THE MINOR
ON THE MOVE

DOING COSMOPLITANISMS

edited by Kylie Crane, Lucy Gasser, Sara Morais dos Santos Bruss, Anna von Rath

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the terrific privileges we share, and upon which this volume is predicated.

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Contents

Practices **183**

Conclusion **249**

Table of Images

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1 The minor on the move: doing cosmopolitanisms – an introduction

by Kylie Crane, Lucy Gasser,
Sara Morais dos Santos Bruss, Anna von Rath

> Microorganisms are highly deceptive creatures. A virus, for example, seems weak by definition: it is classified as an obligate and its primary state is one of need. But a virus does not just hide inside its host like an animal seeking shelter in a cave, nor does it just hitch a ride in a cell and drop off elsewhere. A virus sneaks in and takes over. Some viruses, like Ebola, are effective because that takeover is so rapid and gruesome; but most of them, like the common cold, are powerful because they are relatively mild but ubiquitous.

Namwali Serpell, *The Old Drift* (360)

The virus described in Namwali Serpell's novel *The Old Drift* (2019) is HIV, an epidemic that has wrought a disproportionately large extent of its destruction on the African continent. In the novel, which is set in Zambia, local doctors compete with Chinese and US-American researchers to find a cure for the virus, as sex-workers are (ab)used as guinea pigs for testing vaccines. The way the novel grapples with the AIDS epidemic is embedded in a contextualisation of the forces that shaped its emergence, and international responses to it. Significantly, colonialism and the global divisions of power entrenched by it continue to determine the configuration of 'Others' whose lives are deemed less worth living and less worth saving. Post 2020, discussion of a virus evidently brings a different disease to mind, yet precisely the same concerns prove lingeringly relevant. Responses to the Covid-19 pandemic continue to be symptomatic of larger structures of inequality, giving new urgency to critical interventions that seek to tackle these systemic problems.

The chapters collected in this volume aim to contribute to such kinds of critical interventions by tackling the wide-ranging consequences of colonialism and its epistemologies. With a particular focus on transgressive practices and a multiplicity of positionalities, *The minor on the move: doing cosmopolitanisms* aims to articulate both a critique of structural inequality,

and possible itineraries for redress. As we write, in May 2020, many countries have been on lockdown for several weeks as a result of, and in efforts to further mitigate, the rapid spread of SARS-CoV-2. Since its appearance in late 2019 in China, this uninvited virus has quickly crossed national boundaries, affecting people worldwide. The pandemic confronts humans across the globe with fundamental ethical, economic, and political questions. Many of these questions are not new: Are some lives more dispensable than others? Are breaches of fundamental democratic principles acceptable in order to save lives? Can the economy be prioritized over human life? Is there value in, as Arundathi Roy once put it cynically, suffering and death in the name of "the greater common good" (Roy 1999)?

As scholars based in Germany, we write these introductory words in a world of daily shifts. Epidemiologists, virologists, and related specialists are busy addressing the pandemic scope of SARS-CoV-2. But the lasting effects the Coronavirus pandemic will have on economic, social, and environmental questions are—at this point—unforeseeable. As scholars of cultural and literary studies working within the field of postcolonial studies, together with political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, and art historians, what we have to offer is a critical engagement of the meaning-making practices of the present, and a call to heed what can be learnt from the past. This can help to foster fluency in recognising, as Serpell's novel crystallizes, what is at stake when French doctors suggest that a vaccine be tested in Africa (BBC 2020), and when Donald Trump attempts to racialize the virus as Chinese.

As we are concerned with framing the critique of structural inequalities this volume practices, it is important that we articulate the positionality of our authorial voice. The "we" of this introduction denotes a group of four researchers formerly affiliated with the Research Training Group (RTG) *minor cosmopolitanisms*, sponsored by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft or DFG) at the University of Potsdam in Germany. As (former) members of a publicly funded program within the framework of German academia, we operate from a structurally privileged position and within an elitist space. Access to such spaces is strongly dependent on cultural, economic, and social capital. In addition, as four women who are predominantly read as *white*, we are also beneficiaries of many of the structures of *white* supremacy that this volume seeks to problematize. While working within this system, and from these positions of privilege, we hope that this book will serve as a platform for critical reflections of hegemonic structures and provide possible pathways for practicing solidarity.

