

Necroaesthetics: Essays on Apartheid, Documentary Film and the Black Filmic Image



A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg.

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Declaration

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination or to any other university.

S.T

For

Kgauhelo Benedict Motsoane

Bokang Thapelo Motsoane

Owethu Mdlalose

Tshimologo Zanoluhle Mdlalose

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Abstract

This PhD dissertation is an attempt at an examination of the documentary film practice of a set of filmmakers known for their ‘oppositional’ films between 1976 and 1994 – in hindsight described as the *anti-Apartheid documentary film movement*. Through this the dissertation (hopes to) presents and archives the past and present of South African history through the study of one of its cinematic outputs. Although engaging the history of the documentary film in South Africa, this dissertation is not intended to contribute to documentary historiography per se. The objective is to engage the ontological premise upon which such a historiography is premised by rearticulating and reframing many of the theories and historiography to give insights to the problems in documentary film, especially as it concerns the Black.

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Prologue

Consent not to be a single being¹

I first came inside the University of the Witwatersrand in 2013 while I was moonlighting as a debate coach in Katlehong. Some of the schools I was involved with were invited to participate in a debating tournament hosted by the Wits Debating Union and the Gauteng Debating League. The event was hosted inside the towering gates of the university. I had never stepped inside the gates until then. I was equally intimidated and fascinated with the university that I later came back alone a couple of months later to apply to study the following year.

In first year – after trying to figure out what my major should be, I eventually settled on sociology (and philosophy). In the first semester of sociology (introduction to sociology) we were taught about Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber – the holy trinity of the discipline. These three White men and their work were/are considered classics and their studies *the canon* of the discipline – from which the standard and general criteria is derived. I wanted to be at the university. I chose to be there. However the place felt foreign and alienating, notwithstanding the majority Black student population. While I was in second year, towards the end of the second semester, Rhodes Must Fall/ Fees Must Fall happened. “Shit politics and the embrace of the savagery”, as Athi Mongezeleli Joja named it in an interview I did with him in 2018. Although the concerns the students were raising were not new, the much militant protests took the university by surprise. The students platformed dissent, and in many ways that christened the type of politics and theorisation (at least with me) the university (or if not, the Black student in the university) should be pre-occupied with; shit politics and the embrace of the savagery.

Sociology as a discipline is founded on what Edward Royce calls “the modern condition”¹. As western Europe was going through a precipitate transformation in the mid-19th century and early 20th century, sociology named and theorised this condition. Like a *true* discipline of the social sciences and the Humanities possessed with the ethic of knowledge and need to explain,

¹ I borrow this from Fred Moten. I like the idea of consenting not to be a single Being. To fight against the ideas and the desire to be single, in a world of other single people. Moten writes: “my students wanted to know something more about what it means to have been sent, as Glissant says, (Lorna Goodison says to have been sent by history) “to consent not to be a single being.” What does it mean to have been sent to give yourself away?” (“to consent not to be a single being”. 2010. Poetry Foundation).

sociology – as a practice born out of the transformation of the social changes in Europe/ or better, as an authority or regulation that directs/ or re-directs and maintains an order – is pervaded with the reification idea of universality. And, like a *true* discipline that comes from/out of the West, sociology rather than name and theorise (social change in) Africa, occidentalises and invisibilises knowledge and explanations that come from/out of Africa. The Rhodes Must Fall/ Fees Must Fall moment was a challenge to this Orientalist bias in the university. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* remind us that:

It cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment².

I laboured with this idea of the university and refuge. When I entered the high gates of the university in 2013, I could sense that perhaps this place would be able to provide shelter from the condition of being marked and pursued, although I did not – yet – have a language to name this circumstance. I was running from something and I did not know that I was running and from what. I was born running and I assumed that that is how things are for everyone. Imagine the disorientation in my eyes when everyone inside the high gates was standing still. What was it about this place that made everyone inside its high walls so at rest? The unmoving in their bodies (unlike me) was a mystification that stayed with me. Were the high walls guarding this secret? What was the secret anyway? I did not know it, but the people inside the walls knew it. I could see it in their bodies. So, I had to come back to this place to find out for myself. By the end of my first year – or soon after arriving – I knew the secret. The university guards it well.

This place might be a place of refuge. A place to rest one's head, if only for a moment, from the hunt. I entered the high walls to realise that, fuck it! I am a Black man in a White world. I, to borrow from Moten and Harney, do “not possess the kind of agency that can hold the regulatory forces of subjecthood”³. I am a marked man. This is a place for refugees. A place for fugitives. Nonetheless, the place of refuge is not a place of enlightenment, as we are reminded by Moten and Harney, and as the Rhodes Must Fall/ Fees Must Fall moment instigated. Additionally – and in light of this – Moten and Harney argue that:

In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of – this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university⁴.

I want to speak about social theory (about “the modern condition”) from the margins of history and from those who do “not possess the kind of agency that can hold the regulatory forces of subjecthood” and thus could not be canonised. But, I do not know if I can. I do not know if I want to. I do not know if it is necessary. W.E.B. Du Bois and Anna Julia Cooper. I have a date with you. I will somehow find the words and the vitality to speak about you. This is not the end. I now have the opportunity to stand in front of the lecture halls of the university. I will honour the vow of the Rhodes Must Fall/ Fees Must Fall moment and be sure to always go “with hands full into the underground of the university, into the Undercommons”. Moten and Harney prompt us to see that the undercommons is “the only possible act”. In their words they write that:

In that undercommons of the university one can see that it is not a matter of teaching versus research or even the beyond of teaching versus the individualisation of research. To enter this space is to inhabit the ruptural and enraptured disclosure of the commons that fugitive enlightenment enacts, the criminal, matricidal, queer, in the cistern, on the stroll of the stolen life, the life stolen by enlightenment and stolen back, where the commons give refuge, where the refuge gives commons. What the beyond of teaching is really about is not finishing oneself, not passing, not completing; it’s about allowing subjectivity to be unlawfully overcome by others, a radical passion and passivity such that one becomes unfit for subjection, because one does not possess the kind of agency that can hold the regulatory forces of subjecthood, and one cannot initiate the auto–interpellative torque that biopower subjection requires and rewards. It is not so much the teaching as it is the prophecy in the organization of the act of teaching. The prophecy that predicts its own organization and has therefore passed, as commons, and the prophecy that exceeds its own organization and therefore as yet can only be organized. Against the prophetic organization of the undercommons is arrayed its own deadening labor for the university, and beyond that, the negligence of professionalization, and the professionalization of the critical academic. The undercommons is therefore always an unsafe neighborhood⁵.

In conclusion:

Here is (an ode) to shit politics and the embrace of the savagery².

² But what does shit politics really mean? A beautiful band slogan but rather nebulous. Does it perhaps mean to transcend modernity? To destroy the totalizing order and character of time and history itself; to end the world as we know it? To think/imagine (and perform) about other forms of being in the world? To invent and restructure the world differently? I suspect that all these holds true. Shit politics is contemptible and often arouses scorn, which I envisage will be the position of those who will read this document. Profanity was/is the world's structuring operative and so it is the same profanity and savagery that must be our strategic field and praxis.

Chapter 1

Introduction

As I write this introduction to the thesis, I have so much anxiety that I may not be equal to the task to write on South Africa, Apartheid and anti-Blackness. Perhaps that is the way for every student? I do not know. However be that as it may, let it be observed that with this text and within the minimum time possible, this Black boy tried to contribute something to knowledge in his own small way. I also write and ‘live in the knowledge that the wake has positioned me as a no-citizen’ (after Christina Sharpe¹), that the world depends and demand my death for its survival. These essays are my reflections. My attempt at “wake work”³.

Necroaesthetics. Two words, necro and aesthetics. But why Necro-Aesthetics? The element of speech, *necro*, comes from the Greek word *νεκρο* (nekro). It is the incorporating form of *νεκρός* (nekrós) meaning dead body or death. The adjective *aesthetic* also comes from Greek, and it is derived from *αἰσθητικός* (aisthētikós) which relates to the sensory perceptions. German thinkers used the word to theorize about ‘the beautiful.’ In this sense, and for our purpose, aesthetics is a theory (and theorization on/) of beauty. Reading this, I assume, that it can be posited what I am gesturing towards here; a postulation on the value (and non-value/ or lack thereof) of substances. Necro here as a prefix serves to point towards a type of beauty (or non-beauty) that exists in the negative or as a dead tissue/corpse. I take after Achille Mbembe who argues in his essay *Necropolitics* “that contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death”² create “new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*”³. Necroaesthetics then properly conveys and translates to the aesthetics of death; those forms of ~~beauty~~ subjugated to the power of death.

This thesis is a movement of time and thought. Many of the ideas in these papers were first explored earlier in my studies. For example, in my honours year paper titled *Prophets of Doom: Black Alienation and Psychic Dispossession. A Study of Black Life – Post 1994*, I was interested

³ Sharpe (2016. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Page, 22) writes that wake woke is the proposition/hope that “we might continue to imagine new ways to live in the wake of slavery, in slavery’s afterlives, to survive (and more) in the afterlife of property.” She argues that “If we are lucky, the knowledge of this positioning avails us particular ways of re/seeing, re/inhabiting, and re/imagining the world. And we might use these ways of being in the wake in our responses to terror and the varied and various ways that our Black lives are lived under occupation”.

in understanding the collective unconscious of Black people living in South Africa post 1994 and using a psychoanalytic interpretation. I took after Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* as my starting point and as a basis for discussion in his argument that the Black is a neurotic Subject. I asked, could the recent and ongoing events in the townships of South Africa have more to do with the hidden and repressed feelings and desires of Black people living in this country post 1994? Does the post 1994 political dispensation reproduce the same racial divisions that were characteristic prior 1994 (“Apartheid”)? After toiling and wrestling with this “neurotic Subject”, at the end of the paper I then concluded that “a psychoanalytic reading of these problems is important, but I do not think that it is enough”. I carried this problem of the limits of the psychoanalytic reading into my Masters project and I explored and experimented with the form and void (if that was the case) of Blackness by asking, ‘can there ever be a space for radical Black performativity, by which I mean, a type of Black performance that is a challenge to, and not just a reiteration of (including in others’ enjoyment of it) the anti-Blackness of the world?’⁴ I put forward this question through ‘Kwaito: a uniquely South African post 1994 musical and cultural phenomenon that is specifically born from the experiences of township life and of Blackness in South Africa’. It could be contended that my Masters essay (both the paper and the compositional film essay) was an attempt to advance a theory of aesthetics. The concluding line from my Masters essay reads: “Kwaito then in a way is a work of understanding... a fugitive sonic meditation of the fact of Blackness. A radical critique of everyday ‘privatised’ Black South African life”⁴.

In this dissertation, I do not proffer a theory of aesthetics, at least I try not to. This thesis rearticulates and reframes many of the theories to give insights to the problems in documentary film, especially as it concerns the Black.

This PhD dissertation is an attempt at an examination of the documentary film practice of a set of filmmakers known for their ‘oppositional’ films between 1976 and 1994. In hindsight, these filmmakers are described as *the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement*. This ‘movement’ produced anti-Apartheid documentary films and worked at representing the realities of South Africa under Apartheid. So, then this project is a study of selected anti-Apartheid documentary films and filmmakers. Through this I hope to show and archive the past and present of South African history through the study of one of its cinematic outputs. By choosing to focus on this

⁴ The question is stated as it is written on my Masters paper.

period and the anti-Apartheid film movement, I believe is a fertile ground for theorization and historicization. I have faith that this project will help expand the vocabulary of documentary film and theory, particularly in South Africa. Having said this, although engaging the history of the documentary film in South Africa, this thesis is not intended to contribute to documentary historiography per se. My objective is to engage the ontological premise upon which such a historiography is premised.

Research questions

Are (moving) images free of deceit and unjustifiability/ illegitimacy? Does the structure of the camera (read as an authoritative construction) – as it moves and freezes moments in time – maintain people's faculties and sovereignty? Is it ever possible to document and archive a history of Black people using the structure of the camera? It has been argued that Black people's identities are constituted by an awareness and a collective memory of domination, if so, is it possible to represent Blacks in the positive under this structure? Or does the camera append (and reinscribe) violence on Black people? Lastly, do the films made by Black anti-Apartheid documentary filmmakers escape the legacy of Western filmic racism? Or, in their otherwise projection as 'oppositional films', are they ultimately dependent on the very cinema they are opposing?

II.

This study looks at the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement as a way of understanding and engaging with Black existence in the world. What I do in many pages of this thesis may seem like a trivial description of events that should not concern this dissertation. Granted. However I guarantee that it is an assembly towards something. In chapter 2 I track the history and the postulation of the genre of the documentary film. How is it defined? Who are the Subjects of the documentary film? Who does it represent and who are its representatives? What are the types of subject matter the documentary film is concerned with? Our frame of reference is Africa here. I borrow from poststructuralism an inquiry to/on how – to trace the genealogy of the concept of the Subject – what others may call "paranoid reading" – by showing its history and how Beings are called into subjectivity in modernity. In chapter 3 I look at the documentary film and the archive. I discuss the documentary film in relation to the archive; how it constructs and maintains power/ how it is constructed and used to maintain power – to validate historical

narratives and maintain myths – especially in our context of “post–Apartheid” South Africa. I also discuss the archive in relation to Blacks. I ask, can the Black figure surmise as a source of the record? Can the Black be archived? Is the Black fit to be ‘archivable’? And, is the Black a worthy source to be a status of history? In chapter 4 I discuss the theoretical deliberations on the figure of the Black in relation to the archive and the documentary film. I argue that the documentary film is haunted by the memory of dispossession and that we need to examine its exclusion/ or supposed inclusion of the Black into its filmic framework. This chapter introduces the analytical framework for this thesis, that is, Afropessimism, to argue that the documentary film is, to quote Wilderson, “imbricated in the syntax and morphology of structural violence”⁵. The strategy I take in this chapter is to look at and discuss critiques of Afropessimism’s “supposed erasure” of the Black South African lived experience and specificities before attempting an exegesis of the framework. In chapter 5 I write about Black anti–Apartheid filmmakers; some of the Black filmmakers who operated as anti–Apartheid documentary filmmakers. I discuss the films they produced and the types of demands the films are making. I wanted to name these Black filmmakers and not repeat the colonial categorisation of un–naming Black artists, thereby only crediting them as anonymous Subjects. In chapter 6 I discuss the documentary film and its fulfilment of the desire of the world for the compulsive need to perform Black death for its subsistence and functioning. In the last chapter of the thesis, chapter 7, I discuss the post–Apartheid documentary film practice of South Africa. I ask, does South Africa have an authentic post–Apartheid Black filmmaker/industry? If it does, what does it look like and what are the questions that preoccupy this industry? I also look at documentary filmmaking in the age of the internet and social media. Does it present new and revolutionary filmic possibilities or does it mirror (and/ or naturalize) capitalist and colonial logics of the market economy?

III.

This thesis is in no way a critique. Unlike others, I understand my position in the world as a Black body. I do not try or even pretend to have relationality with the world. I do not think that critique is a register that is available to Blacks. However, for the limits of language and the unavailability (or perhaps my lack of grasp of the English language?) of a grammar to explain, we might use the concept’s available to us. So, this is merely a commentary.

On Methods

This thesis is carried through by the structural grammar that Afropessimism advances. I think through many writers, theorists and practitioners. Many of whom do not identify with/as Afropessimists – and some even being critical of Afropessimism. Frank Wilderson explains that reading and thinking with/through these people:

And connecting the dots at the level of shared assumptions, rather than the content of their work or their prescriptive gestures (if any), it becomes clear that though their work holds the intellectual protocols of unconscious identification accountable to structural positionality, it does so in a way that enriches, rather than impoverishes, how we are able to theorize unconscious identification⁶.

For example, of the critics of Afropessimism (that we use to advance our argument) Zakiyyah Jackson explains that:

It is not that critics such as Gordon simply sought admission into the normative category of “the human”; rather, they attempted to transform the category from within, and in fact they hoped to effect a greater understanding and appreciation of the transformative potential of Africana thought more generally. The hope was not that black people would gain admittance into the fraternity of Man — the aim was to displace the order of Man altogether. Thus, what they aspired to achieve was not the extension of liberal humanism to those enslaved and colonized, but rather a transformation within humanism⁷.

I think that from this we can see that Afropessimism shares some intellectual identifications with some of its critics, even though several of them identify themselves as Black Humanists.

Jared Sexton asks in *The Social Life of Social Death*:

To that end, a few opening questions: What is the nature of a form of being that presents a problem for the thought of being itself? More precisely, what is the nature of a human being whose human being is put into question radically and by definition, a human being whose being human raises the question of being human at all? Or, rather, whose being is the generative force, historic occasion, and essential by product of the question of human being in general? How might it be thought that there exists a being about which the question of its particular being is the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility for any thought about being

whatsoever? What can be said about such a being, and how, if at stake in the question is the very possibility of human being and perhaps even possibility as such? What is the being of a problem?⁸

This thesis, in part, (hopes to) comments in response to these questions.

According to Calvin Warren “we have invested unbelievable value in the human — it constitutes the highest value in the world. And for this reason, we are terrified of letting go of it because we believe this value will protect us against antiblackness (it will not)”⁹. The many projects that are anti-Apartheid – and by extension anti-Black violence, negate this movement by affirming Black lives, Afropessimism challenges this gesture.

Students fluent in literary or film criticism might find this thesis disappointing or lacking in that the thesis does not conform to the norms of the genre. Similarly, students in the social sciences might adjoin that the paper does not follow the dictates of the discipline. I acknowledge my *deficits* – after all, I remain a student with a deep desire to learn. This is merely a work in progress – “the final document” but not my final thinking. I will continue to attend to the ideas in this paper: reading them again, re-writing them, and hopefully making them better.

There will perhaps be a reservation on the structural grammar of Afropessimism and its supposed Americanist idiom, in other words, the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade. Given more time, I would have dedicate more energy in the South African(ist) idiom of the theory and practice of Slavery. I take the paucity on the nature of enslaving in South Africa, especially – and more generally, by the British empire⁵, not as an attempt to herald the American/ and or the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade and its ensuing specificities. I recognise and take seriously the historiography of Slavery – especially, as it pertains to South Africa. In contrast to/with other colonies – specifically sub-Saharan countries, South Africa was an importing site/country of Slaves from these colonies/countries, but also from the rest of the world. In the wake of this submission (*not resignation*) my reflections going forward will be preoccupied by this aspect of South African Slavery. Having said this, this does not necessarily make the restrained

⁵ Which is not to suggest that the British were the only – or the first, to enslave and colonize South Africa, but that the British empire (at least to my knowledge) had a sustained practice and system of ideas about enslaving and colonizing in South Africa.

parlance inoperative and invalid. Irrespective of, South Africa persists as a zone of non-Being. There are parallels to Black subjectivity in the South African context and the African diaspora at large. Africa constitutes ontological lack. It is the negative without a recourse to Being. Africans the world over are excluded from Humanity. Africa is always already positioned as a site of Slavery – and by extension, Africans always already positioned as Slaves. Whether some of us went through the middle passage or not, we were/are already not recognized and incorporated into the community of Humans who share an ontological relation.

This thesis, to some extent, is a qualitative study focusing on textual material and its meaning. Having said that, I need to iron out a few tensions here before moving forward. Although a qualitative methodological approach is instrumental, I only use it here as a ‘broad approach’ that can, hopefully, be able to be stretched to accommodate other more “semiotic approaches” in it. The theoretical proposition that drives the inquiry of this project – that is Afropessimism, is (somewhat) in conflict with a qualitative methodological approach.

Wilderson argues that this methodological approach – entrenched in the social sciences – mystifies rather than clarifies. He argues that this methodological approach forces us to appeal to “facts”. He writes that this approach, where ‘subjective dispossession’ is reached through the process of those “who sell labor power and those who acquire it”¹⁰ is limited when it comes to Blacks because this “empirical markers of stasis and change”¹¹ cannot articulate the experiences/ or rather, the ontological position of the Slave. For Wilderson, Black people are outside of the relationality that a social sciences approach proposes. Therefore, if then this approach is limited, then it is required of us to stretch it to accommodate the unspeakability of Blackness, if ever it can be.

Chapter 2

History of the Genre

Michel Foucault writes that power is everywhere, diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and ‘regimes of truth’¹. Foucault uses the word power interchangeably with knowledge – or rather that knowledge and power are intimately bound up [“power/knowledge”], to signal that through accepted forms of truths, power is constituted. Foucault writes that:

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.²

The documentary film is possessed with this ethic of knowledge – to distinguish between truth and falsity, between fiction and non-fiction. This is also seen historically with the birth of the genre, where filmmaking functioned as a representational “practice in which the culture of the non-Westernized ‘Other’ has been treated as scientific datum subjected to the gaze of Western ethnographic science”³, to cite Keith Beattie. However, this is not to say that the documentary film is the gospel – that is it foolproof, the truth. Not at all. Possession does not mean verity, only that it is consumed with the principal logic and need to explain. John Grierson⁴, who is read as a seminal figure about documentary film in academia, writes that the documentary film has the ability to produce a visual document by means of the creative treatment of actuality, which does not in effect constitute truth but rather has to undergo a process of creative modification in order to reveal its truth. So, then this treatment of the material differentiates the documentary film from the fiction film. Emphasis is given on the ‘power’ of the film to capture reality. Trinh T. Minh-Ha in *Documentary Is/Not a Name*⁵ comments that this reality in documentary film is always “out there” for us “in here”. Dziga Vertov’s *Kino-Eye*⁶ is much closer to Grierson in terms of his articulation of film, even though Vertov was much more interested in the post revolution project. For Vertov the documentary film needs to ‘make visible the invisible, the obscure clear, the hidden obvious, the disguised exposed’ through what he called ‘the factory of facts’.

Defining documentary film this way does not come without any critique. For instance, Carl Plantinga argues that documentaries, in effect, make “direct assertions and implications about the actual world” he continues to note on fiction film that they create “an imaginary world, makes assertions about the actual world only indirectly, via metaphor or analogy”⁷. Here Plantinga makes a clear distinction between the two genres. Beattie writes that “documentary is predicated on a series of refusals”⁸. While Bill Nichols, I think, one of the most familiar and most widely cited film theorists defines the documentary film as a process by which “pleasure and power, ideologies and utopias, subjects and subjectivities receive tangible representation”⁹. Here Nichols is attempting to bring the historical world and the supposed power of the camera to capture the world as is. The argument is that ‘the historical world is separate from discourse but that it gains its meaning only through discourse’.

Bruzzi Stella holds that “documentaries are performative acts, inherently fluid and unstable and informed by issues of performance and performativity”¹⁰. The South African film theorists Keyan G. Tomaselli and Maureen Eke in *Film and human rights: Whose rights, whose interpretations, what consequences?* put it like this: “Films are not transparent windows to the world, projecting a raw reality and ultimate truth onto the screen. Instead, they are technologically constructed and manipulated by textual codes – ways of photographing and joining pictures and scenes – and are thus merely interpretations of situations often colored by the filmmakers' own ideological positions”¹¹. I do not necessarily disagree with this. Only that it is my belief that the documentary film has shaped and created meaning systems that have gained the status and currency of “truth”, however which is not to say that it is the truth – but that at a principal level the documentary film sees itself as having a relationship with reality and containing truth claims.

So, what are the rules that govern the structure of documentary film as distinct from fiction film? I think, for the documentary film, the laws of ‘naturalness’ are deemed adequate, if not mandatory, to give credence to truth. So then any obvious use of falsifications to build a narrative arc are omitted. These ‘falsifications’ include, the fabrication of the context of the film – so then the documentary film cannot distort the place of the shooting of the documentary film, the background information that sets the setting of the documentary film, such as the subjects in the documentary film, and mainly the time/period the documentary film is set in. Unlike the narrative arc of the fiction film where the filmmaker is at liberty to invent a story

for dramatic and entertainment purposes – from characters, the setting, circumstances and the time period, the documentary film tries to be as organic and unblemished by the imaginary. Trinh T. Minh-Ha writes that “in a world of reification, truth is widely equated with fact, any explicit use of the magic, poetic, or irrational qualities specific to the film medium itself would have to be excluded a priori as nonfactual.” She continues to write that “the question is not so much one of sorting out-illusory as this may be-what is inherently factual from what is not in a body of pre-existing filmic techniques, as it is one of abiding by the laws of naturalism in film”¹².

In the production of factuality in the documentary film, the altering of reality is a violation of the truth or honesty that the documentary film projects itself to be. This extends to film techniques that endeavour to build a cohesive film narrative. For example, the speed at which the documentary film is shot at, the type of camera, the position and style the camera is held, the sound, and how the film is cut/edited. However, Alexander Kluge reminds us that the documentary film is:

Shot with three cameras: 1) the camera in the technical sense; 2) the filmmaker's mind; and 3) the generic patterns of the documentary film, which are founded on the expectations of the audience that patronizes it. For this reason one cannot simply say that the documentary film portrays facts. It photographs isolated facts and assembles from them a coherent set of facts according to three divergent schemata. All remaining possible facts and factual contexts are excluded. The naive treatment of documentation therefore provides a unique opportunity to concoct fables. In and of itself, the documentary is no more realistic than the feature film¹³.

It is thus that I want to look at the documentary film as a discourse. For Foucault discourse is a “practice that systematically form the objects of which they speak”¹⁴. Chris Weedon – reading Foucault, notes that discourse is a “way of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern”¹⁵. So then, at any given historical moment, knowledge is socially shared by a body of people. The documentary film is a filmic social practice that arises out of and is ideologically shaped by relations of power struggles over power. It does not merely describe the social world but is also constituted by it by bringing phenomena into Being.

Once a Being has been elaborated by discourse it becomes difficult to articulate it as if it were not¹⁶.

The documentary film as a discourse cinematically frames a certain way of articulation⁶. Foucault speaks of statements as his object of his archaeological study that have functional use. He writes that:

In examining the statement what we have discovered is a *function* that has a bearing on groups of signs, which is identified neither with grammatical ‘acceptability’ nor with logical correctness, and which requires it to operate: *a referential* (which is not exactly a fact, a state of things, or even an object, but a principle of differentiation); *a subject* (not the speaking consciousness, nor the author of the formulation, but a position that may be filled in certain conditions by various individuals); *an associated field* (which is not the real context of the formulation, the situation in which it was articulated, but a domain of coexistence for other statements); *a materiality* (which is not only the substance or support of the articulation, but a status, rules of transcription, possibilities for use and re-use)¹⁷.

So then Foucault is concerned with statements by describing the circumstances that surround them within power structures, in essence the rules that bring them into Being, and which to some extent have autonomy. It is these statements that are the basis for thought and public norms. The documentary film is these statements. It is a ‘discussive formation’ that, to cite Foucault, is ‘the general enunciative system that governs a group of verbal performances’¹⁸. In a study on teenage motherhood Lessa Lara beautifully summarises discourse as a “systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs, and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak”¹⁹.

Subjects and Subject: The Filmic Subject of the Documentary Film

Who are the Subjects of the documentary film? Who does it represent and who are its representatives? What are the types of subject matter the documentary film is concerned with? I think to properly answer these questions we have to first think about who is behind the documentary camera, essentially, who is speaking? Since this study is interested in the

⁶ I would also like to add that I see the documentary film is a type of symbology that is a narrative and a literary technique that is a symbolic meaning system. I am thinking through Roland Barthes (in *Mythologies*, 1972) here and I hope that I will be able to make it clear in the pages of this thesis.

documentary film in Africa and South Africa in particular, I will only be speaking about who is behind the documentary film in Africa, who is speaking and about what.

Aboubakar Sidiki Sanogo, for the PhD thesis titled *The History of Documentary in Africa – the Colonial Era*²⁰, is the first scholar to attempt to write a comprehensive history of the documentary film on the continent of Africa, starting with the beginning of the cinema until the dawn of independence in the late 1950s in a systematic way. Whereas studies of film previously mention the continent it is however in passing, even though the continent was for many years an object of filming and spectatorship, both in the continent and internationally. The study is an archaeological look at the colonial period in the African continent mainly focusing on the British and French colonial empires. Sanogo's study seeks to look at the discourses and institutions deployed in the colonial era to frame Africans cinematically. He terms the period under discussion as the 'early and silent' cinema. This is so, as mentioned, the continent as only viewed as a site where nothing of value is produced. For Sanogo, the "aporia of this approach is to unwittingly exclude Africa from debates on early cinema, silent cinema, and sound cinema until the 1960s"²¹. Thus, his project is an attempt to un-invisibilize Africans and African cinema, covering roughly 65 years.

Sanogo's project is a qualitative historical study where he periodises cinema, that is non-fiction film, in the African continent. He starts on December 28, 1895, however, ironically, not in Africa but in Paris, France, with the screening of a film by the Lumière brothers, who also happen to be the inventors of the cinématographe (not of moving pictures per se but of a motion picture film camera). Within a year of this screening (and about 2 years since the invention of the cinématographe) the Lumière brothers reached the coast of Africa. In total the brothers made over 100 out of 1,425 films in and about Africa, with a considerable, almost exclusive, focus on Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. Sanogo states that "the Lumière production house can thus be considered the first to have consistently put Africa on cinematic screen and displayed it for the purpose of audiences in Europe and elsewhere. Algeria, which was the most filmed of all countries in Africa, was a French settlement colony just off the coast of Marseilles, whereas Egypt and Tunisia were part of the Mediterranean border of Europe"²². The brothers worked on the continent from 1896 to 1903.

The Lumière brothers, explains Sanogo, did not invent or reinvent modes of representation on the African continent and its people, they continued with the colonial discourse of representing

Black people and the continent of Africa in general as uncivilised and backward. Sanogo argues that they:

Make themselves complicit with a more general structure of feeling that accepts the idea that blackness can be represented in a derogatory manner. They offer a royal entry in the cinema of a socio-cultural practice to which the medium adds at least two dimensions: first, its ability to travel across borders contributes to the availability of these images globally. It also gives them a lifelikeness, which affords it an index of veracity in the eyes of unknowing spectators and enshrines it in the consciousness²³.

The Lumière brothers, as the early documentary filmmakers in the continent, through their films, created genres such as the minimal genre, the travelogue, and the official cinema.

Scherzer²⁴ writes that even though imperial expansion was obvious to the European ruling class, the working class however, needed some persuasion. Thus, cinema became a powerful tool to present the arguments for imperialism firsthand to the working class within the framework that would support colonial mission. So, the first colonial films depicted Africa as a dark and exotic, primitive and backward, heathen and a space of savage things in desperate need of western intervention. Of course, these films were building and operating within a bigger structure of colonialism, as Kristin Pichaske puts it in their PhD thesis titled *Colour Adjustment: Race and Representation in Post-Apartheid south African Documentary* that:

Placing the non-white body on display as an object of spectacle and/or study by the white, western world. Within the framework of this colonial gaze, the native was reduced to a racial type without a voice, cultural context or psychological complexity. Meanwhile, the spectator was placed in a clear position of superiority in this west/other encounter, which affirmed western civilisation as the standard against which other “exotic” cultures might be measures²⁵.

The British also made films that mimic the character and style of the Lumière brothers. According to Sanogo, in 1897, the Warwick Trading Company sent Edgar Hyman to the south of the continent, South Africa, to document life there. He shot many films, including, as Sagono explains, one of President Paul Kruger leaving his home for the Volkesraad in Pretoria.

In 1899 the descendants of the Dutch, German, and Huguenot, called the Boers, and the British went on a bloody war with each other for 3 years (1899 - 1902) over the control and influence of the country and its mineral resources. The war is famously known as the Anglo-Boer War. It is possible that the war was the first event to be filmed, however, as Sanogo shows in his notes that the “recent information from Guido Convents seems to indicate that the British war for the conquest of Sudan in 1897 was also filmed two years before the Anglo-Boer War. This may suggest that Sudan might be the location for the first filmed war in history”²⁶. This is debated and we will not enter into these arguments in this paper, however it is important to note that both these locations in the continent hold significance in the history of documentary filming in Africa. About the war, Sanogo writes that:

This war was arguably the very first filmed war in history, involved Britain, the most powerful colonial empire of the day... Once again, the Warwick Trading Co. was at the forefront of covering the war as Edgar Hyman and Joseph Rosenthal were specifically dispatched to South Africa for the occasion. They reportedly ‘filmed movements such as crossings of the Modder River (December 1899), and Vaal River (May 1900), the Boer surrender of Kroonstad, and the raising of British flags at Johannesburg and Pretoria (May – June 1900)’²⁷.

With all these films produced by the British, African people were structured out of the films, even though the war was taking place on their land, and a great many fought in the war, about 17 000 Africans died taking part in the war. “Thus”, argues Sanogo, “as early as the dawn of the twentieth century, the cinema participated in the work of erasure of memory, confining itself to the role of paean to the glory of Empire outside its borders”²⁸. Many films were made following this pattern, with the Warwick Trading Co shooting a lot of these early films.

The colonialists soon discovered that they could use this medium to further their colonial projects, thus a lot of early documentary cinema was used to lobby interests for the colonial project. Film about the Industrial achievement of the imperialists as well as the portrayal of Africans as uncivilised, animal like things. These narrative framing helped to give credibility and legitimise the colonial exploits of the continent and its people. “Documentary becomes a wing of imperial propaganda”²⁹. Other colonial empires, such as the French, also made films in and about the continent. For instance, the French empire lobbied by colonial filmmakers heavily funded colonial films. This move was to turn the ‘cinema into an auxiliary of colonialism’. Sanogo cites Albert Sarraut, the French Minister of the Colonies:

It is absolutely indispensable that a methodical, serious propaganda, constituted by the word, the image, the newspaper, the conference, the film, the exhibition, be able to influence the adult and the child in our country. We must improve and expand, in our elementary and high schools the highly sketchy teaching they receive on our history and the composition of our colonial domain. This teaching must be livelier, more expressive, more practical... [It is important] that the image and the film teach and entertain the French youth who knows nothing about the colonies³⁰.

Another writer – Peter Davis, puts it as follows:

For Africa as a whole, cinema has always been a powerful weapon deployed by the colonial nations to maintain their respective spheres of political and economic influence. History is a distorted and a western view of Africa continues to be transmitted back to the colonised, apart from the obvious monetary returns for the production companies themselves, the value western cinema imparts and the ideologies it legitimates are beneficial for western cultural, financial, and political hegemony³¹.

The colonial powers developed film schools to educate potential colonial filmmakers to help in the continuation of the cultural hegemony of the colonial empires. One of these schools was the *Institut des hautes études cinématographiques* (IDHEC) which was one of the first film schools established in the aftermath of World War 2. The school produced many film graduates, who would go on to help the colonial powers and some work to undermine the project and help in the fight against colonialism. The school ironically produced a few African film practitioners, of this, Paulin Soumanou Vieyra is perhaps its most famous one.

Many of the African filmmakers that would go on to undermine and oppose colonialism were self-taught or took little film education. Ousmane Sembène, regarded as an “Elder of Elders of African cinema” is one such. However, there are a few earlier African born film practitioners before Sembène. For example, Albert Samama Chikly, who is a contemporary of the Lumière brothers. Much, if not all, of Chikly’s work is unknown to us, however it is argued that he operated under the structure of the colonial documentary practices, much like his contemporaries. Chikly, like the Lumière brothers and operators, often did work for and with many of the colonial governments, for example, working as a camera operator in World War 1

with the French Service *Cinématographique et Photographique des Armées* where he filmed military action in Algeria.

Documentary Filmmaking in South Africa

According to Taryn da Canha in an MA dissertation titled *Redefining the Griot: A History of South African Documentary Film*³², documentary filmmaking in South African can be traced to the conservative newsreel *The African Mirror* starting in 1913. However, cinema in general, according to Pichaske³³ was introduced to South Africa in 1896, albeit to a white audience. Black people did not have the luxury of cinema. Only decades later through small community film programs supported by missionaries and philanthropists did Black people have access to cinema, however these films were heavily censored and produced by white people. Documentaries were never shown to Black audiences as the government feared the politicisation of this audience against its rule. *The African Mirror* was a property of the company the Africa Film Productions based in Johannesburg. The films of this production (The African Mirror) were screened every week before the starting of a movie at the cinema. Even though the films described themselves as presenting “life as it was”, according to da Canha, they were superficial portrayals primarily of the white South African society. Da canha writes that:

Before the introduction of television in South African in 1976, the African Mirror newsreel would be the prominent source of news items viewed by the South African - albeit mainly white South African - public. The stories it did tell of Black, Indian or Coloured communities were often either trivial in nature or showed a sanitized and patronizing view of political protests and uprisings. Although it did not necessarily support and advocate the policies of Apartheid after 1948 through the newsreel, it did little in the way of taking a stand against it³⁴.

The African Mirror worked until 1984 and throughout its life span catered for the white minority of South Africa.

As the fight against Apartheid becoming more militant with the injection of young people into the liberation movement in the 1950's so did the National Party's cinematic propaganda efforts. The 1950's with the Defiance Campaign (1951-1953) the formation of the Congress of the People and the adoption of *The Freedom Charter* in 1955. Da Canha writes how the state's

response through the Department of Information was to create films that will explain their racial policies and project themselves as “a powerful white South Africa dealing with a racial problem”³⁵. This state sponsored films were much similar to the films produced by the *African Mirror* though the content was different. Da Canha writes that “they were predominantly expository documentaries, which made use of an off-screen narrator to relate a story from a white point of view”³⁶. Films such as *John Citizen and the State*, *Where to from Here* and *Order out of Chaos* are examples of this⁷.

The 1960s however presented an ‘unprecedented’ rule by the national party government. The 1960s are times of the *Sharpeville Massacre* and the *State of Emergency*. These events and many others like it thrust South African into the international spotlight. These were followed by boycotts, sanctions and divestments. These effectively isolated South Africa in the global community, and this meant that South African filmmakers and cultural practitioners were thus divorced from global developments. This “effectively impeded the development of a film industry in that neither fiction nor documentary films could be distributed to countries overseas who supported the boycott, and in addition to the censorship laws in South Africa meant audiences were confined to view only what the State allowed them to see”³⁷ writes da Canha. The National Party governments response to the boycott, sanctions and divestment pulse of the international community was to establish a National Film Board in 1964 tasked with the cinematic production of Apartheid propaganda. Keyan Tomaselli in *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film* writes that “repression has to be legitimized in some way, and cinema has historically played an important role in presenting apartheid as a natural way of life”³⁸. The Film board was disbanded in 1979, largely due to the introduction of television in 1976.

Tomaselli – in the same book, studies how the National Party government controlled the South African cinema through state censorship and subsidy control. Tomaselli writes how Afrikaans language films were heavily subsidized by the state and this increased the languages socio economic importance. “The growth of Afrikaans, the most recent of world languages, was largely due to its promotion by the South African mass media: first print, then radio”³⁹ writes Tomaselli. The National Party government had a monopoly over the South African film industry, because of – as mentioned, state subsidy, and the financial control of film production,

⁷ All 3 films produced around 1955.

distribution and exhibition. “The Afrikaner insurance giant, SANLAM, bought out the 20th Century Fox interests [in the South African film industry], which gave them control of production, distribution and exhibition”⁴⁰, writes Tomaselli.

South African Anti-Apartheid Documentary Film and Video

According to Jacqueline Marie Maingard in a PhD titled *Strategies of Representation in South African Anti-Apartheid Documentary Film and Video from 1975 to 1995*⁴¹, the development of the South African anti-Apartheid documentary film and video can be traced back to the film *Come Back Africa* in 1959 and including a few documentary films that were created in the 1960’s. However, the creation of a movement that has come to be known as the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement has its roots in the 1970’s. Although, as Maingard points in her notes that this “movement “was not perceived or experienced as such at the time, this is only in hindsight. With the growing resistance against Apartheid, both international and locally, so did the cinematic resistance against Apartheid. This is also largely due to the introduction of television in 1976 in South African and as a result the lifting of the ban on video technology. This gave local filmmakers access to small format video cameras. Da Canha puts it as follows:

The progressive Anti-Apartheid film movement of the nineteen seventies and eighties emerged in reaction to the limited nature of early conservative filmmaking practices and an oppressive system of state-control of film and the media⁴².

These filmmakers against Apartheid are not a part of a homogenous film movement with shared values and methods. Da Canha states that “the ideological specifications that defined the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, were that films served the purpose of fighting an oppressive regime; to these ends, filmmakers of this movement were politically and ideologically united”⁴³. The late 1970’s saw a growing number of independent documentary filmmakers and organizations dedicated to the fight against Apartheid. These are the subjects of what constitute this anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, at least according to Maingard and da Canha⁸. Tomaselli loosely defines this moment in the history of South African anti-Apartheid cinema as oppositional to the dominant cinematic system of the time. He thematizes six categories to identify this independent (anti-Apartheid) cinema – to be specific:

⁸ Also see Harriet Gavshon. 1991. *Bearing Witness: Ten Years Towards an Opposition Film Movement in South Africa*. Radical History Review. Philadelphia.

the intention, alternative exhibition venues, low budget, censorship, the parallel between cost and content, and lastly how this “movement” paves the way for future possibilities⁴⁴. According to Maingard, *Last Grave at Dimbaza* by Nana Mahomo is the first significant South African anti-Apartheid documentary film of the 1970’s. The film’s subject matter addresses the effects of the Bantustan policy on the African population. However, as Maingard notifies us, subsequent South African anti-Apartheid documentary filmmakers opposed the particular ‘stylistic features’ of *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, such as its clandestine nature and the use of a didactic and omnipotent narrator’s voice – for interest, Bill Nichols in his study titled *Documentary Theory and Practice* where he studies short documentary film containing news stories and items of contemporary concerns in the 1960 made and distributed by one of the American radical collectives will be of interest here⁴⁵. Anyway, these films positioned themselves to attack established accounts and present counter interpretations to persuade the masses. Nichols argues that with these films the aim more than anything was to publicize “the truth” and were less invested in aesthetics and cinematic integrities of the political and epistemology.

Maingard thematizes the socio-political contexts that shaped the anti-Apartheid movement and its development. The first period: 1976 to 1985 when the National Party government declared a state of emergency, the second period: 1985 to 1990 when the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African congress (PAC), the Communist Party and other significant political organizations, both internal and exiled, were unbanned, and lastly the third and final period: 1990 to 1995 at the dawn of independence and this period being a transitional period, the in-between Apartheid and after, when anti-Apartheid films gained a wider audience through the access to the national television. Maingard notes that it was only in 1995 that some of these anti-Apartheid films of the 1980’s were screened to a national audience, and thus closes the time frame at 1995. Through these three-time frames, Maingard attempts to do two things: to document the development of the anti-Apartheid documentary movement as well as to show its strategies of representations. In writing about strategies of representation, Maingard is entering into a long discourse in documentary film theory that, she argues, “has evolved in the last decade almost entirely outside of the developments in film in South Africa”⁴⁶. So, in essence theories about the *subaltern subject* (emphasis added) have been developed, more especially in Europe and the USA, but make no reference to developments in South African non-fiction cinema. Much like Sanogo, Maingard’s paper is an attempt to relate these theoretical works to South African film. Part of the strategies of representations that Maingard writes about, identity plays a major role, and she argues that the films of the anti-Apartheid

movement's representation of race and gender are limited. Again, to quote da Canha on the establishment of this movement:

Many of the filmmakers who established Anti-Apartheid film and video organizations were white students whose political consciousness and interest in film led them to explore the medium as a vehicle to initiate change and as an instrument for communities to use to create a space for new voices. At this stage black people who were involved with film were either ushers or cleaners employed by the established film industry or possibly had had some experience and training of technical skills with foreign news journalists who came out to South Africa to report on 'the story'. These foreign companies, such as Viznews, ITN, WTN and Channel 4, hired black people to train as assistants because of their access to the townships⁴⁷.

Below is a brief description of the three anti-Apartheid film collectives/institutions that opposed the Apartheid machinery:

The Video News Service (VNS)

Anti-Apartheid documentary films in South Africa started off by being made by foreign filmmakers and productions, such as the *BBC*, for a predominantly foreign television audience. As mentioned previously, with the introduction of television in 1976 and the lifting of the ban on video technology, South African filmmakers now had access to some form of filmmaking technology. This saw several independent filmmakers making films independent of the state, however speaking against the system of Apartheid. Many of these filmmakers were funded by organizations that had political interests, such as the *International Defence and Aid Fund* (IDAF), founded in South Africa in the 1950's by Canon John Collins to raise funds for Apartheid prisoners, however after the Treason and Rivonia Trial the organization was banned by the National party government and as such moved to London where it continued to do many of its work. However, the IDAF also produced their own films, through their Research Information Department. Films such as, *Isitwalandwe*, *The History of the Freedom Charter* (1980), *The Anvil and the Hammer* (1985) and *Any Child is my Child* (1988), to name a few. These films were mainly representation of the work the ANC was doing in the country and abroad⁴⁸.

The Video News Service (VNS) was established in 1985 by a group of anti-Apartheid filmmakers, backed by the *African National Congress* (ANC) – then still an underground organization, and the *International Defence and Aid Fund* (IDAF). Maingard argues that the VNS in South Africa National Cinema acted in many ways as the visual arm of the ANC within the country documenting the mass democratic movement's events and rallies. The VNS also had links with *Afrivision* in London and as such many of its documentaries were broadcasted internationally. Because the VNS was linked to such organizations as this, it naturally produced films based on the representation of the points of view of the working class. Films such as *Compelling Freedom* (1987) and *Fruits of Defiance* (1990) and *Hlanganani: A Short History of COSATU* (1991) produced by the VNS are examples of this.

Free Filmmakers

Free Filmmakers, established in the 1980's (mid) by a collective of independent filmmakers who left that they could not work with the SABC. Da Canha notes that the Free filmmaker's collective became a training ground for many Black filmmakers who were otherwise not given the chance to produce their own films. One of the collective's well-known works is the 1993 *The Ordinary People* series that was commissioned by the SABC. This series aimed to document the transition of South Africa from Apartheid to democracy through its ordinary people⁹.

Community Video and Education Trust (CVET)

The Community Video and Education Trust (CVET) was established in 1977 as the *Community Video Resource Association* (CVRA) by the University of Cape Town and the Cape Town International film festival, under the coordination of Mark Kaplan. The organization trained “ordinary people”, mainly community workers and activists, on how to use video technology and to encourage them to document their experiences and the problems affecting their communities from their own perspective¹⁰.

⁹ I talk more about this collective in chapter 5.

¹⁰ Da Canha covers this eloquently in her paper.

It is unfortunate that there is scarcity of literature on the anti-Apartheid documentary and anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, specifically, and generally in documentary film in South Africa. As Tomaselli writes that “the study of South African cinema remains confined to a handful of scholars”⁴⁹. This then is an obvious gap here, the lack of theoretically informed scholarship on the “Anti-Apartheid film movement” of the 1970 up until the “dawn of democracy” in South Africa. Not much is written on it, that is, there is not sufficient academic engagement with the movement, other than the already cited above. Having said that, I think it is important to situate the anti-Apartheid documentary and the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement within a broader context of the struggle for democracy in South Africa. As noted earlier the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement was, in the main, constituted by white men with some relations to the broader liberation movement and the anti-Apartheid movement. These men, White activists, receive barely sufficient mention in scholarly analysis. Sakhela Buhlungu in *Rebels without a Cause of Their Own?: The Contradictory Location of White Officials in Black Unions in South Africa, 1973–94*⁵⁰ argues that this partially has to do with the fact that activists and scholars, both Black and White, do not want to disturb the dream of racial harmony in the liberation movement, so the focus has mainly been on highlighting the success of non-racialism. These White activists were from middle class backgrounds and university trained with left-wing and Marxist sensibilities. Because of various developments in the country, one of them being the fall out between White and Black students within the *National Union of South African Students* (NUSAS) and thereafter the formation of the *South African Students’ Organization* (SASO) by the *Black Consciousness Movement* (BCM) and elsewhere in the world. Buhlungu writes that these white activists

In their eagerness to break with their past and shed the guilt associated with being part of a racially privileged ruling group, many of them went into denial about race and consciously sought to downplay its significance. For this reason, they emphasized the primacy of class and class struggle and downplayed the necessity of the struggle for national liberation of black people⁵¹.

