debate and other extramural activities. It was the year when COSAS was in charge of the SRC in 1992.

When they arrived she tells a story of when her boyfriend later in the day changed, was suddenly moody and grumpy. She says then the *zimzims* arrived, physically assaulted her boyfriend and his male friend and then took her forcefully. They went into the school bus that was dominated by *zimzim* comrades and there she was unequivocally told that from that day she was to no longer date her boyfriend; that her new boyfriend was to be one of the *zimzim* boys.

They took her back to her home and from the following day the *zimzim* boy came over. They were to be in a relationship for close to five years. In the interview she says it means this was basically a forced relationship, where the boy physically and sexually abused her until she ran away to live in Vereeniging. She speaks of how she feared and silently left active politics. She did not tell her *varara* comrades because she feared it would result in her home being torched, or a vicious fight between *varara* and *zimzim* comrades. She stayed with a man she did not like, but feared; she went to parties with him, she slept with him, she persevered through many physical abuses until she left town without telling him, only to return more than a decade later. She describes him as a very jealous

man who often got into fights, even with men that would simply be speaking casually with her. In fact, the entire *zimzim* cohort of his friends were known to be capable fighters who never hesitated to pursue what they wanted using force. Her description of *varara* comrades, her own comrades, is that they were not known to be very interested in girls, just politics. She says they were snot-faced boys, who were often not well dressed. *Zimzims* on the other hand were clean and payed attention to dating. In fact amongst *vararas* there is an open admission, which even became an undeclared program of action for COSAS males, that they too should start to recruit beautiful girls into the organisation, even dating them if needs be, to make the organisation more attractive.

This is how she left politics, why she decided not to be active anymore, when her very recruitment came with an unsaid sexual requirement. She says this is how male comrades, even to this day, recruit women to join the organisation. But how should we understand her choice to stay in a relationship of that kind? Did she not feel important enough for black on black violence to occur in her protection? Above all, she feared that in the whole fight, her family home would be torched because this is how fights between *vararas* and *zimzims* often occurred in the townships - they would torch each other's family homes. Nevertheless, she insists the other "choices" were not preferable to her. Instead, she chose to endure physical abuse at the hands, not of the politically unconscious taxi driver, but of a political activist who is part of the Black Consciousness student movement. But is her blackness as a woman, her femininity, less important than the suffering of her fellow comrades and her family who face possible violence?

This reveals the com-tsotsi as an identity – that it is about maleness in the colony. A masculinity which, at times, was also hostile to women. It was not only the criminals who forced themselves on women, both in the struggle and those outside. Even those who had taken upon themselves to fight for freedom raped and embraced a general culture of sexual imposition on women; where a woman's yes is not important or even part of the discussion. The attitude seems to have been that women never know they want it, until you actually impose yourself and in the process they will accept and like it. This attitude of the com-tsotsi even almost looks for or prefers the resisting woman, the woman that actually keeps saying no. Her no is not reflected upon, is not engaged, it becomes the target of masculine self-discovery and expression. Some of the heroes we have discussed here have been found guilty of rape and have spent actual jail time as a result, even long after 1994.

Let us juxtapose this situation with yet another equally oppressive situation in another place and time. This is in 1855 Missouri (USA), when Celia, a slave woman, was purchased by her master, Newsom, when she was only fourteen years of age. Already a slave, her augmented suffering starts

on the journey to her new plantation, when her master rapes her. This would characterise her entire life in the planation: as a slave, she was sexually exploited until her third pregnancy. During this third pregnancy, Celia was in love with another slave man (George) in the plantation. Which meant it was possible that the third child was of her slave lover and not the master. In this uncertainty, she begins to demand more forcefully that the master stops his sexual exploitation, using the pregnancy on the one hand. On the other, her slave lover has demanded her to try and terminate the sexually exploitative relation with the master.

Celia, faced with all impossibilities, tried to appeal to the help of two of the master's daughters. But to no avail, until the master came to her cabin one evening to demand sex. Celia hit her master over the head with a tree branch, twice, which dropped him dead. Fearing that she would be executed for the murder:

> She decided to burn Newsom's body in her fireplace. With his body consumed by flames, there would be nothing left to connect her with her master's disappearance, nothing to indicate that he had come to her that night.[433]

Under the pressure of interrogation, fearing for the life of George who was also suspected of having had something to do with the disappearance of the master, Celia confessed. She was then put on trial, found guilty and sentenced to death.

Gilroy gives us three options in consideration of the slave's dilemma of freedom: suicide, silent mourning and flight. Perhaps Celia gives us a fourth option - kill the master. It is only possible to consider this option if one accepts freedom as implied by death in suicide. Convinced they could not sustain the torture of interrogation and thus possibly betray their comrades, some committed suicide in the struggle. However Celia, only fourteen at the time of her traumatic encounter with her master, learned that this reality would become a long nightmare of her life. Two children later, pregnant with a third one, Celia decides that it is enough. She has already been through silent mourning, persevering despite the torture, violence and trauma of rape. Her point of decision to resist to the death comes in a consideration, perhaps, of the love she shares with George.

Celia could have committed suicide; but why die when you are already the living dead? What is worse than being a slave woman under the rape sentence, sentenced to eternal rape? Celia does not have the right over her body, but something more is happening, something George, who is in love with her regardless of knowing this reality of her situation, might understand, while being aware at the same time that he could never take her place. George could have been the one that killed the

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[433] Melton A. Mclaurin, *Celia, A Slave* (New York: Avon, 1999), 30.

master. But this would deny Celia her own claim to her freedom, her freedom as her own gift to George: she kills the master knowing that this may mean execution. Even as she cuts the body, burning it piece by piece, she knows that she is calling for a direct face-off with the gallows. Why now? There is only one factor in the story – her love, or her relationship with her lover.

In Zamdela, the abducted *varara* comrade made the choice to keep silent, to persevere the rape sentence that these male comrades, in a bus, had handed to her. In that moment they all, as black men, decided that she no longer sexually belonged to herself, but to one of them. They could have as well also said that she belongs to all them. From that moment, right up to the day when she frees herself by taking off, it was a selfless act, where she acted to save others, but finally escaped from the beastly conditions of her life. But her situation amounts to something more than that. Her George in this case is the master: the very same black comrade who should be fighting for her emancipation and liberation is the one putting the final nail, the very final nail in her humanity; each day she rises, she is returned to the grave - she dies many deaths, killed by a conscious political revolutionary - the comrade.

This is what I mean by the liminality of the category of com-tsotsi and how it presents a question of ethics in the colonial world. How should we understand this comrade? Should he not meet the same fate as Celia's master? His black man on black woman violence is not different from those who massacred the people of Boipatong. This too is an avoidance – it tells us that colonialism's petrification is not final; in fact it is, as Fanon says, false. To explain this act of a comrade who rapes and does this over five years to a single individual black woman, holding her hostage in a violent sexual relationship, we have to enter into the space of the gap which Fanon says exists with the colonised; where the comrade, politically conscious, takes a step, their own step, to violate the other and do so for that long. The question about this ethical gap is, how do we account for those who tread the ethical line even under conditions of using violence within the black community?

Our answer to this is ethical gap is the loving subjectivity of Fanon and Maldonado-Torres, which is the subjectivity that takes upon itself the task of being a gift, of constituting the self that shall be a gift. The West's contribution to the human image only brings us to self-mastery, self-possession and self-obsession. The entire rejection of black people lies on the proposition that they cannot possess themselves, they cannot master themselves; they are mastered by nature, their bodies overwhelm them. However, in the struggle for freedom, under such colonial reduction – the death reduction blacks suffer – the human image can make a step forward. In this step, from the Haitian revolution to the anti-apartheid struggle, black people could only conceive of freedom as living not in self-possession, but in self-gift.