In an effort to provide space to a variety of voices, we turn to scholars, policymakers, practitioners, and activists working at the intersections

of academia with the political and social to envision ways of "doing" cosmopolitanisms. Sometimes, these ways of doing cosmopolitanism, and understandings of how best to practice solidarity, may clash with or contradict each other; they may give rise to painful incommensurabilities, and we must recognise that residues of conflicts also shape the world-making capacities of this kind of work.

The discussion the volume aims to foster is organised around four key concepts—cosmopolitanism, practices, the minor, and mobility—whose resonance and relevance have been augmented during the pandemic. Manifestations of these central themes are being played out on a global scale in real time, and we encounter diverse discursive practices scrambling to keep up with the speed of change. Discursive power finds manifestation in restrictions on mobility (or protests against them), in debates that somehow find it necessary to pit economic 'health' against that of humans (not just the elderly, but any number of minor positions that embody the risk of exposure in different ways). It is visible in shifts in practices in remarkable ways (where non-practices, such as not-moving, for instance, can become acts of solidarity), as well as in cosmopolitan habits of living and being in a(ny) shared common world.

The book presents insights into versions and variations of cosmopolitanism that challenge the historical model most commonly connected to upper-middle-class citizens of the world. We want to emphasize the importance of a nuanced understanding of cosmopolitanisms and its ability to tackle inequalities. It is exactly these inequalities that come into focus in Ruud Koopman's diagnosis of Corona as a cosmopolitan virus, as it renders long-existing social inequalities glaringly visible (Koopman 2020). Koopman suggests that highly mobile and elite cosmopolitans are most responsible for the fast spread of the virus, while it is less privileged and therefore often less mobile people who are hit hardest by its consequences, because access to healthcare and emergency aid is mediated in normative terms. To put it simply, #stayathome is difficult to maintain when there is no home to stay at, or when that home is abusive or falling apart.

Instances of global crises thus reveal and amplify historical inequalities and the existing forms of governance that sustain them. The urgency of the pandemic brought forth—for a moment—a recognition of whose backs social infrastructures are built on, as it appeared to amplify a discursive need for quick fixes and solutionism that leave us with more of the same. All of these discourses are mediated through words, images, videos, memes and other cultural texts, which illustrate practices of self-reflection and performance in a way that has allowed us to connect the indigence of the moment with more

17

general and historical imaginations of how things are put together. We don't know where the pandemic will lead us, but we can observe and reflect on prefigurations and partake in careful examinations of how the present speaks to historical privileges. The trajectories of cosmopolitanisms, practices, the minor and mobility are categorical divisions that have allowed us to make sense of such assemblings. And yet any order imposed by, or on, the written format will fall short of expressing the entanglements that the individual contributions open themselves up to.

Cosmopolitanisms, mobility, the minor, and practices

The cosmopolitanism of thinkers like Immanuel Kant has rightly been critiqued as fundamentally Eurocentric and elitist. However, the RTG *minor cosmopolitanisms*, under whose collaborative auspices the present volume came into being, departed from a conviction that the concept in its entirety should not be relinquished to the sole purview of such Eurocentric practitioners. As such, it sought to configure cosmopolitanisms in the plural and in a minor mode. The notion of cosmopolitanisms frames this volume and (re)appears as an underlying concept throughout. Gurminder Bhambra's contribution, reprinted from *The Ashgate Companion to Cosmopolitanism* (2011), starts the volume off with a chapter that speaks appositely to the need to provincialize cosmopolitanism through postcolonial critique.

While it is important to address the particular disadvantages of the poor, it is not correct to divide the world into "haves" who move and "havenots" who stay put (cf. Hannerz 2005: 206), as the various forms of movement addressed in the coming chapters demonstrate. We use the term mobilities as a means to reference movements, but with a particular eye to the movement of human bodies. We maintain a critical stance towards notions of globalisation as a world in permanent flow, as we recognise that not all bodies (human or otherwise) have access to the privileges of movement; and that movement is not per se positive. We argue that the wide variety of minor cosmopolitanisms—such as working-class cosmopolitanism, subaltern cosmopolitanism, discrepant cosmopolitanism, Afropolitanism, and others—add valuable perspectives to the debates of how human beings can and want to live together in this increasingly interconnected world.