So then, the anti-Apartheid movement, of which the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement is a part of, their articulation for the problem that faced South Africa was based on the exploitation and alienation of Black labour by the white government and capital.

There was also a division of labour in the liberation movement between White activists and Black activists. The division of labour between 'strategic and planning functions' held by mostly white activists, and 'clerical and organizing functions' held by Black activists. This of course was as a result of the unequal distribution of education. In a country as racially divided as South Africa, Buhlungu, borrowing from Erik Olin Wright (1979), argues that white activists occupied a contradictory position: they were 'rebels without a cause of their own'. Because of the policy of Apartheid, white activists, to which they have made it their mission to fight for the liberation of Black people, and Black people in general and Black activists in particular, White activists occupied a contradictory location between black people who are oppressed and White people from which they are from. White activists in the liberation movement were cast as intellectuals, which meant that they provided the liberation movement with the necessary theorisation and language to articulate the problems of South Africa and the suffering of Black people. Buhlungu explains that:

The construction of white officials as intellectuals was an acknowledgement of the reality that they were outsiders coming in to engage in a struggle of the working class not because they were oppressed or exploited but because they had adopted an ideological position against capitalism⁵².

The men of the anti-Apartheid film movement are a part of this group of intellectuals who are drawn from middle class backgrounds and are university educated, had a hegemony of the presentation of ideas and who, as Buhlungu explains, that a "majority occupied specialist or strategic positions as media, research, education and legal officers or were appointed or elected as negotiators and branch and general secretaries"⁵³ of Black unions and liberation organisations in South African between 1973 and 1994.

II.

Documentary film history in Africa is about visualizing the Other. Paula Rabinowitz in *They must be represented* notes that much of what the documentary film is has much to do with the idea of 'the social' in the mid-nineteenth century (see Denise Riley). The social is recognized as an expanding public sphere. The social, writes Rabinowitz, is "akin to politics, but not quite political, akin to economics, but not quite, can be thought of as the irruption of the household into the public view"⁵⁴. Essentially the documentary film then becomes that medium that

translates domains that were previously outside of view. Hannah Arendt⁵⁵ theorizes on the private and the public spaces. I would like to borrow these concepts from Arendt to make my argument here. Arendt argues that each type of Human activity has its proper place in the world, and that this place is the only authentic space in which those kinds of activity can truly unfold. Arendt's argument also includes things such as the role of women and men in it, of which we will not entertain much here. However I think her theorization of the private and the public can help us. Arendt theorizes that "the public realm represents that space of appearance in which moral and political greatness, heroism, and preeminence are revealed, displayed, shared with others"⁵⁶. She goes on to argue that the public space is a space for competition, where people compete for recognition, precedence and acclaim. The other thing about this space, argues Arendt, is that it is exclusive "in that it presupposes strong criteria of belonging and loyalty from its participants"⁵⁷. Arendt defines private as that space where things, such as aspects of the 'domestic intimate' sphere, are hidden from sight of the public eye. She believes that certain things need to be hidden from public display, of which this includes the political sphere.

Arendt definition of the private and the public does not necessarily have to do with the arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area or institutions, the public or the private can appear whenever and wherever. But take this paragraph from Arendt in a book – first published in 1958 titled *The human condition*:

Although the distinction between privacy and the public coincides with the opposition of necessity and freedom, of futility and permanence, and finally, of shame and honor, it is by no means true that only the necessary, the futile, and the shameful have their proper place in the private realm. The most elementary meaning of the two realms indicates that there are things that need to be hidden and others that need to be displayed publicly if they are to exist at all⁵⁸.

The documentary film then, I argue, becomes that which mediates between the private and the public. That which publicizes the private (after Roland Barthes). The documentary film presents itself as a 'new kind of seeing' that changes the world by 'bringing to light that which had never been before'. Rabinowitz writes that the documentary film "circulates between the public and the private, personal and political spheres by becoming simultaneously an aesthetic and archival object"⁵⁹. The history of the documentary film in Africa shows that the public has always been the reverse of the *Occident* and the private belonging to the African *Other* (emphasis added). Africans, as the history has shown, have always been objectified by the

documentary film, for the interest of the public Occident. The documentary film in Africa has always been drawn to the continent by the Other (I will explore this idea further in later chapters). There is a type of voyeurism in non-fiction filmmaking where the structure of the camera operates as an authoritative and godlike operative which seeks to get closer to an Other as an adventure that seeks to find the ultimate orgasm for the documentary filmmaker and its audience¹¹. The anti-Apartheid film movement, a left leaning group of mostly White man – in a (Black) struggle function under this inference.

I want to move away from the particular and speak about the documentary film in its generality, however this does not mean that the documentary film in Africa, and South Africa in particular – with the anti-Apartheid film movement, is excluded. The visual economy of the documentary film operates with the same assumptive logic throughout. In the next section of this paper, I want to present the privileged Subject of the documentary film.

The Subject of the Documentary Film

According to the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek in *For they know not what they do. Enjoyment as a political factor*, Subjects are not the “effective” presence of “flesh-and-blood”⁶⁰. This then begs the questions, what is the constitution of Subjects? How are Subjects constituted in modernity? What are the dimensions, if any, that make Subjects? And lastly, for the purposes of this thesis, how are Subjects constituted in modernity as it relates to the documentary film? In the next few pages I want to borrow from the poststructuralist tool box by tracing the genealogy (deconstructing?) of the concept of the Subject by showing its history and how Beings are called into subjectivity in modernity. This exercise is important so that we will get a fuller understanding of the Subject (in documentary film). In my studies at university, in my undergraduate studies, I was taught subjectivity through the methods of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim (the holy trinity of the discipline of sociology), and in my post graduate studies I then learnt about other conceptions of subjectivity, other than those of the holy trinity. I came to appreciate how poststructuralism and its reading of how individuals/ Humans are constituted as Subjects. I am indebted to this analysis of how Subjects are positioned structurally through language and discourse. Poststructuralism’s elaboration of the constitution of the Subject, as I asked before, is, I find, much coherent. I do not want to create

¹¹ I borrow this language from Dr. Mbuso Nkosi who writes about the language of land in South Africa.

a task for myself of trying to explain and cathedralise poststructuralism over other theories. However, safe to say that this thesis takes the position made by poststructuralism with regard to the Human/Subject and will later show how this elaboration, in as much as I agree with it, does not elaborate all sentient individuals on the planet. As Foucault writes in *The Subject and Power*, ‘my objective has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects’⁶¹. The following exposition wishes to follow a similar style of inquiry.

Modern Subject Formation: Meditations and Dasein

Since this section of the thesis is concerned with the making of Subjects in modernity. I think it is prudent to start at the beginning. It is Descartes who first captures our thinking on the matter of the Subject. Moving us away from the medieval notion of Being to the modern notion of Subject. “[J]ust as Jesus established our Christian World with its saints and sinners” write, Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Kelly, “Descartes established our Modern World in which we understand ourselves as self-sufficient *subjects* standing over against self-sufficient *objects*”⁶². Descartes is an important and seminal figure in modern western philosophy, indeed the father of modern rational thought. So I think it is of value to start here.

At a time when dogmatism was the rule and the church the authority on how we come to have knowledge, Descartes publishes *Meditations on First Philosophy*⁶³ in 1641. Through a series of meditations, Descartes seeks to, in his own words, “find metaphysical positions solid enough to serve as foundations for the edifice of the new science”⁶⁴. Here Descartes takes on the mammoth task of what we can know (and by extension the Human).

In the first meditation, Descartes, establishes his method for his philosophy by calling into question all the beliefs of his youth. He argues that the structure of beliefs the many beliefs he held were built on shaky foundations. He then resolves to “demolish everything completely and start again from the foundations”⁶⁵. This beginning for Descartes is to doubt what has deceived him until then and that for him it seems has come through the senses. Therefore he then rejects all sensory based beliefs. In the second meditation, Descartes, then wants to find beliefs that cannot be false. And as though an apple fell from the tree and hit him in the head, Descartes, has a moment of sudden and great revelation about one of his beliefs “I am, I exist”, whenever it is uttered by me, or conceived in the mind, is necessarily true”⁶⁶. Descartes cannot

doubt the ‘essence of his mind’ for as long as he is thinking, he exists. So then Descartes knows that he exists but what kind of existence is he? He writes:

So what in fact did I think I was before all this? A human being, of course. But what is a human being? Shall I say, ‘a rational animal’? No, for then I should have to examine what exactly an animal is, and what ‘rational’ is, and hence, starting with one question, I should stumble into more and more difficult ones⁶⁷.

Descartes can think of himself as existing for as long as he is thinking without the presence (existence) of the body. He can think of himself existing without the body but cannot think of himself existing without thought. So therefore he concludes that he is a thinking thing, a *Cogito*.

What is that? I mean a thing that doubts, that understands, that affirms, that denies, that wishes to do this and does not wish to do that, and also that imagines and perceives by the senses⁶⁸.

In the third meditation, Descartes sets to ‘examine more carefully whether perhaps there are any further items of knowledge in his possession to which he has not yet paid attention to’⁶⁹. One of this items is the idea of a God or the existence of. Descartes intimates that he has ideas about a Being perfect in power, wisdom, and goodness. An Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent Being (or as he puts it “an infinite, independent, supremely intelligent, supremely powerful substance”⁷⁰). He wonders where he might have received this idea about such a Being from and he concludes that if indeed such a Being as all good exists, then it is from this Being that he has received this idea from. Although there is the possibility that this Being, God, could be a deceiver and give him false and unreliable beliefs. Descartes writes, “but whenever this preconceived opinion of God’s supreme power occurs to me, I cannot help admitting, that, if indeed he wishes to, he can easily bring it about that I should be mistaken, even about matters that I think I intuit with the eye of the mind as evidently as possible”⁷¹. To escape this thought, Descartes concludes that there is no way that an all good God can deceive him when he ‘clearly and distinctly’ thinks of something not to be deceitful: to be true and conforming to reality. He writes:

It remains for me only to examine in what manner I received this idea from God. For I did not derive it from the senses, nor did it ever thrust itself spontaneously on my attention, as do the ideas of sensible things, when the things themselves make an impression on the external sense-

organs (or appear to do so). Nor is it a fiction, a creation of my own, for I cannot subtract anything from it, or add anything at all to it. It must therefore be that the idea is innate within me, in the same way as the idea of myself is innate within me.

He continues:

And certainly it is no wonder if God, when he created me, inscribed this idea within me, to serve, so to speak, as the mark by which the craftsman makes himself known in his handiwork⁷².

Then whenever, Descartes as a thinking thing, clearly and distinctly, thinks something to be, he has no reason to doubt it to be false.

In the fourth meditation, Descartes meditates on the idea of truth and falsity. He writes that “as long as I am thinking only of God, and directing my attention wholly to him, I cannot detect any cause of error or falsity; but when presently I turn back to myself, I find by experience that I am, on the contrary, subject to innumerable errors”⁷³. Descartes recognises that he can sometimes be in error, but his errors cannot be attributed to God. He argues that his intellect can sometimes be limited due to the inability to clearly and distinctly judge things, “I find by experience that there is a weakness in my nature that means that I cannot always concentrate attentively on one and the same piece of knowledge”⁷⁴. The response to this inaptitude is to only pass judgment on things ‘that confines itself to items clearly and distinctly represented to the intellect’⁷⁵.

In the fifth meditation Descartes wants to see if “any certainty is possible with respect to material things”⁷⁶. He realises that he has many ideas about material things that are not the product of his doing. These material things have their own essence that is ‘true and unchangeable’, however these material things may or may not exist. Similar to the fourth meditation Descartes looks to God for this problem:

But once I have perceived that God exists, then because I grasped at the same time that everything else depends on him, and that he is no deceiver, and from this deduced that everything I clearly and distinctly perceive is necessarily true, then, even if I am no longer concentrating on the reasons why I judged this to be true, provided I remember that I did see it

clearly and distinctly, no contrary reason can be adduced that can induce me to doubt it; and thus I have true and certain knowledge [*scientia*] of it⁷⁷.

The key in Descartes's argument is that as long as he clearly and distinctly discerns something and as long as he wholly directs his attention to God, then he has no reason to doubt the existence of those things and of God himself.

In the sixth and last meditation, Descartes makes the case for substance dualism, that is the distinction between the mind and the body, and for the existence of material things, independent of the mind. Descartes argues that the mind and the body are independent and distinct of each other and that they are capable of existing independently of each other (disembodied).

I observe here that there is a great difference between the mind and the body, in this respect, that the body of its nature is endlessly divisible, but the mind completely indivisible: for certainly, when I consider the mind, or myself in so far as I am purely a thinking thing, I can distinguish no parts in myself but understand myself to be a thing that is entirely one and complete⁷⁸.

With Descartes the essence of the Subject is thought and reason¹² is the primary element of modern Subject formation¹³.

Heidegger offered a challenge to Descartes, and by extension the Western philosophical imagination of the time. Descartes establishes the existence of the Subject as a thinking thing (*a cogito*) however for Heidegger he is interested in the possibilities that make such a Subject possible. In *Being and Time*⁷⁹, Heidegger proposes an alternative to Descartes' Dualism (Cartesian understanding of the Subject). For Heidegger there is no separation between the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*, that is the mind as a thinking thing and the material things, to which the body forms a part of this material substance. In essence there is no Subject that is

¹² Derrida in *The Ends of Man* (1969:43) will argue that "for Husserl as for Hegel, reason is history and there is no history except that of reason. The latter functions in every man, no matter how primitive he may still be, in that he is "the rational animal".

¹³ Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2001: 37) will argue that the non-European lived experiences disrupt the intimate unity of the modern self.

distinct from the external world of things. For Heidegger, the Subject is a ‘Being-in-the-world’, always and fully absorbed in the world, as opposed to the cogito of Descartes. Heidegger wants the world to reveal itself to him, as a phenomenologist, in contrast to Descartes who does not allow the world to reveal itself to him but rather dictates to it. As Heidegger explains as he demonstrates on the meaning of phenomenology, as “that which shows itself from itself... to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself”⁸⁰. For Heidegger, the immediate and everyday experiences of Human existence is important. Heidegger in *Being and Time* contextualises the Subject, what he terms *dasein*, a term that translates to “being there” in German. For Heidegger *dasein* is within the material world and not separate from it. There are no passive observers or active spectators separate from the material world of things. Heidegger states it more aptly, “Dasein understands itself, initially and for the most part, in terms of its world”⁸¹. In this thinking there is no Subject and the world that is out there (the object). These two substances are united together in a single entity of the *dasein*. *Dasein* is a Being-in-the-world. It is not a Being that thinks of the world as a separate thing, removed from it. However it is one with it. It is a ‘being present to’ the world. As Heidegger explains in his Nietzsche lectures, “We do not “have” a body; rather, we “are” bodily”⁸². The thinking Subject of Descartes is already ‘thrown’ and ‘situated’ in the world.

Descartes and Heidegger might conceptualise the Subject from different perspectives and arrive at somewhat different conclusions. However that may be, there is something common about these two thinkers in their thought. They seem to both centre the Being of the Subject in their theorisations. The Subject here is the pinnacle of creation and the most important element of existence. Whether the Subject is asking the *ontic* question of ‘who or what am I?’ (via Descartes) or the *ontological* question of ‘what does it mean to be?’ (via Heidegger).

Structuralism: ‘Theoretical Anti-Humanism’ and the Constitutive Subject of the Socio-Historical Process

For Althusser⁸³ unlike his predecessors Descartes, Heidegger and others, there is no unified transcendental Subject. Structuralism, which Althusser, helped to give form to, after the linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure, is a macro theory that holds that Human subjectivity must be understood in a context of a social system. This of course follows after De Saussure who is the originator of the modern theory of structuralism. De Saussure earlier

argued that language is a system of signs that express ideas⁸⁴. For de Saussure, “language is a system in which all the elements fit together, and which the value of any one element depends on the simultaneous coexistence of all the others”⁸⁵. Language here is a structured system of signs. In the *Course in General Linguistics*¹⁴, De Saussure gives an outline of structuralism (albeit linguistics at this moment. It is Althusser who takes it further into the Subject). In Structuralism, ‘language is properly conceived as a system of differences, in which identities of the elements are purely differential and negative, instead of being understood as standing in a one to one relation with objects which they merely reflect’. In essence, there is no element in a language that contains within itself its full meaning. Its meaning emerges in a differential relation to other elements within a system of language. This means that a word does not fully contain its meaning in itself. An element gains its meaning only in relation to other elements.

It is important to draw a distinction between *langue*, which is language and *parole*, which is the activity of speaking. De Saussure explains that *langue* is a system of rules, with a large number of elements, shared by a speech community. Whereas *parole*, is an activity of an individual Subject and an external manifestation of *langue*. For structuralism, it is *langue* that is a genuine topic of linguistics. *langue* is a system of systems that is shared by a social structure, ‘a product of the collective mind of a linguistic community’. Whereas *parole* is not rich enough to be studied scientifically. However, it would not be possible without *parole*. For *parole* is a concrete use of *langue*.

Language, as a structured system of signs, involves a combination of thought, as a concept, and a sound-image, as a psychological imprint the pronounce leaves on our senses. How language works is that a speaker must communicate to the listener a concept, which is a signified entity in this regard, as a sound-image, which then becomes a signifier. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary.

As a result of the linguistic structuralist interventions by de Saussure. Althusser proceeds with a “return to Marx”. A call to unsettle the position of Humanism in the history of ideas. For Althusser, the Subject must be decentred. Perhaps more acutely, as Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*⁸⁶ once argued “God is dead”, for God is a fictitious thing created by Humans to

¹⁴ Originally published in 1916 in French as *Cours de linguistique générale* after de Saussure’s death.

accord divine providence to physical laws. Similarly, for Althusser the ‘subject is dead’. Or rather in his own words:

History is a process without a Subject or a Goal where the given circumstances in which 'men' act as subjects under the determination of social relations are the product of class struggles. History therefore does not have a subject, in the philosophical sense of the term, but a motor: that very class struggle⁸⁷.

The Subject in Althusserian and structuralist conceptions is nothing more, if at all, a figurine controlled from above or rather by a structure of a hand inside it, kind of like a puppeteer controlling, working and giving movement to a puppet Subject.

If for Karl Marx, the proletariat is a historical Subject, albeit that has no significant ownership of the means of production, as so must struggles with the bourgeoisie who exploits them and as a result must destroy them by ‘openly declaring to overthrow all existing social conditions’, for, as the saying goes “the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win”. Althusser challenges us to a different reading of this. An invitation, perhaps, to “return to Marx”, however, not this Marx. It may be that there is a different Marx, perhaps a mature Marx? For Althusser, we need to disassociate this reading of the proletariat as a historical Subject from Marx, together with it the ‘base and superstructure’ model and the dialectical method. Althusser argues that Human Beings are completely defined by capital. They are but supports in the social structures. In *Reading Capital* Althusser states this idea categorically:

The structures of the relations of production determine the place and functions occupied and adopted by the agents of production, who are never anything more than the occupants of these places, insofar as they are the supports (Träger) of these functions. The true subjects (in the sense of constitutive subjects of the process) are therefore not these occupants or functionaries ... but the relations of production (and political and ideological social relations). But since these are “relations,” they cannot be thought within the category subject⁸⁸.

For Lévi-Strauss, a contemporary of Althusser and a key figure in structuralism also adds that while anthropology ‘cannot remain indifferent to historical processes and to the most highly conscious expressions of social phenomena’, the anthropologist nevertheless aims ‘to

eliminate, by a kind of backward course, all that they owe to the historical process and to conscious thought'⁸⁹.

In the above arguments, the structuralists also points out two things that are important in structuralism. That is the position of the political and ideological social relations. These two relations, the structuralists introduce against how Marxists have previously thought about society, as structured into two levels, the base and the superstructure. For Althusser society is structured into three social relations. That is the political and ideological social relations and the third the economic relation. With an Althusserian structure of relation, there is no one way causality of the economic relation determining everything, as is the case in 'traditional' Marxism, but a two way causality. This idea of a two way causality gives way to an important concept in structuralism. That is interpellation.

Ideology then, because it is not entirely determined by economic forces, though, as Althusser notes, ideology does 'have a material existence'⁹⁰. Ideology expresses itself in actions which "always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices"⁹¹. For Althusser, "ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects"⁹². So then, if we are to follow here, ideology creates Subjects. But how might this actualise? How are these concrete individuals enter subjectivity? As we have seen, for Descartes individuals enter subjectivity through thought, for Heidegger, individuals enter subjectivity as already thrown in the world, however for Althusser, individuals enter into subjectivity by "means of the pre-existing category of the subject"⁹³. Ideology then, without exception, always creates Subjects and controls them by recognizing them as Subjects in relation to objects. Individuals then enter into subjectivity, or rather are called into subjectivity as 'free' individuals. The individual "is interpellated as a (free) Subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself'"⁹⁴.

The free is bracketed for a reason. It is intentional. Althusser wants to point out that a (concrete) individual is 'always already a subject'. The (concrete) individual is marked into subjectivity from birth, through 'practice, or practices'. Althusser explains further in *Lenin and Philosophy*:

This is a proposition which entails that we distinguish for the moment between concrete individuals on the one hand and concrete subjects on the other, although at this level concrete subjects only exist insofar as they are supported by a concrete individual.

“I shall then suggest that ideology” he continues:

“acts” or “functions” in such a way that it “recruits” subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or “transforms” the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation . . . called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace every day police (or other) hailing: “Hey, you there!” . . . [T]he hailed individual will turn around [and] by this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject . Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was “really” addressed to him, and that “it was really him who was hailed” (and not someone else)⁹⁵.

This then is the understanding of the Subject according to structuralism and against anthropocentrism, alias, Humanism.

The Unconscious and the Discourse of the Other: Post-Structuralism, Psychoanalysis and Subjectivity

Now back to where I started. I would like to return the tools of inquiry back to poststructuralism. Poststructuralism enters the discourse in philosophy as a critique of certain structuralist ideas. Though there is sometimes overlap between the two ways of theorising, nonetheless, Poststructuralism enters the discourse by challenging the rigidity of structuralism and the general pervasive Subject centeredness in western thought by showing its ‘blind spots’ and as a result unsettling traditional understandings of subjectivity. Let us first look at, *deconstruction*, via Derrida.

For Derrida, he wants to move beyond the Human, by questioning the fundamental thinking that is inherent in western philosophical thought – by *deconstructing* its binary and hierarchical dictates that are assumed in its language. For Derrida, because western thought structures existence in terms of binary oppositions, this inadvertently creates hierarchies of superior and subordinate/ political hierarchy and social domination, between the binary opposites. For

example, male/ female, masculine / feminine, good/ evil, God/Satan, Black/White, man/women/ mind/body, self/other, etc.

Early on Derrida gives the following definition for deconstruction:

To 'deconstruct' philosophy, thus, would be to think—in the most faithful, interior way—the structured genealogy of philosophy's concepts, but at the same time to determine—from a certain exterior that is unqualifiable or unnameable by philosophy—what this history has been able to dissimulate or forbid, making itself into a history by means of this. . . motivated repression⁹⁶.

It is true that Derrida never takes the analysis of the Subject as the central theme in his work. However we can abstract from his life's work, interviews he gave and from commentators of his work.

Derrida wants to undo the binary thinking in western thought, or rather more properly, Derrida wants to unbind the text, free it from its logic of western affix and reveal its potentiality, whatever it may be. Joseph Hillis Miller Jr in *Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure*, puts it this way:

Deconstruction, rather, annihilates the ground on which the building stands by showing that the text has already annihilated that ground, knowingly or unknowingly. Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text, but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently solid ground is no rock but thin air⁹⁷.

What Miller is implying is that deconstruction has already taken place in the text even before the advent of deconstruction. The text is not gospel, but riddled with contradictions that betray its unity. The text is already deconstructed. Christopher Norris, in *Derrida* explains it as such:

Deconstruction is the vigilant seeking-out of those "aporia," blind spots or moments of self-contradiction where a text involuntarily betrays the tension between rhetoric and logic, between what is manifestly *means to say* and what it is nonetheless *constrained to mean*. To 'deconstruct' a piece of writing is therefore to operate a kind of strategic reversal⁹⁸.

The cited definitions of deconstruction help us give form to how subjectivity functions in post-structuralism. Derrida remarks during a conversation with Jean-Luc Nancy, that “in order to recast, if not rigorously refound a discourse on the ‘subject’... one has to go through the experience of a deconstruction. This deconstruction is neither negative nor nihilistic”⁹⁹. The Subject in post-structuralism (at least in deconstruction) is not a stable Being that can be ‘read’ (the deconstructed Subject). The Subject, under deconstruction, is not a transcendental Being, if at all it is transcendental or a Subject for that matter. Rodolphe Gasché describes this existence as ‘quasi-transcendental’¹⁵. What this implies is that the Subject is not containable. So what is a Subject? Whatever the Subject is (under deconstruction/ post-structuralism), it is not a privileged centre of discourse. As Derrida puts it in an interview in *Positions*¹⁶, the Subject, as an ‘authority of meaning’, in western philosophy, is not a ‘*transcendental signified*’ or as *telos*¹⁰⁰. Thus it is against this conceptualization that Derrida, alias, deconstruction/ post-structuralism launches a critique [my emphasis].

In the conversation with Jean-Luc Nancy, Derrida asks “what is the place of the subject?”. This question is posed along ‘topological lines’ and aims to answer the ‘who’ of the Subject, the Subject that “appears precisely through deconstruction”. However, this locatable place is a ‘non-place’, if we follow properly Derrida’s thinking. This non-place is ‘at once necessarily undiscoverable’ Remembering that for deconstruction, the Subject (text) is not a transcendental Being (entity), the text has already annihilated itself before the analysis. Derrida notes that:

It would perhaps be necessary to give up the impossible, that is to say the attempt to reconstitute or reconstruct what has already been deconstructed (and which moreover has deconstructed “itself”, an expression which encapsulates the whole difficulty) and ask ourselves rather: what are we designating, in a tradition which one would have to identify in a rigorous way (let’s say for the moment the one which runs from Descartes to Kant and to Husserl)¹⁰¹.

He continues to argue that the concept of the Subject is:

¹⁵ See: Rodolphe Gasché. 1994. *Inventions of difference: on Jacques Derrida*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

¹⁶ Derrida says in the interview, published with *Position*, that his attempt is to “systematize a deconstructive critique precisely against the authority of meaning, as the *transcendental signified* or as *telos*...”.

Such a way that once certain predicates have been deconstructed, the unity of the concept and the name are radically affected? These predicates would be for example the subjective structure as being-thrown-or-under-lying of the substance or the substratum, of the *hypokeimenon*, with its qualities of stance or stability, of permanent presence, of sustained relation to self, what links the “subject” to conscience, to humanity, to history ... and above all to the law, as subject subjected to the law, subject to the law in its very autonomy, to ethical or juridical law, to political law or power, to order (symbolic or not)...¹⁰²

The ‘who’ of the Subject in its locatedness is an instance, however without instance a ““without” without negativity”, as Derrida explains. This instance is:

Besieged by the problematic of the trace and of *différance*, of affirmation, of the signature and of the so-called “proper” name, of the *je[c]t* (above all subject, object, project) as destinerring of missive¹⁰³.

Derrida advises against the all-inclusive usage of the designation of the Subject. Different philosophers have tackled the problem from different perspectives, and coming with different conceptions, as we have noted in this paper. So for Derrida, there is no one (homogenous) conception of the Subject. He argues in the interview, “there has never been The Subject for anyone... The subject is a fable”¹⁰⁴.

For Derrida, Subject or subjectivity has been thought of as individuals thinking themselves possible through the “structure of relation to self as such and of reappropriation”¹⁰⁵. Derrida explains that with the ‘discourse on the subject’, the Subject is a Subject of difference, the Subject incorporates difference to self but however continues to tie-up subjectivity with man. The Subject appropriates the trace and *différance* to itself to relate to itself. This of course aids the Subject to remain whole. However, “re-appropriation necessarily produces the opposite of what it apparently aims for”¹⁰⁶, explains Derrida. But also ex-appropriation, that is to say, the ‘irreducibility of the relation to the other’, is equally not good for man. Derrida explains “ex appropriation cannot be absolutely stabilized in the form of the subject”¹⁰⁷ because the Subject assumes presence. There is a dilemma here, the Subject is displaced because the other can never be stabilised and at the same it cannot reduce itself to the other. The structures that designate a Subject as a signifying entity dispossess the Subject of the stability to be able to be communicated. The Subject is then without a referent.

Lacan, another key poststructuralist figure and a contemporary of Derrida, adds to the poststructuralist understanding of the Subject by way of psychoanalysis. Althusser's unsettling call against Humanism, to "return to Marx", was a precursor to Lacan's shout against the structuralism, to "return to Freud". Lacan uses psychoanalysis, like Derrida, to critique the rigidity of structuralism, particularly its ideas on language and the symbolic order. Lacan took what we know from linguistics and applied it to psychoanalysis.

With Lacan, we learn how the Subject is constructed through the agency of language. For Lacan, the unconscious is structured like a language and operates like a language, in the classical Saussurian way of the relationship between the signifier and the signified. For Lacan, the unconscious, which he describes as the "lost object", is the discourse of the Other, precluded from the conscious. So then language becomes important in the formation of consciousness and subjectivity itself. Lacan intervenes in the Freudian idea of the 'pleasure principle', which is the instinctive biological force that individuals pursue in order to avoid pain. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud explains that:

There is no doubt that the resistance of the conscious and the unconscious ego operate under the away of the pleasure principle: it seeks to avoid the pleasure which would be produced by the liberation of the repressed. Our efforts, on the other hand, are directed towards procuring the toleration of that unpleasure by an appeal to the reality principle¹⁰⁸.

Lacan opposes (or rather re-reads) this idea, of essentially the development of an identity for the Subject, as a result of Human interaction, a social construct, and not biological. For Lacan, Beings are called into subjectivity in modernity through 'the unconscious discourse of the Other', kind of like the existential concept in Sartre's *No Exit*, where Beings are always under the surveillance of others without a break, no exit, from objectification, from hell. For Lacan, subjectivity, or the entering of, begins in his three stages/ or registers of Human development, which is the making of a Subject. The stages are listed as: the imaginary order, the symbolic order, and the real.

The imaginary order is the creation of the Beings psyche. This takes place in what Lacan calls *the mirror stage*. This is a pre-linguistic identification stage. In the mirror stage, the Human child discovers their own image in the mirror and begins to draw a distinction between the self

and the other. The image the child sees is the 'Ideal I', "before it is objectified by dialectic of identification with the other", Lacan explains. The image the child sees is fiction, not reality, however provides the child with a sense of unification and wholeness. The child identifies with the image in the mirror but this identification estranges the child from the self as it comes to lay hold of the place of the self. Lacan explains:

The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for all the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the infants entire mental development¹⁰⁹.

It is at this moment of alienation that the ego is positioned, albeit fictionally so, as a moment of *mis-recognition*. The child is doubtful and irresolute about the image in the mirror. The same image that the child identifies with is also the object of a hateful alliance. So then a rivalry develops between the alienated self and the positioned ego. This stage in Human development is the primordial recognition of the Subject as 'I', before entry into language and the symbolic order.

The symbolic order is, what Miller¹⁷ describes as the "determining order of the subject"¹¹⁰ where the child/Subject enters language and signification. This stage, sometimes referred to/ interchangeable as *Big Other*, is completely autonomous, in the sense that "there is no biological reason, and in particular no genetic one, to account for exogamy. In the human order we are dealing with the complete emergence of a new function, encompassing the whole order in its entirety", explains Lacan in *The ego in Freud's theory and in the technique of psychoanalysis*¹¹¹. The symbolic order is the domain of intersubjective relations and the acceptance of the law (alias, the *Big Other*). In the symbolic order, the psyche comes to be accessible and organised by the rules and dictates of society. The symbolic order is where the 'Name-of-the Father' replaces the mother in that the Subject is introduced to the ideology of the world, which is structured around the father (Big Other). For Lacan, the symbolic order is "the realm of movement rather than fixity, and of heterogeneity rather than similarity. It is the

¹⁷ In *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan*.

realm of language, the unconscious and an otherness that remains other. This is the order in which the subject as distinct from the ego comes into being, and into a manner of being that is always disjoined and intermittent”, explains Bowie¹¹².

The Name-of-the Father introduces lack and castration (making of a lack) to the child. The child is separated from the mother and comes to identify with the father who represents the law. For Ettinger¹¹³ castration is the ‘passage to the symbolic’. A phallic metaphor that does not necessarily do justice to the concept. She explains it as such, “castration refers to the ‘death’ of the ‘thing’ in language, to the impossibility of actually touching through language, to the total separation of the Real from the Symbolic, but also to separation between the Imaginary and the Symbolic: the Other which signifies is no longer the (pointed at, reflected, identified with, and loved) mother but the Symbolic Other. Naming involves destroying the ‘thing’ and replacing it with a symbol”¹¹⁴.

We see then that language is a phallic passage to the subjective. The Subject’s entry into the world of Humans takes place through the passage of the acceptance of the ‘Law of the Father’. This law is postulated as a separation and a difference, that frames communication and desire. The Law of the Father is the signifier of signifiers, which the Subject labours to structure their existence around the unconscious acknowledgment of it. The Law of the Father is the (Big) Other. Lorenzo Chiesa¹¹⁵ reminds us that ‘the Other is Law, the Other of the Other, corresponds to the Name-of-the-Father: this is precisely what allows the resolution of the Oedipus complex, and consequently the detachment of the Subject from the disquieting relation he entered with the mother’. The child then cannot attain language without the Law of the Father, which is to say that for the child to enter into subjectivity, it needs to learn the language of the father, which is the law. The ‘passage to the symbolic’ (via Ettinger) “lays out the social hierarchy determined by the Name-of-the-Father. It decides what the relationship of all the beings of the society is according to socially sanctioned codes”, explains Tamsin Lorraine¹¹⁶. Elizabeth Grosz in her *A Feminist Introduction* of Lacan’s work, expands further into this argument by stating that “the paternal metaphor diagrams the child’s entry into the symbolic order and the social world beyond the family structure, as regulated by the Other. The paternal metaphor names the child and thus position it so that it can be replaced discursively by the ‘I’, in order to enter language as a speaking being. The child can only accede to the paternal metaphor by means of acknowledging the (maternal) castration or privatisation”¹¹⁷.

As stated previously, there is a third and final register in Lacan's theory on Human development and identity formation. This last register is realized through the mediation between the imaginary and the symbolic. However this mediation functions through a conflict, a tension with the other registers. Lacan states that this register "resists symbolization", which is to say that it lays outside of language, wit not within the boundaries of reality, therefore not signified. When the child enters into language and subjectivity itself, it is ruptured into the real. 'The real is impossible' as linguistic structures we know ultimately fail. It is outside of symbolisation and cannot be represented. "For that is how we must understand "*Einbeziehung ins Ich*," taking into the Subject, and "*Ausstossung aus dem Ich*," expelling from the Subject. The latter constitutes the real insofar as it is the domain of that which subsists outside of symbolization", Lacan explains¹¹⁸.

As difficult as it may be to explain the concept of the real in a manner that makes sense, what is important to take away from Lacan is that the Subject comes to Being through its relation with the world, particularly with its acquisition of language, which marks a distinction between Subject and object. Foucault, as I briefly covered earlier in the paper and will later add to this and expand on this idea of Being called into Subjectivity through language by introducing the concept of discourse as a discursive formation that structures individuals. The Lacanian Subject is fully accessed through speech, as a site of truth. Lacan explains this 'site' properly as full speech. In his own words "full speech is speech which aims at, which forms, the truth such as it becomes established in the recognition of one person by another. Full speech is speech which performs"¹¹⁹. Speech then is central to Beings as it symbolizes an entire society into existence. There is no existence of the Subject prior to language, language is the entrance to the possible.

There are many conceptions of the Subject in philosophy. Each one building from another. In communication with each other, building from each other, expanding from each other and sometimes tearing each other apart. There are a variety of ways in which subjectivity has been explicated. Foucault intervenes between this debate on the Subject by providing a historical genealogy of Being. What Giorgio Agamben¹²⁰ calls an 'archaeology of ontology'.

With Foucault the Subject comes to Being through certain modes of disciplinary power and forms of knowledge. So then it is through discourse (via Foucault) (as a "systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs, and practices that systematically construct the Subjects and the worlds of which they speak"¹²¹, to cite Lessa Lara (again as I

did at the start of this paper) that individuals are called into subjectivity. To remind ourselves again, Foucault¹²² explains that ‘power is everywhere’, diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and ‘regimes of truth’. This body of ‘truth’ is the fabric which the Subject will experience themselves as a Subject. If for Lacan, language conditions and also constrains Human thought. For Foucault, discourse categorises and brings Humans into existence. “Discourses do not simply describe the social world, but categorise it, they bring phenomena into sight” as Parker¹²³ puts it. As a structuring operative, discourse, is both an instrument and an effect of power¹²⁴. But for individuals to be called into subjectivity they must have the capacity for freedom and action, for without these, subjectivity would not be possible. Foucault explains:

Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realised. Where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains. (in this case it is a question of a physical relationship of constraint.) Consequently there is no face to face confrontation of power and freedom which is mutually exclusive... but a much more complicated interplay. In this game freedom may well appear as a condition for the exercise of power (at the same time its precondition, since freedom must exist for power to be exerted, and also its permanent support, since without the possibility of recalcitrance, power would be equivalent to a physical determination)... at the heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom¹²⁵.

Epilogue

For Descartes, the act of thinking (*cogito*) presupposes the existence of the ‘I’, the Subject, who thinks. Heidegger conceptualises a modern hegemony of the Subject, against the cartesian Subject, as Dasein. A Being in the material world and not separate from it. For Structuralism, after de Saussure, there is no unified transcendental Subject and as such the Subject becomes decanted. Rather Subjects, as concrete individuals are interpellated by ideology. So, then there is already a pre-existing category of the Subject before individuals enter into it. Poststructuralism deconstructs this idea of the Subject by arguing that the Subject is constructed through the agency of language and discourse. The Subject comes to Being through its relation with the world, as a free Being able to think and act temporally and spatially.

The Subject of the documentary film is then a Subject that is positioned and properly elaborated by the unconscious discourse of the Other, through language and signification, and through accepted forms of truths. The documentary film, as an instrument of power possessed with the ethic of knowledge, the principal logic and need to explain, frames this Subject, by a creative treatment of actuality, the factory of facts, that labour to make the visible invisible, the obscure clear, the hidden obvious, and the disguised exposed. It is under this operative that the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement is positioned.

I felt it necessary to trace this record of the Subject. For often in academia, one must prove their knowledge of the record before making a claim. A judgement is only so if only its logic can be proven deductively. This may seem like a tedious task, of showing the movement of the concept of the Subject/Human in Western thought, however (and from experience) this encyclopaedic appraisal of how Subjects are constituted in modernity is necessary if the claim of the thesis is to hold ground.

Chapter 3

The Documentary Film and the Archive

What has come to constitute the archive has become much about how knowledge of the past is acquired and shaped. History and how we have come to think of the archive now, intellectually and methodologically, occupy different positionsⁱ. This has “conceptual, technical, and practical causes”¹, Francis X. Blouin, Jr. argues. How then do we define the archive, seeing that it has been stripped from its contingency of the past? Blouin, Jr explains that the position of the archive, before its separation from history, was a place regarded as an authentic source of the record. A preserver of memory that holds the past (to think through the widely cited book – A collection of essays on the archive, *Refiguring the Archive*²) a place with diplomatic ties that served to position the “archives as an authoritative source in understanding the past”³. Blouin, Jr explains that “authority in coming to an understanding of the past rested on an acceptance of the archive and on a faith in the authenticity of its holdings... the fundamental link between the purpose of the archive and the purpose of history stood firm”⁴. What then do we make of the archive beyond it being just a historical source, a mere window into the past? Could the archive and how it is constituted and defined be a source of carefully curated historical artifacts? A work of selection, absence and silences. Then moving it away from it being a source of authority it once presumably was, joined together as history and knowledge. Mbuso Nkosi reminds us in one of his essays in his PhD dissertation that “the value of the archive is in its silence(s), it’s (re)presentation of the presence of the past, and of the preoccupation with the past which the present has demanded a future from”⁵. Perhaps let us first define what we are discussing. Blouin, Jr provides this placeholder definition of the archive:

The archive, then, is formed of records that may be but are not necessarily received as historical sources. The archive in this essentialist construct is presented as independent of historical construct. Yet it could be argued that the archive still operates within certain cultural and political norms, of which the archivist may or may not be aware of⁶.

This explanation of the archive gives room to cultural and political biases that may or may not be implicit. Blouin, Jr cautions that “to visit the archive is to engage a well- developed set of

ⁱ I am thinking through Francis X. Blouin, Jr. (2004) here.

intellectual, cultural, political, and technical constructs often removed from the constructs and language of academic discourse”⁷. And, Nkosi is trying to show us the value of taking the archive seriously and investigating its ‘silences’, its blind spots, and as he puts it “making the forgotten remembered and the remembered otherwise to be forgotten yet again”⁸ⁱⁱ.

Can the archive be so without the active consent and relationship of a community of support? Does the archive require support for it to be an archive? Can an archive exist independent of individuals? Mbembe argues that:

However we define archives, they have no meaning outside the subjective experience of those individuals who, at a given moment, come to use them. It is this subjective experience that places limits on the supposed power of the archives, revealing their uselessness and their residual and superfluous nature⁹.

“The archive – all archive – every archive – is figured” argues, Hamilton¹⁰. Hamilton is not too far from Blouin Jr. They want to ‘refigure’ the archive to go “beyond the idea of archives as physical records”¹¹ so as to allow the archive to be read as sites of knowledge production in the here and now and for a “basis for the identities of the present and for the possible imaginings of community in the future”¹².

Ann Laura Stoler maintains that “archives are often both documents of exclusion and monuments to particular configurations of power”¹³. The archive then is not absolved from ideological and power relations. The archive exists in relation to an authority, in most cases of that of the state, with its jurisdiction of what is fit to be ‘archivable’, therefore becoming a record of history. Mbembe explains this as follows:

The archive, therefore, is fundamentally a matter of discrimination and of selection, which, in the end, results in the granting of a privileged status to certain written documents, and the refusal of that same status to others, thereby judged unarchivable. The archive is, therefore, not a piece of data, but a status¹⁴.

In documentary film, the filmmaker is the archivist. From the minute the film is shot, the filmmaker already has a vision of how the film should look and sound; the cinematic techniques

ⁱⁱ Nkosi is thinking through Derrida (1994, 1995) and Moran (2004) here.

to be employed to be able to bring the story together, from lighting, to camera movements and positions, to the sound and the types of microphones used – close – up microphones, hand held, etc, to the environment selected, if the film has interviews in it, to the post production process. These and more techniques are employed in the process of making a documentary film. The filmmaker, as an archivist, treats the documentary film through a process of selection and exclusion. As Mbembe explains of the archive that “not all documents are destined to be archives”¹⁵, similarly, not all footages and sounds, are destined to be (in) a documentary film. At that very moment, the filmmaker has the power to determine what can be seen and heard. The filmmaker gets to speak through the film, has the power to speak through a carefully selected, or better yet, curated, ‘system of statements’ (Foucault). Mbembe argues that in “any given cultural system, only some documents fulfil the criteria of ‘archivability’... the majority of documents deemed archivable are related to the general work of the state”¹⁶. For the purposes of our argument, let us contextualise this argument to fit the system of documentary film. ‘In any given documentary film, as a creative process of actuality, only some footages and sounds, if any, fulfil the criteria of ‘archivability’... the majority of the footage and sound deemed archivable are related to the general work of viewership’. I omit ‘the state’ on purpose in this reading, for now. I will insert ‘the state’ back into the argument later on in the paper. Since we have already established that the archive and the documentary film are analogous to one another, let us sum-up our argument by calling upon Mbembe once more:

It seems clear that the archive is primarily the product of a judgement, the result of the exercise of a specific and authority, which involves placing certain documents in an archive at the same time as others are discarded. The archive, therefore, is fundamentally a matter of discrimination and of selection, which, in the end, results in the granting of a privileged status to certain written documents, and the refusal of that same status to others, thereby judged unarchivable. The archive is, therefore, not a piece of data, but a status¹⁷.

Imamura Taihei and Michael Baskett in *A Theory of Film Documentary*¹⁸ argue that documenting is a Human cognitive activity. That Humans document not for documenting’s sake but rather to reflect on the past, to plan for the future and lastly to make attempt to understand the meaning and purpose of Human life. It is a conscious Human act that is an expression of Human consciousness. The basic idea here is that documenting is never merely mechanical, even though it may seem that way, especially with tasks that are seen as involuntary and passive, they are in fact always consciously and purposively conducted. Take

for example newsreels, there might be an assumption that they are mere data disseminating videos, rudimentary and mechanical. This assumption does not take into consideration the emotional and subjective apprehension of Human Beings. Documenting, in all its manifestations, is always a subjective experience. For Taihei and Baskett “the history of documentary film clearly shows that to document is not the passively mechanical practice of simply collecting data, but rather to develop as an expression of artistic and scientific cognisance”¹⁹. The argument here is that the documentary film is more than a repository of information, a “data film”, as the Japanese translation of the concept implies. The documentary film as an instrument that functions to store the present and act as a site of retrieval is in and of itself an archive.

“The camera is human”, writes Taihei and Baskett, “We do not place humans and cameras in opposition to each other”²⁰ they are one. The camera, and by extension, the documentary film, does not only condition our world and thinking – the separate physical entity, it is our world and thinking. The camera does not exist outside of Human Beings. It is a Human Being. How then do we archive Human Beings, as cameras, as the documentary film?

The Documentary Film and the Production of the Psychic Life of Powerⁱⁱⁱ

Derrida, in *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*²¹ reminds us that the word archive, as *arkhe*, has within it two objects, that is the commencement and the commandment. ‘Two principles in one’. The former object refers to the ‘physical, historical, or ontological sense’ this is the first principle where things commence. The latter object refers to the authority of the law, “there where men and gods command”²² a place where orders (alias, commands) are given and where social orders are exercised. The archive then is a place of commence and command, a ‘residence of the superior magistrates’ who command, taking properly into consideration the Greek word *arkheion*. The residence of the superior magistrates who command, the archons, is a place where ‘official documents are filed’ because the superior magistrates are citizens who held and signified political power and therefore considered to have the right to make or to represent the law’.

ⁱⁱⁱ A site where power is constructed and maintained.

We see then that the archive, as the *archons*, a place of commence and command, requires a residence of some sort for it to take shape. Derrida explains it as such:

The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect state the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law. To be guarded thus, in the jurisdiction of this stating the law, they needed at once a guardian and a localization. Even in their guardianship or their hermeneutic tradition, the archives could neither do without substrate nor without residence²³.

What then of the documentary film that does not commence in the classical way of a domicile of breaks and mortar, a physical and material place? Although the documentary film can be viewed, and often is, viewed in/at a physical place, I would like to argue that, perhaps the documentary film is unique in that it occupies multiple places as commence and as a temporal archival site. The documentary film commences in a virtual archon that then becomes a temporal library of the carefully curated 'system of statements' (Foucault). This virtual library houses the 'law' that distinguishes between truth and falsity, a library with the principal logic and need to explain. Like a spatial space explained by Derrida, the virtual library can be accessed by the public. Seeing documentary film in this way means that a single documentary film can act as an archive – moving away, or rather being supplemented beyond its traditional form of the physical and material. This of course is not an original contribution to how the archive is constructed/ can be constructed in the technological and digital age. This paper borrows from Paul Voss and Martha Werner contributions to the subject in their paper *Towards a Poetics of the Archive Introduction*²⁴. Voss and Werner note that the archive is an ideologically charged space that is “both a physical site – an institutional space enclosed by protective walls – and an imaginative site – a conceptual space whose boundaries are forever changing”²⁵. As a conceptual/ imaginative site, the documentary film opens itself to the definition of the archive.