The comrade and the criminal are both idealists, in that they hold an idea intimately; this is why they act with bravery and it is because they believe in being brave, fearless. The criminal turns away from his bravery like Nietzsche's god whose creation of man is an act of looking away from himself. The criminal looks away from the course of love, which would tell you to live not for yourself but for others, for your neighbour, the stranger. Whereas the comrade's bravery is also an act of looking away from himself: I shall give myself, I shall be for the community.

The criminal kills in order to eat, to dress well and to be comfortable. The very act of taking away from the fellow poor neighbour is an act of murder. The criminal and the comrade do not like to be poor, they hate it. The comrade therefore steals, not to eat, but to arm himself and defend the community so that liberation can come. Love, where one lives for society, is the anchor of the comrade.

Neither of them is made once and for all; they are made over and over again. The path of liberation as well as the path of the criminal carries many processes of making, un-making and many re-births. The criminal can be re-born, often in the form of a comrade and return again and again. As hatred is a constant activity of self-negation so it is with love; a constant activity of self-affirmation, of that living where the objective is to give yourself as a gift to the other and here in this liminal space of self-expression lies the thin line of the BZ and VALIMO, hanging on a string where turning to the opposite direction is just a matter of contested engagement in contingency and uncertainty.

The comrade resists as does the criminal, but the comrade also resists against resisting; he does not resist giving himself. They all enjoy the audience and admiration of society, because bravery is just that attractive. However, the comrade resists one final piece in the periodic enactment of resistance; it is resistance itself, to resist against resisting that powerful call to let go of yourself; not once, not twice, but over and over again – as though it is ritual. And as long as breath and the body are in unison, the journey never ends, the choice is always being made, over and over again.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: War Against Time

Opening

This has been a treatise on black youth political subjectivity under what Mamdani calls "late colonial rule"[434]. It has been about looking at this subject in a specific time, site and most importantly in its everydayness. In addition, the conception of the subject being under late colonisation has been assessed in light of the colonial techniques of subjugation, which we have described as permanent juniorisation.

The idea of permanent juniority is developed out of a rejection of western conceptions of what the youth is. In engagement with theoretical conceptions developed within the western canons and contexts of modern youth studies we asked what it means to be youth under colonial rule, or more specifically: what is the black youth? Using theoretical readings of colonial rule developed in African contexts, we arrived at a conceptually different idea of the definition of youth, one which takes seriously the qualifier "black". We argued that the black youth is a population waiting to wait as a permanent state of being, where to be youth is the end of being for the black folk. Permanent juniorisation is therefore a process of colonial rule where blacks are being made into those who cannot transcend youth into adulthood. This transcendence is understood not only in terms of the corporeal but most importantly in terms of time: blacks cannot grow into adulthood as a temporality - a time of responsibility which denotes self-ownership and self-rule through reason, without tutelage. This is what makes them need permanent supervision from whites, or what makes them targets of permanent white colonial supervision.

The colonial supervision of natives is situated in relation to the idea of modernity itself; that is, in so far as modernity is concerned, natives require white supervision to cope, because they are permanent youth. We have therefore asked how the black youth emerged as politically conscious subjects under a system that relates to them as objects and not subjects of rule. What tools of self-making have they employed in engagement with a system of rule which sought to subjugate, socialise and make them into permanent juniors in the interest of sustaining white privilege?

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[434] See Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

In many ways this has been a question of both ontology and critique. Ontology in that it has been about studying the being of the black youth and critique in that it has been about constructing a critique of late colonisation as a human system of oppression. In constructing the critique we have used the subject of emancipation "blacks" to understand how colonisation functions and is being challenged by its subaltern subjects who have decided to consciously confront it. We have followed this subject as it exists in relation to and under a modern colonial technology of the school, the Bantu School to be precise. Here, we have argued that no other institution of socialisation was more important in the life development of blacks as permanent juniors under apartheid than the school. Through the bantu school, apartheid managed to increasingly shape black lives from an early age up to 18 years or so, en-masse, in an everydayness we have given the term "pedagogy of offence"; this is a mode of pedagogy that is premised on the assumption that the subjects of pedagogical intervention – namely the black youth – are always already guilty. Here, we have suggested that they are being taught as if they are offenders, like convicts in a prison undergoing rehabilitation.

Thus, their "offence" is elemental to their being – that is to say, their very blackness makes them potential or actual "offenders"; and in addition to this ontological "offence" of merely being black, they are also presumed guilty of the desire for plenitude, for full humanity, the desire to be free. It was about offending what is "most human" in black people – freedom.[435] This offence to the freedom of black folk, found its most profound everydayness in the technology of the school. We looked at how the black youth, over a period of time, developed political consciousness of this condition and began to challenge it, whilst, at the same time extending and articulating it with the broader anti-apartheid movement in their community.

We proceeded to study the stories of criminal gangs within the black youth. We looked at the cross roads of crime and political mobilisation, foregrounding this examination with a rich history of crime and gang studies in colonial South Africa. We focused on the theme of colonial violence and how black activists under late colonial rule treaded the thin line between being criminal and activist or, to be precise, being tsotsi and being comrade. We argued that com-tsotsi represented one subject position that signifies an ethical dilemma about the work of violence in resisting or living under apartheid that faces black people in general and in their everyday. This ethical dilemma finds heightened expression in the life of those who take it upon themselves to confront the system in the noble fight for the liberation of all. Here, we pin down activities or stories of Self-Defence Units as

[435] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 2008.

they make the Cartesian ethical choices about how to embark upon violence whilst maintaining the ethical commitment to the liberation of all.

At the core of this journey has been the question of freedom for those who have been colonised. Notice that we do not use the word "liberation", but rather *freedom* and this is really to distinguish between the transformation of the system of apartheid to end the anti-racist socio-economic conditions that subjected blacks into death forms of existence, and a much more profound thing, the humanness or fabric that defines being human which Fanon says is what is most human about humans – freedom [436]. We understand here that freedom is what is human about human beings - thus, the question is, when blacks have been treated in the way we have observed under colonisation, can we say they are still human? This is the same question as asking, are they free? As we conclude this treatise, we shall examine this question in dialogue with the work of both Mbembe and Hegel concerning freedom.

Mbembe and Theoretical Despondency

At the end of his seminal study about life after colonialism, at least in as far as direct white rule in the continent is concerned, Achille Mbembe asks a similar question:

> The object of this book has been to see if, in answer to the question "Who are you in the world?" the Africans of this century could say without qualification, "I am an ex-slave." It has been a matter of determining if, to such a question, it could suffice for an African to reply, "I was someone else's property." Or, "I was the matter on which someone else exercised a right of appropriation, the object that, in the hands and mind of another, once received the form of a thing". More prosaically, we sought to define the quantitative and qualitative difference, if any, between the colonial period and what followed: have we really entered another period, or do we find the same theatre, the same mimetic acting, with different actors and spectators, but with the same convulsions and the same insult? Can we really talk of moving beyond colonialism?[437]

Very few texts manage to arm us with productive tools to situate this event we call colonialism more than Mbembe's *On the Postcolony*. To this Mbembe's answer is a definitive one, that the colony and

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[436] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 197.

[437] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 237.

postcolony are constituted by one logic and one reality. They do not signify a transformation or a revolution, but a continuation in which there are only different actors and spectators. Somehow the most important theoretical meditation about life under both the colony and the postcolony arrives at some form of despondency; a reading of a life that is always entangled with death, much like our figure in Chapter One - the fatherless figure whose head is always facing backward with the hope for the appearance or return of the father. This existence, or this non-time we call death, is the only time or option of existence for Africa. This is the time Mbembe describes with the term "arbitrariness",[438] by which he means that which happens in it is determined by the whim of the coloniser, that command which brought natives into being as things and domesticated animals. This remains the core reality of the ways in which life continues in the postcolony; in the postcolony, Africa "persists in overturning itself in every direction, splitting itself, and, so to speak, getting lost in its own movement… it takes satisfaction in the limitation of its own existence."[439]

This simmering despondency with which he brings us to the dusk of his bright and shining sun of enquiries in the text, may as well lead us to yield to the forceful temptation, in an insidious way, or even abruptly, of relegating black colonial liberation to what Fanon calls "the end of the world"[440]. Examining Adler's psychological theory of behavioural disorders which he says would have us blame blacks for why they suffer the pathological need for reassurance from whites and each other, Fanon argues that it is not the native's doing, but the colonial "society that is responsible for your mystification".[441] To do justice to the description of Mbembe's despondency, it is necessary to quote him in full when he writes:

> Having set out to discover what remains, at the turn of the century, of the African quest for self-determination, we find ourselves thrown back on the figure of the shadow, into those spaces where one perceives something, but where *this thing* is impossible to make out - as in phantasm, at the exact point of the split between the visible and graspable, the perceived and tangible. In many respects, this conclusion is frightening. It suggests that Africa exists only as an absent object, an absence that those who try to decipher it only accentuate. In this logic, our power to state the thing is reduced to our capacity to create shadow effects - literally, to lie - so great is the contradiction between the discourse we produce, and the

[438] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 188.