At the same time, it is not just bodies that move, but also texts and ideas. Texts make different meanings when they travel, and these journeys are not always smooth. They may stumble, come up against obstacles that cannot be resolved, and make different meanings when they arrive, beyond, even contrary to, intentions and expectations. The variety of positions

encompassed in this volume speaks also to such bumpy journeys, and the contributions will be read differently in different contexts. Utopian hopes aside, some incompatabilities are not resolvable.

In the mobilities section, the authors address gatekeeping and/as archiving by thinking through collaborative and institutionalised practices that work to engender, or restrict, movement. The contributions ask: Who is allowed to move and who isn't; who does the allowing; and, significantly, how this mobility is monitored and controlled. Carly McLaughlin and Claudia Schippel's discussion takes up the mobility of 'cosmopolitan minors' in the sense of children on the move. Anouk Madörin examines technologies of mobility control and surveillance with the biometric archive of the European Border Regime. Moving to the Pacific, Lucy Gasser's contribution seeks to delineate the colonial narratives mobilized in the name of *white* supremacist terrorism. Mobilities entangle the world and lead to the interweaving of cultural practices, which Anna von Rath illustrates in her discussion of shweshwe fabric and the politics of cultural appropriation.

When looking at mobility as something that is controlled and often restricted, global power structures become glaringly visible. *White* supremacy and racism, which emerge from and entangle with coloniality, continue to structure which mobilities are deemed valuable and necessary on a global scale. The marginalized, or the minor, have always contributed to the building of worlds across the globe, also when these contributions took the shape of forced labour, slavery, and violence. It was thus precisely the mobility of bodies—turned into cargo—that allowed for the world to take shape as we know it now. Acknowledging this does not entail celebrating it, but rather understanding that violence can also be a productive force—it produces worlds, just as it destroys lives.

The next grouping of chapters thus comes together around the notion of the minor, which speaks to the condition of those historically marginalized, and has of late reverberated in assessments of whiteness as innocent, fragile, and thus entitled to its historical privileges. This section begins with Alana Lentin's contribution, which draws on a speech she previously gave on the occasion of 'Harmony Day' in Australia and speaks directly to structures of *white* supremacy and the discourses that seek to legitimate them in the Australian context in a call for *white* people to critically interrogate their own privilege. In an interview with Sara Morais dos Santos Bruss, Jaye Austin Williams articulates how anti-Blackness has shaped the world as it is today, arguing that the apocalypse is, for some, a continuous state of being. Mariya Nikolova extends on these in/visibilities of anti-Blackness by challenging Kathy Acker's position as an avantgardist feminist writer, arguing that this

position stems from problematic forms of appropriation. Jens Temmen looks at the autobiography of the Mescalero-Chiricahua leader Geronimo as an intervention into the narrative of US expansion.

Saumya Jaipuriar, in turn, takes her readers through the practices of Indian painter Manu Lal, with a view to construct a story of the life of an artist whose minor acts of subversion inscribed authorial presence into the company paintings for the Raj. This chapter hints at the entanglements of the minor with practices of self-elaboration, and it is to the question of practices that the last section of contributions turns its focus. By engaging a wide array of academic and activist practices, the volume enables a productive consideration of how artistic testimony interrogates the rewritings of history to promote what today can be called intersectional justice.

Moses März's delineation of his experiences mapping Édouard Glissant's politics of relation attends to the confluence of creative, scholarly, and political practices, as it resists clear-cut distinctions between them. As he outlines his own cosmopolitan practices of movement as a scholar, he speaks to the insights certain mobilites spark, and the difficulty of pinning down that which, in Glissant, claims a right to opacity. In her contribution, Irene Hilden grapples with how to confront the sensitive collection of colonial traces in Berlin's sound archive and looks to practices of collective listening as a way to collaboratively encounter the remnants of colonial epistemic violence. Turning to the Indian subcontinent, Madhurima Majumder and Sara Morais dos Santos Bruss look at the 2019 anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests to frame them in a larger historical perspective of intersectional feminism. The last chapter on practices looks explicitly at the praxis of doing intersectionality work, in an interview by Lucy Gasser and Anna von Rath with the founder of the Berlin-based Centre for Intersectional Justice, Emilia Roig.