The documentary film can also be the object of the archive in a physical and material site, as is the case for the anti-Apartheid film movement after 1994, where many of the films were transferred and archived at various domiciles.

The anti-Apartheid film movement as an archival project in post-Apartheid South Africa finds its proper expression as a site that mobilizes historiographic metafiction that function to impose a constructed nature of meaning, showing that “history itself depends on conventions of narrative, language, and ideology in order to present an account of ‘what really happened’”, explains Linda Hutcheon in a brilliantly written book titled *A Poetics of Postmodernism History, Theory, Fiction*²⁶.

Using postmodern fiction Hutcheon argues that postmodernist fiction, situated ‘within the enunciative act itself and within the broader contextual framework implied by the act’ is a discourse-specific object that includes a ‘historical, social, and ideological context’²⁷. So the text is then ‘situated’ within these social and historical discourses. Hutcheon borrows from Said’s understanding of discourse that “texts are worldly, to some degree that they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, Human life, and of course, the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted” (Said, in Hutcheon)²⁸. So then, even by its definition as fiction texts, they are never outside of social systems that produce knowledge. Hutcheon explains that:

At first glance, it would seem that metafiction – which is by definition in some dominant and constitutive way self-referring and auto representational – would contradict, rather than support, this drive toward “situating” texts that recent metatheory is urging. However, it is part of the pragmatic paradox of postmodernist fiction that, while being drawn inward to the language and fictionality of the textual product (no longer the representation of a seemingly unmediated reality), the reader is simultaneously forced - overtly or covertly- into an active participation in its process of meaning production. The strategy of such fiction is to focus not on the author and reader as individual historical agents, but on the enunciatory processes of production and reception of language, of discourse²⁹.

This drive toward “situating” texts historicises. Hutcheon explains that the postmodern fiction functions to interpret reality through language. I would like to argue that the documentary film functions through a similar logic; of interpreting reality through the language of non-fiction cinema. Its logic is that of historicising. For Hutcheon, these are the ‘poetics of postmodernism’, or at least ‘the first steps’ in the formulation of such a poetics. Thinking through Eagleton and Said, Hutcheon, implores us that these first steps need to “examine the

conditions, act, and nature of enunciation, to look at the “kinds of effects which discourses produce, and how they produce them” (Eagleton in Hutcheon)³⁰ and to do so by examining the external, social constraints upon production and also “the discursive and cultural (that is, internal) systems that provoke and assimilate literary production” (Said in Hutcheon)³¹. I would like to borrow this from Hutcheon and formulate a poetics of the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, as an archival project in post-Apartheid South Africa.

In chapter 2, I discuss in length how the anti-Apartheid film movement came to be in the 1970's through the lifting of the ban on video technology and the introduction of television in 1976. These developments gave local filmmakers access to some filmmaking technology and with the growing resistance against Apartheid, both international and locally, so did the cinematic resistance against Apartheid. This cinematic resistance, we now know as the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, in the main, was constituted by White men with some relations to the broader liberation movement and the anti-Apartheid movement – which is the Congress/Charterist-inclined anti-Apartheid struggle. Many of these filmmakers, especially those with associations to the Video News Service (VNS), later called Afravision, were funded by organisations that had political interests, such as the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF). I do not want to repeat what has already been discussed in Chapter 2. However, it is important to note that the VNS was backed by the African National Congress (ANC) – then still an underground organization and acted in many ways as the visual arm of the ANC within the country documenting the mass democratic movement's events and rallies. Maingard explains that the VNS filmmakers worked on the basis of:

An ideologically derived political framework that proposes a symbiotic interconnection between the fight for the rights of workers - specifically and mostly black, urban, male workers affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) - and the national campaign for political freedom and democracy in South Africa³².

It is worth noting that COSATU is affiliated with the ANC, forming a tripartite alliance with the South African Communist Party. It is not surprising that COSATU regularly collaborated with VNS to make films for the general public. In one of their films; *Hlanganani: A Short History of COSATU*, a film made for national television audiences that presents the history of COSATU in a linear chronological fashion. Maingard explains that “all the way through the documentary, the point is made, and audiences are led to believe, that civil liberties and the

rights of workers are interlinked, and that in the fight for democracy COSATU was a significant force”³³. Through its cinematic techniques, the film cleverly weaves a narrative that political freedom and worker’s rights are connected, and that “these two features of South African life cannot be divorced from each other”³⁴, explains Maingard, and that “the future of political freedom continues to rest centrally on the status of the worker in society”³⁵.

In a book titled *Striking Back: a history of COSATU*, first published in 1991 by *Ravan Press* authored by Jeremy Baskin³⁶, it gives an account of the early years of COSATU and how the trade union movement was vital in the “demise of the apartheid regime and helped shape the post-apartheid order which followed”³⁷. Baskin writes that it is COSATU’s philosophy to combine an organisation that furthers and protects the interests of workers and a ‘need to be part of the broader, largely Congress oriented, anti-apartheid movement, whilst being socialist in aspiration’³⁸. When reading the book, it is difficult to separate COSATU from the ANC. The two always go together. Though, to be fair to the author, he does discuss that in the trade union movement, there were many ‘political tendencies’, from the United Democratic Front (UDF) bloc, the ‘independent worker’ bloc, and the ‘centre’ bloc. These divisions had different strategies, views and political links that often did not align with the ANC. However I do not think that these divisions were irreconcilable. It is my belief that they always found common ground, which, I guess, is testament to the fact that the tripartite alliance is still standing until today. The ANC stalwart and academic Raymond Suttner (in Jody Cedras and Jerry Kuye) describes this union as “without precedent on the African continent and with few parallels elsewhere in the world”³⁹. In the same article, Cedras and Kuye write that:

Somewhere between common interest and divergent interest positions reside what can be termed twilight interests. One member may have a strong view of certain policies whilst, in the interest of the Alliance, the leading member would usually consent, but not necessarily share the same conviction as the partner advocating certain positions. An example of this is evident in employment-related policies. COSATU, as a workers’ movement, has strong views on the notion of decent work. Whilst the ANC may share this value (which was confirmed through the Polokwane resolutions), its position as a broad-based organisation, is informed by responding to a myriad of constituents that span across the class formations, including the unemployed, the poor as well as organised business. In this instance, it will contend with the COSATU position, whilst seeking to find a solution that will not compromise the national economy as it pertains to the labour market⁴⁰.

The ANC's 'broad church' policy identity makes it an attractive party to be in alliance with. The common ground is easily reached because the different divisions are not that far apart. Let us not forget that those who did not agree with the ANC's 'broad church' identity were crowned out/ left the party/movement and formed alternative structures. One prominent example of this is the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), often called 'nationalists' while still inside the ANC, lead and influenced by such leaders as Pixley ka Isa ka Seme and Anton Lembede. This Charterist and Nationalist division was so sharp that at the end, common ground could not be reached and thus the church broke. This sharp disagreement is well documented and continued post-Apartheid with the Nationalist group being crowded out of history; out of a national understanding of a struggle for South Africa and against Apartheid^{iv}. The new post-Apartheid nation is lead to believe that only the Charterist group, that is to say the ANC, was the only movement that lead, championed and fought for the end of Apartheid. The online archive: *South African History Online* writes that:

The PAC's origins came about as a result of the lack of consensus on the Africanist debate within the African National Congress (ANC). When the Freedom Charter was adopted at Kilptown in 1955, those who championed the Africanist ideological stance felt that this was a betrayal of the struggle. The deepening of political differences broke out into the open in November 1958. At the Transvaal provincial congress of the ANC, 'Africanist' members were excluded from the hall. This group of people resolved to break away from the ANC and form a political party⁴¹.

COSATU and the ANC are not incongruous to each other. In fact just a quick read through both the groups foundational texts one finds common ground. For instance, the ANC constitution declares that:

^{iv} Perhaps a detour. I find Mogobe Ramose's argument (in Ramose. 2007. *In Memoriam: Sovereignty and the 'New' South Africa*. Griffith Law Review. Page, 320) about the sovereignty and the new South Africa quite fitting here. Ramose questions the new South Africa's logic of freedom and how it archived it, as a compromise by the ruling party. He writes "[t]he proliferation of 'anti-apartheid' organisations, especially in Western Europe, certainly made a positive contribution towards freedom in South Africa. However, they had the infelicitous effect of misleading the gullible into the belief that apartheid in South Africa was the fundamental problem. Abolish apartheid, so the reasoning went, then all shall be fine. In this way, the question of freedom in South Africa was reduced to the problem of the constitutional recognition of the 'civil rights' of the conquered peoples of South Africa. Thus, an all-inclusive constitution, recognising the 'civil rights' of all the peoples of South Africa, was deemed to be the solution to the apartheid problem. On this reasoning, it was unnecessary to question the morality and political legitimacy of the 'right of conquest' because South Africa belonged to all who lived in it".

The ANC is committed to end apartheid in all its forms and transform South Africa as rapidly as possible into a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic country based on the principles of the Freedom Charter and in pursuit of the national democratic revolution⁴².

Almost as if the documents were written by the same person, COSATU, at its 10th National Congress appealed for a programme for:

Transformation, setting out the short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives to deepen the NDR and the attainment of socialism. The programme will reflect the multitude of challenges facing the working class at the point of production and reproduction; and in all sites of power, the state, judiciary and the media.

The adhesive substance that binds these two entities together, making them almost indistinguishable, if at all they are, beyond the same slogans and chants, is that they both sing from the same hymn book of Marxist–Leninism, alias communism. Although the ANC with its ‘broad church’ identity can sound like an oxymoron.

The Marxist–Leninist hymn book is opened at the national democratic revolution, as is evidenced by the cited paragraphs above. The idea of a national democratic revolution is a Marxist–Leninist philosophic program for less developed worlds/ ex/former colonial/ and dependent countries. The idea comes directly from a 1960 international Communist conclave of workers and communists who met in Moscow to fashion an ideological blueprint for Communist policy in these parts of the world. This policy is the concept of the ‘national democratic state’. This idea is seen as a “theoretical governmental model, described as a transitional state structure appropriate for less-developed societies”, writes William T. Shinn, Jr⁴³. This national democratic state is thought of as a ‘national democratic front’ for less developed worlds who are sold to the idea of a “non-capitalist path of development in opposition to imperialism and towards national autonomy”⁴⁴ explain Cedras and Kuye.

At the time African states were gaining their independence in the 1960 moving forward. Many, if not all, of them were underdeveloped and agrarian. The western educated leaders of these states, who were persuaded by Marxism, soon realised that Marxism had to go through some theoretical modifications for it to be applicable to the African context. Perhaps the most prominent articulations of this is Julius Nyerere’s policy of *Ujamaa* in Tanzania. On top of the

challenge of underdevelopment and non-industrialisation, the national governments of the newly independent states only had political power, and that alone was not enough to affect change. The colonial masters still had economic monopoly over its colonies. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the first country in Africa to gain its independence soon coined the term, Neo-colonialism, presumably seeing that after independence, it is difficult to move forward as the former colonial powers still had interests in their colonies, and without economic power. Cedras and Kuye write that:

The NDR has historically been understood to be a revolution led by progressive motive forces (mainly oppressed and exploited), to defeat repressive and colonial regimes and build people's democracies. While the objective was regime change in favour of socialism, it was recognised that there were also circumstances where, due to domestic or global balance of forces, such a revolution is unable to immediately proceed to socialism. This could be because the motive forces are either not strong or conscious enough to drive the revolution towards socialism or other objective factors pose a limitation to a transition to socialism⁴⁵.

This is the fuel that drives the ANC and COSATU. This is the common 'motive force' ground that binds them together; 'a program for ultimate Communist revolution in South Africa', as Shinn also notes⁴⁶.

Archiving Apartheid: The Poetics of the Anti-Apartheid Documentary Film Movement

There's no such thing as the voice of society
It is discord and tones in there
Myriad noises clashing
Letting blood
Preserve what history?
Who's story?
When it is the telling of official lies
Ghosts of butchered pasts and phantoms of their aborted futures
Rendered concrete in this present
Who's to blast at forgetfulness
Fuck off with your suffering they say
Otherwise come over to the green side with us

Selective amnesia

Collective mind shedding

Coming together in ubuntu aesthetic

But who's got the keys to the national archives?

Who controls?

Who decides what belongs there?

And who recycles as power to the people goes the way of all vinyl records?

Scratched

– Lesego Rampolokeng in *Oratorio of A Forgotten Youth* ^{47v}.

This archive favours the ANC/is sponsored by the ANC/ and in many ways is the ANC. The archive, that is to say, the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement then functions to validate a historical understanding of the ANC as freedom fighters and maintaining the myth of the ANC as the only movement and political party that fought against Apartheid and that can only lead the new post-Apartheid nation into the future^{vi}. These are the poetics of the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, as an archival project in post-Apartheid South Africa. Mbembe once again reminds us that “the final destination of the archive is therefore always situated outside its own materiality, in the story that it makes possible”⁴⁸. I want to read the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement archive in this light. The ideological and cultural dynamics that shape this archive, I argue, are objects of silences and erasure of the multiplicity of political persuasions, ideologies and anti-Apartheid movements that fought against Apartheid. For the purposes of making my point clear, I re-cite Blouin again, “the archive, then, is formed of records may be but are not necessarily received as historical sources”⁴⁹. I cited this earlier in the paper, and cite it again here to emphasise my point on how the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement archive, as a curated source of myth making in post-Apartheid South Africa functions as a national archive. What I did not cite earlier is that Blouin continues and discusses how the archive:

^v The South African writer and poet (of the lost generation of Apartheid) Lesego Rampolokeng in the ‘jazz’ album project “*The Oratorio of a Forgotten Youth*” by Amandla Freedom Ensemble in the song aptly titled “*#Movement/Soldiers Lament*” pens this poem. A sonic theorization on the post-Apartheid democratic ANC lead dispensation.

^{vi} Zimitri Erasmus (in Erasmus, Zimitri. 2017. *Race Otherwise: Forging a New Humanism for South Africa*. Page, 18) tells the story of her return to the new South Africa after 1994 from Holland, where she was studying towards her PhD. Upon her return to the new South Africa, Erasmus, a colored South Africa, found herself at odds with the (new) politics of the land; “Shortly after 1994” writes Erasmus, some activists described South African politics as ‘African chauvinist’ – an exclusionary politics that was premised on a narrow and reified conception of what it means to be African; a politics that narrowly designated who had contributed to the anti-Apartheid struggle, who was eligible for the benefits of ‘freedom’, and who was eligible to participate in the making of a democratic South Africa”.

In this essentialist construct is presented as independent of any historiographical construct. Yet it could be argued that the archive still operates within certain cultural and political norms, of which the archivist may or may not be aware. These norms may be implicit in the formation of the archive, most notably in the formation of a national archive. The mediating function of culture and politics embedded in these norms, often in the name of tradition, is not always apparent in the representation of the content of the archive⁵⁰.

Blouin continues to argue that the archive:

While removed from explicit historiographical frameworks, the archive in its selection, organisation, and presentation may implicitly reinforce certain cultural and political constructs, which, in shaping the content of the record, also shape how we come to know the past⁵¹.

The new post-Apartheid South African nation likes to think of itself as ‘the rainbow’ nation. A nation made up of different cultures, traditions, races, as well as a melting pot of political ideologies and philosophies. It assumes that Apartheid is a finished event. But what the rainbow hides and hides so well is that step of black across the multi-cultural colour spectrum. The rainbow is built on the erasure of those who suffered under Apartheid; their stories, grammars of suffering, and ways of Being. The archive of the rainbow nation is indeed a colourful one, but it does so at the expense of the silencing of many voices. How we come to know one of the most painful moments in the nation’s history, from beginning to end – if there is a beginning and if the end was, is a work of exclusion and silences. But because the rainbow is an object that functions to absorb everyone into its logic, we are lead to believe that the archive is an institution of totality and continuity that belongs to everyone in the nation. Mbembe explains this as “the alchemy of the archive”⁵². This alchemy of the archive is the idea that the archive is generally assumed to be the case that it belongs to everyone, but not necessarily so, at least not yet. Mbembe maintains that this idea that the archive creates/ or intends to create a “community of time, the feeling according to which we would all be heirs to a time over which we might exercise the rights of collective ownership: this is the imaginary that the archive seeks to disseminate”⁵³.

1994 is assumed to represent a radical break with the past, both politically – in terms of the changes in administrations and symbolically – where the rainbow forms. 1994 represents the

death of Apartheid, the closure of singularity and the promise of a multiplicity of emergences. The archive, as a creation of a community of time, and an alchemy, mediates between the past and future. Mbembe explains it as such:

This time of co-ownership, however, rests on a fundamental event: death. Death to the extent that the archived document par excellence is, generally, a document whose author is dead and which, obviously, has been closed for the required period before it can be accessed. The test represented by this closure, this extension of the period of time and the resulting distance from the immediate present, adds to the archive content of the document. Other than in exceptional cases, it is only at the end of this period of closure that the archived document is as if woken from sleep and returned to life. It can, from then on, be ‘consulted’. The term ‘consulted’ shows clearly that we are no longer talking about just any document, but of this particular document, which has the power, because of a legal designation, to enlighten those who are engaged in an ‘inquiry’ into time inherited in co-ownership⁵⁴.

3 years shy after the formal death of Apartheid, the South African Department of Arts and Culture established the Robben Island Museum^{vii}, thereby ending the period of closure and awakening the ghosts to be consulted on the past, the present and the future of the nation. The Robben Island Museum “is a public entity responsible for managing, maintaining, presenting, developing and marketing Robben Island as a national estate and World Heritage Site”⁵⁵ and houses, among others, the Mayibuye Archives (or the IDAF/Mayibuye collections) – of which the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement forms a large part of. The Mayibuye Centre itself was established in 1992 at the University of the Western Cape, following the unbanning of many organizations fighting against Apartheid in 1990 and the closure of the IDAF. The centre is one of the largest archives of liberation struggle materials in South Africa. I single the centre out in this paper because of its standing in the country as a national archive.

The South African government wanted to consolidated the archive to speak to the ‘time inherited in co-ownership’. It did this by incorporating the IDAF/Mayibuye collections into the Robben Island Museum, however managed by the University. On 4 September 1996, the cabinet of South Africa recommended that “in order to equip the new Robben Island Museum in an expeditious and cost effective way, the Minister should request UWC to agree to the incorporation of the Mayibuye Centre... in to the Robben Island Institution”, reads the

^{vii} Established as a cultural institution in terms of section 3 of the Cultural Institutions Act No. 119 of 1998.

memorandum of agreement between the two parties. The memorandum further reads that “the incorporation of the Mayibuye Collection into RIM [Robben Island Museum] will bring the New Archives increased funding and capacity, greater recognition of status, and possibilities for future growth”⁵⁶.

After the formal death of Apartheid, the government needed to create myths and legends to validate a historical understanding of the ANC as freedom fighters and protectors of the new nation. Rushil Ranchod in a book titled *A Kind of Magic: The Political Marketing of the ANC* aptly puts it as such:

The symbolic cache the ANC developed in the period of struggle resonates in the democratic era. It galvanises the party and stimulates excitement. It endows the ANC with a sense of historical rectitude, and renders its myth-making tangible⁵⁷.

The ANC soon realised that it needed to ‘historicise’ itself and have hegemony over the memory of the past, and the archive – as it concerns the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement housed at the Mayibuye centre – then becomes an important instrument to facilitate this status. The full name of the new archive became known as ‘*The University of the Western Cape Robben Island Museum Mayibuye Archives*’. The shortened name known as ‘the *UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives*’.

The ANC in government post-Apartheid uses memory of the past for strategic political ends^{viii}. Chitja Twala in a paper titled *The African National Congress (ANC) and the Construction of Collective Memory and Its impact in the Post-apartheid Era*⁵⁸, argues that the ANC invokes history of the struggle against Apartheid to ‘profile itself within the South African political constituencies’⁵⁹. The ANC and its use of the archive deliberately makes repetitive references to key events that favour the ANC and constantly mentions ANC personalities in its history as

^{viii} Lesego Rampolokeng writes in a sonic poem that:

Our heroes do not come from among us
they are handed down by officialdom
as we chase the future
the past bites us in the ass
Soweto stone throwers grown up to be mush mellow warriors in Sandton

This speaks to the idea of the ANC’s use of memory for strategic political ends. This memory is selective and praises ANC heroes who are now “mush mellow warriors in Sandton” as Rampolokeng argues (in Amandla Freedom Ensemble. 2023. *Oratorio of A Forgotten Youth*. Mandla Mlangeni Music).

a way to instigate a sense of collective remembering. So then there is an active selective use of collective memory by the ANC post 1994 that distorts the composition and understating of public memory on the fight against Apartheid. Twala aptly puts it as such:

Historically, the question of collective memory played a significant role in identity formation of the ANC. As initially indicated, collective memory plays an important role in the formulation of the references of the ANC's identity. Thus, the renegotiation of collective memory either by regulatory standards or by historical circumstances causes, as a consequence, a change in the identity of the organisation⁶⁰.

The post-Apartheid nation is constituted by an ideological, cultural and artistic discourse that favours the ANC. So entrenched in the collective memory of the new nation that it becomes impossible to divorce the ANC from the struggle narrative. This struggle narrative of the ANC is an "active, non-stop procedure"⁶¹, Twala reminds us.

State Institutions and Post-Apartheid Cinema

The ruling party continues its ideological discursive hegemony over the memory of the past, and the archive – its 'time inherited in co – ownership', through a state subsidized company called the *National Film & Video Foundation* (NFVF). The NFVF is a statutory body of the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture that was created in 1997 and is mandated by the new nations parliament to ensure the reasonable growth of South Africa's film and video industry post-Apartheid. In its declaratory Act^{ix}, the NFVF's states that its main functions are:

(a) to develop and promote the film and video industry; (b) to provide, and encourage the provision of, opportunities for persons, especially from disadvantaged communities, to get involved in the film and video industry; (c) to encourage the development and distribution of local film and video products; (d) to support the nurturing and development of and access to the film and video industry; and (e) in respect of the film and video industry, to address historical imbalances in the infrastructure and distribution of skills and resources.

The NFVF exists solely as an instrument of the government to create and support constitutional democracy through the development of a national cinema. Philip Rosen in *Theorising National*

^{ix} National Film and Video Foundation Act 73 of 1997.

Cinema (in Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen)⁶² describes national cinema as a conceptualisation that is characterised by its selection of the films the nation produces that share a ‘general symptom’ of being associated with a particular nation–state. That share a general history or tradition. Lucia Saks⁶³ reminds us that the NFVF is modelled after the ANC’s socio – economic plans, in particular the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)^x and the Growth, Employment And Redistribution (GEAR) plan that “models transformation in postcolonial, nationalist terms and interprets filmmakers as deserving of state patronage because they are cultural workers participating in the construction of South African cinema/media”⁶⁴, explains. She further argues that South Africa post 1994 “view of cinema is prescriptive, idealistic, artisanal, and auteurist”⁶⁵.

The NFVF as a national cinema, and/ or rather as an institution that strive to become a national cinema in post–Apartheid south Africa privileges certain narratives over others. It is essentially ‘a product of judgement, a matter of discrimination and of selection, to invite Mbembe⁶⁶ once more. The NFVF and its sister companies, the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTI), through its selection of (national) films then function as ‘system of statements’, to invoke Foucault. The documentary film, in general and specifically that which deals with the representation of Apartheid and the past, that speaks to the ‘collective memory of the new nation’ is deemed generally archivable and as such incorporated to the general work of the state, alias, the Rainbow nation. Martin Botha (in Julie Reid) reminds us that:

Film is an important part of the cultural domain in any country, but particularly so in South Africa where social change depends on the quality of communication in the society. Communication is one of the cornerstones of democracy, and film and video can make an important contribution to the democratisation and development that need to take place within this society ... as forms of popular fiction, films and videos such ... can explore the changes taking place in South Africa in a way that helps people to make sense of these dramatic changes⁶⁷.

The mobilization of historiographic metafiction – through the films produced and funded by the NFVF, function to impose a constructed nature of meaning, showing that “history itself

^x 1994 to 1996.

depends on conventions of narrative, language, and ideology in order to present an account of ‘what really happened’⁶⁸.

Independent filmmakers who function outside of the rainbow find it hard to articulate themselves and their messages as they are crowded out of the discussive collective vocabulary. Liani Maasdorp explains that for “most South African filmmakers engaged in bringing non-fiction stories to the screen, exhibition opportunities have been scarce and their filmmaking practice have been dominated by the demands of local broadcasters”⁶⁹. The demands of the local broadcasters function within the discussive collective vocabulary of the rainbow nation. Documentary films “that do not align with conventionality subsequently run into serious troubles because it is hard to obtain measurable data on innovation”, explains Luke Slade in an MA thesis titled *Silence at the end of the rainbow: an analysis of the effects of rainbowism on post-apartheid South African cinema*⁷⁰.

Astrid Treffry-Goatley in a similar fashion argues that the NFVF through its funding model:

Can have a considerable influence on the ways that local stories are told. This homogenisation of storytelling, however, can be seen to impinge on a filmmaker’s right to freedom of expression granted by the National Constitution (Chapter Two, Section 16). In addition to working within formulaic artistic conventions, filmmakers might find that their work is further controlled by the hegemonic national discourse of reconciliation and multiculturalism⁷¹.

Treffry-Goatley further argues that the NFVF is attempting to run a ‘cultural mafia’ that promotes a rigid ‘nationalist discourse’. Slade brilliantly asks “if a filmmaker’s voice is being heard, but they are being told what to say by the state then what is the point of speaking?”⁷². I would like to put it through that the NFVF then plays a critical role in the social and political collective memory of the post-Apartheid nation and is instrumental in locating the ANC at the centre of liberation and post-independent political narratives^{xi} – also noted by Ranchod⁷³.

^{xi} While there are films produced in the post-Apartheid era that are funded by the same institutions and are critical of the state and the post-Apartheid dispensation. For example, films like Rehad Desai’s (2014) *Miners Shot Down* (Funded by NFVF), Richard Pakleppa and Catherine Meyburgh (2018) *Dying for Gold* (funded by DTI), these do not disprove my claims. What I’m trying to argue is that there are general ideological and cultural dynamics (institutional discursive power) that the films and filmmakers have to conform to for them to be regarded as a part of the post-Apartheid nation – and thereby to be seen as constructed/ and constructive in/for knowledge and truth. This post-Apartheid rainbow discursive economy regulates the way the nation talks about and rationalises knowledge. In this sense the post-Apartheid cinematic language becomes indistinguishable from the post-Apartheid rainbow nation project. So then post-Apartheid cinema is about the arrangement of the national cinema

II.

Zamasele Nsele in a remarkable PhD thesis titled *Post-Apartheid Nostalgia and the Future of the Black Visual Archive*⁷⁴ suggests that the 1994 socio-political transition instituted a discursive vocabulary on temporality. This discursive vocabulary, she argues, finds expression in art discourse. This is important in helping us understand how the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, as an archival project, functions as a post-Apartheid temporality. Nsele argues that Apartheid visual scenes, read against/ or in connection to the project of post-Apartheid South Africa as ‘the arrival of the future’ – with the prefix “post” signifying the arrival of a “new” nation – does not escape/ or rather does not exhaust itself in reminding us about ‘the unfinished business of the past’. For Nsele, the new nation that is post-Apartheid South Africa is characterised by historical dissonance. She cites Derek Hook to give clarity to this idea: “South African experience is characterized by historical dissonance, by the continuous juxtaposition of forward and backward looking temporalities”⁷⁵. A day in post-Apartheid South Africa is characterised by protest actions and strikes that carry with them songs of memories of the past. For instance, Sisanda Nkoala in *Songs that Shaped the Struggle: a Rhetorical Analysis of South African Struggle Songs*⁷⁶, argues that struggle music in South Africa is a persuasive means of engaging in political communication. Songs in many ways can serve the function of keepers of memory/ as an affective structure that carries the memories of political icons/martyrs and of markers of the lived experiences and communicative expressions of Black people under Apartheid. Without labouring too much on this point. We see that describing political/ struggle songs in this way means that songs can be read as archives. Simon Frith describes that songs occupy a position of “establishing the communicative situation as with communicating, and more to do with articulating a feeling than explaining it”⁷⁷. Political/struggle songs then are archives of political expressions under Apartheid. These songs, which happen to feature a lot in the films of the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, are a hallmark of the post-Apartheid South African socio-political society. The point I am trying to make here is a re-articulation of Nsele’s argument of the historical dissonance that designate the post-Apartheid South African nation to show how the archive of the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement is integrated in to the logic of the post-

and historiographic metafiction in the image of the rainbow. It produces, if you will, an epistemological post-Apartheid rainbow cinema.

Apartheid South African socio-political society through its ‘juxtaposition of forward and backward looking temporalities’.

Footage of the archive of the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, along with its sonic accompaniment of struggle songs, is often used as an affective – cognitive impulse in relation to ‘history, culture and the future of society’ (Chrostowska in Nsele)⁷⁸ in South Africa post-Apartheid. Let us consider documentary films made after Apartheid covering the history of the struggle against the system of Apartheid funded/ and or supported by the NFVF. Five of such films^{xii}; *Amandla! A Revolution In Four-Part Harmony* (2003) by Lee Hirsch, *Have You Heard From Johannesburg?: Apartheid And The Club Of The West* (2007) by Connie Field, *Murder in Paris* directed by Enver Samuel (2021), *Mama Africa* directed by Mika Kaurismäki (2011) and *Under African Skies* by Joe Berlinger (2012).

These films are a good example of the post-Apartheid temporality of the juxtaposition of forward and backward looking. All five films come out of the filmmaking craze that arises after 1994 about ‘the epic apartheid story of good vs. evil filled with archetypal heroes and villains, colourful characters, inspiring music, and a happy ending’, as Kristin Pichaske⁷⁹ put it, and these interventions rely heavily on the use of the anti-Apartheid documentary film archive in their cinematic narrative structuring and perform a constructed nature of meaning of which its object is the struggle for hegemony over the collective memory of the post-Apartheid nation. Because these films rely so heavily on the archive, they are somewhat aesthetically the same. So I will treat them as one film, making a few references here and there to each individual film. The reference to a specific film should not be seen as unique to the film as such, however generalisable to all the five films – and to the post-Apartheid archive as it concerns the anti-Apartheid documentary film at large.

Amandla! explores how the sonic played an equally important function in the fight against Apartheid, whereas *Have You Heard From Johannesburg* documents the movement for the American call for sanctions against Apartheid South Africa and how that movement helped to persuade the USA foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa. *Under African Skies* tells

^{xii} Hirsch, Field and Berlinger are American filmmakers, and their films are made with funding from American philanthropic organizations, with support from the South African state – through the NFVF. Kaurismäki a Finnish film director and Enver Samuel is the only South African filmmaker in the list. Samuel is also the director of *Someone to Blame - The Ahmed Timol Inquest* (2018) about the inquiry on the death and brutal murder of Ahmed Timol in 1971.

the story of Paul Simon, a white American musician, and his return to South Africa 25 years after the making and release of his *Graceland* album (I talk more this journey in chapter 6). The Film covers a similar theme as *Have You Heard From Johannesburg* of Sanctions. The album, *Graceland*, received political backlash for allegedly breaking the UN boycott and sanctions Against Apartheid South Africa – In 1962 November, the United Nations General Assembly passed *Resolution 1761*. The resolution was a non – binding article condemning Apartheid South African policies. The resolution called for the imposition of economic and other sanctions on the country. *Murder in Paris* attempts to uncover the impulse for the assassination of the anti-Apartheid activist, Dulcie September in 1988, while *Mama Africa* is a biographical documentary film about Miriam Makeba, a popular South African singer and political activist, dubbed, Mama Africa, the queen of African music.

Now, having watched the film, I think that *Amandla!* A film about the role of music in the struggle labours too hard to show us the horrors of Apartheid but fails. The film uses the archive in a rather simplistic way. The archival footage the film employs is without context to the music on the film or the interviews. The archival footage is often random, generic and temporally out of place and do not show a complex and nuanced depiction of Apartheid^{xiii}. This idealised depiction of the struggle speaks to Nsele’s idea of “the visual memory work of nostalgia that infamously sanitises as it selects”⁸⁰. These images, Nsele reminds us ‘gratify while mystifying the common senses of post-Apartheid South Africa’⁸¹. My argument here is that *Amandla!*’s labour to focus on the sonic while using archival footage in a way that it does speaks to Nsele’s ruminations on post-Apartheid visual culture as operating within/ with a structure of feeling of nostalgia that situates us to ‘remember the past with fondness’ and as such ‘implicates the lurking spectre of Black suffering as unthought’⁸². *Have You Heard From Johannesburg* and *Under African Skies* do not escape this operative. In the films, we are positioned to remember the history of the struggle against Apartheid through a nostalgic structure of feeling that centres the ANC. In one of the scenes in *Under African Skies*, Harry Belafonte is heard saying “when I spoke to Paul, I said that I think that it’s great that you are going [to South Africa] and I think that you should let the ANC know, let Oliver Tambo and the leadership know. The ANC, the African National Congress, was the voice of Black South Africans, I can introduce you to the powers that prevail to let them know what you are doing”. This narrative, what Crain Soudien

^{xiii} see Ian Barnard’s review of *Amandla!* (In Barnard, Ian. 2003. *Review of Amandla!: A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony* (film). African Arts, MIT Press).

in a rather ‘interesting’ book, calls ‘triumphalist memory’⁸³ is ubiquitous and generalised in these films.

In an interview with the *New York Times*, the director of *Have You Heard From Johannesburg*, Connie Field, notes that “the struggle against apartheid was not just a South African story.. this was the largest and most globalized human rights struggle of the 20th century, and unique in that what the outside world was asked to do was very strategic”⁸⁴. She continues, “it’s really a model of how people in a country in an oppressive situation can work with people elsewhere” to “move from racism and colonialism to more democratic societies”⁸⁵. The film achieves this through a discourse that favours the ANC and the new nations collective memory of the ANC as sine qua non, inimitable and absolute freedom fighters. The images of ANC leaders and politics that form the structure of the film work as objects/images of common sense^{xiv} in post-Apartheid South Africa. This discourse, of erasure, discrimination and selection is an object of a structure of nostalgic feeling – “a method of remembering and forgetting that perpetually seeks to escape the present”⁸⁶, Nsele explains in her definition of Nostalgia.

In one of the scenes in *Mama Africa*, the main Subject of the film, Marriem Makeba, is seen speaking at the United Nations in New York in 1963. In her speech, she highlights the atrocities of Apartheid South Africa, especially after the Sharpeville massacre. To make her point, she mentions the ‘leaders that were forced to go underground.. jailed and detained or restricted... which include Nelson Mandela, Lilian Ngoyi, and Walter Sisulu’. All 3 leaders are ANC affiliated. Sharpeville massacre, which was a PAC lead campaign, is mentioned, however when it is mentioned in this context with ANC leaders it is assumed that the event was an ANC lead event. This is accompanied by visuals of protest actions in South Africa, of people marching carrying placards that centre the ANC. Towards the end of the film, we see Marriam Makeba returning back home to South Africa, not long before we were told about the release of Nelson Mandela and the jubilations that painted the streets; *yellow, black and green*. So then the historical rectitude of the ANC is maintained.

The Deleted Archive^{xv}: The Black As That Which Cannot Be Archived

^{xiv} I am thinking through Kara Keeling here (in Keeling, Kara. 2007. *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense*. Duke University Press).

^{xv} This concept of the *deleted archive* is borrowed from Michal Ben-Naftali (2016) and their discussion of literary works which observe from different subject positions elderly people in an acute condition of illness, mostly Alzheimer’s disease, and how that challenges the idea of constituted memory and the archive.

But we reach a problem with historical narration, or what the historiographer does with the archival material retrieved. Historiographical narration is not a philosophically neutral enterprise; it is loaded with philosophical presumptions, primarily metaphysical humanism. As Possenti asserts, “it is precisely metaphysics that keeps watch over history; not because it engulfs or digests history as irrelevant, but because it can direct history toward its goal”⁸⁷.

The deleted archive constitutes the condition that enables the stay in the nursing home – no one takes into account who and what you have been in the past; on the other hand, in such a situation, too, power relations are produced, nourished by concrete or imaginary privileges that involve the outside world⁸⁸.

Up to this point, I have been narrating the history of the documentary film within a Humanist framework. This narration assumes that the concept of Being is universal even to Blacks who experience captivity and systemic discrimination. The proposition that this framework rests upon is not on ontological basis but rather on liberties and rights that are conjured to be universal – even to Blacks^{xvi}. However it has to be asked, can the Black figure surmise as a source of the record? Can the Black be archived? Is it fit to be ‘archivable’? Is the Black a worthy source to be a status of history? Calvin Warren, as also cited in the epigraph, reminds us that “historiography reinforces philosophical humanism”⁸⁹. The argument here is that Blacks are excluded from Humanity, but are however conveniently incorporated into Humanistic narratives (of universal rights and liberties) without addressing the ontological question. Warren puts it like this: “Blacks incarnate nothing in a metaphysical world and that the world is both fascinated with this nothing and terrified of it”⁹⁰. Mbembe, in *Critique of Black Reason*, summarises it as such: “to be Black is to be stuck at the foot of a wall with no doors, thinking nonetheless that everything will open up in the end”⁹¹. But nothing ever opens up in the end. If this is the case, then the archive, as it relates to Blacks is under suspicion. We have to ask then, does the hegemonic epistemology, that is to say, western imagination, recognise the figure of the Black as a proper object of knowledge? Sylvia Wynter proposes that:

^{xvi} In the same book, Warren writes that the “term black is precisely the puzzle, the great abyss, of something outside the precincts of ontology. It is a metaphysical invention, void of Being, for the purpose of securing Being for the human. It has something like existence but no recourse to the unfolding of Being or the revelation of its withdrawal. It is nothing—the nonhuman, equipment, and the mysterious”. Page, 15.

On the basis of the first part of its title, that all of these Questions, ones that in the wake of the attaining of political independence by the former colonies or of the ending of segregation in the United States would come to be labeled instead as the Third-World and “Minority” Questions, now need to be redescribed in the terms of an issue that is specific to them—yet one that has hitherto had no name, seeing that it cannot exist as an “object of knowledge” within the terms of our present order of knowledge any more than, as Foucault points out, biological life could have existed as an object of knowledge in the classical (and in my terms, the pre-bourgeois) episteme⁹².

So then the Black cannot/ does not exist as an object of knowledge, at least under the current hegemony. What then if the Black is inserted into the archive as a source of knowledge? This would be a contradiction, if not impossible, as the Black is the Other, if not the nothing of/in the archive. Can a nothing ever be archived. Wynter elaborates that:

This issue is that of the genre of the human, the issue whose target of abolition is the ongoing collective production of our present ethnoclass mode of being human, Man: above all, its overrepresentation of its well-being as that of the human species as a whole, rather than as it is veridically: that of the Western and westernized (or conversely) global middle classes⁹³.

The Black disarticulates the conception of the archive because the Black is that figure that is positioned outside of the political order and is open to the structure of exception that constitutes contemporary biopower. The Black is akin, but not quite, to Agamben’s *homo sacer*⁹⁴. That is, that sacred man who may be killed by anyone but not sacrificed^{xvii}. The Black is the deleted archive. If archive is anything to go by. Because, you cannot archive that which does not exist. I say deleted here, not that the Black archive existed/ or is constantly being produced and deleted by hegemonic powers. Deleted because it has been stripped of its quality and character to be an archive. Deleted because it exists in non-existence. For the *homo sacer*, banishment from society and the Human is contingent on a crime but for the Black crime is not a determinant for banishment. The Black is always already banished and therefore exists as a figure that, “the annihilation of life unworthy of being lived”⁹⁵, to quote Agamben, is a persistent condition. The Black then exists in parallel to the Human and the *homo sacer* as, what Wynter calls ‘Man’s Human Other’^{xviii} and/ or irrational Human Other. Being Mans

^{xvii} In chapter 4 I show how the Black is both killed and sacrificed, so it is not a true reflection of a *homo sacer*.

^{xviii} Wynter is citing Jacob Pandian here.

Human Other or irrational Human Other it is not conceivable that this Other can be a reliable source of knowledge, if a source at all. Wynter explains it as such:

It is in this context that the Negro, the Native, the Colonial Questions, and postcolonially the “Underdeveloped” or Third/Fourth-Worlds Question can be clearly seen to be the issue, not of our present mode of economic production, but rather of the ongoing production and reproduction of this answer—that is, our present biocentric ethnoclass genre of the human, of which our present techno-industrial, capitalist mode of production is an indispensable and irreplaceable, but only a proximate function. With this genre of the human being one in the terms of whose dually biogenetic and economic notions of freedom both the peoples of African hereditary descent and the peoples who comprise the damned archipelagoes of the Poor, the jobless the homeless, the “underdeveloped” must lawfully be sacrificed as a function of our continuing to project our collective authorship of our contemporary order onto the imagined agency of Evolution and Natural Selection and, by extrapolation, onto the “Invisible Hand” of the “Free Market” (both being cultural and class-specific constructs)⁹⁶.

Wynter is thinking with and through an old question in America of ‘what to do with negros’. For Negros, as Wynter explains, occupy a “space of Otherness” in the Western imagination and have never been considered proper criterions for knowledge, if at all. She explains that while from the Renaissance onwards:

Western intellectuals have, by means of the development of the natural sciences, enabled us to obtain nonadaptive knowledge of our nonhuman levels of reality, we have hitherto had no such parallel knowledge with respect to ourselves and the nature-culture laws that govern our modes of being, of behaving, of mind, or of minding⁹⁷.

The sciences and their privileging of reason in the modern era created an epistemic ungrounding of the modes of social life of people outside of the Western imagination making it possible for an idea of a “life unworthy of life”, as Wynter notes it. The modern era for the Black marks an originary displacement. It is the introduction of the unpeopling of the Black from Being. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni⁹⁸ calls this ‘coloniality of knowledge/ coloniality of Being’. The Black is rearticulated according to racialised stereotypes of otherness as that outside of the “World Spirit”, as the Western philosopher George Hegel⁹⁹ puts it. To remind ourselves, it was Hegel who said that Negros have “not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence”. The Negro, according to the ‘great’ Western philosopher, is a

thing without language. That which only contains what is already dead^{xix}. In his own words, Hegel writes:

The peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that in reference to it, we must quite give up the principle which naturally accompanies all our ideas— the category of Universality. In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence ... in which the interest of man's volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being. This distinction between himself as an individual and universality of his essential being, the African in the uniform, undeveloped oneness of his existence has not yet attained.... We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality— all that we call feeling— if we would rightly comprehend him.... At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History¹⁰⁰.

My argument here is that Blackness/ and or the Black figure cannot be a referent for knowledge. Blackness constitutes ontological lack. To use Agamben's words, it is "that which does not have language"¹⁰¹. Of course Agamben is theorising on the position of the *homo sacer* that, to remind ourselves, becomes so as a result of a sin committed against the community – and as such outside of the protection of the law and the moral order. For the Black, my argument is that this sin does not have to be committed in the first instance. It is always already imposed

^{xix} Abiola Irele (in Hountondji Paulin J, Evans Henri, Irele Abiola, Rée Jonathan. 1983. *African philosophy: myth and reality*. Hutchinson University Library for Africa. Page, 12) reminds us that the Western imagination of itself as Human is legitimised in its conception of Africa and Africans as those of primitive culture/ that is without the Human spirit. He writes that: "Hegel's philosophy of history remains the most exalted statement of European self-affirmation in opposition to other races, the most elaborate rationalisation of European ethnocentrism. It provided a powerful philosophical base for the chorus of denigration of the non-white races which accompanied and buoyed up the European colonial adventure... if much of the literature that provided the parts for this chorus of denigration was manifestly inferior, if not downright feeble-minded, it was left to the new discipline of anthropology to sustain the main theme under the guise of a science." And for Immanuel Kant (cited in Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi.1997. *The Color of Reason: The Idea of "Race" in Kant's Anthropology*. The Bucknell Review. Page, 115), the African is inept in "moral maturity". Eze reminds us that for Kant "[T]he race of the Negroes...is full of affect and passion, very lively, talkative and vain. They can be educated but only as servants (slaves), that is they allow themselves to be trained (by Europeans presumably)". So outside of Humanity that Africans need to be perpetually taught a lesson on how to service Humanity. As things without the Human spirit and moral maturity, Africans writes Eze, "[training], for Kant, seems to consist purely of physical coercion and corporeal punishment, for in his writings about how to flog the African servant or Slave into submission, Kant 'advises us to use a split bamboo cane instead of a whip, so that the 'negro' will suffer a great deal of pain (because of the 'negro's' thick skin, he would not be racked with sufficient agonies through a whip) but without dying'. The African, according to Kant, deserves this kind of 'training' because he or she is 'exclusively idle', lazy, and prone to hesitation and jealousy, and the African is all these because, for climate and anthropological reasons, he or she lacks 'true' (rational and moral) character" (Ibid).

on the figure. So therefore the Black, as a thing without a language, cannot possibly be a source. David Marriott (in a close reading of Fanon) gestures towards this when he explains that:

This *n'est pas* (of blackness), to the extent that it is not a possible object of knowledge or judgment, does refer us to what, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon calls the abyss. This abyss that is before any earth or world, tribunal or judgment, before the determination of “the whole possibility of and desire for a world,” before even the indubitability of law or object, is obviously linked to the *n'est pas* and consequently begins, always violently, where *le vécu noir* undergoes the shock of a sudden shift or a reversal in its phenomenal existence. At the same time, however, this utterly naked declivity is not something that can be known, or rendered, or propositionally named as such: for the non-thing that blackness is evades being judged, and should never be confused with the predicates of racism¹⁰².

I could not have named it better. Blackness is the surplus negative core of the colony. It escapes all symbolic attributes. Blackness is the negative. And, Blackness-as-negativity cannot be inscribed into the archive as a Being in relation to other Beings. The archive for the Black, instead of being a source of knowledge, becomes a space for holding cargo; a holding ship^{xx}. The archive (or the ~~Black~~ archive; that which exists in erasure) as a Slave ship becomes that which haunts contemporary post-Apartheid Black life. It is the specter of the hold that produces conditions of containment, regulation, and punishment^{103xxi}. The archive becomes an extension

^{xx} The archive for the Black is a holding ship for cargo. The Black is the cargo in question. Mbembe (in Mbembe, Achille. 2017. *Critique of Black Reason*. Duke University Press. Page, 2) reminds us that with the Atlantic Slave trade and its creation of the “biography of the vertiginous assemblage that is Blackness and race... men and women from Africa were transformed into human-objects, Human-commodities, Human-money”. He goes on to argue that the Black was then “imprisoned in the dungeon of appearance, they came to belong to others who hated them”. The Black existed as a thing ‘denied recognition as a co-human’. As when the Slave ship transporting Black cargo to give birth to the new world left Africa, the archive functions in a similar colonial logic; to transport Black cargo to perpetually give birth to the new world. The Black archive (which is an oxymoron – however let us follow the logic. I will explain in detail why this is so in the paper. In actual fact I should have used the Black under erasure similarly to how Warren does in *Ontological Terror*. For the Black and archive do not go together) is produced, similarly to how Blackness is produced in the modern era as a social link of subjection and a body of extraction, as Mbembe explains. The Black archive exists then as “a body entirely exposed to the will of the master, a body from which great effort is made to extract maximum profit. An exploitable object”, to cite Mbembe (Ibid. Page, 18) once again. Furthermore in the *Critique of Black Reason* Mbembe argues that in America with the Black becoming a “nonperson” from a juridical standpoint – a legal incapacity that made the Black lose the right to appear in court and therefore “nothing more than pieces of property”. America, from 1670 onwards, needed to put large amounts of laborers to work like it never had before that, so it invented Blackness. Mbembe explains that the invention of Blackness “was the cog that made possible the creation of the plantation—one of the period’s most effective forms of wealth accumulation—and accelerated the integration of merchant capitalism with technology and the control of subordinated labor” (Ibid. Page, 20). The invention of Blackness was/is world making, not just only for America, but for the world. Blackness becomes a thing that makes possible the Human to self-actualize. My argument is that the archive is that container, a Slave ship, that is invented to give form and shape to the image of the Human.