[439] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 240.

[440] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*. (New York; Grove Press, 2008) 191

[441] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 191.

> experience as one "fabricates" it from day to day. Thus, we must speak of Africa only as a chimera on which we all work blindly, a nightmare we produce and from which we make a living - and which we sometimes enjoy, but which somewhere deeply repels us, to the point that we may evince toward it the kind of disgust we feel on seeing the cadaver.[442]

In this treatise, we too have observed the black youth political subject under late colonisation in a similar condition. In fact, through this subject, we examined that form of violence that came to be known as "black on black violence" – violence that was signified, in our own journey, by Bojosi's corpse – or Mbembe's cadaver; where they tried to inflict pain on a corpse, to make it suffer, to exhume it in order to set it on fire, and once reburied, to exhume it again, set it on fire, and hang it by the graveyard fence.

Once we know that this that we are is not of our doing, but rather that colonial society has created it – once we know that this, that the native as nothing, as thing, and as animal is a creation of the coloniser[443], Fanon says the obvious follows, and that is to end the world.[444] Could this call by Fanon imply an apocalyptic work about African existence both in the continent, as well as in the diaspora being borne of the human surrender to absolute self-destruction? Could it be that under this despondency we may give in to mass suicide created by the very overwhelming existential anxiety of not knowing how to fix the world's problem of colonialism? Are we forced to ask for the end of the world perhaps because we cannot inhabit it as anything else, but someone else's property? Is it the case that we are not responsible for this problem of colonisation, yet we are asked to solve it still by destroying it, by perhaps unleashing an Armageddon because it refuses to integrate us into itself as equals, so that we call on death for ourselves? But what is achieved in ending the world, in dying? Is it freedom, agency, autonomy? Why die when you already are the living dead? Why ask for the end when you are already under permanent and multiple endings, when you end in multiple and different ways? When yours is a death form of existence?

Indeed, the idea of many deaths is Mbembe's answer or description of what constitutes postcolonial existence; that here we continue to die many and multiple deaths. If colonisation was like an act of killing blacks, or if it is that state of existence in which blacks were as the dead are, Mbembe then

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[442] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 241–42. (His emphasis)

[443] Ibid

[444] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 188.

asks: "What death does one die 'after the colony'?"[445] His answer is, "there are so many. One no longer knows which one to die"[446]. The time of "colonisation" is the same or is in continuity with the time of the "postcolony" in that they are both death worlds and because, says Mbembe, "changing time is… not really possible"[447]. However, in order to signify or speak about the "postcolony" Mbembe moves us "out of the world" into what he calls "the age of raw life as an alternative space" and in this age we are "*several in a single body*".[448]

To fully comprehend Mbembe we must take a step back with him and see him engage with Hegel's thought on human freedom. For even Fanon had to contend with Hegel's theory of recognition to fully describe the black condition. After all, Mbembe wants to understand how colonial violence, or being colonised relates "to the birth of the subject, and the relation between freedom and bondage"[449]. Both he and Fanon show the inadequacy or failure of Hegel's theory of recognition to properly comprehend colonial relations or logic. This therefore starts in the idea of "consciousness" as it relates to being human; the claim that what defines humanity is "self-consciousness" and that this is also the mark of freedom.

For Hegel, in *Phenomenology of Spirit,* to fully claim to possess consciousness of consciousness – that is its certainty, its truth – requires the recognition by another consciousness of consciousness; to do so, one must engage in the struggle towards death. Hegel says of self-consciousness (consciousness of consciousness), that it "exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged."[450] Here, we come across the process of recognition, placing human interrelations at the centre of understating of self-consciousness's process of becoming certain of itself as such. Without being recognised by another self-consciousness as self-consciousness, self-consciousness is locked in "thinghood". Its desire is precisely this: it is to be recognised as self-consciousness by the other who is self-consciousness. Hegel says:

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[445] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 197.

[446] Ibid

[447] Ibid

[448] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 197 his emphasis.

[449] Mbembe, On the Postcolony, 174

[450] G. W. F. Hegel and J. N. Findlay, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Revised ed. edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 111.

> Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come out of itself. This has two fold significance: first it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an other being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self. It must supersede this otherness of itself… This ambiguous supersession of its ambiguous otherness is equally an ambiguous return *into itself*. For first, through the supersession, it receives back its own self, because, by superseding *its* otherness, it again becomes equal to itself; but secondly, the other self-consciousness equally gives it back to itself, for it saw in the other, but supersedes this being for itself in the other and thus lets the other again go free.[451]

We have here a struggle that ensues, a struggle to the death between two self-consciousnesses; and the self-consciousness that triumphs becomes lord or master and the defeated self-consciousness becomes bondsman, or slave. "The individual who has not risked his life may well be recognised as a person, but he has not attained to the truth of his recognition as an independent self-consciousness"[452] says Hegel. This is the "trial by death"[453]: "death is the natural negation of consciousness, negation without independence, which thus remains without the required significance of recognition. Death certainly shows that each staked his life and held it of no account, both in himself and in the other; but is not for those who survived this struggle."[454] The survivors, Hegel adds, "put an end to themselves, and are done away with as extremes wanting to be for themselves, or to have an existence of their own."[455] However, the ones that engage in this struggle toward death, in the trial by death, ultimately come to the certainty of recognition: "they *recognise* themselves as *mutually recognising* each other"[456]:

> They exist as two opposed shapes of consciousnesses; one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is lord, the other is bondsman. [457]

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[451] Ibid. not my emphasis

[452] Ibid., 114.

[453] Ibid.

[454] Ibid.

[455] Ibid.

[456] Ibid., 112.

[457] Ibid., 115.

The slave is reduced to thinghood; this is its condition, the

> chain from which he could not break free in the struggle, thus proving himself to be dependent, to possess his independence in thinghood. But lord is the power over this thing, for he proved in the struggle that it is something merely negative; since he is the power over this thing and this again is the power over the other [the bondsman], it follows that he holds the other in subjection. [458]

Self-consciousness remains simply "being-for-itself", and, in order to come to its truth about being for itself, it has to be recognised, equally by another being for itself - the other. So, the struggle to the death could keep going on because the slave recognises its own potential in its alienation and interaction with things. As it realises, in its interaction with things/objects, that it is a self-consciousness it then poses itself, its freedom in negation with the master. This is therefore a cycle which can be broken by mutual recognition that leads to equality, to a mutual recognition between the two which now avoids death or violence against each other.

Fanon's application of this formula to the colonial relations of domination presents a fundamental problem because black liberation or the emancipation of African slaves did not come with a struggle. For a struggle towards the death presents mutual recognition where the master and the slave, in the Hegelian analogy, come to accept each other as fully human - this yielding into a universal human community of equality. The master could never be recognised by a thing, which, as long as there is slavery, makes his existence incomplete, uncertain, and unfulfilled. Only a free human being can exist in mutual recognition with the other human being.