Interspersed throughout the volume, and adorning its cover, are artworks by Sikho Siyotula. These form part of Siyotula's ongoing project of creatively visualising 'usable' African histories, by reimagining the colonial archeological visual archive of Southern African Late Iron Age settlements. In stark contradiction to the colonial myth of terra nullius, the settlements that Siyotula investigates, such as those at Mapungubwe, Khami, Great Zimbabwe and Bokoni, are evidence of complex pre-colonial societies. Her artistic interventions draw attention to the cultural politics of representation.

The focus on the minor and on politics at the 'small-scale', at the level of everyday practices, becomes all the more significant when frustration at a failure to manifest elitist cosmopolitan ideals is strongest. In this volume, we

thus aim to explore where and how academic concerns are manifested through various forms of practice. We turn to scholars, policymakers, practitioners, and activists working at the intersections of academia and politics to envision what "doing" minor cosmopolitanisms might look like. Dirk Wiemann and Lars Eckstein's chapter returns to discussions of cosmopolitan practices and the contemporary presence of COVID-19 in their discussion of the cancelled performance of an Amazonian adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*: Tracing the multiple struggles and myriad political stances inherent to the staging-that-wasn't, Wiemann and Eckstein reckon with anti-cosmopolitan stances and those stages that are afforded to minor positions in the face of moving politics.

Alternative reading constellations

The contributions in this volume were written by fellows, friends and associates of *minor cosmopolitanisms*. Our collective positions are undeniably privileged, even as such privilege maps across the (biographies of the) contributors in decidedly different ways. The contributions themselves encompass heterogeneous positionalities and positions, which are necessarily diverse and sometimes incompatible. This speaks to a heterogeneity we hope to cultivate and foster, but which also, necessarily, leaves some issues unresolved. Some of the friction that ensues when ideas cross contexts will generate responses and ideas, and sometimes that which is left unresolved will be read as a provocation. These are the risks of international, interdisciplinary, and intercontextual exchange. One attempt to see through such contradictions in the final volume is the use of different Englishes, in an effort to render some of the residuals of the variety of disciplinary and biographical backgrounds visible. Combining academic chapters with interviews and artistic interventions, the volume aims not to provide a comprehensive and definitive answer to the world's problems, but rather offers a collection of approximations, deliberations, (re)visions, and particular—embodied, situated, contextualisable—positions. The contributions work towards practices of the collective, questions of intersectional reparations and (re)imagined spaces, performing interventions into the colonial, imperial, patriarchal legacies that have shaped ways of being in the world.

The organisation of chapters into sections, corresponding to the key terms of the project and its title, presents just one reading constellation. We would like you, our reader, to think of our table of contents as a suggestion rather

than a prescription. There are numerous connections and paths between the contributions, which could be more productive, effective, or simply salient.

All of the contributions—all of the work done within, around, and through the minor cosmopolitanisms framework—can be characterized as post- if not de-colonial. Within the broader sphere of post- and decolonial studies, certain thematic resonances emerge across contributions which lend themselves to alternative organising principles. Issues of representation, specifically self-representation—speaking as rather than speaking for—find specific articulation, for instance, in Jens Temmen's and Saumya Jaipuriar's contributions. These politics of 'voice' fold back, with substantial creases, to the contributions by Lucy Gasser and Mariya Nikolova, which are concerned with the repercussions of imagined solidarities thought along the lines of race. While the latter collects emancipatory negotiations of (self-)representation, their juxtaposition with the former violent, colonially-inflected practices produces what we hope can be a productive tension with regard to issues of representation. Self-representation as practiced in scholarly-activist work, specifically in terms of authorial positioning, or the care taken to articulate the author's own stakes in research and other practices, is a concern that recurs also in the contributions of Moses März, Irene Hilden and Anna von Rath. In März's contribution, it forms part of an ongoing mapping of the author's own artistic-activist-scholarly practice. In Hilden's, it is the attempt to grapple with sensitive archival collections through collaborative practices of listening. In von Rath's chapter, it is an exploration of where and how personal realisations are connected to larger political concerns.