^{xxi} I am thinking through the brilliant work of Christina Sharpe here. See: *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*.

of modernity's coloniality, "an ongoing shape-shifting relational paradigm of coloniality that also finds expression in the structure of settler colonialism, apartheid and its aftermath"¹⁰⁴ to cite Nsele. The archive as a sight and site of exclusion/inclusion – a matter of discrimination and of selection, and monument to particular configurations of power, functions here properly to keep Blacks outside of its status (Mbembe), because the Black is not a thing that can be archived generally because it exists outside of the confines of Humanity. Outside of symbolism. Hortense Spillers captures it beautifully when she says that the Black has a captured personality that is "culturally "unmade", thrown in the midst of a figurative darkness that [exposes] their destinies to an unknown course"¹⁰⁵. The Human can be archived because it exists ontologically, however that same curtesy is not extended to the Black. What is known as the Black archive is in fact an oxymoron. The archive only exists in so far as it records the Human^{xxii}. To juxtapose the concept of the archive with the Black is to impose an infrastructure to a thing, a non-Human, that lacks ontology. The Black archive, to cite Warren:

Stages an impossible encounter: between the ontological (non)relation and the mysterious abyss of nothing. Put differently, it expresses a Hegelian desire of synthesis between "two warring ideas," as Dubois might call it. We might, then, envision the encounter as a form of war, an ontological disaster from which various forms of antiblack violence emerge¹⁰⁶.

The archive, as it concerns the Black, is a problem for thought. Blackness is a problem for thought. The archive cannot/is incapable of recording "the history that hurts—the still—unfolding narrative of captivity, dispossession, and domination that engenders the Black subject"¹⁰⁷, as Saidiya Hartman brilliantly puts it. The archive is a site/sight of freedom for the Human. It is a condition of possibility for the Being to imagine and re-imagine itself in all its possibilities. Warren reminds us that "Freedom is ontological"¹⁰⁸. To want to engage the archive as it concerns Blacks (or to engage the Black archive – which is the nothing of the

^{xxii} I will discuss this in detail in chapter 4. However, I find Sabine Broeck's argument (in Broeck, Sabine. 2014. *Legacies of Enslavement and White Abjection*. Broeck/Junker, Postcolonial - Decolonial - Black Critique, Frankfurt: Campus) fitting and persuasive. Here Broeck details the dominant discourses and their inability to think about the histories of Black people because the Black is the humiliateable, the enslaveable, the rapeable, the abuseable, and the shippable: [t]he humiliate-ability, the enslave-ability, the rape-ability, the abuse-ability, and the ship-ability of Black people in the discourses and practices that shape European white collective memory as well as in the contemporary repertoire of thinking Blackness in the white European mind. These discourses and practices add up to a longue durée of White abjection and un-Humanization of Black Being dating from the early modern period, through Enlightenment modernity into the postmodern moment. The 'Slave's' assumed 'slavishness,' that persistent topos in which Blackness has been contained in white philosophy from Hegel to de Beauvoir has blatantly disregarded the histories of Haiti, and other local and globally important acts, practices, and Black discourses of Black rebellion, and of Black freedom narratives, and has kept negating all forms of Black life.

world) is to want to engage the nothing of the world^{xxiii}. To go to the Black archive is to go to the nothing of the world. It is to go nowhere.

When it comes to the idea of the Black/ and or Africa and on the other that of reason. The two cannot be contemporaneous/ cannot be placed opposite/next to each other. To remind ourselves, in Western thought, the essence of the Subject is thought and reason is the primary element of modern Subject formation (Descartes). If the modern Subject, indeed a Being, is a thinking thing (a *cogito*) and it knows itself as such, in relation to the African/ and the Black who are outside of the logic of reason, it follows logic then to for us to question this relationship between the Black and the archive (“the Black archive”). Mbembe in *Critique of Black Reason* writes that:

Every time it confronted the question of Blacks and Africa, reason found itself ruined and emptied, turning constantly in on itself, shipwrecked in a seemingly inaccessible place where language was destroyed and words themselves no longer had memory. Language, its ordinary functions extinguished, became a fabulous machine whose power resided in its vulgarity, in its remarkable capacity for violation, and in its indefinite proliferation¹⁰⁹.

Blackness robs language of its capacity to explain. Blackness destroys language. If we learn from de Saussure^{110xxiv} that language is a system of signs that express ideas. And from Black thinkers like Mbembe that the Black and Blackness are outside of the world of ideas, then language for the Black as a system of signs points towards nothing and therefore express no ideas/non-ideas. If for de Saussure, “language is a system in which all the elements fit together, and which the value of any one element depends on the simultaneous coexistence of all the others”¹¹¹, Blackness is that element that does not fit together nicely into the system and therefore disarticulates the entire structure. Mbembe like many Black thinkers, explains that Western metaphysics has always defined “the human in terms of the possession of language and reason”¹¹². I show this in chapter 2. However, what Western metaphysics then does is to position the Black outside of Beings who possess language and reason, therefore without access

^{xxiii} Mbembe (in *Critique*. Page, 2) writes that “the Black Man is the one (or the thing) that one sees when one sees nothing, when one understands nothing, and, above all, when one wishes to understand nothing. Everywhere he appears, the Black Man unleashes impassioned dynamics and provokes an irrational exuberance that always tests the limits of the very system of reason”. Mbembe’s argument here is that Blackness produces a ‘delirium’ produced by modernity that tests the limits of reason.

^{xxiv} Chapter 2 gives a detailed description of de Saussure’s linguistic structuralism from which this argument borrows and carries from.

to an “identity, a universal essence, from which flows a collection of rights and values”¹¹³, as Mbembe explains. Human Beings identify themselves as such because they possess these faculties and when they exercise this potentiality they generate “liberty and autonomy, as well as the capacity to live an individual life according to moral principles and an idea of what is good”¹¹⁴ explains Mbembe. Mbembe describes a significant moment in the ‘invention of Blackness’ that I would like to remain with because I think that it explains a moment in Blackness – as outside of the limits of knowledge/knowability, that, even though Mbembe argues that at the moment of abolitionism and the end of the Slave trade there was a slight difference in the way Blackness, as an “emptiness of the sign”, was perceived as not necessarily that but now as a sign filled with content. Here is Mbembe:

The Human experience of Blacks should be understood as fundamental difference. The humanity of Blacks had no history as such. Humanity without history understood neither work nor rules, much less law. Because they had not liberated themselves from animal needs, Blacks did not see either giving or receiving death as a form of violence. One animal can always eat another. The African sign therefore had something distinct, singular, even indelible that separated it from all other human signs. The best testament to this was the Black body, its forms and colors. The body had no consciousness or any of the characteristics of reason or beauty. It could not therefore be considered a body composed of flesh like one’s own, because it belonged solely to the realm of material extension as an object doomed to peril and destruction. The centrality of the body – and especially of its color – in the calculus of political subjection explains the importance assumed by theories of the physical, moral, and political regeneration of Blacks over the course of the nineteenth century. These theories developed conceptions of society and the world – and of the good – that claimed an absence among Blacks. They lacked the power of invention and the possibility of universalism that comes with reason. The representations, lives, works, languages, and actions of Blacks – or even their deaths – obeyed no rule or law whose meaning they themselves could, on their own authority, conceive or justify. Because of this radical difference, this being-apart, it was deemed legitimate to exclude them in practice and in law from the sphere of full and complete human citizenship: they had nothing to contribute to the work of the universal¹¹⁵.

Mbembe here describes the anti-Black world that constitute Blackness, the figure that “allegorizes metaphysical violence”¹¹⁶, as Warren puts it. The ontological relation between the White – ‘that with the power of invention and the possibility of universalism that comes with reason’ and the Black – that which ‘lacks the power of invention and the possibility of

universalism that comes with reason' is ruptured^{xxv} – “no recourse to Being is possible”¹¹⁷, as Warren puts it. Lewis Gordon advises us that, “there is ‘something’ absent whenever blacks are present. The more present a black is, the more absent is this ‘something.’ And the more absent a black is, the more present is this something”¹¹⁸, Wilderson would advance that Blackness is the destruction of presence^{xxvi}. Gordon continues, “Blacks seem to suck presence into themselves as a Black hole, pretty much like the astrophysical phenomenon that bears that name”¹¹⁹. To questions that Blacks are now seen or are now Human citizens, Warren responds with a question, “has the metaphysical world evolved such that blacks can ground existence, indisputably, in the being of the human?”¹²⁰. In Chapter 4, I extend and go deeper into this idea. However, for now I maintain and remain with this moment described above by Mbembe. It is my argument that this moment, of Blacks as signs (or non-signs) of emptiness (“emptiness of the sign”) stuck like Velcro onto our skins. It is, as Warren puts it, a “continuity across diverse space and temporalities”¹²¹.

To conclude:

The ANC’s mobilisation of the archive post 1994 is in actual fact a mobilisation of the psychic infrastructure of the colony to accommodate its rainbow nation dreams – the primal Master/Slave fantasy – of diversification. This archive mystifies. It shows that the Black flesh is always available to be used in Slavery’s (re)invention – ‘the (re)invention of Blackness’. The ANC’s archive performs its own deconstruction, for dispossession and freedom, after all, cannot co-exist.

However, the paper also argues that the Black figure cannot surmise as a source of the archive because the Black is outside of language and the political order and therefore is open to the structure of exception that constitutes contemporary biopower. What is often/commonly referred to as the Black archive is, in actual fact, a naming/identification of a *necropolis*. The Black archive is an oxymoron. It is a door that opens into the graveyard. It is a graveyard entrance. It is the graveyard itself. The Black archive is a record of the dead of the world. The things in the world but not of the world.

^{xxv} A fitting word that describes, in the main, the breaking apart of bodies.

^{xxvi} In an essay/chapter in Mngxitama Andile, Alexander Amanda, Gibson Nigel. 2008. *Biko Lives!: Contesting the Legacies of Steve Biko*. Palgrave Macmillan. Page, 95.

Chapter 4

Framing Africa/ns: The Documentary Film and the Unthought Dynamics of Anti-Blackness

This chapter continues from the theoretical discussions introduced in the second/last part of chapter 3. The idea that Blacks are excluded from Humanity. In this chapter I follow in this logic. My argument: Blacks are sentient Beings exiled from the arc of narrative. The documentary film, as it stands, in its filmic representations of Blacks, cannot escape the anti-Blackness of the world. The documentary film is haunted by the memory of dispossession. Its filmic representations are a continuation of capture, a ‘grammar of emergence and Being’ as Frank Wilderson puts it. The documentary film is implicated in trying to contain and integrate Blackness in a liberal structural framework and it falls short. This chapter introduces the analytical framework for this thesis; Afropessimism¹, to argue that the documentary film is, to quote Wilderson, “imbricated in the syntax and morphology of structural violence”¹. The anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, then, cannot escape the conditions of its existence: violence – it is mimetic of death. For violence conditions the Black. This is the first premise.

The Anti-Apartheid Documentary Film Movement and the Failure of Semblance: Notes Towards a Response to Critiques of Afropessimism

The African-centred thought

This thesis is in acquiesce with a Poststructuralist reading of the Subject/Human. I find Poststructuralism’s elaboration of the constitution of the Subject much more coherent. In Poststructuralism, the Human Subject is positioned structurally through language and discourse. Language, for Poststructuralism, symbolizes an entire society into existence. There is no existence of the Subject prior to language, language is the entrance to the possibility of Being. Language marks a distinction between Subject and object. And discourse, for Poststructuralism, is a structuring operative that categorizes and brings Humans into existence. This is both an instrument and an effect of power. Therefore, for Poststructuralism, the Human Subject comes to Being through its relation with the world, as a free Being able to think and act temporally and spatially. As I show in chapter 2. For Afropessimism, the Black is not

¹ I deliberately introduce the framework for this thesis in this chapter (chapter 4) because I wanted to firstly properly schematize conceptions of the Human on their own terms before attempting a project of critique.

elaborated by this constitution of the Subject. It cannot accommodate “my death/ that’s so related to me as a wink to the eye”² as Mongane Wally Serote writes so eloquently in a poem titled *City Johannesburg*.

Afropessimism forces us to think, if this register of the Human, as articulated in the documentary film, forces a mode of universal life upon the Black, does that not also redact the suffering of Blacks, which are structured by violence on screen?

The aim of this thesis (and this chapter) is to show the parallels and the consanguineous of Black subjectivity in the African diaspora and the South African context. This thesis presents and argues for a global perspective of Blackness. Even though the examples in this thesis are primarily drawn from the South African filmic and lived experience, it is diasporic in mind and so are its inferences. Some will argue that this chosen diasporic analytic, and conception of Blackness erases the Black South African lived experience and specificities. So, let us firstly schematize these critiques of Afropessimism’s supposed erasement before attempting an exegesis of the framework.

In an article titled *How they mistook the map for the territory: The trouble with Afropessimists*³, Masilo Lepuru writes that “Afro–pessimists fetishize the Maafa in the form of the middle passage by granting it magical powers to strip the enslaved Africans of their Africanity”⁴. This rebuke of a critique of a supposed position held by Afropessimism comes from a position that “the ontological category of African and Black are not the same”⁵. This position, for the sake of this argument let us call it the “African–centred thought”ⁱⁱ. From the cited above, the position argues that there is in fact two distinct categorical identities in Africa and the diaspora at large. These two identities, the African–centred thought argues, are a creation of Afropessimism, a figment of our imagination. Because, even after the event of capture and the experience of the middle passage “enslaved Africans continue to identify with Africa in terms of the African worldview and culture”⁶. The captured Africans did not “lose their mothers”⁷ because the experience of the middle passage did not “strip the enslaved Africans of their Africanity”⁸. This is after Archie Mafeje’s idea of ‘Africanity as a combative ontology’, which we will discuss shortly. The African–centred thought argues that there needs

ⁱⁱ I borrow this concept from Masilo Lepuru himself from the same article. In the article Lepuru explains that African–centred thought is rooted in a tradition of Pan – African thinkers and African – centred researchers alike. My emphasis.

to be a proper conceptualization of categories because Afropessimism tends to conflate categories. For the African-centred thought, Africans went through the *Maafa* so they therefore became ‘enslaved African’ because the captured Beings “remain an African even though enslaved (post the middle passage)”⁹, as opposed to Black. The claim here is that Afropessimism’s supposed use of the word ‘Black’ is an inscription of an ontology into Beings, both enslaved and not enslaved [or soon/yet to be enslaved] Africans who did not necessarily “lose their mother”¹⁰. Lepuru writes that “enslavement changed the conditions of your environment it did not change the nature of your being African”¹¹. It is at this opening that the African – centred thought argues that “Afro-pessimism is actually “Black-pessimism””¹². Lepuru formulates that “to become and identify with the ontological category of the Black is to concede to the unprecedented violence of the *Maafa*”¹³. The idea here is that Africans, although enslaved, still retained their agency of culture because they “continue to identify with Africa in terms of the African worldview and culture”¹⁴. So therefore, enslavement does not mean that one necessarily ‘loses their mother’ because one can always return to “the door of no return”¹⁵. Enslaved Africans for all future time; forever, can find their way home through “the door of no return”¹⁶ (my emphasis added).

The African-centred thought makes a distinction between the Black, as Slave, and the African, as colonized. Lepuru writes: “Afro-pessimists such as Wilderson fail to foreground the fact that Africans are a “global people” ... and that ... we dispersed ourselves spreading the seeds of Africa to the entire globe spreading civilization thus occupying the so-called New World”¹⁷. The position argues that Afropessimism has a myopic ‘anti-African historical imagination’. That Afropessimism fails to give account/accommodate the African historical experience. It is then that the African-centred thought argues that Afropessimism ‘exceptionalises the suffering of Blacks’ and ignores, as Leperu puts it, the “Africanism based on race – first ideology and African culture and worldview”¹⁸.

I want to extend Lepuru’s critique of Afropessimism/ and or exposition of the African-centred thought as covered above by discussing Archie Mafeje’s *Africanity as a combative ontology* abstraction which is, I think, the central pillar of the African-centred thought.

For Archie Mafeje, Africanity informs Africans lived experience, which is the basis of African people’s ontological reality. Africanity, for Mafeje¹⁹, is based on the African traditions for the fight against racism. This Africanity, has “profound political, ideological, and intellectual

implications”²⁰ explains Mafeje. Africanity is a response to the Western imagination of Africa and Africans. It is “an antithesis of this [Western conception of Africa] and, like all social revolutions, its terms of reference are exclusive of its negation”²¹. Africanity takes exception to the Western imagination of Africa that neglect African historical traditions of Being. In an article titled *The Ideology of Tribalism*²², Mafeje writes that:

European colonialism, like any epoch, brought with it certain ways of reconstructing African reality. It regarded African societies as particularly tribal. This approach produced certain blinker or ideological predispositions which made it difficult for those associated with the system to view these societies in any other light. Hence certain modes of thought among European scholars in Africa and their African counterparts have persisted, despite the many important economic and political changes that have occurred in the continent over the last 75-100 years. Therefore, if tribalism is thought of as peculiarly African, then the ideology itself is particularly European in origin.

Africanity makes a distinction between White people and *Abantu*. *Abantu* are Subjects with a “state of social and spiritual being”²³ different from other Subjects outside of the African continent. Indeed *Abantu*, are only “limited to the continental Africans” and does not extend, “straddle space and time”, to “all African descents in the Diaspora, especially African American”²⁴ⁱⁱⁱ. Here, in Mafeje’s notes, we perhaps see the distinction between the African and the Slave that Lepuru makes us aware of. Although for Lepuru, Africans are a global people that did not necessarily ‘lose their mother’ but merely that enslavement changed the conditions of their environment. It did not change the nature of their being African. They are still *Abantu*. *Abantu* get their ontological bearings from *Ubuntu*. It is from *Ubuntu* that *Abantu* get their “distinct inner quality”.

Perhaps here it is important to take a detour to give an exposition of the discourse that Mafeje is engaging/operating under. In a collection of essays titled *In Search of an Alternative*²⁵, Mafeje gives a genealogy of African intellectuals. The first generation of African intellectuals,

ⁱⁱⁱ Mafeje (in Mafeje, Achie. 2008. *Africanity: A Combative Ontology*) excluded African Americans from his conception of Africanity. As a response to Afrocentrism, he writes that: Afrocentrism made in America is a contradiction in terms. Black Americans, no matter how well intentioned they are, cannot make indigenous knowledge for Africans in America nor could continental Africans do the same for any length of time in America. While individual African- Americans can become experts on Africa, they cannot in the name of Africanity speak for the Africans. Africanity insists that Africans, in the continent, think, speak, and do things for themselves in the first place (Page, 108).

what Mafeje describes as vindicationists, are characterized by thinkers who were preoccupied with challenging the predominant Western epistemology and the negative representations on about Africa^{iv}. The vindicationists challenged the Western epistemologies monology over the concept of the Human. Because Western epistemology denied African Subjects their Humanity, the vindicationists labored tirelessly to prove to the western imagination that they too belong to the family of Humans. I am reminded of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa of the late 1960, 1970 and early 1980's as perhaps belonging to this vindicationists group. For the Black Consciousness Movement, because Black people have been oppressed as a group because of the colour of their skins, then it is necessary to build a strong movement around that which is used to oppress them to counter the oppression. So, the Black Consciousness Movement is not interested in integration, that is integration with the White community, as 'a means to an end'. The means for the Black Consciousness Movement becomes a 'strategy', flexibly called, 'an inward-looking' process^v. In one of his most influential essays: *Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity*²⁶, Steve Biko, one of the architects of the Movement and its principal mouthpiece, starts by trying to find out 'what went wrong' in South Africa that today (in his time) the Black person is subservient to the white person. Biko, after some thinking attributes this 'anomalous' situation to the deliberate creation of man, the white man^{vi}. This inward-looking process is a process of unlearning or seeking to change the wrongs that the Black people have internalised. This is a program for Black people by Black people^{vii}. This program of inward-looking is a cultural

^{iv} It is important to note that Mafeje here is in discussion with the likes of Martin and West (1999) and Molefe Asante (1989). Martin and West (1999) give a genealogy of African intellectualism that is composed of two traditions, namely, The continental tradition and the transcontinental tradition. The continental tradition is born out of African intellectuals and excludes Africans in the diaspora in their definitions. The transcontinental tradition comes out of intellectuals in the diaspora, mostly America and their definitions are "trans" continental, which is to say that their definition of Black/ and or African include those in the continent of Africa and those outside of it. We can say that Asante (1989) belongs to the transcontinental tradition. In Asante (1989) we find the definition and expression of Afrocentricity. In a separate text Mafeje (in *Africanity: a combative ontology*. Page, 106) argues in response to these debates that "nobody can think and act outside of historically determined circumstances and still hope to be a social signifier or any kind. In other words, while we are free to choose the role in which we cast ourselves as active agents of history, we do not put on the agenda the social issues to which we respond."

^v This belief is also coupled with a claim that Black Consciousness in a post-Apartheid colourless and non-exploitative egalitarian society will be irrelevant, because I believe; everyone will be equal in such a society.

^{vi} Biko (in *I write What I Like*. Page, 96/7) claim that "there is no doubt that the colour question in South African politics was originally introduced for economic reasons. The leaders of the white community had to create some kind of barrier between black and whites so that the whites could enjoy privileges at the expense of blacks and still feel free to give a moral justification for the obvious exploitation that pricked even the hardest of white consciences".

^{vii} South Africans, argues Biko, have lost grips of their selves and their surroundings. With the arrival of White people and the meeting of cultures, black people have been experiencing a process of acculturation. However, argues Biko, this acculturation is not a fusion of cultures, as the concept may sometimes imply, it is a one – sided process and it destroys the black cultures. Black Consciousness then becomes a remedy that addresses this problem. In a SASO (in *I write What I Like*. Page, 50) newsletter Biko states that: "The interrelationship between

enterprise that involves aesthetics that seek to “pump back life into the black person’s empty shell”, to cite Biko. This also implies the adoption of some of the Negritudian ideas. Ideas about the distinctiveness of an ‘African personality’ and African ontology^{viii}.

Mafeje²⁷ assembles Negritude under the vindicationist tradition^{ix}. To call to mind, it is because of the “exclusivist ontologies such as white racist categorisations and supremacist European self-identities in particular”²⁸, writes Mafeje, that the vindicationist tradition is influenced by and from which it operates against to respond to epistemological questions about Black people being inherently inferior.

For example, Biko in *Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity* argues that there is a way that Africans do things that is pure and African. This is to say that Africans by virtue of being African are born with certain characteristics that are only unique to them. These can be anything from dancing to the way Africans talk to each other²⁹. At a conference in 1971, to make the case about the African personality and Africans being “a religious race” Biko cites another Negritude scholar, Dr Kaunda:

The Westerner has an aggressive mentality. When he sees a problem, he will not rest until he has formulated some solution to it. He cannot live with contradictory ideas in his mind; he must settle for one or the other or else evolve a third idea in his mind which harmonises or reconciles the other two. And he is vigorously scientific in rejecting solutions for which there is no basis in logic. He draws a sharp line between the natural and the supernatural, the rational and non-rational, and more often than not, he dismisses the supernatural and non-rational as superstition.... Africans being a pre-scientific people do not recognise any conceptual cleavage between the natural and supernatural. They experience a situation rather than face a problem. By this I mean they allow both the rational and non-rational elements to make an impact upon

the consciousness of the self and the emancipatory programme is of paramount importance. Blacks no longer seek to reform the system because so doing implies acceptance of the major points around which the system revolves. Blacks are out to completely transform the system and to make of it what they wish. Such a major undertaking can only be realised in an atmosphere where people are convinced of the truth inherent in their stand. Liberation therefore, is of paramount importance in the concept of Black Consciousness, for we cannot be conscious of ourselves and yet remain in bondage. We want to attain the envisioned self which is a free self”.

^{viii} Leopold Senghor (in Carty, Wifred and Kilson, Martin (editors). 1970. *The African Reader: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century*. New York, Vintage Books. Page, 27), a prominent Negritude intellectual who Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement read, puts it like this: “Negritude is nothing more or less than what some English-speaking Africans have called the African personality”.

^{ix} Here Mafeje is particularly referencing Léopold Sédar Senghor and Kwame Nkrumah, particularly their ideas of an African personality and Black souls.

them, and any action they may take could be described more as a response of the total personality to the situation than the result of some mental exercise³⁰.

Mafeje³¹ recognizes the vindicationist tradition for its decolonial methodological potentiality, however, argues that this idea of trying to “pump back life into the black person’s empty shell”, to quote Biko, is not enough. Mafeje wants an appeal, not to greater Human qualities but on race. Alias, *Ubuntu*. In his own words, he writes “the idea of a distinct inner quality being, a ‘black soul’, if you like, was not an appeal to race but a claim to greater human qualities”³². Mafeje wants us to rethink the shell. He wants a different kind of epistemological renewal from that proposed by these group of African intellectuals, the vindicationist tradition. Mafeje then makes a plea for Africanity. For Mafeje, “Africanity is an assertion of an identity that has been denied; it is a Pan–Africanist revulsion against external imposition or refusal to be dictated by others”³³. As I discussed earlier, Mafeje’s propositions are only limited to continental Africans, to *Abantu*. Mafeje, writes, “[c]ulturally, socially and historically, the African–Americans and the West Indians have long ceased to be Africans unless we are talking biology”³⁴.

It is interesting that Mafeje argues that Africanity is different from the vindicationist tradition, particularly Afrocentrism. From my reading, Africanity, as an “antithesis” to European epistemology is no different to the vindicationist intellectual tradition of “African personality” and “black souls”. In my reading, the only difference is the context from which these ideas come from. Where these intellectuals are based. Mafeje, in his pursuit of ‘endogeny’^x, critiques the vindicationists only for him to rehash the same “race based” ideas. This strive for endogeny, as a supposed “negation of negation”, to use Mafeje’s own words, to me, represents ‘a term in the dialectic’. It is an unfinished equation, to use Fanon’s words. But, before I show how this negation of negation fails, let us go back to Africanity’s idea of *Ubuntu* as a way to show its mimicking of the vindicationist tradition and how both these traditions misfire because they are in fact the first moments of Western epistemology. Now, Mafeje, as a way to prove the difference between the vindicationists and Africanity slips, unknowingly or otherwise, into vindicationist archaeology. Mafeje writes:

^x Jimi O. Adesina (in Adesina, Jimi. 2008. *Archie Mafeje and the Pursuit of Endogeny: Against Alterity and Extroversion*. Africa Development. Page, 135) in a paper on Mafeje writes that “endogeneity... refers to an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in the African conditions; a centring of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one’s intellectual work”.

Probably, even this would not suffice for ordinary Africans who are not vindicationists but firmly believe that they, as a people, are endowed with greater human qualities than whites. In Bantu languages, the collective abstract noun for describing this is *ubuntu*, which is not translatable into English (carelessly translated, it comes out as ‘humanity’ which is a generic term with no social-cultural connotations). Highest among these qualities are human sympathy, willingness to share, and forgiveness³⁵.

I fail to recognize how Africanity’s claim of *Ubuntu* is different to the vindications of the vindicationists. The claim that Africans are endowed with greater Human qualities than Whites because of a claim to *Ubuntu* is no different to Negritude’s claim of Africans being a pre – scientific people with Black souls. For how do we at least theoretically explain *Ubuntu*’s “state of social and spiritual being” of Africans and Negritude/ or generally the vindicationists “African personality”? The “inner quality” of *abantu* in Africanity and the Black souls of Black people in Negritude, it seems, comparatively are the same. The argument that Black people in the diaspora are positioned differently ontologically to Africans in the continent because of the *Maafa* seems to be lacking because these two positions/ or traditions are both a creation of Western epistemology that they both labour tirelessly to negate^{xi}. Africanity cannot claim an exclusivist ontological position without contradicting itself that it is different to the African personality of the vindicationists. My argument is that, conceptually, it seems, as an overture, Africanity is unable to sustain the use of the concept of *Ubuntu* as an exclusive ontology by precluding the vindicationists. Let us now focus the attention on the failure of the negation of negation.

Lwazi Lushaba in his reading of traditions of scholarship that come out of Black and African thought that serve as opposition to the universalizing structure of European epistemology acknowledges the deficiency with this tradition. For Lushaba this “African discourse” that “claims for itself a modicum of autonomy from the former [Western/European epistemology], in fact it thinks of itself as its negation and/or negativity” fails because it “wittingly or unwittingly it styles itself into a Hegelian self – negation of the European discourse”³⁶. Similar

^{xi} My argument of similarity between Mafeje’s Africanity and the vindicationists is not uncommon. It seems that other people found parallels between the two, even though some thought that Mafeje “drew” from the vindicationists. For example, Sabelo Ndlovu – Gatsheni (in *Archie Mafeje – The Rethinking of Knowledge in and on Africa: Past, Present and Future*. 2012. Department of Development Studies, UNISA. Page, 17) writes: “What is not clear in Professor Mafeje’s work is whether his deep Afrocentric approaches drew from the work of Professor Molefi Kete Asante (2007) who is considered the father of Afrocentric thought and remains its key exponent.” I am not interested in debating who said what first. My point here is that theoretically and conceptually the two positions in questions are the same.

to Fanon's critique of Negritude³⁷. Negritude as a movement represents the antithesis in the grand equation for 'dignity'. An antithesis not because it has within itself the potential to overturn or destroy colonialism but rather antithesis because, for Fanon, Negritude represents an unfinished equation. It only represents 'a term in the dialectic'; it is a transition, a phase, for a world without races, perhaps. Fanon cites Juan de Mérida in his critique:

What do souls' matter?
I am mad.
What can I do but despair?
O heaven what a dread thing
being black³⁸

It is Fanon's argument that Negritude as a project of emancipation labours to prove to the White world that Black people too are Human with civilization. Fanon parodically writes "from the opposite end of the white world a magical negro culture was hailing me"³⁹. From Fanon's perspective, Negritude is its own destruction. Fanon rejects Negritude. He however does not fashion or embrace a type of Black/African universalism, or some version of it. He wants to exist without relation to the White world. However much as this seems impossible, Fanon cannot bring himself to accept such an amputation. Lushaba thinking through Laclau (1990), reminds us that the African discourse of 'negation of negation' like a floating signifier:

Holds itself to be laden with sufficient materiality to engage in an articulatory practice necessarily leading to transformation. For that reason it refuses the authority of and/or splits itself from the European discourse. Its stated object is to transgress the discursive bounds of the European discourse and establish the conditions for its own specificity as well as that of historical or African difference⁴⁰.

And for Lushaba, as was for Fanon, this discourse of negation is unsuccessful antecedently. Lushaba, here thinking through Žižek (1991), argues that the discourse of negation of negation:

Erroneously considering itself to be the external opposite of the European discourse, it essentially becomes comprehensible not as its negative but more appropriately: it is the first moment of Western discourse itself as its own other, as the negative of itself⁴¹.

Lushaba puts it brilliantly. The discourse in question, due to its predilection to the Marxist discourse (or Hegelian logic) takes place in cycles, however unlike the Marxist law of the negation of the negation, the African-centred thought seems to fail to reach a resolution of the contradictions between the struggle of opposites. Lushaba explains further:

Unlike most chroniclers of Hegelian thought who foreground the impossibility of freedom from the absoluteness of Spirit, a quandary alternately referred to as the Hegelian closed circle or finite totality, Žižek (1991) volunteers a less than theological reading of the Hegelian dialectic. In this reading we pass from the Hegelian cul-de-sac to its outside and it is this sense or possibility of freedom that fails to materialise in the current African discourse of difference. For the moment let us follow the example set for us by Žižek (1991) and briefly highlight the elements of the Hegelian cul-de-sac into which as we have said the African discourse of difference writes itself into. Žižek's (1991) reading of the Hegelian dialectic takes off from the last chapter of the *Science of Logic*. In it Hegel posits that;

“[I]n the turning point of the (dialectical) method, the course of cognition at the same time returns to itself. As self-sublating contradiction this negativity is the restoration of the first immediacy, of simple universality; for the other of the other, the negative of the negative, is immediately the positive, the identical, the universal”.⁴²

Lushaba is making an important point here. The African-centred thought tradition fails to anticipate that its own negation of the negation has already been preempted by Western/European epistemology. Western epistemology has within itself the negation by African-centred thought and shows that its telos (which is failure) is willed by its own doing. So then African-centred thought's assertion of an identity that has been denied (the negation of the negation/ or, to be more precise, Africanness as a combative ontology) is complicit in the Western epistemologies continued monology over the concept of the Human and its construction of Africans as actualities of colonial difference. Lushaba explains it further as follows:

The point at which the course of cognition returns to itself or in a sense becomes self-determining is the originary moment of immediate positivity. Effort at the negation or mediation of this immediate positivity does not constitute its immediate contrary or opposite. Conversely, 'it comes forth precisely when we endeavour to grasp the first moment, the immediate, in and for itself, as such' (Žižek; 1991: 180). And so the mediation does not

constitute the negative of the originary moment but as pointed out above, it is the first moment itself as its own other, as the negative of itself⁴³.

Lushaba continues:

To illustrate Žižek juxtaposes “nothingness” to “being” and posits that the former is not the external opposite of the latter. The route to “nothingness” entails first determining the properties of “being”. In his words; “we arrive at “nothingness” by simply trying to specify, to determine the content of the notion of “being””. And from this he concludes; “[H]erein consist the fundamental dialectical idea of “inner negativity”: an entity is negated, passes over into its opposite, as a result of the development of its own potential” (1991: 180). It is precisely this fundamental dialectical idea – of inner negativity – that the African discourse of difference remains oblivious to, thereby making it complicit in the process of the elaboration of the originary Western discourse of colonial difference whose enduring claim is the alterity of the African identity. Put differently, to establish African identity as an ontological void has been one of the major achievements of the Western discourse of difference⁴⁴.

“Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God”: To Conclude

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter. This thesis advances a conception of Blackness that is not limited to the South African context. Since I dispute the African-centred thought’s conception of ‘the African’ and ‘the Black’, I stand by my disagreement that the two, supposed, categorical identities in Africa and the diaspora are different. This disagreement is not to dismiss the cultural nuances and specificities of the Black or African lived South African experience. This disagreement does not, I hope, collapse the many Black or African identities there are in the world under a single umbrella of Being. This disagreement is premised on the idea that we should rather treat the condition of African people – which we call Blackness, and those in the diaspora, as a position that is viewed at the same level as class or gender, as opposed to a cultural identity. I do not dispute the fact that cultural identities of Africans the world over are different, that is a given and it would be stupid to make that claim. It is obvious that the event and experience of the *Maafa* created different cultural identities of enslaved Africans and those that remained in the continent – or, to put it differently, those that went through the middle passage and had their identities suspended, both in the passage and on arrival, and those that remained behind with their identities unmarred, if at all, – with others subjected to Slavery in

their native land^{xii}. That is a given. What Afropessimism argues is that this difference is merely a cultural specification and not a difference in the condition of Blackness. We are the same ontologically and “a part of a larger international black community”, to cite Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley in a paper titled in *Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World*⁴⁵. To continue with Patterson and Kelley, our Blackness ‘criss–crosses the Atlantic, from the U.S. to Africa, from the Caribbean to Europe’⁴⁶. The world is in commune, as was in the Atlantic Slave trade, and defines Africa as a place, a “zone of non–being” – that not only defines everyone’s else, but a place where sentient Beings without agency – “the living dead”, are readily available for exploitation. Stephanie Smallwood in *The Living Dead aboard the Slave Ship at Sea* eloquently puts it like this:

On the ship at sea the logic of commodification reached its nadir. It was here, on the ocean crossing, that the practices of commodification most effectively muted the agency of the African subject and thereby produced their desired object: an African body fully alienated and available for exploitation in the American marketplace⁴⁷.

Africans everywhere, whether they are in the continent or aboard the ship, are marked by the worlds desire for the African body. Therefore, this is why this thesis leans towards a global understanding of Blackness. Africans are always already interpellated by the historical condition of ‘global race and gender hierarchies. Patterson and Kelley in their continued discussion of the African diaspora and Black globality remind us that:

The African diaspora itself exists within the context of global race and gender hierarchies which are formulated and reconstituted across national boundaries and along several lines: (1) along legal lines that curtail citizenship in polities that claim to be democratic; (2) along cultural lines that ascribe negative cultural value to indigenous forms while simultaneously appropriating these expressive cultures for political and commercial purposes; (3) along economic lines through the planned persistence of plantation/colonial economies and a world market that makes those economies untenable; (4) along imperial lines through the international development of “Jim Crowed” modes of industrial production; and (5) along social lines

^{xii} I’m trying to make the point to the existence of Slavery in South Africa that does not need the boat and the middle passage. While many were taken out of the continent to make the new world, others remained and were captives in the continent. This is an understudied aspect of Slavery in the academy. An issue for later study.

through systems that define and limit access based on race and gender in both open and segregated societies⁴⁸.

In other words, when this thesis implores a global conception of Blackness, it does not intend on erasing the complexities and nuances that exist within communities of Blacks across the world, however it does so in recognition of ‘the fact of blackness’ and shared experiences of racism “produced by many of the same needs of capital, the same empires, the same colonial labor policies, [and] the same ideologies”⁴⁹. The structural relations of Blackness/ or Africaness, “the black world”, as Patterson and Kelley explain, can only be understood “in the context of the larger world and vice versa”⁵⁰.

“Race has nothing to do with it”^{xiii}: On Marxism

Marxism has long roots in South Africa and Africa at large. As a theory and praxis of emancipation, Marxism was appealing to African intellectuals who, many of them, pledged allegiances to global socialism and the end of capitalism. How Marxism was appropriated and came to comprise as a tool for the decolonization movements in Africa has its origins with African leaders encounter with European education. I want to trace Marxism’s presence in Africa – from the period of the fight from colonial rule, particularly in South Africa. I do this, because, as has been stated, Marxism is popular in the continent, and it is often used as an epistemology that is universal and makes possible alternative possibilities.

Generally, Marxism/ or Communist ideas come to be before the turn of the 20th century in Europe. As European societies were breaking away from feudalism to a different mode of social life characterized by secularization and capitalism as a mode of production, European intellectuals became preoccupied with the studying of this epochal period^{xiv}. Marxism is one of those political and economic theories, developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, to a lesser extent.

^{xiii} Quote taken from C.L.R. James, *Othello’ and ‘The Merchant of Venice*. 1980. in *Spheres of Existence: Selected Writings*. London, Allison & Busby. Page, 142.

^{xiv} We know of the birth of sociology as a discipline, distinct from political science, philosophy and psychology. How Marx Werber made the case for sociology at the turn of the 20th century in Europe.

Karl Marx, a German philosopher, who, as a young student, was a follower of Hegel and his phenomenology of the mind and the science of logic, which Marx later built a theory as a critique and elaboration of Hegelian ideas. If for Hegel, as the spirit evolves and attains consciousness of itself, the development of history is made in that process. For Marx, the development of history does not owe itself to the movement of the spirit but to Human's necessity for physical survival. The development of history is impacted by the material conditions that people are faced with at a given time. The famous line in the *Communist Manifesto*, "the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles"⁵¹ explains this. Unlike Hegel, Marx does not want to center the spirit in the interpretation of Human society. In Marxism, this view of history is called Historical Materialism. "In the social production that men carry on" Marx writes in the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

They enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will: these relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material forces of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society – the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and intellectual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men which determines their existence; it is on the contrary their social existence which determines their consciousness⁵².

Though they differ in their interpretation of history, both Marx and Hegel had a teleological and forward moving directional perspective of history. The *telos* for Marxism is the economic structure and "not men's consciousness", to cite Marx. The economic structure, sometimes referred to as the substructure or the base, undergirds everything in society, this includes both the material forces of production – which are the means of production and the means of consumption, and secondly, the social relationships that Humans enter into in order to survive, what Marx called the relations of production. This, for Marx, determines peoples Being, or as Marx writes in his own words: It is not the consciousness of men which determines their existence; it is on the contrary their social existence which determines their consciousness^{xv}.

^{xv} A translation by *Encyclopedia Britannica, Incorporated, William Benton Publisher* (1973, Page, 55) puts it this way: "It is not men's consciousness which determines their being, but their social being which determines their consciousness".

The economic structure corresponds with and has an impact on what Marx calls the superstructure. The superstructure is comprised of the ideological forms that form and reflect the economic structure. In the *German Ideology*^{xvi} Marx says that the superstructure can simply be defined as the total of what “men say, imagine, [and] conceive”, this encompasses constituents such as “politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc”^{53xvii}. The superstructure is then an expression of the substructure – as Marx also explains in the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.

There seems to be a unidirectional relationship between the substructure and the superstructure in that all the agents of society in the superstructure are shaped by economic systems. There has been some work to rearticulate this ‘economic determinism’ by Marx, however I do not think that the work done is satisfactory. In continuing to explain the social productions, Marx writes that:

The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life... At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relation of production, or – what is but a legal expression for the same thing – with the property relations within which they had been at work before⁵⁴.

Marx continues:

From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic- in short ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must rather be

^{xvi} This is also known as *A Critique of the German Ideology*.

^{xvii} Antonio Gramsci does something interesting with the concept of superstructure by splitting it into two, as comprising of the political society and civil society.

explained from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production⁵⁵.

The conflict Marx describes here that is inherent in the type of society he is analyzing, a capitalist society that has a different mode of social life to its predecessor, feudalism, is characterized by people's relationship to the means of production. Under capitalism your relationship to the means of production determines your class status. It is a social position rather than an aristocratic distinction. The economic system of capitalism engenders two classes that have opposing interests. That is, the bourgeoisie, who own and control the means of production and the labor power of the proletariat, who are the other class which sells their labor to the bourgeoisie and are exploited in the process. This is the structure of a modern capitalist society. These two classes are locked into a conflict with each other. Marx in the *Communist Manifesto* describes the history of classes and conflict as such:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another⁵⁶.

Everything in capitalism is therefore animated by this conflictual relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and a person's ideological consciousness is determined by their class position in society. As Marxism travels to different parts of the world, different to the industrial Europe of Karl Marx, it takes on different forms, however the core economic structure of Marxism as outline above is taken as universal. While it is true that Marx believed that only highly industrialized capitalist societies can archive a socialist state/ that communism is only essentially possible through capitalism as a social system. The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, where the "workers of all [industrialized capitalist] countries, unite!" and the bourgeoisie ultimately "tremble at a Communistic revolution" and "the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains" but "have a world to win"⁵⁷ is only attainable in a bourgeois European society. In *Capital*^{xviii} Marx writes that "the country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed, the image of its own future"⁵⁸. It is however ironic that communism as a social experiment, at least, was only possible in less developed societies. It is the less developed societies that rearticulated Karl Marx and gave him

^{xviii} Or Das Kapital.

meaning, otherwise without the said less developed societies, Marxism would still be a hypothesis.

It is perhaps agrarian Russia that first gave us a road map for Communism and not the more industrialized Germany as Marx had hoped. Robert Service explains that Marxian ideas were populated in the United Kingdom, where a compelling Marxist party was present. However, despite the freedom to organize and agitate, unlike other states with Marxist movements, the Marxist movement in the United Kingdom failed to install a Communist government when they were defeated in the elections. Robert Service writes that “civil freedom and material comfort, despite their limitations even in Britain, acted as an antidote to political extremism”⁵⁹. While it may seem that Marxism was met with skepticism by other nation states, the less developed nations, it seems, were ready for more ‘politically extreme’ ideas. Service writes that “poverty and oppression constituted the best soil for Marxism to grow in. Accordingly, the Russian empire eventually dwarfed every country except Germany in the eagerness of its reception of Marxist ideas”⁶⁰. Indeed, it is so. Russian, with its largely poor and agrarian population managed to stage a Marxist revolution by overthrowing the autocracy of the Tsar and ‘transferring all the landed property’ into the hands of the peasants, and not the proletariat as Marx had predicted. As history teaches us, it was not enough for Marxist revolutionaries to stop at Russia with this wave of communist revolutionary ideas. The new government in Russia wanted the spread of communist ideas beyond its borders, and so over the years they advocated for and created various international communist organizations and offered political, financial and military support to these organizations. When the decolonization wave hit Africa, African countries found allies against their colonizers in Russia and Russian backed communist institutions. In South Africa, because of settler colonialism – that came with a noteworthy European population, Marxist ideas were popular here than any other part of the continent^{xix}.

The International Socialist League of South Africa (ISL) under the leadership of a Welsh journalist, David Ivon Jones, is perhaps the first Marxist organization in South Africa. Jones came to South Africa in 1910 and in 1915 formed the ISL. The ISL dissolved and merged with/into the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), founded 8 years after the infamous *Natives Land Act of 1913* that sought to consolidate and limit the acquisition of land by Africans. The CPSA worked to organize workers, particularly in the buzzing mining areas of

^{xix} Perhaps, with the exception of Egypt, Algeria and Sudan which also had a significant European population.

Gauteng. It faced pushback from the government of the day; however, it was the National Party government that proved to be a thorny adversary to the CPSA. In 1948 when the National Party came to power it passed the *Suppression of Communism Act, 1950*^{xx}. This Act forced the CPSA to dissolve and go underground as the South African Communist Party (SACP). The SACP sought to align itself with the ANC in order to influence the policy direction of the party^{xxi}. In 1960, after the Sharpeville massacre, the National Party government banned both the ANC and the PAC. Both parties formed military wings to fight against the Apartheid system, Umkhonto we Sizwe by the ANC (and the Communists^{xxii}) and the Azanian People's Liberation Army by the PAC.

Because of the prevalence of Marxist ideas in the country, subjectivity in general was read from a Marxian class perspective. Politics, and indeed emancipatory politics, for Marxists is read outside of race, sex and gender. With Marxism, class is a hegemonic concept that supersedes all the other 'identity' based political subjectivities. This has certainly been the case in South Africa. For example, Michael Neocosmos in his paper *Political Subjectivity and the Subject of Politics: Thinking Beyond Identity from the South Africa*⁶¹ argues that there is an absence of a conceptualization of emancipatory politics that make "alternatives thinkable and thereby possible"⁶² in politics that center origin (social place or location) – however extendable to what Neocosmos describes as the "language turn in social thought worldwide"^{63xxiii}. My reading of Neocosmos is that he wants to overcome "crude classist dogmas" that, perhaps, come with the (un)reading of Marxism and on the other hand identity politics, however he fails/ or is unwilling to read African Subjects outside of the Marxist language of alienation and exploitation. He writes that "displacement – the politics of excess beyond social location and identity – has rarely provided the theoretical foundation for a history of Africans, and yet it is surely displacement which is the truly universal phenomenon of politics and hence of

^{xx} Act No. 44 of 1950

^{xxi} See: Visser, Wessel. 2005. *Exporting trade unionism and labour politics: the British influence on the early South African labour movement*. New contree: a journal of historical and human sciences for Southern Africa. And: Hirson, Baruch. 1991. *Notes towards an intellectual history of the early communist party: The influence of David Ivon Jones*. African Studies Seminar Series. University of the Witwatersrand.