The problem of the postcolony or post-slavery, for Fanon, is that a struggle never took place, which means that the black man and the white man have no mutual recognition of each other as human. They are locked in thinghood, in that relation which Hegel says was constituted without the *Trial by Death*. Fanon says they are in relations of "narcissism": "The white man is locked in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness."[459] The white man is locked in his superiority over the black man, and the black man is locked in his inferiority under the white man. The significance of the trial by death is that both master and slave get shaken in the core of their being, they enter mutuality and

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[458] Ibid., 114.

[459] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, xi–xii.

thus they came to value themselves in that they are seeing each other as self-consciousness; this is the coming to value freedom as such after being shaken by what Hegel calls "dread" or fear of death: "everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations… the absolute melting away of everything stable."[460] One must therefore come that close to death to in turn value one's freedom - being for self by valuing the other's being for self.

This is the dialectic of freedom, of how we come to constitute a society of equality, a universal state of reason, a true human community – it is how we partake of human existence. Fundamentally, it is how we keep away from finishing each other because we value in each other that we are self-consciousnesses, those beings who are being-for-self. Upon this mutual valuing of freedom in each other, we build the political community, or in fact, the human community. Zizek, quoting Milner says:

> Even a subject deprived of active speech and reduced to an object has to accept this reduction and behave accordingly. This is why the master's pleasure stems from his awareness that his slave is not simply an object but a free being compelled to act as if he were a mere object, a "speaking tool" to use Aristotle's term for slaves. Hegel was well aware of this paradox: the key result of his dialectic of Master and Slave is the insight into how, "in order to keep a speaking being silent, it is not necessary to kill it. At this moment, politics emerges… it suffices to dominate, killing is superfluous, this is the moral of [Hegel's] fable. To keep silent and not to kill, these are the two faces of the same axiom: the initial axiom of politics."[461]

The master however, soon discovers that the relations are not sustainable since the very reduction into thinghood he forces the slave into, serves to end slavery as the slave ultimately rises. Slave revolt, whose resolution is a political human community of mutual recognition or equality, is based already on the fact that slaves are human themselves and the master knows this, even as they attempt to reduce them into thinghood. The essential lesson is that true equal political community comes out of the recognition that those who are slaves will struggle to the death in order to express the truth of their freedom. In this struggle, the cycle gets to be broken by the two coming to see each other as equal, thus avoiding perpetual violence, or death, although only through such a violence to the death is such necessary.

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[460] Leo Rauch and David Sherman, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Self-Consciousness: Text and Commentary* (SUNY Press, 1999), 117.

[461] Slavoj Zizek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards A New Foundation Of Dialectical Materialism* (New York: Verso, 2015), 71.

This is why Hegel elsewhere says of Africa, "slavery is in and for itself injustice, for the essence of humanity is Freedom; but for this man must be matured. The gradual abolition of slavery is therefore wiser and more equitable than its sudden removal."[462] and it so happens that for the French world, the opposite happened. Fanon says, one day it was just declared, "Slavery shall no longer exist on French soil".[463] Thus, the problem of the black person is that "steeped in the essentiality of servitude, [he/she] was set free by the master."[464] Black people, says Fanon, "did not fight" for freedom. He adds that blacks do not know the price of freedom because they never fought for it; it was a gift of the master. But since certainty of self-consciousness can only be attained in the struggle to the death with the other [self-consciousness] it means freedom as gift is really non-freedom, blacks still exist in "thinghood" in relation to the coloniser.[465] The result is:

> When the black man happens to cast a savage look at the white man, the white man says to him: "Brother, there is no difference between us." But the black man *knows* there is a difference. He wants it. He would like the white man to suddenly say to him, "Dirty nigger". Then he would have that unique occasion - to "show them". But usually there is nothing, nothing but indifference or paternalistic curiosity. The former slave wants his humanity to be challenged; he is looking for a fight; he wants a brawl. But too late: the black Frenchman is doomed to hold his tongue and bare his teeth.[466]

Yet Fanon makes an exception. Writing in the 1950s, he says, "black Americans are living a different drama. In the United States the black man fights and is fought against. There are laws that gradually disappear from the constitution… On the battlefield, marked by scores of Negroes hanged by their testicles, a monument is slowly rising that promises to be grandiose. And at the top of this monument," says Fanon, "I can see a white man and a black man *hand in hand.*"[467]

Struggle to the death is as important for Fanon as it is for Mbembe. However, whilst it might seem for Fanon that there could arise a "hand in hand" summit in the colonial antagonism, Mbembe takes the problem of recognition further. For Mbembe, the colonial relations, even under the

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[462] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (Courier Corporation, 2012), 117.

[463] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 194.

[464] Ibid.

[465] Ibid.

[466] Ibid., 196.

[467] Ibid. not my emphasis

phenomenology of the struggle-towards-the-death in the colony, remain in absolute antagonism. Here lies the essentiality of his theoretical despondency. The colonised for him are not in a state of Hegelian "thinghood" in that within their servitude is the master's pleasure that they have turned a human being into thinghood, turned them into a speaking object. His departure is a much deeper reality, a much more violent reality; in the colonised, the coloniser could not discern an otherness – that is, another self-consciousness. This enslavement or colonial reduction is therefore not a Hegelian enslavement or reduction; it is simply an act of creation in the cosmological sense. And it is Hegel himself that already characterises the African in this way. Mbembe argues that, "In… the Hegelian tradition, the native subjected to power and to the colonial state could in no way be another "myself". As an animal, he/she is totally alien to me."[468]

It is true that Hegel, particularly in his *History of Philosophy*, does not see the African as human. "The Negro", says Hegel:

> …exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality – all that we call feeling – if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character. [469]

Thus, the cycle of colonial reduction is based on this dilemma, which is really beyond misrecognition in keeping with Hegel's theory of recognition. To the coloniser, the blacks are not "another myself"; the struggle for recognition with the colonised is thus futile. To put it yet again in the words of Hegel, Africa "is the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night"[470] – this is what we have called permanent juniority.

This is how Mbembe arrives at the after death, and the multiple death delirium. There is truly nothing "post" about the postcolony. It does not represent actual change in time, the actual calling of everything into question. Instead, following Fanon, "decolonisation is quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men"[471]. It is truly a "violent phenomenon" but

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[468] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 26.

[469] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 111.

[470] Ibid., 109.

[471] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London; New York, New York: Penguin Classics, 2001).

the violence of decolonisation, this struggle towards death, is not of two beings who mutually recognise each other as mutually recognising each other. It is the violence of the hunter and the animal; it is empty violence and does not lead to freedom where freedom is the state of self-consciousnesses mutually recognising each other. Decolonisation is also something more: it is 'black on black violence', it is black people turing on each other, and even as they turn on the master with their whole being towards the death, in the eyes of the coloniser they are always already non-human: permanent juniors.

Death, for the colonised, cannot provide freedom, does not carry the realisation of being under the colony because to die is to live; natives live in a state of necropower. To commit suicide, to sacrifice oneself, to kill the other is not the work of freedom – it is the normal way of being under the colony. The colony is precisely a reality made in the image of death; it is where death has no meaning, only because those who live there are already dead. Mbembe really wants to say there is no constituting an anti-colonial struggle with the tools of the western canon. One would not do an immanent critique of Hegel for the colonised and grant them Hegelian recognition. Blacks cannot say they are doing freedom when being-towards-death, for they are already dead. Mbembe explains:[472]

> …the future, here, can be authentically anticipated, but not in the present. The present itself is but a moment of vision - vision of the freedom not yet come. Death in the present is the mediator of redemption. Far from being an encounter with a limit, boundary, or barrier, it is experienced as "a release from terror and bondage."[473]

The future is itself entangled with death. Redemption is ceasing to be. Here, Mbembe embraces that moment in Gilroy's own examination of the Hegelian dialectic in his *The Black Atlantic* when looking at African American slaves who commit suicide. Gilroy sees suicide as agency, as a testament of the humanity of the slave, that they can end their lives.[474] "For death is precisely that from and over which I have power" says Mbembe, "But it is also that space where freedom and negation

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[472] See Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (December 21, 2003): 11–40, doi: 10.1215/08992363-15-1-11.