A further theme central to post- and de-colonial studies that finds articulation in our table of contents—mobilities—has been employed there as if it were synonymous with (human) migration. As outlined above, the contributions gathered under this rubric address the shifts and limits of human movement and settlement. Understood more broadly, mobilities furnish different ways of bringing together (and setting apart) some of the contributions: Thinking of mobilities as archives—of moving matter—brings together Irene Hilden's contribution with Saumya Jaipuriar's; thinking of mobilities in terms of mobilizing affect, or as transnational solidarities, brings Madhurima Majumder and Sara Morais dos Santos Bruss' contribution into dialogue with Emilia Roig's. Mobilities as racially determined and determining also come to the fore in the way colonial narratives travel as suggested by Lucy Gasser's, Alana Lentin's and Jens Temmen's contributions. Finally, thinking through mobilities in the sense of mobilizing responses, following from mobilizing affect, we can bring together those contributions that engage specifically with creative practices, and thus set the initial key

terms of mobilities and practices into direct conversation with each other: Anouk Mädorin's deliberations on selfies, Moses März's map-making, and, crucially, Sikho Siyotula's images—an essentially transversal contribution from the start.

We must acknowledge the limitations to the multiplicity entailed in this volume, as there are certainly issues it fails to address. Returning to the implications of the Coronavirus, its oft-cited comparison with the Spanish flu or the bubonic plague of the 14th century does not halt at the racial implications of attaching the source of the illness to a certain nationality. Then and now, the evocation of well-poisoning as the source of the illness incited violence against Jews, whom antisemitic conspiracy theories sought to frame as responsible for the sudden and inexplicable deaths sweeping through Europe. In the early months of the Coronavirus, a surge of theories arose claiming that Jews or Israel had manufactured the virus to advance global control. The worryingly broad acceptance of Corona conspiracy theories, amongst them those that demonise figures like George Soros and which are evidently embedded in broader antisemitic discourses, seems, troublingly, to indicate that what can be read as emancipatory for one group—finding a voice and critiquing the state—may very well propose an act of violence upon another.

While it may be legitimate to produce knowledge upon the desolate state of health systems and critique state responses to the pandemic, the ease with which right wing populism could instrumentalise the virus as propaganda should give us pause—as it gives us cause to consider our own complicities and limitations in tackling the complex ways in which violences intersect. Putting together this volume has thus also become a conversation on knowledge gaps that we hope to continue to find opportunities to address and learn from, as uncomfortable as it may be.

The fruitfulness of these convivial encounters lies in the willingness to engage with differences and in accepting the challenges this might entail—including conflicts, hurt feelings and misunderstandings. We are thankful for sustained conversations and collaboration that make us acutely aware of sometimes insurmountable differences as much as they allow us to find unexpected connections and similarities. While friends, enemies and alliances tend to shift, for Francis Nyamnjoh, conviviality in scholarship "recognizes the deep power of collective imagination and the importance of interconnections and nuanced complexities" (2015, 268). Taking this as the conceptual setting for our work—for encounters with differences—we intentionally centre the incomplete in an attempt to subvert the violence and

control that can emerge from ideas both of completion and lack. We invite readers to become part of these conversations.

The work of minor cosmopolitanisms, finally, is to decenter European, or 'major', traditions of thinking, particularly as pertains to ideas and ideals of cosmopolitanism. Together the contributions in this collection form an argument for the deep power of collective imagination, the importance of interconnections and an awareness for positionalities as well as the complexities and entanglements of the contemporary world.

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2 Cosmopolitanism and postcolonial critique
by Gurminder K. Bhambra

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Introduction

The paradigms of postcolonialism and cosmopolitanism have emerged in recent times offering different responses to similar questions, the most pertinent, perhaps, being: how do we, with our manifest differences, live together in the world?[1] While the two approaches have been articulated and elaborated in a number of disciplines, my concern in this chapter is with their sociological expression in the context of a global world. In work spanning the first decade of the twenty-first century, Ulrich Beck (2000, 2006) has argued that a cosmopolitan approach is necessary to engage critically with globalization. As such, cosmopolitanism, for him, is defined explicitly in terms of a global world society, separate and distinct from the age of nation-states which preceded it (and which gave rise to the intellectual tradition of cosmopolitanism he uses).

Globalization has often been regarded as a synonym for modernization or Westernization and so it is not surprising that ideas of the global have similarly been equated with the modern West. In recent years, modernization theory, with its assumption of global convergence to an explicitly Western model, has been supplanted by the approach of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2000). Within this theory, the modern is understood as encompassing divergent paths, with the diversity of cultures in the world giving rise to a multiplicity of modernities. Beck (2006) allies his version of cosmopolitanism with the global understood as multiple modernities and so cosmopolitanism confronts the modern world as, potentially, a multicultural world. This raises the question of cosmopolitanism's relation to multiculturalism.