^{xxii} The Soviet Union and allied Communist countries offered material support (funding and firearms) to Umkhonto we Sizwe in exile.

^{xxiii} In his critique of such politics, Neocosmos (in the same paper) argues that "the idea of 'political identities' has been perhaps the dominant intellectual notion here" that "studies of political identities have become overwhelmingly dominant in the social sciences and humanities today in the Global South in general and in Africa in particular within all disciplines". This has resulted in various thinkers from across the disciplines in the Humanities to think about "African society, state and politics in terms of identities: personal, social and political" (page, 466).

history”⁶⁴. Neocosmos advocates for a politics of excess, which is universal. However, how is this any different from class, that is produced by the economic structure and its excesses^{xxiv}, which are supposedly universal?

Neocosmos argues that authentic politics, and if they are to be truly emancipatory, must be a politics of “dis-identification, one of ‘tearing away from the naturalness of place’ which amounts to the ‘opening up of a subject space’”⁶⁵, and here he is thinking through Ranciere, and this process he calls subjectivization. Neocosmos critiques ‘civil society’ – social movements and non – governmental organisations, as being concerned with politics of representation and in his words: “their mere presence provides us usually with little more than popular examples of state politics”⁶⁶. Neocosmos is interested in a universal politics of emancipation, a politics that breaks away from identity politics. For him identity politics “are incapable of providing a basis for the thinking of a politics beyond state democracy and hence beyond current configurations of neo – liberal capitalism”⁶⁷. Neocosmos continues:

The fundamental problem of identity studies from the perspective of emancipation is that political identities are necessarily derived from social location: they ‘represent’ such social location of place in what is termed ‘the political’. As a result, identities can only reproduce such places subjectively along with their accompanying hierarchy, thereby unthinkable. Simultaneously, the absence of a thought of politics beyond identity, the inability to think a politics of excess, has also had other problematic effects, central to these has been precisely the inability to break free from state modes of thought, from ‘seeing like a state’⁶⁸.

Essentially, for Neocosmos, the state as well as identity thinking, in their various articulations, for example: feminist thought, Black consciousness, etc., create and reproduces difference and hierarchies and true politics, understood as a practice, must try and transcend this location.

^{xxiv} My argument here is that the Marxist economic structure produces the excess of Being through its alienation and exploitation of the proletariat, which is the displacement of Being. Marx said that “the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of the commodities”, what the worker gives/works is not equal to what he earns “the worker becomes all the more poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and size”. This, sometimes Marxists call ‘thingyfication’, or, alias, might I add, displacement or alienation from society/estrangement from other men, alienation from Human nature/species Being. Displaced people, or rather, people articulated by the language of the politics of excess, are alienated and exploited people, which is to say classed people produced by the economic structure.

Neocosmos sees the movement *Abahlali base Mjondolo* as a perfect example of a politics that transcends the location. For Neocosmos, when *Abahlali* organised a road blockage to protest against the state, that was the beginning of ‘subjectivization’. This, I suppose, was a sign that yes, indeed “those who are not supposed to think show in fact that they can by stepping out of place, or... [by showing that] the inexistent begins to exist”⁶⁹. This, for Neocosmos, was an opening of a genuine politics that launched a painstaking critique of the state’s conception of freedom, this was an affirmation of their Humanity, and the resistance of the gratuitousness of the suffering they experience (emphasis added). *Abahlali*, through their movement/organisation and their ‘living theory’ manage to sustain this subjectivization and as a result do not fall prey to the pitfalls of representation. *Abahlali*’s politics, argues Neocosmos, has a “universal content because they have exceeded their allotted place in society” he continues, “it is precisely this universal character which not only makes *Abahlali* an organization whose struggle resonates in many parts of the world, but which also turns into a major problem for the state which always sees itself as possessing the monopoly of the universal”⁷⁰.

I cite Neocosmos here to show the tendency Marxists and liberal thinkers like to make about subjectivity. It assumes that all sentient Beings are included in the arc of Marxist and liberal narratives of Being, without addressing the anti-Blackness of the world, because, as Neocosmos would like us to believe that “the fundamental problem of identity studies from the perspective of emancipation is that political identities are necessarily derived from social location; they ‘represent’ such social location or place in what is termed ‘the political’. As a result, identities can only reproduce such places subjectively along with their accompanying hierarchy, thereby leaving a universal notion of emancipation (equality, freedom, justice) unthought and indeed unthinkable”⁷¹. I may be included to agree with Neocosmos about social location and its pitfalls, however I disagree with him about his notion of “a universal notion of emancipation”. This universal notion of emancipation tries to contain and integrate Blackness in a (liberal) structural framework without addressing the anti-Blackness of the world and the dispossession that haunt Black sentient Beings. Neocosmos cites the leader of *Abahlali*, Sbu Zikode, to try and argue how the ‘principled’ politics that *Abahlali* espows that is rooted in the ‘resistance of any notion of representation’:

Our politics starts by recognizing the humanity of every human being. We decided that we will no longer be good boys and girls that quietly wait for our humanity to be finally recognized one

day. Voting has not worked for us . . . Our politics is about carefully working things out together, moving forward together . . . We do not allow the state to keep us quiet in the name of a future revolution that does not come. We do not allow the NGOs to keep us quiet in the name of a future socialism that they can't build. We take our place as people who count the same as everyone else. Sometimes we take that place in the streets with tear gas and the rubber bullets. Sometimes we take that place in the courts. Sometimes we take it on the radio. Tonight we take it here. Our politics starts from the places we have taken. We call it a living politics because it comes from the people and stays with the people. It is ours and it is part of our lives^{xxv} (Zikode, 2008)⁷².

I sympathise with Zikode and his cause, however he makes the same mistake that Biko made of trying to “give the world a more human face”. This Human face, of “recognizing the humanity of every human being” does not, to think through Wilderson, rise to the temperature of ‘the Black’s grammar of suffering’. This thesis argues that this “universal character” is not at all universal because it is predicated on economic exploitation and not on anti-Blackness. Fanon makes a point in *The Wretched of the Earth* that “blacks are not, essentially, dispossessed of land or labor power, but dispossessed of being”⁷³. This Being, the left is yet to offer an account for. I am still to elaborate this further in the next section. However, this is a common assumption for thinkers on the left. The question of race is almost always treated as secondary, to class. It was CLR James in *The Black Jacobins*, writing the history of the first successful slave revolt, who stated that “the race question is subsidiary to the class question in politics”⁷⁴. Such a bold statement from James that he continues to add that “to think of imperialism in terms of race is disastrous. But to neglect the racial factor as merely incidental is an error only less grave than to make it fundamental”⁷⁵. The Marxist materialist position adopted by James is quite clear in this citation and is paradigmatic of the left and its mobilization of class to think

^{xxv} The class politics of *Abahlali base Mjondolo* has seen them, in the 2014 elections, of endorsing a political party that is known for protecting the interest of White people, the Democratic Alliance (DA). In a media statement issued by the movement, *Abahlali* states that “the removal of the ANC was our first priority and the weakening of the ANC was our second priority”. *Abahlali*, after nine years of boycotting elections, took a strategic decision to use the DA to remove the ANC from power. In the vocabulary of *Abahlali*, it is the poor that matter, rather than the Black. In this sense, everyone then can be poor, whether Black or White. The *Abahlali* statement continues to read that “we have been clear that no political party represents the interests of the poor and that it was necessary for us to build our own power in order to present our own needs and demands to society”. This political vocabulary is not rooted in antiblackness but on the so – called universal concept of the poor, that is produced by the economic structure. For *Abahlali*, it is not a contradiction to endorse a known White political party, and might I add a anti-Black one for that matter, because race or “identity” as Neocosmos puts it, is not a defining character of their struggle and oppression. In the statement, they are heard saying that “some of our members did not want to invite the DA to make a presentation as they are known to represent the rich”. This clearly shows that their grammar of suffering, to think through Wilderson, is predicated on economic exploitation and not, as Afropessimism argues, on anti-Blackness.

through and give an account of oppression, and especially oppression suffered by Black people^{xxvi}.

For Marxist thinkers like James and Neocosmos, class regulates access into freedom. The suffering, or unfreedom, suffered by Black people is not as a result of a supposed ‘race question’ but one that affects “all humans”: the economy. With regards to the Slave, James writes that:

In a slave society the mere possession of personal freedom is a valuable privilege, and the laws of Greece and Rome testify that severe legislation against slaves and freedmen have nothing to do with the race question⁷⁶.

For James, the institution of Slavery is not predicated on racism against Black people, but that racial prejudice was weaponized to give justification to the economic exploitation of Black people^{xxvii}. And even though the institution was brutal in its exploitation and unfreedom of these people who are merely racially prejudiced, the institution of Slavery in its systems did not un – people the Black (emphasis added). James writes:

The difficulty was that though one could trap them like animals, transport them in pens, work them alongside an ass or a horse and beat both with the same stick, stable them and stave them, they remained, despite their black skins and curly hair, quite invincibly human beings; with the intelligence and resentments of human beings⁷⁷.

For the left, race/ “the race question” should not be given any more importance over class for the reason that race is merely an epiphenomenon of the economy. In the same modus operandi, the Jamaican Marxist and cultural theorist, Stuart Hall⁷⁸, also asserts that race operates via class. Race is a consequence of class. He writes that “race is thus, also, the modality in which class is ‘lived’, the medium through which relations are experienced, the form in which it is

^{xxvi} In the 1980 publication of the *Black Jacobins*, James (2001) writes in the forward that “my West Indian experiences and my study of Marxism had made me see what had eluded many previous writers, that it was the slaves who had made the revolution”. Marxism gave James the theoretical perspective to write the history of the San Domingo Revolution.

^{xxvii} Biko advances a similar view in *I write what I like*, he argues that “there is no doubt that the colour question in South African politics was originally introduced for economic reasons. The leaders of the white community had to create some kind of barrier between black and whites so that the whites could enjoy privileges at the expense of blacks and still feel free to give a moral justification for the obvious exploitation that pricked even the hardest of white consciences” (Page, 96/7).

appropriated and ‘fought through’”. For Hall the race question, or rather, racism is as a result of “a set of economic, political and ideological practices, of a distinctive kind, concretely articulated with other practices in a social formation”⁷⁹. These practices are produced historically and help the dominant group secure hegemony “over a series of subordinate ones, in such a way as to dominate the whole social formation in a form favorable to long term development of the economic productive base”⁸⁰. We can see here that oppression/ and or domination, at the level of the political and perhaps even ideological, works only to maintain an economic class positionality of a particular group. What is also important to note in Hall’s analysis of racism is the appropriation of Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony. Hegemony, as “a state of total social authority”, is produced through the manufacture of consent. And here lies the key. For Gramsci⁸¹, the dominant cultural norms in society are those of the bourgeois dominant class. The dominant class, according to Gramsci, present their definition of reality in a particular way that their views are accepted by other groups of people as common sense and the only way to see the world. The idea is that people are supposed to consent to this, while any group who presents an alternative world view are marginalized⁸². However, unlike some of his contemporaries, Gramsci is not a nihilist. He believes in Human agency and accordingly room for resisting the dominant societal norms. For Gramsci, the revolutionary Subject must create a proletarian culture that will counter the hegemonic culture of the dominant class^{xxviii}.

What Hall takes from Gramsci is the idea that racism, as a dominant, historically produced cultural norm, that works to maintain an economic class positionality of the dominant group, can be negated through the staging of alternative counter hegemonic positions. We must not forget; consent as opposed to coercion.

To circle back to the anti-Apartheid documentary film. The above logic then becomes the analysis that permeates the anti-Apartheid documentary film. The anti-Apartheid documentary film looks at the oppression of Black people through the lens of the ‘rich vs the poor’, which is to say, through the imagination of class analysis. Black people’s suffering at the hands of the Apartheid system is connected through production. So, then I ask, is this enough? Does this explain the essence of the suffering of Black people? If the suffering Black proletariat overthrows racial capitalism, will that solve the problem of anti-Blackness?

^{xxviii} Gramsci speaks of the war of position, which is distinct from the war of manoeuvre, and in it the revolutionary Subject must struggle, culturally and intellectually, to gain positions of power that can in turn build a counter hegemony.

This assessment of Black suffering is necessary but not essential. They merely explain an aspect of the suffering that Black people experience, as sentient Beings, however they are not essential. While it is true that these bodies are indeed workers and therefore, they are exploited and alienated, but these bodies are also Black and therefore do not suffer in their bodies like how other bodies under the brutality of capitalism suffer. These Black bodies have no capacity for reciprocity at the level of temporality and spatiality, which is to say that these Black bodies have no capacity to make a world; to turn South Africa into Azania, or rather, put differently, to name a space – wherever that may be, into a place – and for argument’s sake, let us call this place Azania. These Black bodies have no capacity to turn duration into the event. No capacity to transform time. These Black bodies are constantly projected as Slaves by the world. These Black bodies are routinely killed. They are natally–alienated, and they are generally dishonored, without access to subjectivity.

What if then we ask, not based on the economic dispossession of these bodies, but based on the construction of the phyllo identity of the Human, and other bodies who sell their labor power, that is in contradistinction to the Black? Which is to say that the world knows itself to be Human through its distinction that it is not Black. What will this do to the documentary film? Will it show the failure of the genre to incorporate the Black into a filmic structure, that ironically, I argue, is also depended on the violation and death of the same Black for its narrative arc? Will it show that the documentary film does not capture the violence of Apartheid, which is violence against Blacks, that is constitutive of the state and its nation building ethos? Will it show that the documentary film does not possess the demand that Blackness embodies which is the end of the world?

Afropessimism: The Black as a Position of Accumulation and Fungibility

In this section of the paper, I want to sufficiently and clearly delineate the theoretical proposition that drives the inquiry of this project, that is Afropessimism.

Afropessimism is located in a theoretical movement, within Black Studies, that is a provocative critique of not only what gets treated as ‘Black identity’ but is a specific “theory” of Blackness that exposes the violence of liberal personhood, subjectivity, and the possibilities it supposedly offers for resistance. To begin with, to call Afropessimism a theory does not properly articulate

what it is about. Afropessimism is not a political framework or a political ideology or anything of that sort; it is simply a work of understanding, a meta-critique of the world and of the discourse identified as critical theory. Afropessimism does not perform a work of liberation; it refuses to put forward seemingly untenable solutions to the problems it raises⁸³. Afropessimism describes the world as it sees it, not how it is presented to us.

Humorous that critiques of Afropessimism like to make the assertion that the theory is American, but not the same is said of Marxism or any of the theories developed in the lecture rooms and beer halls of European intellectual circles. In any case, the ideas that later gave form to what we now know as Afropessimism began in South Africa. Let us perhaps start there. A Black student comes to South Africa from America during Apartheid and decides to stay and help fight the system. Frank Wilderson joins the Charterist Movement in 1986 and works in both underground and above – ground operations as a revolutionary and educator. When he leaves South Africa after Mandela is elected, he takes up the discussions that first began in Apartheid South Africa to America. I think for Wilderson, the Black South African Subject and the Black (or African American) Subject in America were indistinguishable. They were not two Subjects, as many have tried to argue, as noted earlier, but one people void of subjectivity; Kaffirs and Niggers, however with different customs and ways of life, as is common^{xxix}.

The first premise of Afropessimism is that the Black, a Subject – who is not a Subject – is always already positioned as a Slave. For this thesis, if the Black is a Slave, the documentary film, which embraces Human capacity, cannot then articulate the position of the Black, which lacks the capacity to be Human. Afropessimism effects a dichotomous and essentialist twinning of Masters and Slaves – that is to say, of Whites and Blacks. The Black is positioned paradigmatically as a Slave in relation to the White, which is positioned as a Master. In *Black skins, white masks*, Franz Fanon reminds us that “the black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man”⁸⁴. The Black, as a Slave, has been banished from the community of Humans and now lies as the antithesis of the Human Subject. On the ontological position of the Black, Wilderson writes in *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*:

^{xxix} See Wilderson (III), Frank B. 2008. *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile & Apartheid*. South End Press.

The Slave is not a laborer but an anti-Human, a position against which Humanity establishes, maintains, and renews its coherence, its corporeal integrity; if the Slave is, to borrow from Patterson, generally dishonored, perpetually open to gratuitous violence, and void of kinship structure, that is, having no relations that need be recognized, a being outside of relationality⁸⁵.

The Black person is then that Subject who's relational status, even before they aboard the ship, is already not recognized and incorporated into the community of Humans who share an ontological relation. Wilderson puts it as such:

Slavery is and connotes an ontological status for Blackness; and that the constituent elements of slavery are not exploitation and alienation but accumulation and fungibility⁸⁶.

So, then Afropessimism puts forward the thesis that the rubric of exploitation and alienation cannot be used as a grammar of suffering for Blacks because Blacks are positioned differently, ontologically, to other people in the world who sell their labor power under capitalism. Fanon notes that "the Negro suffers in his body quite differently from the white man⁸⁷". Chabani Manganyi, the South African psychologist and intellectual, in his 1973 book *Being Black in the World* suggests that Black people experience the world differently and as a result a different mode of Being is attributed to them that is different from other people, the title is suggestive: Being [a] Black [body] in the world – "there is a mode of existence (of Being in the world) which may be characterized as being white in the world and being black in the world"⁸⁸. Manganyi argues that the structure of existence is a dialogue, it is relational. And relationality according to him may be established in four different levels. Namely, an individual has to relate themselves first to their body as existential fact, second to this is that an individual has to relate themselves to fellowmen and women and sometimes to God, thirdly relation has to be with objects or material culture and lastly with time. In relation to the body, Manganyi argues that the legacy of colonialism in Africa has created a dichotomy relating to the body, namely, the bad and the good body:

The white man's body has been projected as the standard, the norm of beauty, of accomplishment. Not only the body proper, but its periphery; its embellishments have been recognized as such. On the contrary, the black body, projected as the bad body, has always been projected as being inferior and unwholesome⁸⁹.

Manganyi continues to argue that because of this different projection of the bodies, two different sociological schemas were/are developed. One of these schemas is that Black is bad and White is good, which also affects interpersonal relationships across the color line. Thinking through Mearlau – Ponty, Manganyi argues that under normal societies the individual schema predominates over the sociological schema – the body becomes a point of view. The White world lives under this ideal condition, it has maintained a balance; the individualization of the White body is not limited (by the sociological schema). However, in the Black world, explains Manganyi, the individual schema has become traumatized and thus ceases to be a point of view; of notifying the world who one is – this is as a result of the sociological schema which dominates over it (later I will show how this sociological schema is constructed as White, Manganyi assumes this position but is not explicit enough in explaining it). Because the sociological schema is predominant over the individual schema, the Black person experiences their body as an object, as something that is outside of them and alien.

On the relation with time, Manganyi begins by arguing that time is only real only in terms of its primeval relationship with space, and it is the combination of these two properties that constitute an individual's lived space (existence). Because our 'primary mode of existence' is given then it should follow that an individual is free to constitute their lived space on the basis of 'the open appeal of time'. However, according to Manganyi, this is not so in the Black world. A Black person is not at liberty to constitute their lived space under the 'open appeal' of time and as such not able to actualize their potential as Humans. Because the 'primeval relationship' between man and time is disturbed in the Black existential experience, the Black individual, explains Manganyi, lives as though they were immortal, as though death were a fiction. Death is fiction because already Black people occupy a presence marked by death^{xxx}.

^{xxx} Allow me to take a detour here but only to emphasize my point. Here is a tale of Blackness:

During the FeesMustFall movement, there was a moment where after a long-time student had been fighting – running around campus causing destructions and trying to not run into the police. During all that, the police captured Mcebo Dlamini, one of the leaders of the movement, and the university hired security engaged in a stone throwing exercise with the students. Some of the black students decided to go provoke the police where they were situated, by Amick Deck; between the east and the west campus of the university. The plan was to at least set alight one police car. We did not care very much about the hired university security, sure they were a hindrance, but it was the police that were shooting at us, throwing teargas and spraying water cannons at us. At that time, the police were only using rubber bullets, but we knew that this could change at any minute. We knew about the happenings at Marikana. We knew all that, but the 'structures of feeling' at that time was that we "needed to teach these police officers a lesson, and besides what is a revolution without casualties". Some of us wanted so badly to be short at, not killed per se, maybe injured and maybe hospitalized, by the police. This was to be our struggle credentials. Wilderson (in Mngxitama Andile, Alexander Amanda, Gibson Nigel. 2008. *Biko Lives!: Contesting the Legacies of Steve Biko*. Palgrave Macmillan) in a similar experience in 1992 after the Boipatong massacre recalls of the experiences at a Tripartite Alliance Rolling Mass Action where an intelligence note was read that

Now to recap, Manganyi is arguing that, for White people their individual schema corresponds with their sociological schema; it affirms their Being, however for Black people this is not the case, their individual schema does not correspond with their sociological schema, and from this comes a disjuncture (only on the side of the Black people). He/she exists in a cultural gap (due to time). Black people exist in a sense of ‘emasculatation’ (for lack of a better word) or better yet, social death, and from what we are getting from Manganyi, as a result of this, they turn to violence to affirm or claim their Humanity back, which is an impossibility. I agree with Manganyi on his diagnosis. Black people’s suffering is not located in economic exploitation, like other sentient Beings, but because of the Black’s ontological position as a Slave, s/he suffers from anti-Blackness. Wilderson notes it as follows:

During the emergence of new ontological relations in the modern world, from the late Middle Ages through the 1500s, many different kinds of people experienced slavery. In other words, there have been times when natal alienation, general dishonor, and gratuitous violence have turned individuals of myriad ethnicities and races into beings who are socially dead. But African, or more precisely Blackness, refers to an individual who is by definition always already void of relationality⁹⁰.

Blackness always already constitutes absence. Lewis Gordon puts it eloquently when he reminds us of this fact:

There is ‘something’ absent whenever Blacks are present. The more present a Black is, the more absent is this ‘something.’ And the more absent a Black is, the more present is this

General Joshua Oupa Gqozo will open fire with live ammunition if the meeting members planned to cross the border into the Generals homeland. Wilderson describes how the room erupts into cheers and applause. Instead of these Black delegates being deterred by the contents of the intelligence communiqué and maybe make them reconsider their plan, they welcomed their collective death. Wilderson proposes that “perhaps the bullets that were promised us did not manifest within our psyches as lethal deterrents because they were manifested as gifts; rare gifts of recognition; gifts unbequeathed to Blackness; acknowledgment that we did form an ensemble of Human capacity instead of a collection of kaffirs or a bunch of niggers. We experienced a transcendent impossibility: A moment of Blackness-as-Presence in a world overdetermined by Blackness-as-Absence” (Page, 97). Remember how Manganyi argued that the black people undergoing a disjuncture between their sociological schema and their individual schema live as though death is a fiction? There is no indication that Wilderson and his comrades ever managed to carry out their plan, and also, the black group of students at the FeesMustFall movement never actually carried out their plan, but it is the prospect of death that allures black bodies, especially if that act of killing is carried out by a hand that is read as the legitimate; public noticing private. You cannot kill what is already dead; the threat of death proves that one is indeed alive. You can die because you live, you are noticed as Human, or rather have what all Humans have: life, Human life.

something, Blacks seem to suck presence into themselves as a black hole, pretty much like the astrophysical phenomenon that bears that name⁹¹.

Wilderson, in *Biko and the Problematic of Presence*⁹², designates three layers of “Black Absence” that elucidate the *blackhole* experience that is a constitutive element of Black people (of Blackness). He writes:

The world cannot accommodate a black(ened) relation at the level of bodies—subjectivity. Thus, Black “presence is a form of absence” for to see a Black is to see the Black, an ontological frieze that waits for a gaze, rather than a living ontology moving with agency in the field of vision. The Black’s moment of recognition by the Other is always already “Blackness,” upon which supplements are lavished—American, Caribbean, Xhosa, Zulu, etc. But the supplements are superfluous rather than substantive, they don’t unblacken⁹³.

Blacks are removed from the world, exiled from the community of Humans – “no Slave is in the world” as Orlando Patterson, cited in Wilderson⁹⁴ suggests. It then suggests that if Blackness represents ‘absence of subjective presence’ then Whiteness represents full presence at the level of the subjective. It is a *being-for-itself*. If this is so, the documentary film then captures (or un-captures/ unable to apprehend) the nothing of the world, because there is nothing substantive to capture, other than the presence that assumes subjectivity (Whiteness). Wilderson extends this ontological schema to suggest that Blacks also suffer absence at the level of cartographic presence. The world that Blacks inhabit is a world cursed from the face of the earth. It is a world of paradigmatic impossibility. A world where vision goes to die. I think it is important to cite the inspiration for this cartographic absence here. Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* explains that:

The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not recall apartheid in South Africa. Yet, if we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies⁹⁵.

Fanon continues:

The colonial world is a world cut in two ... The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners⁹⁶.

Blackness as cartographic absence reproduces the Black Slave as a fundamentally deficient non-Subject that enters the world to service the needs of Whiteness. As absence, or rather as “the private” to use Arendt’s conception, the Black world is a captivity of Slaves for the stability and coherence of Humans. To refresh our memory, Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, explains the private as follows:

The distinction between privacy and the public coincides with the opposition of necessity and freedom, of futility and permanence, and finally, of shame and honor, it is by no means true that only the necessary, the futile, and the shameful have their proper place in the private realm. The most elementary meaning of the two realms indicates that there are things that need to be hidden and others that need to be displayed publicly if they are to exist at all⁹⁷.

The world of Humans is a public world (closed to Blackness) where “the public realm represents that space of appearance in which moral and political greatness, heroism, and preeminence are revealed, displayed, shared with others”⁹⁸ to follow Arendt (in *Between Past and Future*). The cartographic difference between the Black world, as private, and the White world, as public, is an indication of “Africa’s status as *terra nullius* in the Human psyche”⁹⁹, as Wilderson explains^{xxx}. Fanon continues to explain the Black cartographic absence as follows:

^{xxx} I also explain and discuss this further in later chapters.

The town belonging to the colonized 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, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. 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.

This world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species. The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality, and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species¹⁰⁰.

The lengthily Fanon reference is justified. The African context is necessary to show the critiques of Afropessimism that it is not from the American experience of Blackness that we draw our examples. Nevertheless, to continue with our ontological schema, Wilderson presents a third absence, namely: ‘absence of political presence’. I briefly touched on this absence earlier in this thesis. The argument states that the Subject of political discourse is imagined to be a Being “dispossessed of citizenship and access to civil society... [and] labor power”¹⁰¹. This Subject of political discourse is a Being structured by the needs of the political economy, a Subject who sells their labor power to capital and is thus exploited and alienated as a result. A Subject who is a proletariat, an unraced worker engaged in the direct relations of force. This is, likewise, the Subject of the documentary film.

II.

The political discourse that the documentary film employs cannot “imagine a fundamental difference between the worker and the Black”¹⁰². As a result, the Black is unthought or absent from such a vision. The documentary film, as political discourse, with its insistence on Marxian political subjectivity is unable “to think White supremacy as the base”¹⁰³, which Afropessimism calls attention to. The color blindness, to put it bluntly, of the political discourse (the absence of the Slave) is deprive of vision to the fact that “capital was kick-started by the

rape of the African continent”¹⁰⁴, as Wilderson explains^{xxxii}. The political discourse does not have the framework of anti-Blackness as what kickstarted the formation of the new world. Wilderson explains:

This phenomenon is central to neither Gramsci nor Marx. The theoretical importance of emphasizing this in the early 21st century is two-fold: First, “the socio-political order of the New World” (Spillers 1987: 67) was kick-started by approaching a particular body (a Black body) with direct relations of force, not by approaching a White body with variable capital. Thus, one could say that slavery—the “accumulation” of Black bodies regardless of their utility as laborers (Hartman; Johnson) through an idiom of despotic power (Patterson)—is closer to capital's primal desire than is waged oppression—the “exploitation” of unraced bodies (Marx, Lenin, Gramsci) that labor through an idiom of rational/symbolic (the wage) power: A relation of terror as opposed to a relation of hegemony¹⁰⁵.

To demonstrate this further. Take for example, the South African liberal constitutional democratic state. South Africa post 1994 does not (or continues post 1994 to not) recognize the experiences of Black people – it is an individualistic social ontology – and as such it reproduces colonialism and Apartheid. One example (but not limited to) would be the 1955 Freedom Charter, adopted as an African National Congress – ANC document. Clause four of the document states: “The land shall be shared among those who work it!” This ideological framing, I argue, is a neo – liberal understanding and does not recognize the history of South Africa nor does it seek to redress the inequalities as well as the land dispossession of the native (Black) South Africans. South Africa post 1994, over and above the political discourse, still has colonial remnants, that is to say, colonial symbolisms, which work to maintain the structure of colonialism post 1994.

The discourse of the Human does not “rise to the temperature of the Black’s grammar of suffering”¹⁰⁶. The dispossession of Blacks cannot be elaborated by relations of capital and/or the discourse of language (following the post-structuralists). These ‘grammars of suffering’ cannot “explain Blackness as an anti-relation; that is, as the impossible subjectivity of a sentient Being who can have “no recognition in the eyes of” the Other”¹⁰⁷. Anti-Blackness cannot be detached from the foundation of the world. It is world making. The ontological absence of Black people is beyond signification and is archived through “civil society’s

^{xxxii} Chapter 6 explains and discusses this further.

constituent element: Black accumulation and death”¹⁰⁸. If the Human Subject is positioned structurally through language and discourse. Language which symbolizes an entire society into existence, for the Black, gratuitous violence is a structuring operative that positions us as Slaves. The Human, through discourse is categorized and brought into existence. The Black on the other is killed without cause and has no relation with the world, as a free Being able to think and act temporally and spatially. The violence that the Human experiences does not structure their Being – it is experiential and not without a cause, whereas the Black suffers violence that is without a cause. The Human meets violence at the hands of capital – when s/he sells their labour and is thus exploited and alienated or when s/he demands for better wages and is killed – at the hands of social oppressions as a migrant, queer person, woman, etc. The violence that the Human suffers is not gratuitous. Taking after Fanon, the Black is killed not because of the idea others have on it but because of its appearance. The Black magnetises bullets, as Wilderson once noted. The Human and the Black have two different grammars of suffering that are irreconcilable. “The visual field”, Wilderson writes, ““my own appearance,” is the cut, the mechanism that elaborates the division between the nonniggerness and Slavery, the difference between the living and the dead”¹⁰⁹.

Isono sethu ubumnyana (our sin is that we are Black) laments the Black. Oh, “my death/ that’s so related to me as a wink to the eye”. The violence that continually repositions the Black as a void of historical movement is without analog in the suffering dynamics of the ontologically alive. Open vulnerability to mutilation and death is the name of the game. This – as I have already used the concept before – we call social death. This concept of social death that Afropessimism uses is borrowed from Orlando Patterson’s 1982 study titled *Slavery and Social Death*¹¹⁰. In this study, Patterson shows the internal and external forces (relations) of Slavery. Patterson studies many societies (66 in total) where Slavery existed. For example, in the preface of the study he notes that:

There is nothing notably peculiar about the institution of slavery. It has existed from before the dawn of human history right down to the twentieth century, in the most primitive of human societies and in the most civilized. There is no region on earth that has not at some time harbored the institution. Probably there is no group of people whose ancestors were not at one time slaves or slaveholders¹¹¹.

However, what Patterson does in the study that is perhaps unique with such studies of Slavery is to argue and show that Slavery comprises of three principal features. That is (I have used these in the paper before, but without explaining them in detail) namely: firstly, coercive action (or naked force/violence). Patterson explains that this first feature of Slavery is always present, even in instances where it may seem that it is not (in disguise). He argues that violence is/was necessary in “creating and maintaining that domination”¹¹² and that naked violence “did apply [in that] the Slave or freedman could not only be moved about and used without any regard to his feelings on the matter, but in the event that he was inefficient and corrupt, he could be punished in the most degrading and painful manner possible”¹¹³. Secondly, natal alienation. This Patterson explains as the process in which a Slave, “recruited, as a socially dead person” is alienated from all “rights” or claims of birth, he ceased to belong in his own right to any legitimate social order”¹¹⁴. Patterson explains that this is a “cultural aspect of the relation” because/ or in so far as it “rests on authority, on the control of symbolic instruments”¹¹⁵. Patterson continues to argue that “the slave [is] denied all claims on, and obligations to, his parents and living blood relations but, by extension, all such claims and obligations on his more remote ancestors and on his descendants. He was truly a genealogical isolate”¹¹⁶. Thirdly, dishonored in a generalized way (general dishonor). Patterson explains that the Slave “could have no honor because of the origin of his status, the indignity and all-pervasiveness of his indebtedness, his absence of any independent social existence, but most of all because he was without power except through another”¹¹⁷. This says that the Slave is explicitly and structurally languaged as a powerless entity. Patterson explains that “honor and power are intimately linked”¹¹⁸. So, considering these three principal features (constitutional elements) of Slavery we see, as Patterson argues, that Slavery “differs from other forms of extreme domination in very special ways”¹¹⁹.

Afropessimism thinks through Patterson’s theorization to – to cite Wilderson:

Not only drawing a distinction between what is commonly thought of as the Master/Slave relation and the constituent elements of the Master/Slave relation, but I am also drawing a distinction between the experience of slavery (which anyone can be subjected to) and the ontology of slavery, which in modernity (the years 1300 to the present) becomes the singular purview of the Black¹²⁰.

We now see how Blackness is (constituted as) the negative and divorced from the symbolic. Critiques of Afropessimism – as we have outlined earlier – are often unable to make this distinction. What they generally do is to make emotional responses to the analysis in question without addressing the grammar of structural positionality that Afropessimism advances. In any case, Wilderson continues to explain that:

The Afro-pessimists are theorists of Black positionality who share Fanon's insistence that, though Blacks are indeed sentient beings, the structure of the entire world's semantic field—regardless of cultural and national discrepancies – “leaving” as Fanon would say, “existence by the wayside” – is sutured by anti-Black solidarity. Unlike the solution-oriented, interest-based, or hybridity-dependent scholarship so fashionable today, Afro-pessimism explores the meaning of Blackness not – in the first instance – as a variously and unconsciously interpellated identity or as a conscious social actor, but as a structural position of noncommunicability in the face of all other positions; this meaning is noncommunicable because, again, as a position, Blackness is predicated on modalities of accumulation and fungibility, not exploitation and alienation¹²¹.

With this, as I *might* have mentioned before, Afropessimism does not mobilize a theory of life in order to “save” the Black from the condition of structural noncommunicability. Or – to use Marriott's words (as cited in Jared Sexton), “the need to affirm affirmation through negation”¹²². Our meditations are “structural and historical”, explains Sexton, and they seek “to displace a binary understanding of structure and history”¹²³. While we are here and thinking through Sexton, perhaps a qualification on *Black life* is necessary at this point. Afropessimism does not deny Black life, however we question the nature of such a life, and if it is consistent with a Human life. Black life (or, if you will, African life, as it tries to distinguish itself as *Abantu*) *might* be lived, however what we note and interrogate is that “a black social life [is lived] under the shadow of social death”¹²⁴. The documentary film and the anti-Apartheid movement (and by extension the critics of Afropessimism) might affirm Black life, however, as Sexton reminds us:

The question that remains, beyond the immediate negotiation even as it continues to loop back to it, is whether a politics, which is also to say an aesthetics, that affirms (social) life can avoid the thanatological dead end if it does not will its own (social) death¹²⁵.

In the protest documentary film *Vukani – Awake!*^{xxxiii} the narrator is heard saying: “how long can this slaughter, this oppression, this flagrant negation of Human life, this suicide cause go on for [?]”. The narrator is describing the ontology of Slavery, even though he might not recognize it. This is a symptom of Liberal Humanism. There is a recognition that Black life is negated, that Black life is lived under the duress of death, that Black life is a living death, however we (Humanists) also want to continue to affirm the life of the Black, perhaps in hopes that Black life will someday/somehow be accommodated into the living. Sexton remarks: a living death is as much a death as it is a living”¹²⁶.

To conclude – and to reference Sexton once more:

Nothing in afro-pessimism suggests that there is no black (social) life, only that black life is not social life in the universe formed by the codes of state and civil society, of citizen and subject, of nation and culture, of people and place, of history and heritage, of all the things that colonial society has in common with the colonized, of all that capital has in common with labor – the modern world system¹²⁷.

What critiques of Afropessimism do not realize or fail to realize, and what documentary film must contend with, is that the world is “constructed at the intersection of both a capitalist and [a] White supremacist matrix”¹²⁸. That “it is impossible to disentangle both Blackness and Africanness from the constituent elements of slavery since their emergence and legibility are inextricably bound with the centuries old process through which subjects were turned into objects”¹²⁹. In short: “Black life is not lived in the world that the world lives in, but it is lived underground, in outer space”¹³⁰.

^{xxxiii} Chapter 5 discusses this in detail.

Chapter 5

Black Memory Makingⁱ and That Which Exist in Non-Existenceⁱⁱ

It is difficult to write a story about Black anti-Apartheid filmmakers. Many of the films produced under Apartheid, for the general work of the anti-Apartheid movement, do not have end credits on them. The films also do not have any images or voices of the filmmakers in them. This non-authorship of the anti-Apartheid documentary films makes it difficult to tell if any Black filmmakers were involved in the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement. With regard to VNS/Afravisionⁱⁱⁱ, da Canha writes that “in order to protect the film unit and continue working within the confines of censorship and police harassment to fight Apartheid, the presence of the filmmakers’ was unidentified, and the films remained devoid of authorship”¹. Granted that much of the footage, “visual documents”, taken was used as authoritative evidence of the situation happening in Apartheid South Africa and served as footage for productions about South African outside of South Africa. If there were Black videographers providing footage for the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, we do not know of them. With regards to footage of Apartheid South Africa serving productions outside of the country, Barry Feinberg, in his interview with da Canha notes the following:

So if I was making a film on a particular aspect of the liberation struggle and needed particular footage, we had a way of secret communication where I would pass on my needs to them and what interviews I wanted, even down to what kind of shots I wanted at the interviews and they would tailor the job in South Africa and send the stuff out to me, so that I only had to cut it and incorporate the shots into whatever movie I was making².

Barry Feinberg was a White South African who had gone into exile in 1960 and headed the International Defense and Aid Fund (IDAF)’s propaganda unit known as the Research Information Department.

There were collectives that were formed towards the later stages of Apartheid that were intentional about training and incorporating Blacks into the film industry. VNS/Afravision did

ⁱ Can the representation in documentary film be radical and critical when undertaken by black filmmakers?

ⁱⁱ Do they also bring to mind an aesthetic evoked in Saidiya Hartman’s (2017) “The Terrible Beauty of the Slum” where the ghetto is also a space of black social life vitality and pleasure?

ⁱⁱⁱ Nyana Molete is the founding member of VNS/Afravision, in 1985. However, we do not know what role he played as the Black founding member of the collective.

this, however we are not certain of its extent and if they were at all successful. The *Free Filmmakers collective*, formed in Johannesburg in 1985 by a group of independent filmmakers who “were trying to survive outside the SABC and the trash feature film industry”³ – to use Lynette Noreen Steenveld’s words, is one example. The name, free, is suggestive of the kind of political and institutional program the collective imagined for themselves and the film industry. The collective was trying to build a “national film culture” not dictated by the ordinances of the exploitative capitalist film industry. Angus Gibson, a member of the collective explains that they “didn’t want to operate in the way that funded organisations usually have to ... [they] didn’t want to be accountable in a way that funded organisations often are. [They] wanted [their] independence”⁴. The collective wanted artistic ‘free reign’ to be able to tell the stories of South Africa the way they wanted. Steenveld notes that on one occasion the collective “returned *Channel Four* funding for a proposed film on Soweto when the imposition of the second State of Emergency made it impossible for them to make the kind of film they intended”⁵. I am assuming also that because of their politics and their intentions to ‘transform’ the face of the film industry, the collective became a training ground for many Black filmmakers who were otherwise not given the chance to produce their own films. Da Canha also notes this. Of this impulse to transform the face of the South African film industry, Steenveld writes that:

An integral part of the motivation of Free Filmmakers in setting themselves up was to train aspirant black filmmakers. However, as the group has no organisational or institutional links, the people who are trained are mainly "friends ... people we knew who wanted to make films ... they'd worked in theatre, or were writers. The training consists of learning on the job”⁶.

I must commend the *Free Filmmakers* for their gusto and initiative to want to incorporate Blacks into the image making business, however, as Steenveld brilliantly points out that, “while this provides a marvelous experience for the trainees, it must be questionable whether this is a viable form of training – especially as it is so limited in its intake”⁷. Nonetheless, we cannot blame the collective for trying. The responsibility to train Black filmmakers was not their own, but they did it anyway. One of the collective’s well known documentary project is the 1993 *The Ordinary People* series that was commissioned by the SABC. This series aimed to document the transition of South Africa from Apartheid to democracy through its ‘ordinary people’⁸. The South African film industry, post 1994, is, unfortunately, still overwhelmingly White and male. Post 1994, the media and the documentary filmmaking industry, is still

untransformed and crippled with carvings of coloniality. There is a sustained institutionalized exclusion of Blacks in cinema. The Whites that had a monopoly of image making pre 1994 continue to hold the means over this cinematic and cultural production post 1994. On this, Kristin Pichaske writes that:

The majority of documentary filmmakers in South Africa (as elsewhere) have historically been white, Western and male, and therefore the balance of films produced have presented “reality” as filtered through a white, Western, male bias – a phenomenon that has served to keep people of color and other marginalized groups on the fringes⁹.

The rainbow has unfortunately not reached this side of the media industry. Pichaske continues to argue that:

Unfortunately however, the fact remains that a critical mass of black documentary filmmakers has yet to emerge, the means of filmmaking remain largely in white hands and blacks remain more often the subjects of documentary film in South Africa than the markers¹⁰.

The training that Blacks received in film from collectives formed by White filmmakers pre 1994 was limited and because Blacks faced racial discrimination and exclusion in the media generally, the training only enabled them to be assistants in films produced and directed by Whites. The South African artist David Koloane once noted – in 1996 – that:

The art market is entirely white controlled, its components, art historians, critic, collector, viewer, restorer, archivist are also white. The only other reviewing is in the local tabloid periodic journal, the mediator between the gallery and the public. It is often perceived as the only barometer which determines the creative climate. The visual arts in the South African context are often perceived as élitist and a specialist undertaking because they are associated with power and affluence. Of course colonial influence cannot be emphasised enough¹¹.

Whites were the only specialists pre 1994 and remain the only specialists in a post–Apartheid South Africa. Whites have monopolized themselves in the art and media industry in general that, Koloane continues to explain that:

This influence has not waned or become, an exception after independence in most African states but rather the general rule. This influence has become the criterion of aesthetic realization in the visual arts^{iv12}.

In the second part of this paper, I will attempt a discussion on post–Apartheid documentary film.

II.

For all we know representation matters. Perhaps positive representation on film matter. It could be that representation of Black people in the film industry is a positive thing. Not only that, but representation behind the camera is also perhaps important. I do not know. But Pichaske is convinced that Black filmmakers (or “filmmakers of color”) will add a much–needed plurality of voices in the “global society” and that this “diversification of power” is a positive step. He writes that:

The emergence of filmmakers of color has two undeniably positive effects: 1) a greater plurality of voices, and 2) closer ties to their communities, which should at the very least necessitate a more sensitive approach to representing those communities¹³.

I do believe that the opening of the film industry to Black people has the potential to create a new mode of cultural expression that will respond to the embodied experiences of Blackness. There is a certain beauty when those that did not have the tools finally get the means to represent themselves. Having said that, I am not one to romanticize the representations of Black people by Black filmmakers as essentially positive^v. My assertion that representations of Black

^{iv} Koloane was discussing art criticism, and he was responding to fellow art critics here. I refer to him to show that the institutionalization of power by Whites/ as a form of the monopolization of cinema and art in general in the country – post 1994 – by Whites is a form of exclusion and anti–Blackness.

^v This position is also assumed by Pichaske and Ruby (cited in Pichaske). Pichaske (Page, 75) argues that “documentaries produced by indigenous or marginalized people are not inherently true anymore than those produced by those who represent the mainstream”. I do need to add that Pichaske is a White documentary filmmaker and scholar, and this position is quite typical of White filmmakers who have anxieties about letting go of their privileged position as the only filmmakers to represent the struggles and lived experiences of Black people. Ruby (cited in Pichaske, Page, 76) agrees with Pichaske. He argues that “although it is clear that the balance needs redressing and that the victims of Western oppression should represent themselves, it should not be assumed that any one group has privileged insight into its own history. People seldom understand their own motivation. No one person can represent his or her gender, class, or culture as a whole. No particular group has the corner of being self-serving or adjusting the past to fit the needs of the present”. I am tempted to agree with Ruby and Pichaske, despite their condescension – which comes from a politics of multi – racialism, which assumed to be inclusive

people on and behind the camera matter is not an implication of an extrication of Black people from the condition of social death. The representation of Blacks I am imagining is one that hopes to complicate and think anew the aesthetics and analysis of the lived experiences of Black people. This re – imagining does not necessarily mean cinematic freedom for the Blacks. Blacks with movie cameras can be able to open the world up to visions of Black sensibilities not previously captured by White filmmakers. Black filmmakers can lead a path to the “creation of a fresh perception of the world”¹⁴ – to cite Dziga Vertov, they can be able to “decipher in a new way a world unknown to you”, a cinematic vision of “the end of the world by God”¹⁵. However, for Black filmmakers to lead this path, they will have to bring to screen, or better yet, be articulated by a vision of accumulation and fungibility. This path will, unfortunately, force Black filmmakers to expel Subjecthood in their cinematic language and impose a condition of ontological death upon Blacks. This path is seldom taken by Black anti–Apartheid documentary film movement filmmakers (even post 1994, Black filmmakers are still unable to chart this vision of Black cinematic language). Now of course I operate from an Afropessimist perspective, and I do not believe that this new path inevitably escapes the White colonial gaze. This new path, alas, does not escape the mechanism of intrusion that the camera operates with/within. It does not escape the devouring eye that plays a part in sustaining the appetite of Black violence. Black filmmakers willing to take on this new path will have to live with the contradictions, as I have.

I want to look at some of the Black filmmakers who operated as anti–Apartheid documentary filmmakers. The films they produced and the types of demands the films are making. Unlike White anti–Apartheid filmmakers, Black anti–Apartheid filmmakers are but only a sprinkle, so it is not difficult to choose^{vi}. I will be looking (part biography and part commentary) into Nelson “Nana” Mahomo and Lionel Ngakane. I think that it is important to at least try to highlight the role these men played in the anti–Apartheid movement and the South African documentary scene in general. I think a part of me desperately wants to speak about this unknown, even

but inevitable centers the White body. Ruby and Pichaske are of course operating within a framework of Humanism, which I hope Black filmmakers go against.

^{vi} I am aware of the politics of exclusion that Black people face in cinema. My wording here and the decision to only focus on these two men is not intended to repeat and justify the exclusion of other possible filmmakers (the singularized categorical feature of “the pioneer men of film in Africa”). These two men (perhaps also with the inclusion of Gibson Kente) are the only ones that I could find in the literature and the archives. I am aware that the scarcity of Black people, especially Black women, in cinema does not always mean unavailability. If not the erasure of these people from history. Perhaps in a future project I will undertake a study to write a history of the unspoken.

though I am well aware of the limits of such an undertaking. Saidiya Hartman, in writing about the “ubiquitous presence of Venus in the archive” reminds us that:

The *history* of black counter – historical projects is one of failure, precisely because these accounts have never been able to install themselves as history, but rather are insurgent, disruptive narratives that are marginalized and derailed before they ever gain a footing¹⁶.