[473] Ibid., 39.

[474] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 57.

operate".[475] "Under conditions of necropolitical power, the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred."[476]

In this treatise, we have travelled with Mbembe, in full application of this crucial colonial logic, from the chapters on pedagogy of offence, colonial criminality up to revolutionary subjectivity – in the name of love. In many ways this work has been as much steeped in Mbembe, both in style and in theory, as it is in Fanon. But we must now part ways with Mbembe; if anything it is due to his very first proposition that theory in Africa must put - *Time on the move.*[477] If we start at his tail, we are unable to lift our eyes into the horizon because *On the Postcolony* is a thesis about a stagnation, a barren time whose movement is multiple stagnations. Africa only moves under direct white supervision; under its colonial potentate or even before colonisation, it stagnates. The postcolony is "an existence that is contingent, dispersed, and powerless but reveals itself in the guise of arbitrariness and the absolute power to give death any time, anywhere, by any means, and for any reason".[478]

Our subject of study here has been the black youth, and the black youth, as with all black people, is at war with time; it is a war of freedom precisely defined as the time of death – colonisation. Thus, when Mbembe ends, as though he is unable to tell what the native ought to do in order to no longer be someone else's property, we cannot tell if he has achieved his goal to set time on the move – African time, African subjectivity – or if he has managed to recognise African freedom. Our enquiry here has been about the demand against time, on time and for time: to think about black youth politics in South Africa, one is really to think about a time when living is dying.

Of course, Mbembe's own reading of the politics of the black youth in South Africa has been as dismissive as the despondency of his postcolony. Writing in the foreword of Fiona Ford's rather poor attempt at a biographical account of Julius Malema, Mbembe calls black youth politics seen over a long period of time, "lumpen radicalism": "A political tradition of unruliness - and at times

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[475] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 39.

[476] Ibid., 40.

[477] Ibid., 1–18.

[478] Ibid., 13.

resistance - in which fantasies of male power, control and desire have always been deeply entangled with war envy and an almost insatiable appetite for money, luxuries and women."[479]

Mbembe attributes this "political tradition" to "the influx-control system, the mass forced removals and relocations and the relentless and all-pervading social and economic insecurity that became hallmarks of black urban experience under apartheid."[480] This for him encapsulates the entire history of black youth politics in South Africa from the formation of the ANC YL of Anton Lembede, AP Mda, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela to the student movements of Steven Biko, Abram Tiro, Tsietsi Mashinini, down to the 1980s and the triple alliances of worker, student and community politics. He recognises, unlike many observers of the South African liberation struggle, that it has been the black youth who have served as a critical locomotive of popular resistance. Yet they are for him, of a lumpen radical political tradition. This assessment of black youth politics falls into the same trap of scholars who explain away the black youth phenomena, as opposed to explaining it.

Without excusing this rather dismissive reading of black youth politics, Mbembe's theoretical despondency still contains something much more refined that we should contend with. In *African Modes of Self-Writing* Mbembe provides a rich critique that asks, what "ways of imagining identity are at work today and what social practices do they produce?"[481] In probing the triple challenges of African experience – slavery, colonialism and apartheid – Mbembe warns against the simplistic victimhood that has characterised critiques found for instance in many of the versions of African nationalism, including their Marxist turn. He wants us to see how the events that have rendered the African into servitude have also been made possible by internal inconsistencies of ways of living that precede these events or even co-exist with them, so that a self-critical project emerges that also takes responsibility for parts played in collaboration during slavery, colonialism and apartheid.[482]

A simplistic victimhood position not only does not open the liberation project to engage in self-criticism, but also foregoes an opportunity to critique some of the dark parts of our ways of living.

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[479] Mbembe, A Foreword in Fiona Forde, *An Inconvenient Youth: Julius Malema and the "New" ANC* (Granta Publications, 2012), vi, vii.

The obvious risk with this label of "lumpen radicalism" is a reductionist dismissal of the politics Malema instantiates – because it doesn't fit his model of a 'proper' or 'progressive' politics. In this respect, it is as analytically weak as that of orthodox Marxists who dismiss any politics that doesn't emanate from a properly self-conscious proletarian subject.

[480] Ibid.

[481] Achille Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing," *CODESRIA Bulletin*, no. 1 (2000): 22.

[482] Ibid

In these forms of critique, "the quest for sovereignty and the desire for autonomy are almost never accompanied by self-criticism"[483] he says. Yet, even with readings of self-writing occurring in the African scene today, Mbembe remains despondent and nothing he reads is of any hope. Africa remains the land of death, multiple deaths and the dead; all we can do with Mbembe is die, our future is "judgement"[484] he says, more death. He does not provide us with ways of imagining identity that would inspire a different reality; that would have us put time on the move.

> History itself becomes "hope of history". Henceforth, each death or defeat leads to a new appearance, is perceived as confirmation, gauge, and relaunch of an ongoing promise, a "not yet", a "what is coming" which – always – separates hope from utopia.[485]

Indeed, this is what we mean by permanent juniority, that state of being in which we wait as a permeant state of being – waiting to be adult, but dying as a permanent state of being. With Mbembe there is no escape from this, but it is only if we accept with him that only the western canon and its colonial domination have a final word on the African being. Is it not by accepting this cul de sac of being that we too put a final nail on the coffin, burying the African continent in Hegel's envelope in that "dark mantle of Night"?

Fanon's conclusion on the other hand seems vested in giving hope. It is also a critique of time that we find in *Black Skins White Masks (BSWM)*. BSWM is about a social revolution, that activity of doing time and setting it forward. Unlike the Mbembe of *On the Post-Colony*, Fanon sets the sun of his enquiry into "what does the black man want" with Karl Marx, the philosopher of time, a time called historical materialism - the philosopher of a conflict of time, the title of which is dialectical materialism; that engine or locomotive of its forward transitions from primitive communism to modern communism. Here is the quote that Fanon uses to introduce his concluding chapter in BSWM and it comes from the *Eighteenth Brumaire*:

> The social revolution cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped itself of all its superstitions concerning the past. Earlier revolutions relied on memories out of world history in order to drug themselves against their own content. In order to find their own content, the revolutions of the

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[483] Ibid.

[484] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 206.

[485] Ibid.

> nineteenth century have to let the dead bury the dead. Before, the expression exceeded the content; now the content must exceed the expressions.
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This is where Fanon ends. He ends here because it is Marx's idea of social revolution that is engraved in this sentence about history and time which Fanon wants to pick up. Fanon takes to the idea of the future because, as he says, "the discovery of a black civilisation in the fifteenth century does not earn me a certificate of humanity. Whether you like it or not, the past can in no way be my guide in the actual state of things".[487] He writes:

> We are convinced that it would be of enormous interest to discover a black literature or architecture from the third century before Christ. We would be overjoyed to learn of the existence of a correspondence between some black philosophers and Plato. But we can absolutely not see how this fact would change the lives of eight-year-old kids working in the cane fields of Martinique or Guadeloupe. There should be no attempt to fixate man, since it is his destiny to be unleashed. The destiny of History determines none of my acts. I am my own foundation.[488]

Fanon is fighting the past, he is firing at it with all of his power; he is fighting the idea that blacks want to be like whites, that European humanity is the only version of humanity that can exist. "A long time ago the black man acknowledged the undeniable superiority of the white man, and all his endeavours aim at achieving white existence."[489] Fanon will not be a prisoner to his past: "I am not a prisoner of history. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction". "I will not make myself man of any past" he says, "I do not want to sing the past to the detriment of my present and my future".[490]

If *Black Skins White Masks* is a study of the black condition, then here we discover that this has to do with temporality: "The problem considered here is located in temporality. Disalienation will be for

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486 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox, Revised edition (New York : Berkeley, Calif.: Grove Press, 2008), 198.

[487] Ibid., 198–206.

[488] Ibid.

[489] Ibid.