Black Men with Movie Cameras: Nelson “Nana” Mahomo and Lionel Ngakane

Nelson Mahomo

Nelson Mahomo, affectionally known as Nana, was born in 1930 in what was then known as the Orange Free State, which was an independent Boer sovereign republic founded in 1854. Mahomo was born to a Dutch Reformed^{vii} cleric. Mahomo was involved in politics at a young age with the African National Congress (ANC) and later with the breakaway Africanist group of the ANC, later known as the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC^{viii}). It is perhaps through the PAC that Mahomo did most of his political work and where his ideology as Africanist flourished. When the PAC was formed in 1959, Mahomo was elected secretary for culture. After the 1960 peaceful anti pass campaign that resulted in the death of 69 people in Sharpeville and many others injured, the PAC was banned and many of its members, including its leader Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, were arrested, while some, including Mahomo – asked by the

^{vii} It is important to remember that the Dutch Reformed church supported Apartheid. The widely publicized expulsion of the church from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches is testament of this. The alliance declared Apartheid to be a sin, however the Dutch Reformed church in South Africa did not adhere to this policy. I do not know how the Mahomo’s (Nana’s father) justified this with their lived experiences as Black in South Africa. I do not want to speculate.

^{viii} The term Africanist has a long history that precedes the formation of the PAC in 1959. The “Africanists” have long existed in South Africa, only as individuals without a political formation. Perhaps the earliest and known Africanists in the history of South Africa were those that belonged to the ANC in the 1940’s under the ideological leadership of Anton Lembede. Lembede and his comrades made the case for “African nationalism” in the ANC, as opposed to the ideology that the party advocated for at the time and formed a youth wing in the ANC that housed many of these radical ideas with Lembede as its founding president. The ideology of the Africanists is loosely based on the idea that Africa belongs to Africans and Africans should take charge of shaping and leading Africa. At the formation of the PAC in 1959 Mangaliso Sobukwe argued in a speech that “we aim, politically, at government of the Africans by the Africans, for the Africans, with everybody who owes his only loyalty to Africa and who is prepared to accept the democratic rule of an African majority being regarded as an African” (published by South African History Online). This was a sharp contrast to the ideology of multiracialism of the ANC, especially after the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955. The ANC’s adoption of this multiracial document as its guiding political and philosophical ideology was the final straw that ultimately broke the ANC into two; the multiracial camp, as it were, and the Africanists, under the banner of the PAC. Mahomo exists in the latter group and his frame of things is characterized by this ideology of Pan-Africanism. It will be interesting to see whether the films that Mahomo did are different or the same to those that the multiracial group of the ANC did, under the banner of VNS.

PAC to leave and organize support externally^{ix} – skipped the country and went into exile. While in exile, Mahomo worked to garner support for the PAC and the anti-Apartheid movement in general. Within 8 years in exile, Mahomo earned a master's degree in political science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Vested with political theory and media communications, Mahomo together with a group of PAC exiles and British film students formed *Morena Films*, in 1969.

The intention of *Morena Films* was to make films about the situation in Apartheid South Africa. In an interview with Gabriel Teshome, Mahomo explains this as follows:

I was sent out of South Africa by the Pan-Africanist Congress to explain the conditions under which black people live in South Africa and to solicit support for their struggle of liberation. During the process of my work I discovered that the more I tried to explain the situation in South Africa the less it seemed people believed me. There was a tendency to say you exaggerate, the conditions in South Africa are not as repressive or as brutal as you state them to be. Over the years I decided that the time had come when perhaps I should try other forms of communication, other than just telling people about South Africa. It seemed to me that if you presented the public with something visual, something which at least their eyes can testify to, you are half-way home. So we, a group of South Africans, without the necessary resources, without even the formal training, embarked on this task of communicating the problem of black South Africans in terms of visual images. That is how I was thrust into this complicated frustrating media of filmmaking¹⁷.

Through *Morena Films*, Mahomo produced two critically acclaimed documentary films, which I will be discussing in this paper, namely: *PhelaNdaba*^x (1970) and *Last Grave at Dimbaza* (1974).

^{ix} It is not clear to me when Mahomo left South Africa exactly. However, Harald Barre (in Barre, Harald. 2015. "A natural alliance"? *The PAC's changing perception of African American activists in the 1960s and 1970s. An analysis of the Azania News*. Vienna Journal of African Studies. Page, 128) suggests that Mahomo left South Africa at the eve of the Sharpeville Massacre.

^x Translated and published as *End of the Dialogue (PhelaNdaba)* for audiences outside of South Africa (CBS made a shorter version of the film and put it out as "Black view of South Africa"). The film came out in 1970 and it was one of the first films to visually document the horrors of Apartheid South Africa. It received critical acclaim winning, a Golden Dove Award, 1970 Leipzig Film Festival (Germany), Inter-Film Jury Prize and the Volkshoch-Schule Jury Prize, 1970 Oberhausen Film Festival (Germany), 1970 Catholic Film Workers Prize, 1970 Moscow Film Festival and including, but not limited to the 1971 Emmy Award.

PhelaNdaba was filmed in 1969 during a 3 – month tour by a British performing arts group known as the *Dryden Society* from the University of Cambridge. The society faced many challenges before and during their tour of South Africa from across the political spectrum. The tour took place during the academic and cultural boycott^{xi} advocated by the anti–Apartheid movement. So, the going to South Africa by this society was protested by many groups, in the UK and South Africa. Daniel J Feather writes that the “Left-wing [South African] student groups protested outside the Dryden Society’s performances, based on a similar belief to their counterparts in the UK that its presence in South Africa helped legitimize apartheid”¹⁸. However, what the groups protesting, including the majority of the Dryden Society members, did not know was that Chris Curling, Antonia Caccia and Simon Louvish were working with the PAC in exile to collect information and footage to be used as propaganda against Apartheid South Africa. Feather puts it as follows:

The Dryden Society tour provided a useful cover for filming the conditions in which the country’s black majority were living. This necessitated spending time in black townships which was illegal for a white person without a permit. This material was later used in a documentary film entitled *End of The Dialogue* (1970), which was produced with Nelson ‘Nana’ Mahomo, Vusumzi Make, and Rakhethla Tsehlana, members of the PAC in exile in London¹⁹.

In their interviews with Antonia Caccia, one of the architects of this cover mission, and Harriet Walter, one of the members of the Dryden Society during the tour. Feather captures their memory of the events as follows:

Other actors did become aware of the activities or at least suspicious of what Caccia, Curling and Louvish were doing. Harriet Walter, who was not a University of Cambridge student, had been encouraged to audition by Curling, whom she was close to at the time. When she began to have doubts about the tour Curling admitted that he, Caccia and Louvish were using the tour as cover to undertake filming in South Africa. Walter went on to help with the filming and played an important role in posting some of the film back to the UK, and smuggling the rest through customs at Jan Smuts Airport, Johannesburg. Jill Lewis became aware of these activities halfway through the tour and briefly assisted by starting a friendly conversation with

^{xi} Albeit published in 1989, the academic and cultural boycott can be surmised by this text of the ANC which states that “no cultural workers, artists, sportspersons or academics should be permitted to travel to South Africa to perform or impart their services and their expertise, save and except in those instances where such travel is clearing in the furtherance to national democratic struggle or any of its objectives.” The boycotting of South Africa existed as an idea as early as the late 1950’s.

a South African police officer so Louvish could film them without suspicion. Anthony Kirwan questioned Caccia about the regular meetings she was having in almost every town they visited and even asked if she was a member of the African National Congress²⁰.

Mahomo was the mastermind behind this insidious plan to use the Dryden Society tour of South Africa – to essentially hijack it – to film the conditions there. Mahomo was also key in the enrolment of Caccia at the London Film School. This was done for the purposes that Caccia may one day travel to South Africa to document the situation there. It became important to otherwise document the conditions in South Africa from a different perspective as the Apartheid propaganda internationally presented South Africa as that of ‘peaceful co-existence’ between the races. Peter Davis, cited in Feather explains this as follows:

Many cinematic portrayals of life in South Africa that were produced in the 1960s ‘showed forms of partnership across the colour line’ that ‘bore little resemblance to reality’²¹.

The decision to use film as propaganda and information dissemination is not new. Many groups before Mahomo used film before to aid their struggles. Perhaps of notable of this would be the *Third World Cinema*, most pronounced in Latin America. But, unlike Third World Cinema where the marginalized people themselves document their stories from their own perspectives, Morema Films used White Subjects, here in the form of that of Chris Curling, Antonia Caccia and Simon Louvish. This was the only way this film could have been made at the time. Remember that this was before the advent of TV in South Africa. This would only be in 1976 with the lifting of the ban on video technology, and subsequently now access to some form of filmmaking technology that saw independent filmmakers making films independent of the state.

Through the *World Council of Churches*, Mahomo raised funds to purchase a 16 mm camera, sound recorder, and film stock²². In South Africa the group secretly met with different leaders of the liberation movement, from the PAC side. They visited Lesotho and interviewed Joseph Molefi, and upon return to South Africa managed to meet Robert Sobukwe who was under house arrest in Kimberly. When the tour came to an end, the group, working alongside Mahomo and two other PAC exiles, Vusi Make, and Rakhethla Tsehlana, they put together the film.

Curling, Caccia and Louvish were not credited when the film came out in 1970^{xii} “to protect against potential reprisals from the South African authorities”²³. Plus, perhaps this omission was a clever way to allow the group access to the country to yet again produce a film about the conditions there. This is exactly what Curling did. Curling returned to South Africa to take footage of the film that was to become *Last Grave at Dimbaza*. One of the most influential artifacts against the Apartheid system at the time. Both films, *Phelandaba* and *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, created a template and a bedrock for the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement. These films are what many of the VNS/Afravision, and others, based their practice on.

Lionel Ngakane

When people talk about seminal figures in African cinema (“the founding fathers”), they often mention the likes of the Senegalese’s, Ousmane Sembene (1923 – 2007) and Djibril Diop – Mambety (1945 – 1998), the Mauritanian, Med Hondo (1936 – 2019) or the Malian, Souleymane Cissé (1940). Lionel Ngakane is a little less known in South Africa, despite having the same stature as “the founding fathers” of African cinema. Ngakane is the first Black South African to cinematically document Apartheid South Africa with the 1962 documentary film *Vukani – Awake* (created in 1957 and released in 1962). Ngakane is actually the first Black African to produce a film on the African continent. Ousmane Sembene's *Black Girl* (French: *La noire de*) was produced in 1966 and *Mandabi*, in 1968 and *the Wagon Driver* (French: *Borom Sarret*) in 1962.

Ngakane was born on 17 July 1928 in Pretoria, the administrative capital of South Africa at the time, to parents who were educators. Later, in 1936, the Ngakane family moved to Sophiatown, a Black cultural hub at the time, until 1955 when it was destroyed, and 60 000 inhabitants resettled to Meadowlands in Soweto. While in Soweto, Ngakane joined the local branch of the African National Congress (ANC), subsequently becoming a convener of the Orlando ANC Youth League. After secondary education, Ngakane went to Fort Hare University and later the University of Witwatersrand to complete his qualification. It is not until he was 20 years old did Ngakane assume a position in the creative activity^{xiii}. He worked as a journalist for *the*

^{xii} Their names were only added to the credits in 2002.

^{xiii} Ngakane worked for *Drum* from 1948 until he was fired in 1950. If he was born in 1928, it makes sense that he was 20 years old when he started working at *Drum*.

Rand Daily Mail and *Zonk Magazine*, before heading to *Drum Magazine* – a magazine targeted at Black audiences^{xiv}. In this role of journalist, Ngakane travels to Britain in 1950 to try and interview Zoltan Korda, the director of the film *Cry, The Beloved Country*. While there, Ngakane ends up auditioning for the role of Absalom Kumalo in the film, which he gets and subsequent to that works as Korda's personal assistant and technical advisor. We also need to bear in mind that this was during the post war life in Britain, and the situation was not easy, especially for immigrants. The country still had a race relations problem – state sponsored racism, the racialization of Black immigrants and general anti-Blackness^{xv}. After *Cry, The Beloved Country*, Ngakane worked in several productions for TV, radio and film as well as writing for a few magazines. Struggling to access the White dominated film industry in Britain as an aspiring film director, Ngakane chose the guerilla filmmaking route as a necessity to share his stories. He explains in an interview that:

The trouble in this country [Britain] is that people in theatre and films simply can't visualise a coloured man as a director. It is hard enough to get through to one of them, and when you do, you hear the secretary say to the boss – 'There's a coloured gentleman on the phone' ...²⁴.

Ngakane's first attempt at making a film was with a film titled *Sunday in London* made around 1956, however his first official film as director was in 1957 with the film *Vukani – Awake*.

To make *Vukani – Awake*, Ngakane travelled back to South Africa in 1957 to shoot the film. Making this film, *Vukani – Awake*, the first film to be filmed in Africa by a Black African. This makes *Vukani – Awake* the precursor to the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement. In 1966, Ngakane produced *Jemima and Johnny*, a short film about two children; a Black girl and a White boy, in London, whose friendship draws "the audience's attention to the similarities between black and white people without delving into the racist attitudes that often pervaded the late 20th century"²⁵, to use Calum Russell's words in an article they wrote about the film. *Jemima and Johnny* received acclaim, becoming the first Black British film in history to be honored with an award at an international film festival – the film won 1st prize at the 1966 Venice Film Festival, 1st prize at Rimini Festival and a bronze award at the Festival of Carthage.

^{xiv} See: Kros, Cynthia and Auguiste, Pervaiz. 2022. *Reframing Africa?: Reflections on Modernity and the Moving Image*. African Books Collective.

^{xv} See: Carter Bob, Harris Clive, Joshi Shirley. 1987. *The 1951 – 55 Conservative Government and the Racialisation of Black Immigrants*. University of Warwick, Ethnic Relations. And, Perry, Kennetta Hammond. 2015. *London is the place for me: black Britons, citizenship, and the politics of race*. Oxford University Press.

Ngakane also produced, what is probably, the first documentary biography on Nelson Mandela in 1985 titled, *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is My Life* – for British TV, while Mandela was still in prison²⁶. This does not come as a surprise. Ngakane remained an ANC member even while in exile. In 1961, he and Oliver Tambo, opened an ANC office/branch in London²⁷. Moreover, Ngakane took part in many films serving in various positions^{xvi}.

In 1967, Ngakane ideated the formation of the *Pan – African Federation of Film Makers* (FEPACI) – a lobby organization of independent African filmmakers. The idea for the organization came up in 1966 when Ngakane was invited by the Austrian Socialist Party to the Third World Cinema symposium in Vienna. He presented the idea for the organization to the Carthage Film Festival in Tunis and the following year the organization was born. He served as its honorary president and Regional Secretary for Southern Africa²⁸. Ngakane returned to South Africa, like many exiles, in 1994 and began the work of making cinema accessible to Black South Africans.^{xvii}

II.

There is also one figure I cannot, for the life of me, conclude writing this without mentioning. He did not, or rather, was robbed of an opportunity to present his film to the world – and perhaps be added to the list of “founding fathers” of African cinema. His name, Gibson Mthuthuzeli Kente. The ‘Father of Black Theatre’.

^{xvi} See: *Sunday in London* (1956), *Vukani – Awake* (1962), *Jemima and Johnny* (1966) *Once Upon a Time* (1975), *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is My Life* (1985), *Nigerian Transition* (1989).

^{xvii} External sources for this biography:

Biography of Lionel Ngakane by Rod Reyna. South African History Online. 2016. Available: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/biography-lionel-ngakane-rod-reyna#endnote-xxiii-ref>.

Chris Albertyn. 2011, *Vukani – Awake! (1962) A Cinematic Context*. Available: <http://electricjive.blogspot.com/>.

Inge Blackman. Available: <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/464233/>.

Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Literature. 1997. Available: <https://web.mit.edu/21f.853/africa-film/0494.html>.

African Film Festival, New York. Available: <https://africanfilmny.org/directors/lionel-ngakane/>.

Lloyd Reckord. 2001. *Black in the British Frame: The Black Experience in British Film and Television*.

Kente was born 23 July 1932 in the Eastern Cape. After completing his matric at Lovedale Training College in the former Cape Province, he moved to Johannesburg in 1956 with the intention of studying social work, however the arts called him. 'Bra Gib' did not complete his social work studies. Instead, he joined the Union of South African Artists in Johannesburg. Kente wrote and produced many theatre plays – about 23 – in his life time. Kente also wrote music for Black artists in the country. His work always reflected township Black life. Other than writing and producing – with little to one institutions for Black creatives, Kente trained many artists in the country, many of them going on to creating works of art themselves and becoming Black household names.

Kente's early work was not overtly political. It took a turn in the 1970's – necessitated by the increasing and much militant demands that the student movement, influenced by Black Consciousness philosophies, at the time were making. The musical play, *How Long* (1973) is a result of this turn. This did not sit well with the Apartheid government. The play, as well as subsequent pieces that directly challenged and attacked the government were banned. Because of the popularity and impact of the play *How Long*, Kente decided to make a film (with the same title^{xviii}) based on the play. After shooting the film in 1976 – just after the student massacre – the master negative was seized by the government and handed to the National Film Board in Pretoria. Kente was detained without trial for a year^{xix} for this subversive act^{xx} and the film never saw the light of day.

Quite a lot has been written about Kente the playwright and his place in South African theatre and literature. But, not enough about Kente the filmmaker. In a 1990 interview with *Villon Films*^{xxi}, Kente briefly speaks about his love for film and his desire to contribute to the cinematic landscape of South Africa that is overwhelmingly White. Kente might not have made a film that the general public has seen, however his artistry and visionary mind/imagination has given birth and shaped the arts and media landscape of this country. He was/ and continues to be an institution. A well of knowledge that remains a frame for popular Black artistry in the post-Apartheid South Africa.

^{xviii} The film version went with the longer name: *How Long Must We Suffer*

^{xix} Some accounts say 6 months.

^{xx} See: Tomaselli, Keyan. 1989. *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film*. Routledge

^{xxi} See: Gibson Kente – Unedited Interview. 1990. Villon Films, https://villonfilms.ca/archive/vf_svxxwccwxgr.

**Anatomy of Black Struggle Film: *PhelaNdaba*, *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, *Vukani–Awake!*
and *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is My Life***

PhelaNdaba

PhelaNdaba begins by showing still black and white images of Black South Africans. An image of what appears to be Blacks at a train station, a man standing next to produce in what looks like he is selling the food, a person looking away at the camera/ or rather, the camera caught the person as they were looking away, so we cannot properly see their face, after that the film cuts to a picture of a child starring directly at the camera, with the title of the film written in red underneath: PHELA–NDABA, and then after followed by the English translation: END OF THE DIALOGUE, in red again. The still images continue, with one image that gives a brief explanation of what we are seeing on screen: APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA 1970. After several pictures, another explanation is given, displayed with a picture of a child: “This film was shot illegally in South Africa during the 1969–1970 by members of the Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa”. This is followed by several pictures of Black children starring directly in the camera. This serves as the opening of the film, with haunting music in the background, by Barton Midwood. All these still images are shots from the moving images in the film and are employed to arrest the viewer’s attention, perhaps to notify them that what they are about to see in the film is unlike what they have seen before.

The film then moves to images of the disparities of the living conditions between the Blacks and the Whites, and this is where we are introduced to our voice over guide, the voice of Nana Mahomo. Mahomo provides context and, together with the music, sonically carries the emotive structure of the film. There is not a single interview in the film. The faint voices of the Subjects in the film can sometimes be heard however it is difficult to understand what they are saying. The raw material of actuality, to use Grierson’s words, of the contrasts between the Whites and the Blacks, the townships and the cities, is the mechanism that the film employs throughout. This is in addition to ‘information’ about South Africa conveyed by the didactic voice over.

“South Africa has a population of 3 million whites, 15 million Blacks, 1 million Coloureds, and half a million Asiatic’s. Blacks have no vote. There are no Blacks in parliament and no Blacks in the armed forces. Africa mines more than 15 minerals and is the world’s greatest producer

of diamonds, chrome, platinum and antimony. It is from this solid face of economic, political and military strength the 3 million Whites exercise and maintain exclusive power in South Africa. South Africans sunshine and wide open spaces and its high standard of living for Whites, second only to the standard of living in the United States are a boom to tourism”.

The above is an example of the kind of information the voice over narrates about South Africa. This is found at the beginning of the film and like the images its function is to show the contrast between the Blacks and the Whites. This disparity of the raw material of actuality is the modus operandi of *PhelaNdaba*. *PhelaNdaba* is a classic exposition film bound by the documentary contract of a Truth claim. By making the film *PhelaNdaba*, Mahomo and his colleagues entered into a contractual agreement between themselves as the filmmakers, making a film about the realities of Apartheid South Africa, and between their audience outside of South Africa. This contract binds the filmmakers into an ethical bond that demands that the representation that we see on film are indeed based on actual social and historical realities (thinking through Keith Beattie here²⁹). A documentary film of such nature is expected to have been “produced in good faith with standards of evidentiality” a work of “accurate and verifiable depiction of the world”³⁰. The truth claim that documentary film functions within is mediated by the assumption that “the camera cannot lie”. The camera functions to record physical reality. It is a relationship between image and object, what Peirce (in Beattie³¹) calls *an indexical bond*.

The bond between representation and referent, that is, between the image and the real world, produces an impression of authenticity which documentary draws on as a warrant or guarantee of the accuracy and authority of its representation³².

The documentary film of course goes beyond the function of recording. While the camera records physical reality, the documentary film will go through a process of editing and manipulation to produce a legible narrative arc. So therefore, the documentary film should properly be thought of as a performative act (via Bruzzi³³). In chapter 2 I discuss this in length. The documentary film as a performative act merely interprets physical reality. Beattie puts it as follows:

Documentary representation exceeds a recording function; a documentary representation is an interpretation of physical reality, not a mere reflection of pre-existent reality³⁴.

I agree with Beattie. However the documentary contract that Mahomo entered into and the interpretation of physical reality we see in *PhelaNdaba* is based on a false premise about the condition of *Blackness*^{xxii}. I do have to state that *PhelaNdaba*, *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, and *Vukane – Awake* by Lionel Ngakane (I will discuss these films shortly) were driven by a sense of urgency. They are ‘video pamphlets’ designed to, as Pichaske puts it, “to document conflict on the ground with political, as opposed to aesthetics, in mind”³⁵. However even with this in mind, what these video pamphlets, *PhelaNdaba* in this case, do is to articulate the experience of Apartheid through a materialist economic class positionality. The visual contrasting that *PhelaNdaba* adopts throughout the film, the rich vs the poor analysis, is consistent with the Marxist tradition that characterises the decolonization movements in Africa. For example, one of the first images we are shown in the film is that of the opulence of the White world in South Africa – the Whites enjoying a rugby match, the clean and safe towns of the Whites, with all the banks and the economic opportunities, the military parades that show the strength of the White system. In those first images, the film cuts straight to the images of Black men and women in the early hours of the morning going to work and the shanty towns they live in, the township Soweto. From this images, the voice over comes through to explain this contrast:

This is a Black township adjoining Johannesburg. The day began at 4 in the morning when the Blacks started on the 15 mile journey into Johannesburg to do their chores as domestic servants, factory workers, drivers, messengers, street sweepers, and clerical workers. Under the group areas act, it is illegal for different racial groups to live together in the same area. Six hundred thousand Blacks live here, during the day Soweto is almost completely deserted, except for children. The parents only come back about 8 or 9 in the evening. Most mothers are doing domestic work, which includes taking care of White children during the day. This has made Black parents almost strangers to their own children^{xxiii}.

As a Marxist analysis, perhaps the film succeeds. The visual contrasting shows the economic structure of the Whites, their material forces of production and the social relationships that

^{xxii} Or at least partly false/ or an incomplete condition about the suffering of Blacks.

^{xxiii} “Black parents [are] almost strangers to their own children”, what a striking sentence. A Marxist/Humanist framing and analysis of the problem of Apartheid cannot understand that Black family is an oxymoron. Black children are estranged from the protections that come with kinship. In the township, Black children are left by themselves. Black parents (or rather Black grownups, because there are no parents in the township, just things/prosthetics that) raise White children in the suburbs. Hortense Spillers (page 74) explains that Slavery creates a Subject that is outside the structure and protection of the world. This we call Natal – alienation. Black children are structurally and institutionally severed from the protections that come with being children. They are in a state of existential homelessness. Hobos of the world. Hobos of Apartheid.

Black people enter into in order to survive. However we know that Black people are elaborated by far more than what this analysis depicts. What this contrast hides is the fact that Black people are things that are readily available to use for other people's enjoyment and profit. The Black is what Saidiya Hartman³⁶ calls a fungible thing. *PhelaNdaba* labours to elaborate Blacks through a Humanist filmic structure for its White audiences outside of South Africa without addressing the ontological question of the exclusion of Blacks from Humanity. This, as I have already argued in the chapter on Afropessimism, is a mystification and erasure of Blackness's grammar of suffering (via Wilderson³⁷). The contrast that *PhelaNdaba* employs in the film, predicated on class politics, masks the real contrast of the Master/Slave relation. The Master/Slave relation is made possible through a wave of violence that incapacitate the Black's spatial and temporal capacity. The violence of Apartheid is structural and unconditional for the making of the White South African reality^{xxiv}.

PhelaNdaba ends by displaying the names of political activists who were sentenced to death by the Apartheid government. Mahomo prefaces this by explaining that:

South Africa denies that she holds any political prisoners, except for Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, president of the banned pan Africanist congress. Sobukwe has spent 9 years in prison, 6 of them on Robben island, where he was held without trial. He is now under house arrest. The record show however that there are many other political prisoners.

Mahomo then lists some of these political prisoners, all serving life imprisonment. From here he continues to explain that "many have died while on police interrogation. Scores have already been hanged" and so Mahomo lists them and that is how the film ends. This ending is consistent with a class/Humanist framing that the film adopts. Here, the Black, as a political activist/freedom fighter, is imprisoned and put to death for his/her political convictions and actions. So therefore his/her punishment/ or rather violence is contingent – the Black committed a political crime therefore s/he is punished. Wilderson reminds us that the violence:

Which turns a body into flesh, ripped apart literally and imaginatively, destroys the possibility of ontology because it positions the Black in an infinite and indeterminately horrifying and open vulnerability, an object made available (which is to say fungible) for any subject³⁸.

^{xxiv} These Black filmmakers acquire their style of articulation through their political parties.

The assumption in *PhelaNdaba* is that Apartheid is unethical for the killing and subjugation of Humans who are Black and not unethical for the un – peopling of the Black. *PhelaNdaba* is unwilling to view the killings, imprisonment and humiliation of the Blacks as rituals and routines of violence that sustains and gives coherence to White South African social life. While the PAC of Mahomo was committed to Black liberation that is led by Africans, its political and ideological framing of the suffering of Africans was based on Marxist socialist contours. For example, the PAC framed the problem of Black suffering under Apartheid as a “national liberation” struggle “against racist capitalism”. This framing of the problem of Black suffering under Apartheid was a position put down by the *Azanian Manifesto* – a socialist document that frames the problems and course of action to be taken by the oppressed African people. The PAC adopted the *Azanian Manifesto* at their launch in 1959. The Azanian Manifesto saw “the eradication of the system of racial capitalism” to “put an end to Apartheid. The “black working class inspired by revolutionary consciences is the driving force of our struggle”³⁹. This framing of the problem in the *Azanian Manifesto* is evident in *PhelaNdaba*. The images of Blacks going to work and at work are abundant in the film, if not only that, the voice over reminds us at every time about this racialised system of capitalism.

Liberation movements in South Africa, though they preached revolution, wanted inclusion in the state and liberties enjoyed by White South Africans. The *Azanian Manifesto* maintains the Humanity of the Black and insists that the Black, as Human, should have ‘the right to work, state provision of free education, housing, health care, legal, recreation, etc’. The revolution that is imagined by South African liberation movements, PAC and ANC included, is not a Fanonian call for the “end of the world, by God”, a complete destruction of the White world. This ethico – political articulation of the South African problem is what *PhelaNdaba* is premised on. This structure of the antagonism we see in *PhelaNdeba* is also carried into Mahomo’s second anti-Apartheid documentary film, *Last Grave at Dimbaza*.

Last Grave at Dimbaza

Last Grave at Dimbaza has been hailed as the first significant anti-Apartheid film of the 1970⁴⁰. Stylistically and aesthetically *Last Grave at Dimbaza* is not that different to *PhelaNdaba*. Similar to the didactic voice over employed in *PhelaNdaba*, *Last Grave at Dimbaza* is no different. However, unlike in *PhelaNdaba*, where Mahomo, a Black South

African with lived experience of Apartheid narrates the film. What is striking to me about *Last Grave at Dimbaza* is the choice of the voice over guide. *Last Grave at Dimbaza* has what sounds like a White British male as the voice over. I wonder what led to this decision to use what sounds like a White British male as the voice over? Perhaps the film producers wanted it to have more appeal? I wonder. Does a Black voice over carry less of an authority than that of a White voice over? Do the producers of the film realise that a Black voice performs the role of intrusive racial imago for White people, so they tried to avoid this with a less threatening voice? Were the producers of *Last Grave at Dimbaza* that desperate that they mimicked the conventional documentary style and sound of the country that housed them, Britain? We need to remember that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) had made many documentary films before *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, films such as *The More We Are Together* (1958) and *Ansel Adams, Photographer* (1958), the many TV documentary films such as *Meet the Commuters* (1976) and *The End of Rationing* (1954). All these BBC documentary films use a voice – over commentary – a White male, to render an impression of authenticity. This voice over technique was almost institutionalised at the BCC. Of the BBC and the decision to initially adopt the voice over technique, Bill Nichols explains it as follows:

An institutional framework also imposes an institutional way of seeing and speaking, which functions as a set of limits, or conventions, for the filmmaker and audience alike. To say “it goes without saying” that a documentary will have a voice-over commentary or “everyone knows” that a documentary must present both sides of the question is to say what is usually the case within a specific institutional framework. Voice – over commentary, sometimes poetic, sometimes factual, was a strong convention within the government-sponsored film production units headed by John Grierson in 1930s Britain, and reportorial balance, in the sense of not openly taking sides, prevails among the news divisions of network television companies today⁴¹.

This institutional framework imposes a phallogentric and colonial constitution in documentary film that renders the Subjects in the film, other than the White male, inept and invisible. It is puzzling why the producers of *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, knowing the racialised nature of the condition in South Africa, where Blacks are treated as perpetual minors and therefore in need of assistance, where Whites see themselves as saviours and the designate guides of Black people, chose this framework. This is also puzzling because the same *Azanian Manifesto* that

the producers of *Last Grave at Dimbaza* are guided by seems to gesture against White ventriloquism in the struggle against Apartheid:

The struggle for national liberation must be against racist capitalism, which imprisons the people of Azania to the advantage of the small minority of white capitalists and their allies, ie the white workers and the reactionary middle – class groups⁴².

The imprisoning of the people of Azania, it may seem, by capitalism to the advantage of Whites, is a signal against White hijacking of the liberation struggle. I say this because it is a well – known fact that one of the reasons the PAC broke away from the ANC was because of the view that the ANC was making too many concessions, especially after the adoption of the *Freedom Charter* in 1955. The PAC, then a so – called Africanist group inside the ANC, felt that the ANC:

Had diluted the traditional black nationalist position of the ANC. They felt blacks should be in control of their own liberation struggle, and should not be prompted by white liberals, including communists. According to the Africanists, the whites have too much to lose to be regarded as reliable allies⁴³.

Explains Padraig O'Malley. If the PAC held this view, then their choice to use what sounds like a White British male as the voice over in *Last Grave at Dimbaza* is a cop out, to say the least. The producers fell into the trap of being labelled “native informants for first world intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other”⁴⁴, to cite Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her famous essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*. The White voice imposes itself on the Blacks, speaking for and in place of the Blacks.

“In this film we show what it is like for the black people of south Africa to be on the receiving end of the white governments Apartheid policies” announces the voice over guide in *Last Grave at Dimbaza*. Perhaps, aptly put by the voice over. The film strives to do exactly that by showing how South Africa, a “rich industrialised country with the capability of producing her own nuclear bomb. In this country of 22 million people, the lives of the 15 million blacks, 2 million coloureds, and 600 000 Indians, are totally controlled by the white minority of under 4 million” (*Last Grave at Dimbaza*). The film does this by demonstrating the law of Apartheid

in South Africa, most notably its policy of the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970, better known as the Bantustans.

The film shows how under the policy of the Bantustans, the government of South Africa provides no services to the Blacks who are forcibly removed to the Bantustans. Not adequate health care services – “1 doctor for every 4 hundred whites and 1 doctor for every 44 000 blacks” – and as a result Black children are malnourished, 1 in 5 people suffer from TB, 50% of the children die before the age of 5 years old, limited food resources, etc. All this information about the suffering of Blacks under the policy of the Bantustans is accompanied by images^{xxv} to drive the point across. Under the Group Areas Act, the film shows Soweto and the forced removals in District 6, a coloured neighbourhood where 45 000 coloureds are being forcibly removed to the Cape Flats to make way for 15 000 Whites^{xxvi}.

Like *PhelaNdaba*, there are no interviews in the film, however unlike in *PhelaNdaba*, there is a moment in the film where the viewers are introduced to two Black Subjects who are not nameless. Mrs. Gertrude Mbatha, a servant for the White people since she was 15 years old. Mrs. Mbatha has 4 children that stay in the Bantustans and only sees them once a year, if she’s lucky, a husband she only sees once a week on her day off and lives 13 miles in Soweto. And Mrs. Ayanda Nkosi, a pregnant Black woman with twins who works to take care of a White family. Mrs. Nkosi has one daughter that stays in the Bantustans with friends, a son that earlier died from malnutrition. A husband that lives in an all – male barrack in Soweto. Although we are introduced to these two Black women, the instituted voice over speaks on their behalf. I do not know why the film continued to do so. It is intelligible why the rest of the Subjects in the film are nameless, without a biography and spoken for, however here, with Mrs. Gertrude Mbatha and Mrs. Ayanda Nkosi we already know them beyond nameless Blacks who cannot speak. Upon seeing the film, the Apartheid government could have easily traced them –

^{xxv} Images of overcrowded hospitals, children sick with malnutrition – with their stomachs huge from kwashiorkor. Images that are often characteristic of the poverty advertisements in Western countries used to urge people to donate money to save starving families in Africa.

^{xxvi} The forced removals and the creation of the Bantustans is a necessary performance that South Africa depends on for its coherence. Apartheid South Africa, in order to maintain its status of civility, necessitates these performances of forced removals and relocations to the Bantustans and ghettos and the ritual carrying and producing of the passbook to White officials on demand. These performances are necessary and guarantee the coherence for the South African civil society. The Bantustan policy is a cartographic coherence that secures subjectivity for its White population (thinking through Wilderson (III). *Red, White & Black*). But of course, the filmmakers in question cannot comprehend the framing of the problem along these intervals.

because we already know their biography, even if pseudonym were used. Nonetheless, we do not know what resulted in the decision to keep Mrs. Gertrude Mbatha and Mrs. Ayanda Nkosi silent. However, we do know that that decision actually further invisibilizes Mrs. Gertrude Mbatha and Mrs. Ayanda Nkosi. That decision to not let these two women speak for themselves is in effect an act of violence. To argue further, this decision in fact maintains the West's desire to conserve its perspective of Subjecthood. This is epistemic violence that reinscribes the Black, as Slave, and an object (a Subject that is not a Subject) of the Other of the world. I borrow this grammar from Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?*. In this text, Spivak argues that Western thought is constructed to support Western economic interests. For Spivak, it is impossible to study the colonial Subject without colluding with the colonial project [my emphasis]. "The intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of Other as the Self's shadow"⁴⁵, writes Spivak. The filmmaker in the West – with his voice over voice of God – is "under the standardization and regimentation of socialized capital", to cite Spivak, "though they do not seem to recognize this"⁴⁶. *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, and it is unfortunate, mimics this colonial project.

Like *PhelaNdaba*, *Last Grave at Dimbaza* continues with a materialist class analysis of the suffering of Black people under Apartheid: "The discovery of gold transformed South Africa from an agricultural country into an advanced industrialized state. And it's the gold mines that have set the patten for the inequality between white and black industry", announces the voice over in the film. The film ends in Dimbaza, a Black township about 20 kilometers from King Williamstown, in the homeland of Ciskei. The film shows a haunting image of the children's grave in Dimbaza, with the voice over guide recounting that "there have been many deaths at Dimbaza in the last 3 years. By 1973, there were 60 adult graves and 450 children graves. This is a special children graveyard. Nearly all the children died before the age of 2". The film is, of course, premised on the idea of the exploitation and the alienation of Blacks from South Africa. So, these deaths are posited on that framework. It is perhaps ironic that both *PhelaNdaba* and *Last Grave at Dimbaza* end with reflections on Black death. These films compel their audiences to reflect on the superfluous nature of Black death in South Africa. Black death is spectacularised. This, I read as a break in the normal order of the political analysis of the producers of the films. Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* states that "I believe that only a psychoanalytical interpretation of the black problem can lay bare the anomalies of affect that are responsible for the structure of the complex"⁴⁷. I disagree with Fanon that only a psychoanalytic interpretation can explain this complex. Psychoanalysis does not have

sufficient analytical syntax to explain the Black condition, however it is conceivable that it is a start/ or explains a part of the problem/complex. Blacks are, after all, sentient Beings.

Freudian scholars argue that psychoanalysis simply studies, what they call “the gaps in the phenomena of our consciousness”. Psychoanalysis then infers from the ‘gaps’ in our experiences to derive its effects. The invitation to mediate on Black death by *PhelaNdaba* and *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, is a cinematic and analytic interruption that the producers are unconscious of. Slavoj Žižek (in Peter Hudson⁴⁸), for the purposes of social analysis, reminds us that the unconscious is not hidden away but rather it is embedded in the social and public practices of the people. It is fixed in instances where normativity breaks down, where the normal order of things is interrupted. These invitations to meditate on Black death are unconscious eruptions that somehow recognize that dying and death in South Africa are disproportionately distributed and that Black life in South Africa is invariably constituted by death. The voice over to *Last Grave at Dimbaza* narrates that “these graves have been dug in preparation for the next month’s toll”. Death is anticipated. An anxious existence that the narrator recognizes. This is a break that, in a way, appreciates that Blackness occupies a zone of non-Being that is forever permanently reiterated by ontological and epistemic violence. Saidiya Hartman⁴⁹ and Abdul JanMohamed⁵⁰ describes this as *death bound subjectivity*. This invitation to meditate on Black dying and death is an unconscious cinematic turn that reads Black life in South Africa as undergird by Whiteness that produces Blacks as the “negated Other” (thinking through Mbembe⁵¹) without access to “civil society”⁵². These invitations express the beautiful perfection of Black death (thinking through David Marriott⁵³). They have a dyad function, the other being to transform the reality of Apartheid into art for public consumption and Subject formation (I cover this in detail in chapter 7).

Vukani–Awake!

Vukani–Awake!^{xxvii} is a black and white 16:32:00 minutes long film. Besides being shorter in length compared to *PhelaNdeba* and *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, *Vukani–Awake!* has the same cinematic institutional framework to both films. A framework that was standard practice in documentary filmmaking in 1962. The film follows a similar Marxist analysis we see in both

^{xxvii} The ANC also published a pamphlet in July 1967 with the same name in support of the National Liberation Movement. Available: https://www.saha.org.za/nonracialism/vukani_awake_july_1967.htm

films. It traces inequality and Black suffering through an economic structure that corresponds with and has an impact on what Marx calls the superstructure – comprised of ideological forms, such as Apartheid. Of course, this should not come as a surprise. I have already explained in chapter 4 how Marxism comes to be in South Africa and how its framework came to comprise as a tool for the anti-Apartheid struggle – and as I had already noted earlier about Ngakane, that he belonged to the ANC, the ANC that reads subjectivity from a Marxian class perspective.

The footage that Ngakane shot in South Africa was smuggled out of the country to Britain, while some of the footage to complete the film was assembled from a wide variety of sources.

The film begins with the title *Vukani–Awake!* in bold black letters shown across the screen with a white background – this can (possibly) be read as Blackness imposing itself into the world or Whiteness that is forever constant in Blackness. Whatever it means, the opening of the film immediately steals our attention. The opening title image is accompanied by singing – of what sounds like church hymns or songs sang at a funeral. The film is specific about its target audience, from the start we are shown an image of the map of southern Africa with South Africa shaded in black so as to alert the views of the context of the film – where exactly is Apartheid South Africa on the map. This is followed by what seems like a political rally with the popular chant shouted by the voice over guide: *Amandla! Amandla! Amandla!* followed by an explanation, “Amandla! Power to the people, that is our cry.”

The film is excessively didactic – in a somewhat dramatic monologue manner. It uses a voice over guide – like *PhelaNdaba* (and unlike *Last Grave at Dimbaza*) the voice over guide is what sounds like a South African man, I assume that of Ngakane. The film presents events from the narrators perspective (first person narrative), often using the first person plural “we”, (for example: “in the last few years we’ve had the native resettlement act and the group areas act, also known as the ghetto act, imposed on us. These two acts have cause a mass movement of our people from their homes in the cities to ghetto townships”) and/ or the possessive pronoun “our”, (for example: “naturally our demands, first and foremost, are that our children must have the opportunity denied us these 300 years”/ “the schools and university colleges are divided tribality against our wishes”).

Vukani–Awake!, as a pamphlet form documentary film is underpinned by a sense of urgency that is felt in the narrators speech. Towards the end of the film, we are shown images of

mutilated, dead and dying Black bodies – we are yet again invited to meditate on Black death – and the narrator remarks that:

How long can this slaughter, this oppression, this flagrant negation of Human life^{xxviii}, this suicide cause go on for. Hate is a terrible thing. We do not hate easily, but everywhere in our tragic country we see hate, feel hate and suffer hate. One day, God forbid, we too may be contaminated with hate.

Without a grammar of accumulation and fungibility, White hate is read as a symptom of racialized capitalism and not anti-Blackness. The urgency that the narrator speaks with is postulated on the inclusion of this “negated Human life” into the South African *res publica*^{xxix}. The urgency in the narrator’s voice is supplemented by the moment in the struggle against Apartheid: The Sharpeville massacre had just occurred on 21 March 1960, the Apartheid government placing a barn on political activities – the PAC and ANC banned in 1960 and going underground forming paramilitary structures, the ANC in June 1961 with *uMkhonto we Sizwe* and the PAC on 11 September 1961 with *Poqo*, and of course Apartheid South Africa cutting its ties with the British Empire on 31 May 1961 and becoming a republic.

Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is My Life

Although Nelson Mandela is the key figure of the documentary film, the film is intended to be a Political history of South Africa, reflected through the life of Mandela. The title of the film, *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is My Life*, comes from an earlier book published in 1978 by the *International Defense and Aid Fund* for Southern Africa, in London, to mark Mandela’s 60th birthday^{xxx} – which is also borrowed from a press testament he wrote on 26 June 1961^{xxxi} in which he explains his decision to carry on his political work underground. He writes at the end of the statement: “only through hardship, sacrifice and militant action can freedom be won. The struggle is my life. I will continue fighting for freedom until the end of my days”. *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is My Life* is a 45-minute long documentary film that comes out of the anti-Apartheid movement campaign, the “Free Nelson Mandela” campaign that began in the

^{xxviii} I think he says life. He is inaudible here.

^{xxix} So essentially these filmmakers replicate the form and function of modernist cinema.

^{xxx} The book is a collection of some of his speeches and writings.

^{xxxi} The press statement was published by the ANC in London.

late 1970's. The Free Nelson Mandela campaign championed Mandela as a symbol of South Africa's struggle against Apartheid and oppression and a quintessential prisoner of Apartheid. In the film, Mandela is presented as an exceptional Black figure – a messianic Being – who defied the odds to become a success in the world, however, chose to dedicate his life to the oppressed Africans. The narrative is characteristic of the mythological figure of Moses, the Hebrew prophet, who leads the Israelites from Slavery in Egypt. "Nelson Mandela is one of a small band of men and women throughout the ages who have been prepared to die for the freedom of their people", explains the narrator of the film – the English actor and narrator, David de Keyser^{xxxii}, at the start of the film. The narrator's 'monologue' on Mandela continues:

He is the tribal boy who despite poverty and all the obstacles designed to make higher education for Africans well know impossible struggled for his education and eventually become a successful lawyer defending his people as they fell foul of the hundreds of Apartheid laws that restrict every facet of their lives. Having recognized and lived the injustices, the inequality, the oppression under Apartheid, he dedicated himself to the liberation struggle waged under the leadership of the African National Congress... Nelson Mandela is the symbol of defiance, resistance and struggle against what has been described as the most evil dogma in the world today.

The narrative (monologue) is recited accompanied by images, both moving and still, of Apartheid South Africa: signs into public facilities that read, Blacks, Coloureds and Asians, White persons only, a mass of Black people gathered together, Black women carrying things on their head, images of mutilated Black bodies, etc. We are not offered an explanation of these images. They seem random, cutaways from earlier films. The narrative is interspersed with interviews of leaders in the campaign against Apartheid, such as the Anglican archbishop Trevor Huddleston – a founding member of the anti-Apartheid movement, Oliver Tambo, the president of the ANC, John Hatch, Labour Party politician and Desmond Tutu, Bishop of Johannesburg, at the time. Similar to the 1978 book, the film has rather lengthily read – out of Mandela's speeches/ smuggled out of prison writings, delivered by another person – not the narrator.

Like Moses, who Yahweh reveals the Ten Commandments to, Mandela has his *Freedom Charter*. If the Ten Commandments establish the basis for Jewish law, the *Freedom Charter*

^{xxxii} Similar to *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, the film uses a White man as a voice over.

will establish the basis for a post–Apartheid law. The film is sure to let us know of the importance of the Charter and Mandela’s conviction to it. What is perhaps unsettling is the blatant omission of the PAC/ and or Robert Sobukwe his/its involvement in the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. The film mentions the event but does not mention the PAC. This erasure of the PAC in the film upholds an understanding of the ANC as the only movement that fights against Apartheid and that can only lead the Black South Africans into the promised land^{xxxiii}.

Epilogue

These films, like most – if not all, the films of the anti–Apartheid documentary film movement, rely on shock value to get its message across. The most heinous of scenes, spectacles of Apartheid are brought to the screen. Whites are presented without lack, in their every day, quotidian subjectivities, while on the other, Blacks are represented as always lacking something – a house, land, liberty, etc. The films tend to focus on the spectacle rather than the quotidian. The films, rather than be inspired by Fanon’s lamentation of an end of the world by God, do “more to fortify and extend the interlocutory life of Western civil society than to hasten its overthrow”⁵⁴, to uses Wilderson’s words.

In the films, the shocking spectacle of Black social death is exploited for Human consumption. The dramatized narration and the imagery vividly try to capture the ways in which Blacks suffer under the violence of White civil society – although the filmmakers are often misguided in their analysis of the events. The reading of Blacks as people who are excluded from the political and economic structure of South Africa and those who sell their labor to Whites – at an unfair wage – (conscription?) and suffer extremes forms of exploitation and alienation under this racialized economic and political system enables different forms of violence and domination upon Blacks.

There are several moments in the films where Black mutilation and death is laid bare for us to witness. As if we are being asked to meditate on the conditions and possibilities of Black life lived in social death. I do not think that the filmmakers are aware of this – I also do not think that that were their intentions. However, this ask (an invitation that is not an invitation. This

^{xxxiii} What is interesting about this is that the PAC mentions the ANC/ and or ANC affiliated persons in both of their documentary films – *PhelaNdeba* and *Last Grave at Dimbaza*.

request that cannot be named. A demand that cannot be properly articulated) is predicated on a series of refusals, postponements and contradictions on the complexions of Black death, Black violability, and Black living. Here the specter of Black death almost becomes normalized that we come to expect it. Black death is used as a deterrent/ and a protest to the continued violability of the Black body, however this performance thrives/ or is predicated on anti-Blackness. This is – to use Christina Sharpe’s words, “the ground on which we stand”⁵⁵, this is the weather of our everyday. The weather that frames these films. The “total climate” of anti-Blackness^{xxxiv}.

Like the graves dug in Dimbaza in anticipation of the next deaths. This is – to cite Sharpe, “a reminder that to be Black is to be continually produced by the wait toward death”⁵⁶. We, Black people, living under Apartheid with its *afterlives* are “always already in the space of”⁵⁷ the dead and (yet to be) buried bodies – in the dugout graves of our Dimbaza’s.

The Black anti-Apartheid documentary filmmakers, like the documentary film, are present-oriented (or presentist) in that they imagine that redress is possible within the confines of this modern social moment. Their suspension to the present is not only their pitfall but a clutch. Wilderson gestures towards this when he states the following:

Accompanying those discourses, which assume a universal grammar of suffering (White film, metacommentaries on ontology, film theory, and film reviews) is a prescriptive political common sense vested in shared convictions regarding the socially transformative power of symbolic action, a notion that the effects of symbolic action can have the impact of a structural intervention powerful enough to liberate the subject positionally. At the end of this socially transformative trajectory, the subject is recomposed and redeemed—in a word, liberated⁵⁸.

II.

It is unfortunate that there continues to be systemic cinematic exclusion of Black people in film, as both filmmakers behind the camera, and on screen with multiple identities that intersect, rather than the dull one-dimensional representations of Black people that characterize the documentary film. Of course, this cannot be thought outside of the anti-Blackness that

^{xxxiv} I am thinking through Christina Sharpe here.

characterize the world. Blacks are systemically excluded in film because the Black cannot exist as a positive object of representation. It cannot be allowed to hold space as the maker of such a possible image of positive representation (an image that exists in impossibility – an anti-image).

This systemic cinematic exclusion of Black people from film, it seems, also takes place in academia. White academics hold the monopoly of theorizing about/on cinema, media and representation in South Africa. One cannot do scholarship on these without being in conversation with them. This monopoly that Whites hold in academia is of course a product of modernist colonial incentives and operates through the continued reproduction of regimes of epistemic violence.

The failure or unwillingness of White academics to contend with their White positionality reproduces Whiteness as a site of knowledge (those who are the legitimate epistemological producers) and Blackness as a site of anti-Black maneuvers.

In closing:

The camera,
as a historical object of domination
A devouring eye
As an object of Whiteness
Can never be a utility for liberation,
for the Black.
It is inherently anti-Black.

Chapter 6

White Jouissance and the Visual Abstraction of Black Death

What the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement did not realize, or was unwilling to acknowledge, is that their documentary practice – of making seemingly innocent, albeit oppositional, films (so called pamphlets films) for the European and American audiences inadvertently fulfilled the desire of the world for the compulsive need to perform Black deathⁱ. Theorists of the movement are rather interested in the cinematic strategies and/ or the history of the movement. How and by whom (assuming that they do not already know who the films are made for) the films are enjoyed and the kinds of claims and discourses they invite is of little interest. After all, “we are all Humans”. Film reception and spectatorship shouldn’t worry us much. We have more important things to worry about, such as how many Blacks are in the films and how many are behind the films. So, inclusion into the economy of the imagery – representation industry, so that, at least, even Blacks can extract material and psychical satisfaction from the process. If this is uninviting and does not inspire confidence, the writing on the subject is mainly – if not only, done by White academics who impose a Humanist understanding of subjectivity upon Black Beings “represented” in the documentary filmsⁱⁱ. For example, Pichaske in their doctoral thesis makes the point that “audience reception [in South Africa and across the board] is a subject that receives scant attention in documentary theory and criticism, no doubt because it is so difficult to measure”¹. I agree with Pichaske, however if I were to show them what has been written about their community of Whites and their active enjoyment of Black imagery and production they would be dismayed. How can they not know that Whites have historically appropriated Blackness as a sport? Do they not know? Perhaps then, it is my duty in this paper to show this, and extrapolate – if that is what I will be doing, to documentary theory and criticism. Nevertheless, upon the recognition that scant attention is given to audience reception, with the thesis, Pichaske attempts to write a theory of documentary film audience reception. They, Pichaske, writes that:

By evaluating films not merely in terms of form and aesthetics, but in terms of use-value, immersion, subject/crew relationships, and audience impact, development communication has the potential to take documentary away from its historical position as a tool of imperialism at

ⁱ I am thinking through David Marriott: 2017. *The Perfect Beauty of Black Death* and: *On Black Men* here.

ⁱⁱ This, of course, should not surprise us. Whiteness has always seen itself as being responsible for the Black person. Whiteness knows itself as that which authority radiates. The source of rationality (Kant) and reason (Descartes). The Black is always the object of study, not the inverse.

worst and an ineffectual medium practiced in the Grierson “tradition of the victim” at best, into a future where nonfiction cinema is a powerful tool for subject and community empowerment².

Pachaske is right about nonfiction cinema being a powerful tool for Subject and community empowerment, however, for which community and for which Subject? Their (in)accuracy in the matter is misguided because it includes Blackness into a community and Subjectivity with the world. Their framing of the problem disguises Black suffering. It conceals the long history of the world looking at Black people in lynching scenes. Beyond the imagined reformatory value of these films, the aesthetic value, on the other hand, is to perform a worldly duty of recuperating and maintaining global civil societies stabilityⁱⁱⁱ as well as the psychic stability of White society – Subject formation^{iv}. The camera, when it is projected towards the Black, loses all its positive value, it becomes a “devouring eye, which looks at and incorporates the external world and later projects it outward again”³, to use David Marriott’s words in *On Black Men*.

Marriott, in a beautiful essay titled *The Perfect Beauty of Black*⁴, explains that “the world is the sovereign possession of Black social death”. The world desires Black flesh for its psychic coherence and so cinema plays an important role of mapping the antagonism between the living and the dead. The political demands that the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement makes on behalf of Blacks to the world, are in fact, corroborations of the social death of Blacks. The films, and their cinematic spectacles of Black violence, preserve Black death as an outline⁵ or outside of Humanity. Blacks are structured by a regime of violence that makes them objects of accumulation; Hortense Spillers calls this process becoming ‘beings for the captor’⁶. The anti-Apartheid documentary film movement helps Apartheid – and the world, to secure a paradigmatic division between the Human and the Black⁷. Black death and White existence are mutually inclusive, or, to put a spin on it, they are rhythmically bound together like a duet, however unlike in a duet, one partner must die for the other to succeed. Wilderson frames this meticulously as a “symbiosis between the political ontology of Humanity and the social death of Blacks”⁸.

My argument in this paper is that the documentation and distribution of Apartheid violence, against Blacks – the visual abstraction of Black flesh – is, in fact, a ritual of pleasure and

ⁱⁱⁱ I am thinking through Wilderson (III): 2010. *Red, White & Black* here.

^{iv} Thinking through Fanon: 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks* here.

psychic renewal for the viewers of the films in the places the films were distributed – mainly in Europe and America, which are White concentrated places.

The Dissemination of Black Social Death and its Affective Function

The anti-Apartheid documentary film movement operated with an implied audience in mind. The audience was not that resided at the substance of the moment – Apartheid South Africa. The audience, in Europe and America – and by extension White, was withdrawn from the scene, only connected to it through a collective desire to derive pleasure and humiliation from the mutilated Black body. However, as Judith Butler in an essay titled *Torture and the ethics of photography*⁹, reminds us that images “reiterate and continue the event”, they are affective instruments of memory and collective remembering that “strictly speaking, postdate the event, but becomes crucial to its production, its legibility, its illegibility, and it’s very status as reality”¹⁰. The audience may not have been physically present at the scene; however, the filmmakers always had them in mind, always capturing the moment to their satisfaction – ‘would this shot work? Is the light in our favor? Would the audience be moved by this scene; this interview, line and song, will the audience like it if we cut the film this way? The audience is always present. The filmmaker always travels with it. The filmmaker, as the producer, and the audience, as the consumer, are one, other than the fact that – in many cases, as is so for the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, they both belong to the community of Humans. The Black filmmaker, barred from the community of Humans, also shares something with the Humans, a collective gaze informed by Whiteness. David Marriott, in *On Black Men*, explains that the Black psyche is a facsimile of White desires. The Black unconscious hates itself. Images, after all, have a *transitive function*, as Butler notes, they “do not merely portray or represent, but they relay affect”¹¹. This affect, for Afropessimism, we call anti-Blackness. All Humans, and Blacks, are mobilized by this force. It is comprehensive and organizes the unconscious of the whole world.

Butler asks, “does the photograph continue the event in the present?”¹², for this thesis we may ask, does the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement continue the event of Apartheid in the present? This is not to imply that Apartheid was an event or that we are past the affair. I

⁹ I understand that this has also been turned into a book with the title *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* published in 2009/ Or the chapter also appears in a book with that title. During the writing of this thesis, I reference Butler from the 2007 essay – given as a lecture – and not from the book. I could not access the book in time.

use event here as a proxy to the moment captured on film. Butler has a rejoinder to the question. She writes that “it would seem that photographing the scene can be a way of contributing to the scene, providing a visual reflection and documentation for it, giving it the status of history in some way”¹³. Butler here is discussing the photographs from Abu Ghraib where prisoners were abused and tortured on camera. The torturers being the capturers of the moment of brutality on camera. Here, the tortured experience violence contingent on their transgressions against the United States of America. They are prisoners of war whose banishment from society and the Human is contingent on crimes alleged to be committed against the United States of America. We could say that they experienced general dishonor, something that is a constituent element of Blackness. The anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, for its sake, is only the capturer of the moment and is much rather opposed to the acts being captured. However, since the Black exists in a paradigm of gratuitous violence that secures the position of the Human, that is to say, the implied audience of the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, the movement, capturing the moment of Black brutality, thereby inadvertently helping the Human with its desire for Black flesh. I put it to them that they are just as much complicit in the act of brutality. Therefore, the capturer and the torturer are one. There is an “uncertain line between witness and spectator”¹⁴, as Hartman explains in *Scenes of Subjection*.

The documentary film is complicit in the construction of the Black body as the antithesis of the Human, and its recipients get to possess a piece of this, as a souvenir, similar, to how a person would collect lynching pictures of Blacks as relics for their satisfaction, pornographic cadavers for their thrills. The documentary film extends the moment of capture – it preserves the temporal experience of Black mutilation for Human consumption. It intervenes to keep the paradigmatic division between the Human and the Black. Butler gestures towards this on her essay when she states that:

The action of the camera itself is either oddly complaint, recording, as it were, without comment, and raising no alarm, or it works as an incitement to orchestrate the scene, but also to extend the scene in time, to keep the scene going, again and again, promising a further visual consumption of the sadistic pleasure after the event. Indeed, the camera does not exactly delineate the event in time and space, although it does do that, and the time and space can be dully chronicled and recorded. At the same time, it allows the event to continue to happen, and I would suggest that, because of the photo, the event has not stopped happening¹⁵.

The documentary film keeps this event on a loop – it is a keeper of what Marriott explains as the “most perfect illustration of death as beautiful finality”¹⁶. A forever invitation – or for as long as the documentary film is on rotation at cinemas, tv stations, film festivals, or, in today’s times, digitized and placed on online archives such as YouTube – for others to take pleasure in the never-ending spectacle of Black mutilation and death. Blackness then, properly, has a figurative capacity that secures subjectivity for the world. Hartman eloquently shows this dimension of Blackness. Hartman explains that enjoyment is a right that Whiteness possesses and exercises. It is an “incorporeal hereditament or illusory inheritance”¹⁷ that has been bequeathed to Humans. And, for the Slave, the exigencies of Slavery demand that enjoyment be furnish to the Human. The Black is a property of enjoyment to the White. All whites. It is, as Mbembe puts it, a ‘human-object, a human-commodity, a human-money, imprisoned in the dungeon of appearance, and belongs to others.’¹⁸ The Black is a property of desire, a castrated thing that is “a passive instrument for the enjoyment of the Other”¹⁹. The Black is subjected to this circumstance. It defines his position in the world. As property, the Slave is under the full control and authority of the world. It is to be used for all manner of ways that can be imagined, including to fulfil the sexual needs of the world. Hartman clarifies and furthermore explains that this positioning is “attributed to the slave in order to deny, displace, and minimize the violence of slavery”²⁰.

South Africa, as a colony of settlement, has always been thought as a place where Whites and Blacks live next to each other, but apart from each other. Whites came to South Africa to settle, and the Blacks were forced to make space for them. Blacks in South Africa were never necessarily extracted, as commodities to other parts of the world in large numbers, as was the case in other parts of Africa. And, under Apartheid, it is often thought that Blacks in South Africa were isolated to the world, especially after the embargos placed on the country by the West. However, be that as it may, this did not free the Black in South Africa from the positioning of Slavery. He or she was still positioned as a Slave whether they went into the ship or not. The South African Black is also an extractive surplus, like every Black in the continent, and like all those Blacks forced into ships for the new world. The “symbiosis between the political ontology of Humanity and the social death of Blacks”²¹ in South Africa was still maintained, to use Wilderson’s words. The absence of the ship does not mean that extraction of Blackness in South Africa was not taking place to sustain the appetite of Whiteness in the world. Apartheid South Africa still maintained itself as a symbol of White authority and Black social death. The world knew that somewhere in the world existed a place where its laws are

not disguised as anything they are not, a place where racism is legislated, and Blacks know their position in the system. Nothing is concealed. This is a heaven for Whiteness. It is the objective of this paper to argue that this heaven for Whiteness is/has always been mobilized in the service of colonialism. It has always fulfilled a fetishistic investment for the world. Now, the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement, unbeknown to them, aided the world to satisfy its desire for this heaven for Whiteness. Through the anti-Apartheid documentary films, the world could get access and extract a piece of this heaven and satiate its psychosexual fantasies about the Black. Mbembe reminds us that during the Slave trade – and after, those in power:

maintained a relationship with commodities that viewed the latter [the slave] as sources of the erotic, not just as objects. In this context enjoyment became the equivalent of absolute license, while everything incarnated in a practice of transgression was considered a form of power. But this form of practice also saw itself, at the same time, as a kind of aesthetic²².

The world ‘keeps tab’ on its object of enjoyment. South Africa may have been isolated from the world – a mere performance to show face – it however was not isolated from the psyche of the world.

South Africa, and Africa in general, has always been – and continues to be – a Slave estate^{vi} and/ or what Zine Magubane in a paper titled *Simians, Savages, Skulls, and Sex Science and Colonial Militarism in Nineteenth-Century South Africa*²³, describes as a laboratory of modernity. As a laboratory for modernity, the Black colonized Subject was used for “scientific” methods that were used to systematically authorize acts of exclusion from Humanity. For example, during the enlightenment period, to determine the faculty of reason of the Xhosa people in South Africa, phrenological examinations were used – where the skulls of the Xhosa people were studied and ranked – to validate their complete subordination to Humans. Magubane notes that phrenology was used on Xhosa men to demonstrate:

Their shared incapacity to exercise reason [with white European women]. And it was the linking of Africans to apes, a category of subhumans, which exempted them from the protections offered to European females and ultimately justified the genocidal acts of aggression that were directed against them²⁴.

^{vi} I am thinking through Mbembe here in *On the Postcolony*. 2001. University of California Press.

So then, phrenological samples extracted from South Africa proved to be a valuable tool to determine access to the Human race, and subsequently to justify acts of anti-Blackness. “The skull provided a seemingly incontrovertible measure of the most fundamental attribute of personhood”²⁵, writes Magubane. Magubane continues to write that “South Africa’s many frontier wars (nine in all) were particularly important and steady sources of raw data”²⁶ for colonial expansion. “Indeed”, she continues:

The traffic in skulls between Britain and South Africa began in the 1820s. The Royal College of Surgeons in London, for example, listed in its catalogue of specimens a number of skulls of Xhosa men that were taken from battlefields. Indeed, one of the founding texts of scientific racism owes its genesis to South Africa’s long and bloody military history²⁷.

These scientific facts, explains Magubane, become so widespread that even nonscientists deployed them “as a matter of course” for othering people. However, over and above that, the “scientific data” gathered from South Africa helped to guide and shape new research into other fields such as criminal anthropology and criminology. Everything was read against this scientific data, the fact of Blackness. The Black body is constructed as “the ostensible missing link between rational humans and irrational animals”²⁸, to quote Wynter. The new fields of inquiry could be used to interpret deviant behavior in society that was characteristic of the colonized Africans. The colony, as a living laboratory of modernity, “profoundly influenced metropolitan understandings of domestic social problems and their possible solutions”²⁹, explains Magubane. The colonized Africans, in South Africa, have a long history in the world as objects that help to secure the subjectivity of the world. Apartheid, as a “closed system of oppression”, was nothing but a protected colonial laboratory, known to the world, where Humans can extract material and psychical satisfaction from. Perhaps the most well – known story of one of the “scientific data’s” extracted from South Africa to perform a worldly duty of recuperating and maintaining global civil societies stability is that of Sarah Baartman, the so – called Hottentot Venus.

“Just arrived”, read the poster^{vii} advertising the exhibition of “the most wonderful phenomenon of nature”. Sarah Baartman, or the Hottentot Venus, as she was famously known in Europe,

vii See: Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sarah-Baartman#/media/1/1926742/273564>.

Britannica,

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sarah-Baartman#/media/1/1926742/273564>.

was a Khoi woman born in the Cape Dutch Colony, what is now known as the Eastern Cape, in the mid 1770s. The name she bears, Sarah/ or Saartjie Baartman, is most probably her Slave master's name. Her true name is lost to us. Baartman was a Slave, performing domestic duties for Whites ever since she was a child, until she was sold to a merchant in Cape Town. From here, she was quickly exhibited for Europeans exchange for money. It was not long until she was shipped to Britain to continue the public exhibitions of her body.

“In viewing this Wonderful LIVING Production of Nature”, the description in the poster announces to the world. An arresting descriptor fitting for a circus freak show offering a promise of jouissance. The summons continues:

The public have a perfect specimen of that most extraordinary tribe of the Human race, who have for such a length of time inhabited the most southern parts of Africa, whose real origin has never yet been ascertained, nor their character, which has been so differently described by every traveller who has visited those remote regions of the World; and considering the natural morose disposition of those people (who are scarcely ever observed to laugh) she is remarkably mild and affable in her manners. She has had the honor of being visited by His Royal Highness the PRINCE REGENT, and several branches of the ROYAL FAMILY, also the principal NOBILITY, of both sexes, in England, and declared to be a great natural curiosity, well worthy the attention of the public. She is particularly obliged to the female sex who have so liberally patronized her exhibition, and more especially after the malicious reports circulated to her disadvantage after here arrival in this kingdom; but which have been long since proved to be groundless. Over her clothing, which is suitable to this climate, is worn all the rude ornaments used by that tribe on Gala Days. N. B. elegant engravings of the Venus, by Lewis, sold at the Room. ADMITTANCE ONE SHILLING.

The poster must have been successful. The exhibitions were popular in Europe. People came from all over Europe to see and enjoy the display of Baartman naked in a cage like an animal. The royal family, we are told in the poster, has seen and endorse the spectacle. Baartman spent four years in London and was sold to an animal trainer and exhibitor in France, where she was showcased alongside animals in a cage performing all manner of things to the animal trainers demand and public satisfaction. Baartman was subsequently made a science specimen where she was inspected by zoologists, physiologists and anatomists. These inspections reinforced existing views about the position of Africans, as oversexed objects unlike anything in the world. Having worked in Europe since she set foot there, exploited, sexually abused,

humiliated, she died in December 1815 at the age of 26. However, even in her death, the world could not let her go. It was not finished with her. She still had an aesthetic function to perform. Her “Black corpse, by a kind of natural necessity, ultimately [became] the most perfect illustration of death as beautiful finality”³⁰, to use Marriott’s words. Baartman’s body was dissected. Her brain and genitals put into jars and placed on display at the *Musée de l’Homme* (Museum of Man) in Paris. “Murdered, not-yet-buried as “surplus waste,” the Black corpse is able, from a place other than the grave, to transform murderous violence into beautiful social fact, white narcissism into a public good and aesthetic value into deadly perfection”³¹ writes Marriott. Baartman as a symbolic object of racial difference and deviation from White femininity, in the same manner, becomes a source of the erotic and power for the world – enjoyment of Blackness as an absolute license³², as Mbembe explains. Marriott further notes that the Black corpse “as the perfect specimen for the fatal instrument of law, or the social needs of violence, Black death confirms a requisite truth: “No beauty without violence, without death”. “The rhetorical function of Black death”, Marriott continues, is to:

Express death’s essence... the black corpse becomes a “symbol of perfection” because it has merged into substance, and this attribute is used to distinguish between the imperfection of a gap between being and event and the perfection that scorns such distance. Forensically and beastly dead, blackness can only signify perfection by being dead – in these instances, shot to death – its absorption in death is the “ground zero” of its perfection. This death becomes art in the same way that murder becomes forensic, and the gap between real acts of death and their lived, symbolic meaning renders the corpse as a zero that turns into extractive surplus³³.

The ground zero of its Being. The dismembered body of Baartman lay in *Musée de l’Homme* in jars for years as public amusement, skulls of Xhosa men kept at the Royal College of Surgeons in London and films of Apartheid where Africans are dying, mutilated and dead playing on rotation in screens across Europe and America^{viii}. Acts of Black social death kept

^{viii} For biographical accounts on the life of Baartman see:

Sara “Saartjie” Baartman. South African History Online, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/sara-saartjie-baartman>.

Lyons, Andrew P. 2018. *The Two Lives of Sara Baartman: Gender, ‘Race,’ Politics and the Historiography of Mis/Representation*. Anthropologica. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44876756>.

Holmes, Rachel. 2007. *The Hottentot Venus: The Life and Death of Sarah Baartman*. Wordsworth Books.

Gordon-Chipembere, Natasha. 2011. *Representation and Black Womanhood: The Legacy of Sarah Baartman*. Palgrave Macmillan.

on a loop. The violence routinised and fresh in the air every time, organizing the psyche of the world. Whiteness always turned to South Africa – and every place where the Black inhabits, laboratories of modernity – a Slave colony to find and renew itself. Blackness has always inspired Whiteness. And the Black has always been – and continues to be – constructed as “the ostensible missing link between rational humans and irrational animals”³⁴, to borrow from Wynter.

II.

As “closed” and “isolated” Apartheid South Africa was, Paul Simon, a depressed and struggling musician in America knew that if he turned to the Slave colony it could resuscitate his career. Simon had earlier success as part of a rock and roll musical duo, Simon and Garfunkel, as well as releasing a few solo albums that were popular. The duo went their separate ways in 1970 and Simon continued as a solo artist. Simon’s musical style – before his acquaintance with Apartheid South Africa – was not necessarily political. He rarely made songs about political issues in the world, something that he acknowledged when asked about political writing^{ix}. Simon rather saw himself as a social singer/artist who writes and sings about everyday social issues. I must say, a privilege for White artists to sing about social issues that do not involve the problem of race. A privilege position to be in, even during the American civil rights movement, where the race and political situation is so charged but all you can sing about is clear skies and friendship. Simon did relatively well as a solo artist, at least not until the commercial failure of the film, *One-Trick Pony*, in 1980. Mark Eliot in a biographical book on Simon titled: *Paul Simon: A Life*, writes that *One-Trick Pony* “was a box-office loser”³⁵ that “disappeared quickly, and Paul slipped back into his own deepening depression”. He continues to write that:

The failure of his film and his love-life problems led him directly into the open arms and leather chair of the nearest available psychiatrist. The time had finally come, he realized, to get his head examined... So urgent was Paul’s need to talk to Dr. Gorney that whenever he went to see him, he would go directly from the Los Angeles airport to the doctor’s home. There he would begin his sessions by laying out the major contradiction of his life; he was young, healthy,

^{ix} See an interview Paul Simon did with David Fricke for *Rolling Stone* in 1968: *Paul Simon: African Odyssey A conversation about the musical journey that led to the singer's new album, 'Graceland'*, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/paul-simon-african-odyssey-104029/>.

famous, talented, and wealthy—and depressed to the point where he feared he might no longer be able to keep it together. Eventually, working with Dr. Gorney, Paul was able to cite the failure of the entire *One-Trick Pony* experience as one of the symptoms, rather than the cause, of his darkening state of mind³⁶.

Following the whirlwind of depression and therapy, Simon managed to record and release another solo album in 1983 titled *Hearts and Bones*. And, like his previous project, the “audiences just didn’t go for it. *Hearts and Bones* reached only number thirty-five on the album charts. With almost no airplay... [in] rock stations”³⁷ explains Eliot. Simon’s career, it seemed, was virtually dead. The young musical acts, like Michael Jackson and Elvis Costello, dominated the scene. The chance for an older act, though having had success in the past, it seemed, could no longer identify with the American audience. Perhaps it was time to call it quits and retire from the music business? He would not have been the first to do so, and certainly not the last. Or did Simon have another hit in him? An ace up his sleeves? Eliot writes that:

As 1983 came to a close, Paul had a grim inventory to deal with. He had lost his wife, Carrie; his best friend, Artie; and, apparently, his audience. With his life and career in shambles and nowhere else to turn, after much contemplation followed by one burst of cosmic inspiration, he decided to make a final leap for redemption and, because of it, stumbled upon the most glorious of resurrections³⁸.

The most glorious of resurrections, as fate would have it, was found in Apartheid South Africa. That little heaven for Whiteness south of the Slave colony. The story is that Simon stumbled across a cassette tape, titled, *Gumboots: Accordion Jive Hits, Volume II*. And while he was building his house in Long Island, New York, he would listen to the tape on repeat. He then inquired and found that it is the music from Black South Africa.

Now, as I am sure we are all aware by now, at the time, South Africa was under the academic and cultural boycotts – going as far as 1958 at the *All African People Conference* in Accra, Ghana, and, most significantly, in 1968 with the General Assembly of the United Nations adopting a resolution that called for the creation of sanctions against Apartheid South Africa.

In 1980, UN General Assembly resolution on the cultural boycotts against South Africa notes that:

The United Nations General Assembly makes the request to all states to prevent all cultural, academic, sporting and other exchanges with South Africa. This is also an appeal to writers, artists, musicians and other personalities to boycott South Africa. It urges all academic and cultural institutions to terminate all links with South Africa³⁹.

During this climate, of supposed sanctions against Apartheid South Africa, Simon decides to not comply with the sanctions and travels to Soweto with the aim of recording an album. Eliot writes that Simon “knew he had to carefully tiptoe around the long-standing United Nations Anti-Apartheid Committee, whose cultural boycott had effectively prevented other performers from playing to segregated audiences in South Africa”⁴⁰. There were several Black South African musicians in the States at the time who Simon could have collaborated with. There was also the option of travelling to neighboring South African countries, such as Zimbabwe, who share a somewhat similar sound to Black South Africa, and who housed many South African exiles. But Simon was steadfast on South Africa. None of the options presented could match up to the promise that the little White heaven furnished. None of the options held a more promising assurance for Simon’s psychic coherence.

“Having settled in Johannesburg” writes Eliot:

He [Simon] and Halee [Simon’s engineer] went to the Ovation Studios to work with three groups of musicians—Tao Ea Matsekha, General M. D. Shirinda and the Gaza Sisters, and the Boyoyo Boys Band. For two weeks, the studios were filled with dozens of musicians, their wives and girlfriends carrying babies in their arms and parked on their hips while they chanted in the background, older children playing between the feet of all the musicians and relatives⁴¹.

And of course, a trip to the Slave colony would not have been successful without poverty porn and Black abjection tourism. Something to write home about. We are told that “in between sessions, South African musician Sipho Mabuse showed Paul and Halee the poorest sections of Soweto”⁴². I can imagine that it must have been liberating for Simon and Halee to tour these poorest sections of Soweto. To be inspired by Black abjection like that is a privilege only Whites know. “Blackness”, Wilderson reminds us, “inspires White dreams of liberation”⁴³. It

is as if Eliot consciously knew the power of the Slave colony to inspire liberation in Simons and his dying musical career. He writes that Simon “had gone in search of his own music, looking for a way to move forward by going all the way back, into the heart of music’s darkness in the hopes of once more ringing its brightest chimes”⁴⁴. “The heart of music’s darkness”, He says. I do not know if this is a play on the 1899 novel *The Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad. What I do know is that, if anything, these words expose the violence of the world’s abstraction, as well as the creation of Black social death. I can imagine Simon and Halee driving through Soweto, with their car doors carefully locked and their hands firmly gripping their personal belongings. Driving through Soweto looking at Kaffirs, things void of subjectivity. Driving through Soweto, a place that constitutes absence. Driving through Soweto and experiencing a life changing, a life-giving orgasm. I can imagine that they must have had a camera with them. After all, what is a tour of Soweto without photographic souvenirs of the experience?^x I can also imagine the same for the millions of viewers of the anti-Apartheid documentary films. The anticipation for the next anti-Apartheid documentary film must have been so nerve – wracking. The demand for the films must have been innumerable. The TV stations playing the films already made available on rotation. I wonder if they recorded the films to replay them at their own leisure? I think this is plausible.

This also comes during a moment of a film called *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980) by a White South African born film director named Jamie Uys. The film, what The New York Times in 1985 called “a truly international hit”⁴⁵, follows a Black man (“bushman”) named !Ky from the Kalahari desert and his community in their “simple” and “unsophisticated” way of life. When an unknown piece of technology, read here as Western modernity, is introduced to the community, they go into disarray. The suggestion here is that African people should be left to their own backward ways and that “the Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. [and that]. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community”, to quote the architect of Apartheid Hendrik Verwoerd. The film is described as a “South African comedy” by its creators and many reviewers – “It’s just a slapstick comedy, with no message”⁴⁶ explains Uys. However, when I watched the film, I found it insulting than humorous. The film plays on African

^x I wonder what and how the conversations in the car went. Who was driving the car? What it Mabuse himself? Did he point at the sites as he drove around Soweto? What did Simon and Halee say after they got back to their hotel? Did they talk and discuss – debrief, what they had just experienced? I can only speculate. Such *scenes of subjection* are not the kinds of things one simply forgets. They stay with you.

stereotypes and colonial tropes about the inferiority and backwardness of African people. The film promotes the central tenet of Apartheid more than anything. We are told that the idea of the film came about when Uys was making a film about the animals of the Kalahari Desert, lo and behold, he met the bushman and “fell in love with them”⁴⁷. To him, the people of the Kalahari were probably indistinguishable to the animals in his films, judging by the condescension and contempt we see on screen against the Black people. Anyway, regardless of the obvious racism and anti-Blackness in the film, *The Gods Must Be Crazy* became a box office hit. Judy Klemesrud writes in *The New York Times* that:

Since 1981, the film has earned more than \$90 million worldwide, including almost \$40 million in Japan alone, as well as \$11 million in the United States. It has also played in France, Venezuela, Sweden and other countries, and is in its third year in some. This week it will have grossed \$1 million at the 68th Street Playhouse without much advertising. Depending instead on word of mouth and repeat business, the film's earnings at the East Side theater increased from \$14,796 in the first week to a high of \$38,000 during Christmas week, and are now running over \$20,000 each week. Not since "La Cage aux Folles" in 1979 has a foreign movie built an audience in this manner⁴⁸.

The Gods Must Be Crazy was a huge success and made lots of money that Uys made a sequel of the film in 1989. The appetite for Black humiliation only seemed to increase with each screening of the film^{xi}.

Circling back to *Graceland*, Simon knew that his life will forever change after this life – giving experience bequeathed to him by the White heaven called South Africa. Eliot writes that:

^{xi} The South African film director Zola Maseko (Drum) in an interview with Audrey McCluskey (in McCluskey, Audrey. 2009. *The Devil You Dance With: Film Culture in the New South Africa*. University of Illinois Press. Page, 115) explains that Western companies for fund many of the post 1994 films want an image of Africa that is negative:

There is big responsibility here. If it was South Africans' money, Black South African money, there wouldn't be the cultural divide. It comes with having foreign funding. They say, OK, here's the money to tell your stories, but this is how you are going to tell it. You respond and say, but hey, that's not how we walk, that's not how we talk, that's not how we make love, that's not how we are. That's not who we are." To that they say, that's how we want to see you though, that's the only way you are going to sell it. McCluskey responds to Maseko: Feeding a preexisting view of African people?

Maseko answers: Absolutely. I mean with Drum the response from one festival – I won't mention any names – is that it's not African enough. And that's because when they think about films that come from Africa, they think jungle. They think women with naked breasts dancing and people coming out of caves.

Now he [Simon] felt once more musically invincible, that nothing could bring him back down, not even his name being added to the UN blacklist for deliberately disregarding the boycott, or when the African National Congress voted to officially ban him⁴⁹.

The heart of music's darkness had "finished [his] disappointments and sorrows", said the man in question. Whiteness will risk anything, as Simon did and as the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement did, to get closer to Blackness so that it can continue/and or renew its itself.

In the book *Afropessimism*, Wilderson shares a story known to many readers, that of James Baldwin and Norman Mailer. Wilderson (re)articulates this story to highlight the impossibilities of Black and White friendships, and the risks Whiteness will go to try and save a "friendship" with blackness. "[T]he really ghastly thing about trying to convey to a white man the reality of the Negro experience has nothing whatever to do with the fact of color, but has to do with this man's relationship to his own life. He will face in your life only what he is willing to face in his"⁵⁰, explains Baldwin.

The relationship that White people have to their own life is that of a Subject that conveniently attaches itself to Blackness only to benefit from it by deriving pleasure from it. Complete enjoyment at the expense of Blacks. Blackness is the host to this parasitic arrangement. Likewise, Apartheid is a system that White settlers and the world in general extracted maximum pleasure and enjoyment from. It's supposed end in 1994 – a smoke screen that conceals, would not have been staged if global civil society had not yet formulated a *locum tenens*^{xii}. Where will the world derive its pleasure if the Slave state is brought to an end? Where will the world look to for its psychic renewal if the colonial laboratory is ended? No! Apartheid cannot simply end just like that. The world cannot make that silly mistake. The psychic disposition of the world would collapse if Apartheid suddenly ended. Is it not comical that acts of Black mutilation, death and dying are beamed across the world, for the world to end the very acts that it sets in motion for its survival? It is fatuous for the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement to have made this judgment.

^{xii} Latin word meaning "to hold the place of", essentially a substitute. Blackness constantly holds a place of, in global civil society. A substitute of systems of subjugation and dying are constantly being introduced, without changing the structure of the antagonism.

Simon released the South Africa inspired album, titled *Graceland*, in September 1986. The controversy surrounding the album only fueled the success of the album. “*Graceland* had been quietly released by Warner Brothers”, explains Eliot:

After all the supposedly “great” summer albums were already out and before the new fall records were ready for release. Much to the label’s surprise, *Graceland* jumped onto Billboard’s Top Album chart at number three (number one in England and Australia) and looked as if it could stay there forever. It went platinum five times and eventually sold over fourteen million copies worldwide⁵¹.

Graceland became critically acclaimed. It won numerous awards, including the 1987 Grammy for Album of the year. Once the accolades started, they never stopped. “*Graceland*”, writes Eliot, “both the album and the single, did not just cue Paul’s comeback; it became his moment of true musical greatness”⁵². Like everything Black and appropriated by Whites – and often appropriated without reference, elevated and valued out of proportion – *Graceland* became “the standard against which subsequent musical experiments by major artists were measured”⁵³, to use William Ruhlmann words in *AllMusic*, commenting on the album. Very much consistent with the appropriation and abstraction of Blackness that characterizes the entertainment industry. Till today, *Graceland* continues to receive accolades and critical reception. Without a doubt, with *Graceland*, Simon had awakened his musical career from the dead.

Let us pause for a moment here, hold back on the argument we are trying to make and ask: Why South Africa? Am I cathedralizing the position of South Africa and its relational status of Slave estate/ colonial laboratory for the world? What makes South Africa special from all the other colonial laboratories in the world? Was it necessary for the Black body in this part of the world to be abstracted to make and advance the new world? Is there anything special about the flesh of Blacks in South Africa? Could *Graceland* not have been made in the poor, neglected and “dishonored” parts of White America? The flesh and skulls of Blacks from this part of the world in European museums, hospitals and homes? Could they not use the ailing and dying Whites in Europe for their medical experiments? Or perhaps it was necessary to advance science and to give the world a new sound and performance at any cost? Perhaps Blacks just happened to be un-willing participants in the world’s experiments – unintended/ accidental specimens?

I do not think that this specific part of the Slave estate called South Africa is any special from the ensemble of the Slave estate. The Black body here and the Black body in other colonies, and those already shipped for the new world, is the same and are all paired together by Slavery. However, South Africa has its own specificities that make it distinctive. For instance, this part of the Slave estate had strategic importance, for the control of the route to the east – to supply passing ships with goods, the weather also being favorable for farming and not too hush for possible settlement. In fact, many Whites settled in the estate as farmers, administrators, etc. The promise of wealth with the discovery of diamonds and later gold made the estate a hotbed for White emigrants, seduced by shiny minerals deep inside the belly of the estate, hoping to strike it rich. With all these factors, and possibly more, by 1948 when the settlers instituted Apartheid, their community had grown significantly in numbers. With a significant number of White settlers, this part of the Slave estate became a secure link for the rest of the world. White settlers in South Africa and Humans in the new world were natally and psychically connected. Humans in the new world could easily claim South Africa as home through the contingent White settler community in this part of the Slave estate. Similarly, to how Jews can claim Palestine (or Israel to them) as home through the settler community there. Therefore, guaranteeing religious and psychic stability for the Western Judeo-Christian tradition.

Wilderson reminds us that the symbolic value of Black Slavery in Western European thought outweighed the possibility of converting “convicts, prisoners and vagrants” to Slaves. He writes that to make the new world “[they]could easily have provided 50,000 [White Slaves] a year [to the New World] without serious disruption to either international peace or the existing social institutions that generated and supervised these potential European victims”^{54xiii}. Western European thought could not accept Whites, no matter how low of a class they were, to be subjected to a “condition of being owned and traded”⁵⁵, as Wilderson puts it. Though they might have been the undesirables of the White community, they could not be generally dishonored. I argue that South Africa then, because of the above mentioned, provided the world a perfect site for its naked violence. The world could be close to the “living laboratories” – contingently and otherwise, without compromising their interests.

III.

^{xiii} Wilderson is also citing David Eltis here to make his point.

At best, Whiteness succeeds within a context of collective memory and remembering^{xiv}. The violence against Black bodies must constantly be dramatized – as a tool – to reinforce the collective memory and remembering of the world. Black flesh is easily commodified and exploited as a fabric that weaves together the collective minds of Humans. Black social death is a Human memory project that installs itself as a hegemonic culture and a site of identity formation. Black flesh, and the various ways it is abstracted, is at the center of this. It is a signifying property for world making. This memory project underwrites violence on the Black. It constantly struggles over the present and terms of Being.

The Slave estate/colonial laboratory by its very nature is constructed to extract bodies from it to make the symbolic order of the world – or what Jared Sexton (in Wilderson⁵⁶) calls the libidinal economy^{xv}. The Black body is, in essence, a living laboratory (via Spillers^{xvi}) for the world. Hartman and Spillers help us to theories about the fungibility of the Black body. For one, Spillers makes a distinction between body and flesh. This is not like the Cartesian distinction where the two entities are distinct from each other – the mind as a thinking thing and body as a material thing – and can be imagined separately from each other. For Spillers, the making of the New World [modernity] represents “a scene of actual mutilation, dismemberment, and exile”⁵⁷ for the Slave, here synonymous with the Black. She argues that the impulse, as well as the enterprise, of the New World, through its violent machinery made a “theft” of the body thus resulting in splitting it from its “motive will” and its “active desire” (emphasis added). From here, then, Spillers draws a distinction between body and flesh, and this is important in how she thinks about bodies that are captive and with those that are liberated. She writes that:

^{xiv} I borrow this concept of collective memory and remembering from Maurice Halbwachs (see: Halbwachs, Maurice and Ditter, Francis J. 1980 [1950]. *The collective memory*. New York, Harper & Row.

^{xv} Wilderson (in Wilderson (III). *Red, White & Black*. Page, 9) writes that Jared Sexton describes the “libidinal economy as “the economy, or distribution and arrangement, of desire and identification (their condensation and displacement), and the complex relationship between sexuality and the unconscious””. Wilderson continues to argue that the libidinal economy is “linked not only to forms of attraction, affection, and alliance, but also to aggression, destruction, and the violence of lethal consumption”. Wilderson writes that “Sexton emphasizes that it is “the whole structure of psychic and emotional life””. Wilderson continues to write that, according to Sexton, the libidinal economy is “a dispensation of energies, concerns, points of attention, anxieties, pleasures, appetites, revulsions, and phobias capable of both great mobility and tenacious fixation”.

^{xvi} In Spillers, Hortense J. 1987. *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book*. The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Under these conditions, we lose at least gender difference in the outcome, and the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuvers, not at all gender-related, gender-specific⁵⁸.

The Black body is then an estranged structure, from itself and from the world. It is a de – gendered and de – personed object that has been collapsed into itself. Spillers explains it as such:

But this body, at least from the point of view of the captive community, focuses a private and particular space, at which point of convergence biological, sexual, social, cultural, linguistic, ritualistic, and psychological fortunes join⁵⁹.

Spillers explains that these overlapping systems that disrupt the body in particular ways define the Black body from without^{xvii}. This imposed definition on the Black body means that it “becomes a source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality” however at the same time, “in stunning contraction”, explains Spillers, “the captive body reduces to a thing, becoming being for the captor”, this means that the Black becomes a Being without a Subject position^{xviii} – “absent from a subject position”, explains Spillers, and from here the Blacks “captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of otherness”⁶⁰. The Black then as a “category of otherness... translates into a potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general “powerlessness”, resonating through

^{xvii} Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* theorizes this movement of Blacks being defined by White culture from without as “the prelogical thought of the phobic” – “I am overdetermined from without”, he explains, “I am the slave not of the “idea” that others have of me but of my own appearance” (87). The Black is what Fanon calls a “phobic imago” for the world. And, as a phobic imago, the Black is transformed to assume that image of imago – he becomes a “being for others”. It does not matter what the black thinks or feels about themselves, because the real world, which is the world of Humans – the world that matters (or rather a “racial epidermal schema”) has already positioned and defined the Black person from without. “And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man’s eyes”, explains Fanon, “an unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims” he continues (83). So, we could say that there is a violent paradigm that underwrites the position of the Black as paradigmatic and antithetical to Humans. “The White man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories” (84), Fanon explains. White culture represents the Black as a phobic object – Marriott (in Marriott, David. 2000. *On Black Men*. Edinburgh University Press. Page, 2) explains here (negro – phobia) that Fanon uses the syntax of fetishism “to account for the construction of the black man as phobic object”. What culture is saturated with images of Blacks as objects of enjoyment and anxiety (imago’s). “The white world, the only honorable one, barred me from all participation. A man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a Black man—or at least like a nigger. I shouted a greeting to the world and the world slashed away my joy. I was told to stay within bounds, to go back where I belonged” (86)

^{xviii} Marriott (*On Black Men*. Page, 43/44) describes this as “black types” – not his own idea but the concept comes before his time. However, I think Marriott shows how Blackness becomes a figure/and or symbol of something else (other than itself): lust, violence, sexuality, degeneracy, etc. The Black male/Black body is categorized and defined as a foreshadow for something.

various centers of human and social meaning”⁶¹, explains Spillers. As a pornotrope, the Black is reduced to mere flesh, a hyper visible object of phobogenesis and sexual pleasure. An object that the world fears and fetishes at the same time. Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Marks*, properly called this double and seemingly contradictory location occupied by the world as Negrophobia. When the world looks at the Black body – visually/cinematically abstracted as it were, it experiences both hatred and exotic desire – an ambivalent effect – for the Black. These two impulses, rather than cancel each other out, co-exist in (in)perfect harmony.

Marriott is a close reader of Fanon and in *On Black Men*, he re – prints an account of a lynching from Baldwin’s *Going to Meet the Man*, to make the case for the routinised lynching of Black men as sexual imago and pleasure for the world. I will also re–print it here to make a case for this paper:

He watched his mother's face. Her eyes were very bright, her mouth was open: she was more beautiful than he had ever seen her, and more strange. He began to feel a joy he had never felt before. He watched the hanging, gleaming body, the most beautiful and terrible object he had ever seen till then. One of his father's friends reached up and in his hands he held a knife: and Jesse wished that he had been that man. It was a long, bright knife and the sun seemed to catch it, to play with it, to caress it – it was brighter than the fire. And a wave of laughter swept the crowd. Jesse felt his father's hands on his ankles slip and tighten. The man with the knife walked toward the crowd, smiling slightly; as though this were a signal, silence fell; he heard his mother cough. Then the man with the knife walked up to the hanging body. He turned and smiled again. Now there was silence all over the field. The hanging head looked up. It seemed fully conscious now, as though the fire had burned out terror and pain. The man with the knife took the nigger's privates in his hand. ... The white hand stretched them, cradled them, caressed them. Then the dying man's eyes looked straight into Jesse's eyes - it could have been as long as a second, but it seemed longer than a year. Then Jesse screamed, and the crowd screamed as the knife flashed, first up, then down, cutting the dreadful thing away, and the blood came roaring down. Then the crowd rushed forward, tearing at the body with their hands, with knives, with rocks, with stones, howling and cursing⁶².

“He began to feel a joy he had never felt before”, Baldwin notes the experience of the sexually frustrated White man watching Black flesh hang on a tree. Pleasure and satisfaction he experienced. A climaxing experience inherited from father to child – “a gift from his father. That gift, the desire and power to castrate”, explains Marriott. “He watched the hanging,

gleaming body, the most beautiful and terrible object he had ever seen till then”, the narrative continues. These memories of black flesh hanging from a tree “are what allow him to enter his wife”⁶³ and without them he would probably remain impotent, unable to please her. The bond that the father and son have over Black flesh is a shared affect that White men/ the world share for Black flesh. It allows them to perform their duties as men. Black flesh is an instrument of White collective memory and remembering, to reiterate my earlier point. To be Human is to take on and use this fetish object for oneself. “To take and so to take on — the sexuality of black men, brings them together and forges their futures as white men”⁶⁴, explains Marriott.

What did the audience of the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement feel/experience when they watched Black bodies being mutilated, dead and dying? Were they empathetic? Ashamed? Grieved? Violated? Did they share a meal while watching the scenes from Apartheid South Africa? Did they remind each other to watch the films? Did they pass them around like contraband items traded among criminals? Were they overcome with sadness over what they saw and shared prayers for the captured bodies? Were they prepared to receive such images of Black social death? Or they simply watched the films and then went about their business? The day-to-day business of being Human in the world. This is imaginable. I can imagine that, like the images and body parts of Sarah Baartman on display for everyone to consume in London. These images of captured Black flesh on screen were a health tonic for the audiences. It is plausible that they constantly wanted these images to be fed to them to make themselves feel better. The unconscious Human eye ever ready to receive images of Black violation. Marriott writes that the performance of the White man in Baldwins narrative “thrives on imitating derogatory images of black men as either dangerously oversexed and/or emasculated or dead” and, he continues, “one thing he knows for sure is this: blackness is a vicarious, disfiguring, joyful pleasure, passionately enabling as well as substitutively dead”⁶⁵. In the hands/ or rather, the eyes of the world, these images become fantasmatic representations of White desire. This corroborates Hartman’s argument that the Black body is *the source of opacity* [outside of language] that is the vehicle of the other’s power, pleasure, and profit⁶⁶. Scholarship on the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement would have us believe that the films were a vital instrument in the fight against Apartheid – “Agonizingly well done...ammunition to be used in the fight for more freedom and equality”⁶⁷, writes The Daily Mirror in a review of *PhelaNdaba* – but this view lacks sophistication and does not consider the framed opacity that is the Black body and its symbolic role in the psychic life of culture.