[490] Ibid.

those Whites and Blacks who have refused to let themselves be locked in the substantialised 'tower of the past'. For many other black men disalienation will come from refusing to consider their reality as definitive."[491] *Black Skins White Masks* is Fanon's testament on humanity, on its defining capacity to author a radically new future.

It is possible to read the idea of time worked on by Fanon as freedom? In many ways slavery, colonialism and apartheid were an assault on African time. To white people is attributed a mastery over time. They can conquer it, accelerate it, and multiply it; in fact, modernity itself is a conquest over time. The teleology of Marxism is a conquest of time where time is no longer the "mystery" it used to be. It finally opens itself up and we know what is coming and can all work right towards it; it is the predictability of modern science itself; in fact, doing social science is itself the work of conquering time – of predicting or opening up the future through a reading of the past and the present.[492]

The capitalist supersonic ability to compress both geography and time in massive and super speed is evident in technological advancements – in the train, the cellphone, the radio, the plane. The speed with which plants can be grown (through genetically modified organisms), buildings erected and machines produced is all a conquest of time. The African is therefore outside this zone of the conquest of time; hence, as Mbembe demonstrates, this is where you find that shift in colonialism about forcing the African to submit to customary law and ways of living. This is Fanon's thesis on time, and yes, Mbembe's in *On the Post Colony* too, but to illuminate a refreshing reading of modes of self-writing that could allow the politics of the black youth subject to inspire a progressive change on the African scene, we have to disabuse ourselves of Western metaphysics, because as Fanon puts it, each time we search for humanity in the "techniques and style of Europe", all we find for ourselves is "a succession of negations of [humanity], and an avalanche of murders."[493]

The Miracle and Human Nature

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[491] Ibid.

[492] For a discussion of capitalism and the idea of conquest of time see Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Reissue edition (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin Books, 1988).

[493] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 252.

In this study we looked at the black youth in a time that has come to be known as the transition. This time represents an era when South Africans transited from apartheid into a democratic dispensation. It often begins with the release of Nelson Mandela from 27 years of imprisonment in 1990, through to his inauguration in 1994. This is the era, in our own study, of the BZ, the Germans, of Bojosi's corpse and of VALIMO. It is also known as the time of the miracle, in that South Africa's transition to democracy was, strictly speaking, a miracle. Addressing the Opening Session of the National Conference on Racism in Johannesburg, 30 August 2000, Mbeki said:

> Correctly, much has been made by people around the world about the 'miracle' of our transition from apartheid rule to a non-racial society. At the heart of the sense of wonder and relief among the international community was the fact that, contrary to many expectations, we avoided a racial war, despite the racial brutality of the apartheid system and the racial antagonisms it generated.[494]

Even Nelson Mandela, in his reflection about the tenth anniversary of this transition, stated poignantly:

> I have so often heard us being described by people across the globe as a miracle nation. We were expected by the world to self-destruct in the bloodiest civil war along racial grounds. Not only did we avert such racial conflagration; we created amongst ourselves one of the most exemplary and progressive non-racial and non-sexist democratic orders in the contemporary world… For once history and hope rhymed, a famous poet reminded me and us, speaking of the miracle of our transition and the wonder of our democracy. [495]

South Africa's transition was indeed dubbed a miracle – a wonder – even by its leaders. But what greater miracle is there than the very act of creation? The idea that out of nothing, God created the earth and all that is on it? In fact its extreme version is: he commanded everything to be: "let there be light". Or out of the word (speech) the world came to be; there is indeed no greater miracle.[496]

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[494] Thabo Mbeki, "WCAR: Speech by President Thabo Mbeki, at the Opening Session of the National Conference on Racism, Johannesburg, 30 August 2000," accessed January 15, 2017, http://www.racism.gov.za/substance/speeches/mbeki000830.htm.

[495] Mandela, "Nelson Mandela - Speeches - Statement by Nelson Mandela on Anniversary of 10 Years of Democracy in South Africa in Sunday Times, 2004" accessed January 15, 2017, http://www.mandela.gov.za/mandela_speeches/2004/0404_times.htm.

[496] Here you can find both in Genesis in the old testament and in the book of John in the New testament, the story of creation (Genesis 1, John 1)

But it is Mbembe who takes on this idea of the miracle from an opposite, but relevant position. He warned that to understand what Western epistemology was really doing in the colony we have to go into its cosmology, and not its canon of philosophy. He says:

> …the act of colonising resembles a miracle. But, wherein lies the violence of the miracle if not that it is indivisible? Faced with its sovereignty, no law, no external determination has any hold. Everything trembles and everything can be manipulated. In the economy of the miracle, nothing is, in principle, unattainable, unrealisable. The possible is limitless. The miracle annihilates nothingness by making something rise up out of nothing. It empties what is full by transforming it into something other than what it was. It fills with content what was fully empty. Nothing contradicts the miracle. That is why, as a miraculous act, the act of colonising is one of the most complete expressions of the specific form of arbitrariness of desire and whim. The pure terror of desire and whim - that is its concept. As a miraculous act, colonialism frees the conqueror's desires from the prison of law, reason, doubt, time, measure. Thus, to have been colonised is, somehow, to have dwelt close to death.[497]

Is it possible, therefore, that the term "miracle" is precisely how the coloniser absolves self-autonomy or self-authoring from blacks in terms of the very moment of 1994? At a point in which blacks had to claim victory over the inhumanity of European modernity, a discourse that quickly took over was that, no, the transition was a miracle. What really did they mean by a miracle? When the poet Seamus Heaney said "history and hope rhymed" to Mandela, what did those words mean? Why is South Africa a miraculous transition to democracy?

Many democratisations, in particular those that founded modern polities in the USA and France, are called social revolutions or simply revolutions. This means they are grounded within human acts and explicable through social science laws or reason. Central to these social revolutions in all their different forms is that they are made out of violent conquest or overthrow. It is impossible – that is to say, it is not within human imagination or reason – that a transition to modern democracy could be authored without this element of absolute violence.

The miracle is, therefore, precisely that unlike the American and French revolutions. South Africans did not conquer the oppressors; they made a peaceful inauguration of democracy side-by-side with their "former oppressors". This is why, as Mandela and Mbeki state, the expected racial civil war

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[497] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 189.

did not happen or was avoided. This was, as Mbeki put it, "despite the racial brutality of the apartheid system and the racial antagonisms it generated." Apartheid had founded itself on the fact that blacks and whites are irreconcilable antagonists that need apartheid if they are not to degenerate into civil war. In addition, at that point during the transition, all chaos was leading to this very reality of outright war – the Boipatong massacre; the violence in Sebokeng, West Rand, Soweto, and Natal; the assassination of Chris Hani; and the killing of AWB militias in Mmabatho. However, this civil war was avoided and a "miracle" transition occurred.

Herein lies the relationship of reason and violence in modernity; the reasonable violence in European modernity is the ending of the totalitarianism and tyranny that characterised the pre-modern. But, is it not true that colonisation was also authored this way? So, in an inverted logic, when blacks inaugurate democracy in South Africa by "avoiding" absolute violence it was not a revolution, the world called it a miracle. By calling it a miracle did they not absolve human capability and expunge it into the realm of the impossible? Does not this idiom prevent blacks from owning the moment of 1994 as our own creation, that through struggle itself, democracy was inaugurated and as such, that if needs be, they can create it again?

In the narratives of slave emancipation, there is indeed another miracle emancipation, and that is of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Here Moses simply negotiated with Pharaoh until his heart was turned from stone to spirit. No wonder the Israelites were so ungrateful, because they never liberated themselves through struggle against the Egyptian empire. Is it perhaps for this reason that the whole generation that was freed from Egypt never made it to Canaan, including Moses? Perhaps precisely because they never were free; thus they suffered that pathology lamented by Fanon – when freedom is just a gift from the master, former slaves really have no appreciation of their freedom.[498]

Is it not true that this freedom herein discussed by Fanon is also something of a miracle? When one day, the whole inhuman machinery of slavery was eliminated and the former slave was allowed to exist as equal – to sit at the master's table, with the master? But, yet again, within the Western canon, perhaps there are two epistemic versions of "miracle" we could quickly recollect, one represented by David Hume and the other by Baruch Spinoza.