Hartman argues that “it is the white or near-white body that makes the captive’s suffering visible and discernible”⁶⁸. The Black body, in and of itself, cannot be a source of discernment, sensibility and sentiment. The Black body is denied sentience, so when it is read/ or rather devoured (can a non-Being be read?) off the screen, it is experienced as a body that can tolerate/ or not feel pain at all, “the missing link” in the chain of Human Beings. As an object that is read as that which can tolerate pain, the Black body, when it is visually abstracted, is robbed and devoured by the audiences. It is a scopophilic instinct and identification that the audience has with Black flesh – it is taken in, so that it can be controlled, tormented and spat out at the end⁶⁹. The films carry on – continue – and facilitate a Euro-American culture that is obsessed with Black performance – whether it be our attitudes, relationships, behaviors, sexuality, etc. or our music and art – to quote Marriott, “as a jouissance incapable of any self-restraint or asceticism”⁷⁰. I would like to submit that Apartheid “lasted” – the exigency of the scare quotes is deliberate – as long as it did because the people – who are not in fact people – who were being killed and mutilated were, to use Marriott’s words again “already carrying the visible warning signs and burial markers of American culture: a black disinterred remnant visible (as the camera flashes on and off) on the proud edges of a wound”⁷¹. Simon traveled to South Africa, as scores of European scientists before him did, and as Sarah Baartman lay there in jars at the museum, like the bodies of Blacks in European hospitals and academic laboratories, and as scores of White men and women after them voyaged to the estate – a White heaven – they did so because, for starters, there were no real constraints to it and furthermore because they, to refer to Marriott once more, “wanted to feed, and feed well, on something [they] delimited as beyond the edges of perception, something defiled and unredeemed, carnal and virile, abject and socially dead”⁷². South Africa is marked, both within and without, by the Human’s anxieties and fears^{xix}.

The camera is a devouring eye^{xx} that robs and bites and cuts into people, and likewise “the photograph is a product of that movement of introjection and projection, an object through which to trace the movement of devouring and spitting out”⁷³ explains Marriott. It is impossible to save the Black from the gaze of the world, yet many have tried through Marxist and Humanist efforts. Its opacity makes it illegible – as a part of the Human community, but its

^{xix} I am thinking through Fanon here, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and his idea of the racial epidermal schema that saturates European culture.

^{xx} This is taken from Marriott (in *On Black Men*) and his reading of Fenichel’s conception of the camera as a type of devouring eye.

abstraction makes other people's enjoyment of it. The Black is therefore an impossible Being (via Hartman⁷⁴). "The norms governing the 'human'", Butler reminds us, "are relayed and abrogated through the communication of these photos"⁷⁵. The death of the Blacks in the images of the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement continue to haunt the screen as they meme the psychic life of the world.

Black flesh is a passion relic that binds the faithful Human community together, similar to religious relics that the religious faithful's use to channel their connection to a deity. The relics renew the faithful's faith in an order, a deity. But unlike a positive relic that is worshiped, Black flesh is a negative relic that the faithful need, but do not worship – or rather worship it by devouring it.

Chapter 7

Afterword: Post-Apartheid Documentary Film Practice

Documentary film, and cinema in general, between 1976 – with the introduction of television in South Africa – and 1994 – with the symbolic end of Apartheid – existed in polarity between in favor of and against Apartheid. There was little, if at all, room to articulate and explore the boundaries of experiences and Beingⁱ. It was not after 1994 did we begin to see new voices and artistic languages emerge – working with the supposition that 1994 represents a radical break with the past, both politically – in terms of the changes in administrations and symbolically – where the rainbow forms. “The year 1994 could also be regarded as a landmark for the South African film industry”¹, writes Martin Botha in the Spring 2006 Issue of *KINEMA*ⁱⁱ. Although still largely White and male dominated, this period saw South African filmmakers exploring themes outside of the polarity of Apartheid. Now 1994 came with many changes; the introduction of the South African Film and Video Foundation (SAFVF) to transform and support the local film industry, various film initiatives were started to advocate and give plurality to the new, or yet to become, film industry, and lastly South Africa formed partnerships with other film industries to collaborate and share best practices. A few Black filmmakers emerged from these efforts. “For the first time South African audiences are exposed to certain marginalized communities”², writes Botha in the same article. One of the questions I am interested in exploring in this paper is the idea of a Black post-Apartheid filmmaker/industry – so in essence, does South Africa have an authentic post-Apartheid Black filmmaker/industry? If it does, what does it look like and what are the questions that preoccupy this industry?

“[An] important theme in post-Apartheid cinema is how South Africans are dealing with the traumatic past and how they are adjusting to the dramatic socio-political changes in contemporary South African society”³, proclaims Botha in the same article. This is an interesting theme, especially after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the

ⁱ However, Botha writes in the Spring 2006 Issue of *KINEMA* in that “according to film historians 1986/1987 can be regarded as the turning point in the South African film industry. Only then did several feature films begin to critically examine the South African milieu, as well as apartheid and colonial history”. He explains that Keyan Tomaselli “calls this the new wave in the South African film industry” and that he and Adri van Aswegen describe it as an “alternative film revival... “that gave voice to those who were previously marginalised by apartheid”.

ⁱⁱ This is a social cinema platform (a partner – based distribution network) for filmmakers and community builders to share and view films.

fabrication of the rainbow that became an object that functioned to absorb everyone into its logic. Does the logic of the rainbow allow for Black filmmakers to articulate themselves without censorship? Can Black filmmakers be intelligible about their suffering? Do they think that they suffer? After all, the logic of the rainbow can crowd out those who operate outside of its discursive collective vocabulary.

In 1994, the scholar of African cinema and history, Frank Ukadike writes on Black African cinema and the purpose it should/and or hopes to inspire:

The new Black African cinema concerns itself with the role film can play in building African society. Black African filmmakers contend that traditional ways of filmic representation old ideas and attitudes – must give way to new ones, especially in portraying African cultures. The interest, participation, and collaboration of the people must be secured, stimulated and maintained. Toward this goal the majority of African filmmakers are united by their art and ideology. Despite differences in their background, it is evident that these filmmakers have worked to establish certain criteria that might serve as the basis for Black African cinema⁴.

This mirrors Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o call for language and its role in national culture in post-colonial Africa. Cinema for Ukadike is a language that should unify people toward a national culture. Jacqueline Maingard⁵ makes a similar assertion about post 1994 South Africa cinema. The collective vocabulary on South African cinema that is championed can mask and erase the suffering and experiences of those who suffered – and continue to suffer under Apartheidⁱⁱⁱ. Nonetheless, Botha writes that “post-Apartheid features are also dealing overwhelmingly and by necessity with the lives of Black South Africans”⁶. This paper is not so much interested in feature films, however Botha gestures that the documentary film industry in South Africa, post 1994, mirrors/follows the feature film. The “documentary film industry is blossoming and receiving attention on the international stage... the present is indeed an exciting time for South African features, documentaries and shorts”⁷, writes Botha. So then I ask, how does the documentary film stay true to its form and also contend with the collective vocabulary of post 1994 South Africa?

ⁱⁱⁱ I can even extend this to the moral philosophy of *Ubuntu* that became popular after 1994, especially during and after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). *Ubuntu* and its principles of harmony and togetherness: “I am because we are”, is a ‘Rainbow’ strategy that is deployed to collectivize the Black and the White post 1994 and the TRC.

As I have stated somewhere in the thesis, the documentary film industry, and the film industry in general, remains largely White. There have been attempts to introduce, train, and incorporate Black filmmakers into the industry through government initiatives such as the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) and the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and private initiatives such as the Close Encounters Documentary Laboratory and MultiChoice.

There are many developments in documentary/ non-fiction film since/after 1994, especially when it comes to Black filmmakers. It would take me another thesis to explain and describe these developments in detail, however with the next two sections, I want to think deeply about two developments that are a part of the post 1994 South Africa film landscape, namely: the Close Encounters Documentary Laboratory initiative and the advent of the internet; social media/ and filmmaking.

Reversing the Lens: Black on White Series

In 2003 – 9 years after 1994 – Close Encounters Documentary Laboratory in partnership with the SABC, Fuzebox Productions and 0-dacity Films, came up with a documentary series initiative called *Black on White*. As the name suggests, this initiative was about Black South African filmmakers subverting the White (colonial) gaze and making feature length (48 minutes) documentary films about White people. The initiative call brief declared that it requires:

Six contemporary, challenging, provocative, humorous and subversive films about what black people actually feel and think about white people, whiteness, white worlds. We want six black writer/ directors that have the courage to say that race matters in this country, and who can express these ideas using the different traditions and genres of documentary filmmaking^{iv}.

Leading up to the 6th *Encounters South African International Documentary Festival*, in 2004, in the Encounters information document, the authors write that:

In 2003 Encounters held a number of workshops, two of which became a platform for examining personal identity, the legacy of apartheid's racial classifications and the opportunities available to filmmakers in post-apartheid South Africa. The consensus,

^{iv} Encounters. 2003.

perception, was that white filmmakers make films about both whites and blacks and that black filmmakers make films about blacks only. Black filmmakers do not make films about whites only – *slegs blankes*⁸.

The 6 documentary filmmakers that were selected, each given a commission of R216 000.00 to produce a film on the subject, for the inaugural series were:

Sipho Singiswa for the film *Inja Yomlungu*

Omelga Mthiyane for the film *Different Pigment*

Vincent Moloi for the film *Men of Gold*

Khadija Magardie for the film *Black Girls Spit, White Girls Swallow*

Yunus Valley for the film *The Glow of White Women*

Rehad Desai for the film *The Heart of Whiteness*

The first 3 being Black African; Singiswa, Mthiyane, and Moloi. Magardie (I could not access her film. Only five films came out at the end of the project, excluding hers) being what we might call Coloured – an Apartheid era classification that has been carried over into the new South Africa; Valley and Desai are persons of Indian origin. The term Black/ or identity if you will, is used as a generic category in post-Apartheid South Africa to include all the people that were discriminated against based on the color of their skin. Biko's Black Consciousness also used this political categorization for its mobilization. In any case, the series "turns the lens on White people" and, I guess, disturbing the dream of racial harmony that post-Apartheid South Africa tries to cultivate (or does it?). This also speaks to how – and against the idea that in documentary film, Black people have historically been the Subjects of the documentary film – subjected to the White gaze – positioned and properly elaborated by the unconscious discourse of the Other, the White filmmaker. We know that White people, including and especially White documentary filmmakers, are in denial about race and have consciously sought to downplay its significance. Sakhela Buhlungu – as I cited him in chapter two, makes this point quite clearly about White anti-Apartheid activists/ practitioners in 'Black struggles'. Buhlungu writes that 'they emphasize the primacy of class and class struggle and downplay the necessity of the struggle for national liberation of black people'⁹ (emphasis added). bell hooks in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* reminds us that in a White supremacist society, such as South Africa:

White people can “safely” imagine that they are invisible to black people since the power they have historically asserted, and even now collectively assert over black people, accorded them the right to control the black gaze. As fantastic as it may seem, racist white people find it easy to imagine that black people cannot see them if within their desire they do not want to be seen by the dark Other¹⁰.

So to “reversing the lens”, as the initiative proclaims, presents interesting possibilities for thought, because Whiteness is seldom, if ever, an object of study – especially under the gaze of Blackness.

We know from Lacan, Foucault and Fanon that the gaze is a system of power and knowledge, that the gaze in as much as it scrutinises, controls and de-Humanises the objects of its view. The gaze has the power to affect our conception of self, as Jean-Paul Sartre famously writes in the existentialist play *No exit*, “hell is other people”^v. Fanon argued that “the black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man”¹¹ (this is the fact of Blackness), a claim this thesis has made no secret to endorse, but, having mentioned that, I still would like to ask, if only for my own satisfaction, can the lens – that is/has always been an instrument of White power (or colonialism), an instrument about visualizing the Other, if only for its own enjoyment – be reversed? Can it be turned on its head – and especially by Blackness? Can the perimeters of Whiteness be defined by Blackness, or appropriately, can Blackness control and direct the destiny of Whiteness? Or, to think through Foucault¹² can it hold upon it, invest it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs? Can Blackness enslave Whiteness?

It may feel like I am inserting words inside the mouths of these filmmakers. Questions that they had not set to answer, had no intention, and are a non-issue in and for their documentary practices. However, be that as it may, it is unfortunate, that the camera asks these questions on behalf of the filmmakers. Steven Markovitz, who is the co-executive producer of the *Black on White* initiative explains that the series represents:

A significant contribution to the discourse around race and representivity in SA. How do black people really feel about white people and how do they perceive them? These debates around race represent a necessary, even if uncomfortable, contribution to the spiritual and political

^v *NO EXIT* (French: *Huis Clos*). 1944.

well-being of the country. Let us make sure that these debates are not only happening in the newspaper columns and are also taking place on television¹³.

Sipho Singiswa's film *Inja Yomlungu* (the White man's dog) is a 55 – minute film that investigates the relationship White people have with their dogs. As a Black person, it has always been known to me that White people place more value on their animals than they do to Black people, who are often their servants. So, with this film, Singiswa sets out with his camera to interview White dog owners. Though the premise of the series is to make Whiteness the spectacle of the documentary, to set the context, I suppose, Singiswa interviews many Black people, including a Black diviner, Credo Mutwa, to get clarity on the cultural differences White people and Black people have with their dogs. At the end of the 55 – minute film, we are left with an intense dislike of White people – and their connection with their dogs. As a Black person watching the film, I am led to identify and sympathize with the Black Subject – who is supposedly not the center of the film, because White people love their dogs more than they love me. *Inja Yomlungu* “points” the gaze at the White man and his dog only for it to endeavor to save and recuperate the White man and his dog. This is not unique to *Inja Yomlungu*. We also find, what I can only describe as an impasse for speech, in many of the post–Apartheid documentary films – especially those that position themselves as ‘radical’/ and or tackle social and political issues, by Black filmmakers. Take for instance, *Driving with Fanon* by Kwenza Mokwena (2010), a film that invites us into a conversation about/with Fanon while it uses the subject of post–war Freetown, Sierra Leone or *BEEing Me* a film by Tebogo Ngono (2007) that interrogates the post–Apartheid South Africa un – freedoms through mostly 3 young Black women. Similar to *Inja Yomlungu*, *Driving with Fanon*, and *BEEing Me* lament at the post–colonial/ independent reality – which is an empty speech – but only for them to still maintain the Humanity and the sanctity of Whiteness. These films go searching for something, a framing of Being, a recuperation and reconstruction of Blackness (via the White man and his dog for Singiswa) through the discourse of Humanism that centers recognition and the self – a language that works to keep/split two separate entities apart (dualism) while at the same time positioning the subject (theme/discourse) and the Subjects of the films through the agency of language (Lacan) and in the process the films end up compromising (and/or failing to inspire) on the imaginative/ entrance to the possible. Singiswa followed *Inja Yomlungu* with another film titled *Chasing the Ancestors* (2005) where he and his wife – a White woman – *chase* the route where their ancestors – the Dutch and the Xhosa – faced and fought each other, in a bloody antagonistic war to the death, 300 years ago. Now they *chase* after their ancestors, hand in

hand, Black and White, as lovers in the fresh waters of a post–Apartheid South Africa. Singiswa refuses to acknowledge that he is her Slave and that the war that his ancestors fought 300 years ago in fact did not end. The *chase of the ancestors* becomes a journey of a Slave Master and her Slave to the war grounds to perform Black death in order to recuperate and maintain the stability of White post–Apartheid civil society^{vi}.

In a 2006 interview about his film *Inja Yomlungu*, Singiswa notes that through his film he wanted to:

Explore elements of racism and socio-economic differences in the country. I also strive to understand why it is that so many white people are so intensely attached to their dogs. Part of me begins to believe that it is because of the breakdown of community, extended family and ubuntu in the white individualistic culture, that makes so many white people rely on their dogs for company. Many are old couples, divorcées or widowers whose children have left them and they are lonely. Their dogs are their only companions¹⁴.

Singiswa points the lens at the White man (and his dog) with the assumption that the concept of Being is universal even to Blacks who experience blatant dishonour and systemic discrimination. At the end of the film, we do not learn of how the Black is that figure that is positioned outside of the political order and is open to the structures of exception that constitute contemporary biopower – that would explain the violence and humiliation that Blacks face at the hands of White people through their dogs. Instead, we learn that the White man values their dog more than Blacks because of the “breakdown of community, extended family and ubuntu in the white individualistic culture”¹⁵.

Another “journey film” in the Encounters series is Rehad Desai’s *The Heart of Whiteness*. This is a 50 – minute film that sees Desai, a middle – class Indian man (that somehow identifies as Black in the film) travelling to the Whites only town of Orania, in the Northern Cape province. This is an interesting film that, in many ways, mirrors Western anthropological/ ethnographic films that subject their representational gaze to the ways of life of the non – Westernized Other.

^{vi} I first saw *Chasing the Ancestors* as a second-year student in 2005. The SABC aired the film on the South African public holiday, Day of Reconciliation, on 16 December. The holiday is meant to foster relations between blacks and Whites. It came into effect in 1995, replacing the Afrikaner religious holiday of *Day of the Vow*, where 3,000 Zulu warriors were killed by the Afrikaners in 1838 in what is known as the *Battle of Blood River*. The fact that the SABC airs this film on this day is telling of the mobilization of historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon, 1983) and non-fiction’s in place to construct the poetics of a post–Apartheid society.

The Heart of Whiteness has more in common with what gave birth to modern documentary film practice, that is Robert Flaherty's 1922 film *Nanook of the North*. Flaherty travels to Quebec, Canada and documents the indigenous people there and their ways of life. Similarly – however with a much rather indignant attitude – Desai takes a trip to the Whites only town to “make visible the invisible, the obscure clear, the hidden obvious, the disguised exposed”¹⁶, to use Dziga Vertov's words – perhaps fitting to cite him here to be amongst a fellow Marxist^{vii}. In any case, what this journey to the heart of whiteness yearns for, to me, is not so much to find out “what it means to be White”, as Desai explains in the film, but rather why does whiteness not want to be incorporated into the rainbow.

Orania. Let me first start here. It is not surprising to me that a White Afrikaner town exists in post-Apartheid South Africa. This is in many ways a continuation of the system of Whiteness and Apartheid ideology. It was naïve to think that White Afrikaners would politely accept to be ruled by Blackness, however, again, I am not at all surprised by this naïveté. Afrikaner psyche, much like Whiteness, has always had a cartographical contrast within itself as an epithet that mimes the exile of Blackness from Humanity. Perhaps what is unique about Orania is that it does not force a mode of universal life upon the Black, something that is uncharacteristic for a Humanist project like South Africa. Anyhow, when Carel Boshoff, the son-in-law of Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of Apartheid and former South African Prime Minister, founded *Afrikaner Volkswag* in 1984, anticipating 1994 with its discussive collective vocabulary of the rainbow nation, he was, as a matter of fact, overcome by Negrophobia. The White Afrikaner psyche could not imagine itself governed, if not assimilated or incorporated, by an existence outside of Humanity. “Citizenship (for Blacks) will inevitably lead to a political takeover, and the Afrikaner will lose his freedom and his fatherland. In the long term, the black majority will take over here”¹⁷ lamented Boshoff to his followers in 1986. “The pressure to include permanent (Black) residents in the political structure of the country cannot in the long term be fought off”¹⁸ notes Boshoff. Bischoff, in his anti-Black racism, was able to realise that the moment of 1994 will be the *destruction of presence* to the White Afrikaner sociality^{viii}. He

^{vii} I assume that Desai is a Marxist, judging by the books he is reading at the beginning of the film that are heavily influenced by a Marxist frame of analysis. Also, Desai comes from a Pan Africanist Congress family in exile, an experience he made a film about in 2004 called *Born into Struggle*. Upon his return from exile, Desai worked as a trade unionist. In any case, even without this presumption, *The Heart of Whiteness* makes it clear that it reads subjectivity through a (Marxian) class, and I should add that, a liberal narrative.

^{viii} Many scholars have written about this phenomenon as *White Flight*. Leah Platt Boustan (in Boustan, Leah Platt. 2010. *Was Postwar Suburbanization “White Flight”? Evidence from the Black Migration*. The Quarterly Journal of Economics) shows how American metropolitan areas are racially segregated. Blacks live in cities and White in suburbs. She argues that when Blacks migrated from the rural areas in the south to the cities, Whites

knew that, “Blackness”, to use Gordon’s words, “is the destruction of presence, for Blacks seem to suck presence into themselves as a black hole, pretty much like the astrophysical phenomenon that bears that name”¹⁹. “Black government” is a form of absence and Bischoff and his followers knew this.

“In many ways Orania represents the logical conclusion of a White identity prevalent throughout SA” argues Desai. This he is correct about. “In this sense, Orania is the norm rather than the exception as Whiteness is something that first and foremost resides inside the head”, he continues, an apt observation. “It’s part of the past, or an attempt to entrench the present, rather than a look at the future”²⁰, Desai concludes his analysis of Orania with a rather *prospective nostalgic* (thinking through Nsele²¹) anticlimactic gesture – something all of the *black on white* documentary films have in common. Bischoff, in his anti-Black racism, was at least able to recognise the ontological vacuity of Blackness, unlike Desai. However this should not come as a surprise. Desai’s political lens functions with the operate of the rainbow nation. But, I want to add that, despite the logic of the rainbow, which is an anti-Black logic (I argue this in detail in chapter 3), it has always been the desire of people whose Humanity is called into question to desperately labour for White approval and proximity – perhaps to also insatiate their sexual and ontological fantasies of being with White men and women, something Yunus Valley in *The Glow of White Women* knows very well of.

Of the five films in the series, I have to confess that I enjoyed Valley’s *The Glow of White Women*. However though, *The Glow of White Women*, premised on turning the lens on White women, becomes a film centered on Valley and his desires for White women and the envy he

responded by leaving the cities for the suburbs. She shows that for every Black arrival there was 2.7 White departure. Kevin M. Kruse (in Kruse, Kevin. 2007. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Princeton University Press) also shows this by arguing that in Atlanta (now known as a Black mecca) moved from being a White city (mostly tolerant of other races) to a Black city after the civil rights movement. And this, he argues, is what undergirds White modern conservatism. White flight is a global phenomenon that is buttressed by negrophobia. Of recent in South Africa, Stats SA has released a report (2001 population statistics) detailing how Whites have been leaving the country in numbers since 1994. Stats SA estimates that 611,500 Whites have left South Africa over the last 35 years. Johann van Rooyen a South African White immigrant to Canada in his book, *The new great trek: The story of South Africa’s white exodus* (van Rooyen, Johann. 2000. *The new great trek: The story of South Africa’s white exodus*. Unisa Press) tries to give an explanation for this by arguing that Whites leave South Africa in “search for better material conditions and the avoidance of physical danger” and “the desire to escape from violent crime” to “ensure that their quality of life and living standards are not affected by rapidly changing socioeconomic and political conditions” (vii). Van Rooyen is being disingenuous with the facts. He does not want to admit that when the *White heaven* in 1994 was compromised, the *Swart gevaar* that Whites invented during Apartheid became an imminent possibility in their minds.

has for White men as an Indian Muslim boy growing up in Nelspruit. In the Sithengi piece Valley tells us that:

The documentary deals with the social construction of white women and why apartheid was so terrified with the idea of black men being friendly with white women. Apart from giving an overview of the history of white women in SA, the story also seeks to engage with whiteness in a genuinely critical way to create a dialogue about race theory²².

I hear Valley's explanation of his film, however, honestly, there is no lens reversal taking place in the film. Valley, it seems to me, in his narcissism, just wanted the spotlight to let us know how much he loves fucking White women. And, I must say, I really appreciated this. Despite the false premise, or rather the failure to reverse the lens (which is proving to be a difficulty for all the films in the series) Valley's film is a decent Humanist framing of *a man of color* "who", to quote *Black Skin, White Masks* "has raised himself through his own intelligence and his assiduous labors to the level of the thought and the culture of Europe [and] is incapable of escaping his race"²³. One of my favourite lines from *The Glow of White Women* comes from the moment where Valley describes what it was like growing up in Nelspruit under Apartheid:

And of course, you know, if you are a kid and growing up there, you'd wanna be white, not that you'd wanna be white, white, but certainly want what whites had or at least the illusion of the things you thought that they had.

The Glow of White Women is filled with germs like this. This line could have been taken from *The Man of Color and the White Woman* by Fanon, who Valley knows very well^{ix}. Like I said, I appreciate Valley, knowingly or unknowingly, I don't know, granting us access into his mind through *The Glow of White Women*. In many ways, Valley represents all the *attitudes* and *problems* of Black men. Given the opportunity to make a film about White people and he takes this opportunity to let us know how much he gets satisfied by White women. Very apt. Valley, masturbating to images of White women at the bioscope as a young boy and describing the experience as not "necessarily [...] something very oppressive, I think it was something privileging in a way, in some ways Apartheid it kind of worked". He says this in a flippant manner; however, the humor could not divert the attention from the truth:

^{ix} There is a moment in the film where Valley lets us know of the books that shaped his political awakening, and *Black Skin, White Masks* by Fanon is one of them.

Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly white.

I wish to be acknowledged not as black but as white.

Now—and this is a form of recognition that Hegel had not envisaged—who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man.

I am a white man.

Her love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization...

I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness.

When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine²⁴.

Omelga Mthiyane's film *Different Pigment*, like Valley's *The Glow of White Women*, is a film about interracial love where, in this instance, it is the man who is White and the woman Black – with a different pigment to her partner). *Different Pigment* is a 48 – minute film about a post–Apartheid love between a 25 – year-old White man named Alex Botha, also called Mjy – who lives amongst/with Blacks in a township called Lindelani, north of Durban – and a 16–year old Zulu girl name Thandeka. There are a few projects in post–Apartheid South Africa that mirror a *Different Pigment*. Take for example the 2013 comedy (fiction) film by Henk Pretorius *Fanie Fourie's Lobola*, about a White man, Fanie and Dinky, a Black woman, and their quest to be with each other despite their cultural differences (also see, *White Wedding* (2009) directed by Jann Turner and screenplay by Kenneth Nkosi, Rapulana Seiphemo and Jann Turner. *The Miners* (2006) directed by Angus Gibson for Heartlines). Another project, a 2017 multimedia documentary project by Miora Rajaonary titled *I See You With My Heart: An Exhibition for the New South Africa*. This project explores the stories of interracial couples in Gauteng, South Africa through audio interviews and intimate portraits of the couples. Like *Fanie Fourie's Lobola*, the project is *restorative* in its logic and is buttressed by the rainbow mythos of the post–Apartheid rational. As the name suggests, we are inspired to see with *our hearts* – an affective romantic sentimentality of the post–Apartheid rational – because, as the project advice, [it is] *the new South Africa* (or at least the future of).

Post–Apartheid interracial films, such as *Different Pigment*, inspire/ or guide us into forgetting – the violence of Apartheid – despite its afterlife, which is often masked as a huddle that we all

collectively must pass. Mjy in *Different Pigment*, despite his Whiteness, embraces the Zulu culture – and in many ways is considered a Zulu man, which, I guess, is why he was able to pay lobola and marry Thandeka. Despite that at the end of the film the two love birds are somewhat estranged, living in different provinces, with marital problems, the message that the film wants to drive across is that relations across color lines are possible. The ethos of the film is to try and naturalize these seemingly different relations and to protect them – a racial harmony (rainbow nation) effort of post-Apartheid South Africa. The *differences* between Mjy and Thandeka are understood as normal Human differences, an evanescent conflict between two contemporaries, and not competing differences between two adversaries, the Human and the Slave.

The last film in the series (Khadija Magardie's film *Black Girls Spit, White Girls Swallow* did not make it into the series) is Vincent Moloi's film *Men of Gold*. This is a 54-minute film about a 40 – year-old White man named Leonard Johnson and his navigation of a post-Apartheid inner-city Johannesburg selling fake gold jewellery to fund his drug addiction. Johnson wonders around Johannesburg, doing odd jobs, begging for money and blowing it all on drugs. A phenomenon not unique to Johnson (there are many documentary films made about Blacks and drug abuse, post 1994. See, for example: the SABC produced documentary film *Cat and Mouse* (2005), *Uphill: The darker side of Port Elizabeth* (2005), *Below the Rainbow* (2004) by the SABC, or more recently: *Devil Bones* (2015) by Health-e News Service, *Saving Jesus from Nyaope* (2019) by BBC Africa Eye). Perhaps what makes it unique and strange is that here, in the film/with the film, he is being documented by a Black man, whose presence is made known immediately in the film.

Nonetheless, even though Johnson, and his friend Arthur, who goes missing in the middle of the film, are *White trash*^x, *Men of Gold* Humanises them: they still maintain their Whiteness

^x I use this term carefully, however, to also draw a contrast. I understand that the term is derogatory and offensive, however, as Allyson Drinkard shows in (Coleman, Marilyn and Ganong, Lawrence H (editors). 2014. *The Social History of the American Family: An Encyclopedia*. SAGE. Page, 1452/3) that the term “probably originated in African American slave slang” but the term was ultimately used as “part of the American class structure” to describe White people that are “inappropriately different than normal whites”. So, the label designates a social and class position of those White people who are “undisciplined, ungrateful and disgusting”, explains Drinkard, from White people who are perceived as “noble and hardworking”. Terry Angelos in her 2014 book *White Trash – My Year As A High-Class Call Girl* chronicles her life as White trash working as a sex worker (call girl) in London. Angelos experienced this humiliation and castration from Whiteness for only a year. She manages to escape this castration with the help of strangers and God. I wonder if the same would be possible with Blacks? Can they escape the castration of society and find meaning and purpose? Can they be integrated back into society after being “trash”? Perhaps it is possible. However, my reading of this is that society often does not extend the

grounded in the Being of the Human. Their mode of universal life is not shattered by them being *White trash*, and certainly not by being filmed by a Black man. The White in the film is not natally alienated – his relationship with the world is maintained and recognized, he is not perpetually open to gratuitous violence, and he is not generally dishonoured. William Du Bois in *Black Reconstruction in America* puts it eloquently as the public and psychological wages of Whiteness. Du Bois shows that, beyond the material, poor Whites are compensated socially and psychologically in society for their Whiteness, something not extended to poor Blacks. He writes that:

It must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown them. White schoolhouses were the best in the community, and conspicuously placed, and they cost anywhere from twice to ten times as much per capita as the colored schools. The newspapers specialized on news that flattered the poor whites and almost utterly ignored the Negro except in crime and ridicule²⁵.

So then Whiteness is a public and psychological wage that is undergirded by Black social death that, as Du Bois put it, even poor Whites in America can feed their vanity. Even Moloi, toward the end of the film, cannot bear to witness the dishonour of Johnson and so he breaks protocol and buys Johnson a new suit so that, at least, the boundaries between the Black and the White can easily be legible/ or, if you will, remove the dishonour that plagues Johnson, but this is however, ironically, a constant companion of Blackness post 1994.

same courtesy to “Black trash” than it does to White trash. White trash, although they are undesirable, they are still White and not invisible to society. They are undesirable, yes, but still Human nonetheless, unlike Blacks. Blacks in general experience social invisibility, it is even worse when we are deemed “Black trash” by other Blacks, often those with proximity to power. To “escape” (an impossibility, unless there is a White body that mediates on behalf of the Black (Hartman in *Scenes of Subjection*) Black social invisibility we must be anti-Black, to against ourselves and our people, most often by toiling and entertaining White people. Ralph Ellison in his 1952 book *Invisible Man* points this reality out. When the protagonist of the book (an invisible man) wins a scholarship it comes with conditions, he must first take part in a humiliating battle for the entertainment of White people. He gets the scholarship but soon loses it when he shows a certain White dignitary “Black trash”. The protagonist is, in his own words, “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me”. He lives underground buried by Whites, literally and figuratively (he lives underneath a White’s only apartment and was put there by two White men). This is the condition and position of Blacks in the world.

In conclusion. The *Black on White* series did not in fact subvert the White (colonial) gaze. Rather than deconstruct the conventional language of cinema that has historically represented the Black as the Other, the series of films instead labor to present and forge a vision of racial harmony and pluralism. The series reproduces and maintains the metaphysical infrastructure (Nahum Chandler) of the world. So, can the camera (an instrument of power and anti-Blackness) represent the White/ or rather answer the question “what does it mean to be White”, as Desai asks in *The Heart of Whiteness*, the answer is a resounding yes. However, that question cannot be captured by Blackness. Because, I think, in the end, that which lacks capacity to be Human – positioned paradigmatically as nothing, cannot, in fact, or rather does not have the power to represent and/or capture the fullness of Whiteness. Because, what does it mean for a non-Being – an anti-relation – to represent that which lives, if only but to expose itself as without merit? The camera is an instrument of anti-Blackness and to try to reverse its gaze (a Humanist affect) is an impossibility that can only produce disappointment. Blackness does not have the power to pose any questions to Whiteness (at least cinematically), which is to say that it does not have any ontological ground (it is not of the world, but in the world).

The Radical Promise of the Internet (?): Documentary Filmmaking in the Age of Social Media

Social media has changed the way we consume information. Many of us are engaged in the morning ritual of updating our social media statuses and checking on what is trending for the day or what we might have missed when we were sleeping. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are an essential part of my daily diet. I break my fast with them. Things happen in real time in the age of the internet. An event that takes place right away can quickly be recorded using a phone, easily accessible in our pockets, edited – if there is a need – and shared with the rest of the world in real time. Time and space have been compressed in this new digital age^{xi}. We can speak of the influence of the social media site Facebook with the 2011 *Arab Spring* protests, the 2011 *Occupy Wall Street Movement* or the killings of black men by police officers in America and those actions recorded and “going viral”. We know of the Black Lives Matter protests. We can speak of all these to demonstrate how information or news is shared and consumed today, and how that same information posted on social media sites, such as

^{xi} See: Cammaerts, Bart. 2015. *Social media and activism*. LSE Research Online.

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, helps the protestors coordinate their efforts with each, share “best practices” and not have to worry about censorship, something that traditional media is grappling with^{xii}.

The advent of the internet – as a network site, and social media has made it such that anyone with access to a recording device – such as a phone, and a computer with access to the internet can upload large media files and within minutes share them with the rest of the world. In 2017 I made a 2-minute film titled *remembering and forgetting* with my friend Sumeya Gasa, narrated by Dr. Mbuso Nkosi, using my phone and an old laptop I bought in 2013 to edit the film. I then shared the film on Facebook and through my contacts on WhatsApp. I had about 2000 friends on Facebook and people could also share the film with their contacts therefore maximizing my reach. That’s literally all it takes to be a filmmaker in the age of the internet and social media. I do not have formal film school education – besides the film school lectures (mostly theory classes) I used to audit in my undergraduate years. Everything I knew from making that film, and everything I know now, comes from the internet. I did not have to pay a single cent to learn how to make that film and to be able to share it with hundreds of people on my contact list^{xiii}. The world has come a long way since the Lumière brothers invented the cinématographe and screened, what is perhaps, the first film in Paris, France in December 1895.

The internet, particularly from the moment of the Web 2.0^{xiv} and the user generated content created a real paradigm shift in digital technology that in many ways democratized the filmmaking process. The filmmaking process (from the production, distribution and exhibition) has become relatively inexpensive and toppled as the technology of the privileged few. Video sharing and viewing sites are many and diverse. In short, the means of production and distribution are now easily available to us than other periods in history^{xv}. Douglas Schuler

^{xii} Traditional media still has a bureaucratic and often hierarchical system where media that is to be sent out into the public goes through various channels of authorization (editorial) first. With social media, all this is obliterated. You just press post.

^{xiii} It is true that to have access to the same lectures as I did and the fast internet that the university provided, you need to first be a student at the university. Yes, I did not pay for the lectures in the film department, in the sense that I was not formally registered for the courses. Yes, I also had a cell phone to record and a laptop to edit and to share the film. These are privileges I am not blind to. I understand that many do not have access to these ‘elite’ training and institutions. What I am trying to describe here is that I did not need a budget and a huge team to make the film. All I simply needed were those basic tools to get me started.

^{xiv} This is the second stage of internet development characterized by the move from static web pages to user generated content that is voluntarily contributed by members of the public. This move saw the birth of social media (see: Taprial, Varinder, and Priya Kanwar. 2012. *Understanding social media*. Bookboon).

^{xv} South Africa has approximately 43.48 million internet users, with 25.80 million social media users as of January 2023 (DataReportal, Kepios, 2023).

gestures towards this when he writes that “for the first time in human history, the possibility exists to establish a communication network that spans the globe, is affordable, and is open to all comers and points of view: in short, a democratic communication infrastructure”^{xvi}. The rules governing access to knowledge as well as the “expert vs layperson” contrariety is challenged and reconfigured with the advent of the World Wide Web^{xvi}. Social media sites like YouTube have become game changers and alternatives to traditional media and access for documentary filmmakers. However, because access has been granted to virtually everyone – guaranteed that they have the means of access (like I did in 2017 when I made *remembering and forgetting*) – empowering laypersons (such as myself) to be experts on a profession that would have otherwise required formal training and a huge budget to undertake, social media, for example, YouTube – being the largest video sharing site in the world^{xvii} – is saturated with unsophisticated, simple and artless documentary films (such as the one I made in 2017)^{xviii}. Millions of filmmakers on the internet but very few artists. We are truly over stimulated with these sorts of visuals that it is overwhelming. Perhaps such is the nature of the world today. Perhaps such is the nature of capitalism today, adapting itself and perpetuating itself over again with endless growth. I am beginning to doubt Marx’s deliberations that the technological changes in the world will ultimately collapse capital formation^{xix}.

The internet is a place where one can be unseen and unknown but have access to all that the digital world can provide. It grants access as it does anonymity. People can hide behind pseudonyms and fictitious identities on social media. It takes only a few clicks to create a social media account. No hassles. I can be whoever I want, whenever I want, and whenever I want on the internet. With such ease of access and unlimited possibilities to become anything *online*, this potentially means that one can create content, share it with the world, and not have it traced back to them. This is a blessing and a potential curse for others.

^{xvi} See: Walsh, Peter. 2004. *That Withered Paradigm: The Web, the Expert, and the Information Hegemony*. Mit Communications Forum, <https://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/legacy/papers/walsh.html>.

^{xvii} YouTube in South Africa has 25.80 million users as of early 2023 (DataReportal, Kepios, 2023).

^{xviii} I made 3 other documentary films after *remembering and forgetting*, each one better than the last, and each one getting hundreds of views online. This may be a good thing, if improvement is anything to go by. The films were still conventionally quite simple in style; simple camera shots, talking heads, little to no movement, and free music from the internet. I put my head on the chopping block to demonstrate how simple in this age of the internet to become a filmmaker and take on topics, that I sometimes know little about, and pose as an expert. While my intentions were good, I would like to think, there is a potential risk in this.

^{xix} I follow Cathy O’Neil in her book *weapons of math destruction* (2016. New York, Crown) where she makes the case that media ‘algorithms are opinions embedded in code, that these algorithms are not objective, they are however optimized for commercial interest’.

The digital world is, it is unfortunate, also exists in the real world^{xx}. It is not a parallel world where things are different to this world as we know it. Social media exists with the contradictions of capitalism, racism and antiblackness. The double bind is that while access to filmmaking is democratized it however created a flooding of uncritical voices in the process and the death of critical imagining.

I fail to see how these new modes of consumption can operate outside of the logic of capital consumption. The new “content creators” and filmmakers on social media are often assimilated and naturalized into the capitalist logic of the market economy. Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas in *Toward a Third Cinema*, said it best when they noted that “just as they are not masters of the land upon which they walk, the neo – colonized people are not masters of the ideas that envelop them”²⁷. As often as not, the films that “matter” get buried and diluted

^{xx} “Surprisingly, we have arrived with little warning at a crossroads that society has moved towards for years. Today, and in the future, we need to live in two worlds – the real world and the digital one”, one writer notes in a magazine article, “by living in a digital world, I mean the ability to access, participate in and experience the world virtually through technologies, systems, applications, devices and networks such as the Internet. We need to be able to connect with people, places, services and content safely and fully from a distance”, he continues (See: Milner, Colin. *Living in a digital world*. 2020. Thrive Global, https://community.thriveglobal.com/living-in-a-digital-world_trashed/#:~:text=Today%2C%20and%20in%20the%20future,networks%20such%20as%20the%20Inter
[net](https://community.thriveglobal.com/living-in-a-digital-world_trashed/#:~:text=Today%2C%20and%20in%20the%20future,networks%20such%20as%20the%20Inter)). The writer is correct, we are paired to this other strange inorganic world. Perhaps the feminist theorists of late are correct to theorize that we are both/ or a combination of Human and machine (I write Human as they theorize it, but of course we know that Blacks are not Human, perhaps then we can say sentient and machine?) trapped in this mythic time. This changes the boundaries of reality and slightly throws us into science fiction. Donna Haraway spoke about this back in 1985 in her *A Cyborg Manifesto* (Haraway, Donna. 2016 [1985]. *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late 20th Century*. University of Minnesota Press. Page, 6). For example, she writes that “a cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction” she continues to write that “the cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women’s experience in the late twentieth century. This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion”, emphasis added. So, then it could be that in this age of the digital, we are not singular Beings but a complex mix of things that seemingly disrupt the binary logic between bodies and objects.

So, we might be cyborgs or sentient Beings navigating between the digital world and the real world. In any case though, there is no doubt about this fictitious inorganic world we are somehow connected to. And, I deliberately say world here to note that this system we speak of is also socially constructed – albeit virtually, and otherwise worthless things are given power to dictate social norms and events. In a sense the two worlds reflect each other/ or they are rather two sides of the same coin. But, if we say that the digital world is a world then we, the real world’s darker skin people, must ask: could this world have been created with us in mind? Could it have been created to include us as its citizens with equal rights and liberties as everyone else? Are we free to join/ or rather free to access the liberties and possibilities of this world? Does access equate to citizenship? Are we citizens of this world? I think to answer these questions accurately we must be honest with ourselves. If we say reflect and tracing how the concept works (to embody, represent, to throw back light, heart or a sound without absorbing it, to bounce back or shine back) then we will find that historically the “real world” has not shown that it has the capacity to include us into its citizenry. Frank Wilderson puts it beautifully when he says that “we are in the world but not of the world”. If this is so, then the digital world, reflecting the real, cannot offer residence for us, other than to use us for its continuity.

against the vacuous content thrust upon us by algorithms and virality^{xxi} – which are often engineered to reinscribe coloniality^{xxii}. Virality is king! You must understand. Today’s content creators, or otherwise filmmakers, many a time bend themselves and curate their content for what is currently popular and trending, and often what the market desires. Their function, style and language. If you do not want your content to be de – monetized – if you are monetizing your content – you need to be “advertiser friendly”. This, for me, kills any revolutionary potential we might have hoped for in/with new media.

Yes, it is true that many of the films/ and or content on social media are without any political or revolutionary possibilities that guide and sustain them. The few and far between documentary films that are sustained by some political and revolutionary theoretical understanding are isolated by the popular and viral and by social media algorithms that are, first and foremost, market driven. As a Black person I do not find comfort in new media, because I know that even with this promise of access and democracy, I would still have to perform Black death to sustain both the worlds, and as we see, the possibilities are endless. So, the promise is not for me^{xxiii}.

By Way of Conclusion

I situate my area of study as Black thought (Black Studies). Lewis Gordon²⁸ describes this area of expertise as Africana philosophy, and he explains that by coining the term ‘philosophical

^{xxi} Social media sites like Facebook and YouTube tend to prioritize what users can see on their sites (feed) using algorithms and analytics – based on a variety of calculations, however, as Maria Petrescu and Anjala Krishen (in *The dilemma of social media algorithms and analytics*. 2020. J Market Anal) put it that the business model of social media is based on algorithms that encourage addiction.

^{xxii} There have been discussions on how social media algorithms and analytics tend to be biased against particular positions, ideas, and people. For example, the Netflix documentary film *Coded Bias* (2020) shows how online facial recognition algorithms are racially biased. Black people are essentially being written out of the digital world using complex algorithms. Also, Jonathan Schroeder in their study (*Reinscribing gender: social media, algorithms, bias*. 2020. Journal of Marketing Management) notes that social media algorithms and analytics exert a profound influence on how gender is experienced, processed, and recirculated in contemporary culture. The recirculation of this in social media tend to reinforce dualist, hierarchical notions of gender, argues Schroeder. I cite this study to show how algorithms and analytics did not fall from the sky but are socially created and mirror the realities of the world: misogyny, racial supremacy, ableism, anti-Blackness, etc. Nima Kordzadeh and Maryam Ghasemaghaei (*Algorithmic bias: review, synthesis, and future research directions*. 2021. European Journal of Information Systems) also show how bias is embedded within social media through algorithms and analytics. They argue that algorithmic systems on social media yield socially biased outcomes thereby compounding inequalities in society.

^{xxiii} My claim also argues along the theoretical lines made by Marshall McLuhan (in *Understanding Media*. 1964. McGraw – Hill) that the media are extensions of man (that is to say, Human) that mediate communication and that their structures affect how Humans perceive and understand the world around them.

anthropology'. He describes this as an "area of research that is central to the area of thought that is dedicated to the understanding of Beings whose Humanity has been called into question or challenged in the modern era". One of the key questions this inquiry is concerned with is: "what does it mean to be a Human Being?" As simple or trivial as this may sound, this question needs to be carefully investigated. At every turn the Black body is questioned, and we find it wanting, so the question of the Human cannot be left attended. In our philosophical anthropology or Black thought, we are interested in locating the Being of the Black or to put it differently, we are interested in a question, to use Fred Moten's words "whose necessity is so fundamental that it must be unasked – the question of the meaning of Black Being, the question of the meaning of (Black) things. We study in the sound of an unasked question. Our study is the sound of an unasked question. We study the sound of an unasked question"²⁹. This thesis sought to ask this unasked question.

It sometimes becomes difficult studying a problem if one is also a part of the problem. If one is the problem being investigated. The question being asked or unasked. How does one even begin to do that? It seems like an impossible task we are setting ourselves for. Be that as it may, I asked the unasked question nonetheless by primarily trying to explain the status of the Black image and the ways it is consumed. I did this through an investigation of the South African documentary film practice, particularly a set of filmmakers known for their 'oppositional' films working between 1976 and 1994, in hindsight, called the anti-Apartheid documentary film movement. I believe that this chosen period is a fertile ground for theorization and historicization.

Through my investigation I wanted to know exactly what are the rules that govern the structure of documentary film, as distinct from fiction film. We find through the thesis that the documentary film is possessed with the ethic of knowledge – to distinguish between truth and falsity, between fiction and non-fiction. And with this, the documentary film can easily be described as a discursive formation that cinematically frames a certain way of articulation. I try to trace the history of the documentary film to be able to see who is its privileged Subject, and we discover that the Subject of the documentary film is not, in fact, the Black. The Subject that the documentary film represents is properly articulated/positioned by/through language and signification, and through accepted forms of truths. What the documentary film does is to assume that the concept of Being is universal even to Blacks. What this does is to force a language and a mode of existence upon Blacks, which it fails.

Blackness constitutes ontological lack. Black people disarticulate the premises that undergird the conceptions of documentary film. We also see that this extends to the archive and how the documentary film is used as an archival project in post–Apartheid South Africa. We see how the documentary film/as an archive finds its proper expression as a site that mobilizes *historiographic metafiction*s that function to impose a constructed nature of meaning post 1994 South Africa. This, however, at the end fulfils the desire of the world for the compulsive need to perform Black death. Properly the representation (which is an impossibility) of Blacks in documentary film is a ritual of pleasure and psychic renewal for the world. There is no refuge in images for Blacks.

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