[498] See the story of Israel's emancipation from Egyptian slavery in the Bible, in Genesis

For Hume, a miracle is a "violation of laws of nature"[499] which must be rejected as simply illusory, and as based on human ignorance belonging to barbarous superstitions. In this miracle narrative, when the West says 1994 is a miracle it is actually denying the humanity of black people. It basically is steeped in the same logic as the one that founded colonisation, in which, as Mbembe describes above, blacks are simply barbarous. To stretch it further, blacks must believe in superstitions not to execute violence in completing the transition to democracy. In fact, the very fact of not engaging in absolute violence represents their incapacity for human reason, that they rely, as Hegel said, on "sentiment of self" and not "self-consciousness".[500] Was it not Mbembe who also lamented that South Africa "is the only country on Earth in which a revolution took place that resulted in not one single former oppressor losing anything"?[501]

However, for Spinoza, a miracle does not represent a transgression of nature, rather it exposes our own limitation in understanding nature itself.[502] Here, miracles represent a moment of our own ignorance which might in future be revealed to our understanding; meaning just because we could not humanly comprehend something, it is not useful to say it is a "violation" of the natural; rather we should accept that it exposes our own ignorance of the natural. On one hand, if we follow Hume, the world is saying the transition was a transgression of natural laws, which is in continuity with the founding logic of colonisation itself. Following this explanation we could accept blacks as "freaks" – or in the words of Mbembe, as something "out of this world". Here is a pessimistic hole of endless cold nights of repetitive violence.

On the other hand, we could be saying, following Spinoza, that the transition surpasses or simply exposes the ignorance of western understanding of the nature of human freedom. This question must be properly put to the West's whole being: how could a people, who lived a death form of existence and who were subjected to totalising forms of violence and terror (as are objects or animals), possibly inaugurate a transition from that violent existence to another without obliterating their oppressors in absolute violence? This question would never make sense if in the first place we do not disabuse ourselves of the Hegelian logic on human freedom. For this logic, which Mbembe exposes, human freedom comes only through struggle to the death; in fact in precise terms the truth

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[499] David Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding," accessed January 15, 2017, http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/hume/enquiry.pdf.

[500] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 190.

[501] Achille Mbembe, "Exorcise Our White Ghosts," *CityPress*, 18 September 2015, 12:00:05 PM, accessed January 15 2017 http://city-press.news24.com/Voices/Exorcise-our-white-ghosts-20150918.

[502] Jonathan Israel and Michael Silverthorne, *Spinoza: Theological-Political Treatise* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

or certainty of self-consciousness comes through struggle to the death of self-consciousnesses. This is the only way human autonomy is realised. Or to bring it back home, could we say in the drama of 1994, white people came to see or recognise the humanity of blacks?

There is indeed something about two warriors anticipated to fight the final fight of destruction so that once and for all, it is determined who is superior, and yet they simply stare at each other and both resign themselves not to fight. Yes, they meet each other in the battlefield and after a moment of reflection, without speaking, they both realise "what is the point"? They then go on with their lives without giving the audience the satisfaction of knowing who would have conquered. How do we make sense of this moment?

It is Zizek who explores the implications of this moment for subjectivity or for human freedom and recognition in his work *Absolute Recoil*. Zizek foregrounds a materialist conception of subjectivity in relation to the concept of *acedia* in order to account for the gap or void in subjectivity. Conceptions of the subject, which he patiently examines, including that of Hegel – all seem to arrive at some form of a gap, or a void in the explanation of human freedom/autonomy or subjectivity. For instance, when Althusser explains interpellation, he uses the example of a cop who hails at an idler on the street. This moment, when the idler turns to respond to the cop, is what constitutes the idler as the subject of authority. But the important question is, Zizek explains, what was the idler before the hail?[503]

This gap, the point before constitution or subjectivisation, is what concerns Zizek. If the subject comes into self-consciousness through the struggle to the death, what was it before the confrontation? Zizek tries to salvage the dialectic of Hegel by indicating that the fall creates what it falls from; only by falling do we come to realise what we fell from. It may seem easy to deny "freedom" to the slave; however, precisely because it is a slave, it has to concede to its subjugation, it can also either hate the master, love the master, run away, or commit suicide. All these remain signs of its undoable freedom, the very reason they are enslaved. We, too, used a similar logic from Fanon in explanation of colonial criminality and violence in the previous chapters.

This is the paradox of human freedom – or of the negative in post-Hegelian terms. There is no positive prior to the negative; it is the negative that creates the negative from which the positive or creation stems. Freedom is, actually, the negative that is revealed by slavery; freedom is prior to

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[503] Zizek, *Absolute Recoil*.

slavery, not after it. You are a slave because you are free; freedom is precisely what mobilises you as a slave – it is the very death. However, until you are enslaved it is impossible, or difficult, to see this freedom; it is the reason you become enslaved; thus it is the negative, the wound.

Zizek takes the stalemate of the two warrior heroes of simple resignation to signify the basis of subjectivity even if it is out of laziness, boredom, depression or melancholy - acedia. He asks, is it not true that a truly moral or ethical act – self-restraint, self-control or the cop who is doing the job of controlling traffic or chasing criminals – is one that is often seen as boring? Is it not true that the criminal, whose life is based on living on the edge of risk, adventure and discovery, is often portrayed as interesting? A truly post-Hegelian position would be that the interesting person today is the one who does the boring moral work of preserving order on the highways of the big city traffic or who is not getting bored in constantly chasing the criminals who are daily mugging poor people.

In the previous chapter we demonstrated how Maldonado-Torres' assessment of Hegel puts self-possession at the centre of the idea of recognition. In confrontation with death, the Hegelian subject comes into certainty of consciousness by possessing themselves; recognition is about affirming the other as possessing themselves. Maldonado-Torres then shows how Fanon exposed the limits of this logic in the colonial context and thus introduces the "self as gift" or as giving to the other; a selfhood that is about living for the other, where we recognise each other as those who not only possess ourselves, but are open to receive others as gifts for ourselves. This critique allows us to imagine a new practice of the self which is central to decolonisation or liberation: to imagine a moral subject of liberation struggle[504]. However, we are still left with the task of explaining human freedom: what is human freedom?

Here, we may have reached the full lesson of the miracle, of how to make sense of South Africa's transition or liberation as a miracle; there was no better demonstration of freedom in 1994 than arriving at the question, "What is the point of violence? Of civil war, racial war, or absolute violence?" Yes, Chris Hani is dead, but so are many in Boipatong; the right-wingers killed them too, so, what is the point of revenge? Did we not also kill them in Mmabatho too? Yes, those unruly white AWB right wingers? And then what?"505

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[504] See chapter 5 or Maldonado-Torres *„Against War*, (Chapter 4)

505 For a better detail on the discussion of the transition see Max du Preez, "TURNING POINTS BOOK 6 Chapter 2 - Explaining the Miracle," accessed January 15, 2017, http://v1.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/onlinebooks/turningpoints/bk6/chapter2.htm.

What was truly not foreseeable, what was truly uncertain and unknown was precisely what would happen if we simply throw our guns into the sea as a way to inaugurate a democratic future. In a way, here, blacks opened the future; it became what it is supposed to be – unknown and thus an adventure to embark on. It was not an act of cowardice, neither was it an act of a free gift which Fanon was worried about. Even General Viljoen conceded after mobilising in excess of 6 000 right wing Afrikaners to oppose the transition with armed violence. He too, like Mangosuthu Buthelezi, registered a political party and participated in democratic elections.[506]

This elucidates Fanon's insistence about grounding our conception of freedom on the idea of the future as a new or unknown time to come; we could also use Nietzsche's insight about freedom to further demonstrate this. Nietzsche's interest is to base or found a new notion of freedom, of human freedom whose premise is not a "free from", but a "free for". In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* he asks:

> Do you call yourself free? I want to hear your ruling idea, and not that you have escaped from a yoke. Are you such a man as ought to escape a yoke? There are many who threw their final worth when they threw off their bondage. Free from what? Zarathustra does not care about that! But your eye should clearly tell me: free for what?[507]

And so, if we return to Mbembe, we might have to reformulate the despondent questions that create that apocalyptic dusk when thinking about the postcolony. In our work therefore, our point of departure has been to find a way of affirming freedom, human freedom founded on what it is for, as opposed to what it is not, or what it is from. We therefore part ways with Mbembe in that we want to ask if critique is able to bestow new tools of self-making in Africa, as opposed to only assessing what modes of self-writing have been or are there. This is in that mode of self-arrogation of theorists and activists who dared to dream, or create; and without dreaming even Mbembe himself has nothing to critique – he relies on others' inventions or innovations in order to then arrive at doing theory. But the point is both to critique and create as a way of doing theory. Creating whilst admitting that it comes with the risk of both self-critique and critique from others, or worse, a failure. Without creating or innovating, Mbembe is susceptible to being complicit with the colonial logic itself.

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[506] Ibid.

[507] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 89.

In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche says, "the free man is a worrier - how is freedom measured in individuals as well as in nations? According to the resistance which has to be overcome, according to the pains which it costs to remain uppermost."[508] This, as Wendy Brown explains, is about a practice and not a state. She argues:

> …institutionalised, freedom arrayed against a particular image of unfreedom sustains that image, which dominates political life with its spectre long after it has been vanquished and preempts appreciation of new dangers to freedom posed by institutions designed to hold the past in check. Yet the very institutions that are erected to vanquish the historical threat also recuperate it as a form of political anxiety.[509]

African nationalism, as a ruling idea, has already been challenged by Fanon in that it is unable to recreate life because of many limitations in how it imagines identity, economy and culture. In fact, he properly demonstrates that its lack of creativity in imagining a new future is based on the pathological desire to want to be Europe or travel to a past and return to some utopian idea of what Africa truly is and was before colonisation. Based on identities of injury manufactured by past oppressive regimes, freedom will merely be about repeating them over and over again. This is because if freedom is made in the image of what it is free from, then it will stagnate in the tower of this past. However, we do not want to end here with the idea of freedom being about "being for" as opposed to "being from".

With Black youth politics we learn that politics in the colony is a war against time, and it is not possible to return to an African past because in it we cannot even begin to think of "youth" due to the gerontocracies of its systems of rule which still find expression to this day both in the modern state as well as in the pan-African movements. Freedom rejects institutions: once black emancipation is relegated to institutions, being black as being nothing becomes trapped in them; there blacks appear mute, silent or in the rigour of Mbembe's African modes of self-writing, we engage in different forms of rendering our claims mute, or into nothing, into more death. To insist on death as redemption is also to insist on muting/silencing blacks and their self-writings and subjectivities.

To put time on the move, critique must also live on the critical picket lines of freedom fighters; it is here that we ought to assess creative modes of self-making and the social practices they inspire. The

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[508] Friedrich Nietzsche and Tracy Strong, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Richard Polt (Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), 71.

[509] Wendy Brown, *States of Injury* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995).

black youth political subject, read with the seriousness of this question, inspired disruptions that allowed time to move, and to move into a future - into the production of the miracle transition. They allow us to appreciate freedom as that which we cannot quantify, measure or fully know such that we can say it has attained "certainty of itself". In many ways the history of black youth politics in this country is a history of refusing to be quarantined into the category of "youth". We see these activists speak for the condition of black people as a whole and do so whilst insisting on imagining a future and doing this as part of doing freedom – of being human. Permanent juniority, as a trapping of time and as a condition of colonial modernity, had been challenged by those who are its subjects of entrapment, the black youth.

What therefore defines being human is the subjective gap of the unknown; that human reaction cannot be preempted or conceived scientifically as though in a science lab. You can never truly know what step the human will take or what reaction they will give; what makes them human is precisely this uncertainty about them. This is why they are oppressed; it is what makes them targets of oppression. Death or absolute violence are only one way of revealing freedom, which already exists; other ways may be boredom, laziness or even acedia.

This is by way of fanning hope in the past, articulating it as the present it truly was, as that time of now in which the human spirit flashed. It is by way of fidelity to what Walter Benjamin said in his timeless work on history: "only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins."[510] Human freedom revealed itself in 1994, it chose the unknown and took for itself the voyage into a time of the future, that unknown next step for which there was no preconceived script or map.

Final Note

In the final analysis, the examination of black youth politics has elucidated that the death existence imposed by late colonial rule had not succeeded in eclipsing what is most human in blacks. This means we will now have to work out a new metaphysics of being that is grounded on freedom as precisely that which is unknowable, unmeasurable, and unquantifiable about the human. We have to imagine a new way of understanding being that does not have to arrive at "certainty" or "truth of the subject". Rather, that the really truthful way of perceiving the human is as a mystery for whom freedom is not about escaping from a bondage, or a trial by death. That in fact, even death

[510] Benjamine, Illuminations (London; The Bodley Head, 2015) 247 (his emphasis)

forms of existence fail to eclipse the human. They may eclipse reason in the human or rationality, they may even refuse reason in the human, but that is not the only way of being, the finality of being.

In the colony we must contend with the idea that being is best expressed by burning the midnight oil with a proposition about tomorrow, about the future as uncertain. Once told about a future, the human spirit stretches forth, and makes an advance. This spirit has reason, but it is not only reason; it is precisely that – a spectre, a ghost beyond reason, that which is not knowable through human reason, that which will always exposes our ignorance about human nature – the miracle or mystery.

Mbembe does not make a proposition about a future; he does not create a new way of imagining identity, hanging it on a proposition about the future. He therefore cannot see anything, anticipate anything, or even advance anything, except a return to the past – to death, to judgement. The next task in postcolonial studies is therefore in creating a metaphysics for this new proposition, the idea to which the human spirit must fix its eyes, wiping all sleep from them and launch forth. To think through about a world which accepts humanity as simply a wonder, a mystery, a miracle! Who really, could cause death to a miracle? Is it not a miracle itself that death exists? So back to our question: when blacks have been treated in the way we have observed under colonisation – as permanent juniors (objects, dwelling close to death), can we say they are still human? This is the same question as asking, are they free? The answer at this stage is obvious; it is a definitive and an uncompromising "yes".

Or even more than that, if the question is, is there a difference between apartheid and what comes after? The answer is even if what comes after would in the long run return to apartheid itself or its different mutations, the answer still is, at the transition, that yes, something definitively different came, a different *miracle* which exposed the ignorance of human nature which western epistemic traditions depend on to do colonisation. This fact, that what is human about humanity is their being a mystery to humanity, must be the starting point for all attempts that follow henceforth in building a new world that can be truly called a human world. *Sela*[511]!

Postscript

[511] I use Sela to mean pause and think of that. I take this from Psalms in the Bible, which in the Amplified Bible is translated as such – "pause and think of that."

There is no pretension that what I have said in this treatise is anything new; this has been an attempt to say something that has already been said. In the words of T.S. Eliot, it was;

> "trying to learn to use words, and every attempt is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure because one has only learnt to get the better of words for the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which one is no longer disposed to say it. And each venture is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate with shabby equipment always deteriorating in the general mess of imprecision of feeling, undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer, by strength and submission, has already been discovered once or twice, or several times, by men (and women) whom one cannot hope to emulate - but there is no competition - there is only the fight to recover what has been lost and found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions that seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss. For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business"[512] *Sela*!

The whole work has been about the human spirit as a mystery we cannot claim certainty of. Thus, I too do not claim its certainly, only an attempt with multiple failures to articulate a flashing moment in the struggle to be truly human.

[512] Eliot, *Four Quartets: East Cooker* (London; Faber and Faber, Mcmxliv), 21-2

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