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1   The literature on both postcolonialism and cosmopolitanism is vast. As an indicative guide, see Bhabha (1994), Gutmann (1994), Nussbaum (1996), Loomba (1998), Vertovec and Cohen (2002), Fine (2007).

In what follows, I shall I take issue with Beck's cosmopolitanism because of its inability to deal with issues raised by a multicultural world deriving from a 'Eurocentric' definition of the cosmopolitan[2]. He is not alone in his 'Eurocentric' definition of cosmopolitanism; in fact, in this regard, as we shall see, he is typical rather than unusual. However, what does make his work distinctive is that he places his argument in the context of an embrace of the idea of 'multiple modernities' and in criticism of 'multiculturalism', both of which are central to my concerns. If we can now understand dominant approaches as Eurocentric, it is because of new voices emerging in wider political arenas and in the academy itself, which might now be regarded as beginning to emerge as a 'multicultural' space. More specifically, I argue that postcolonial scholarship, with its critique of Eurocentrism in particular, provides more adequate resources for making sense of our contemporary world (Bhambra 2007a). The demise of colonialism as an explicit political formation has given rise to understandings of postcoloniality and, perhaps ironically, an increased recognition of the role of colonialism in the formation of the modern world and its associated concepts. Scholars such as Homi Bhabha (1994) and Walter Mignolo (2000) argue for the necessity of postcolonial or decolonial understandings as integral to the opening out and questioning of the assumptions of these dominant discourses. Such recognition, I suggest, is not present in most contemporary discourses on cosmopolitanism; what is required instead is a form of provincialized cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitan Eurocentrism?

What appears striking in not just the sociological, but also the wider academic literature on cosmopolitanism, is the extent to which 'being cosmopolitan' (as a practice) is associated with being *in* the West and cosmopolitanism (as an idea) is seen as being *of* the West[3]. As will be discussed later in this chapter, by writing out the wider contexts within which ideas and practices are located, a particular cultural homogeneity is assumed and this becomes a standard of universal significance. Anthony Pagden, for example, writes:

> it is hard to see how any form of "cosmopolitanism" can be made to address the difficulties of the modern world if it does not in some sense begin where Kant [and the Stoics] … began, that is with some vision of a community of

2   The terms 'Europe' or 'Eurocentric' are used in this chapter as continuous with central aspects of North American social and political undertakings.

3   This section is informed by arguments made in Bhambra (2010).

"the wise" whose views must in the end triumph … In the modern world it is
equally hard to see, at least in the immediate future, that those views can be
anything other than the reflection of the values of western liberal democracies.
(19)

With this, Pagden asserts the origin of 'cosmopolitanism'—both as idea
and as practice—in the history of what he claims as European, or, more
generally, Western thought and draws a direct link between that history
and our present—again, here, in the West. This is a parochial reading of
cosmopolitanism which betrays the very ideals that the concept expresses.
The issues with the claims made here are twofold. First, there is a refusal
to acknowledge that there have been cosmopolitan practices and the
development of cosmopolitan ideas in other parts of the world outside of
European contact, in relation to European contact, and not subordinate to
it (see, for example, Bhabha 1994, Pollock *et al* 2000). Second, there is no
engagement with the problematic tension brought to the fore when we (*if,
we*) address contemporaneous European domination over much of the world
as the very real negation of the idea and ideals of cosmopolitanism otherwise
put forward.

Even scholars critical of the standard forms of cosmopolitanism as expressed
by Pagden, often remain circumscribed to a particular geographical territory
and intellectual tradition in their exposition of a critical cosmopolitanism.
Muthu (2003), for example, develops a sustained argument for 'Enlightenment
against Empire', the title of his monograph, in which he uses the relatively
lesser known (or 'underappreciated') resources of Enlightenment thinkers
to elucidate the largely unacknowledged anti-imperialist strand within
their philosophies of cosmopolitanism. Fine, in turn, presents a critical
engagement with modern cosmopolitanism and seeks to reinstate it within
the tradition of *social* theory as distinct from the natural law tradition from
which it is said to emanate (2007, 133-34).

Yet, while opening up the space to consider the standard histories of
cosmopolitanism differently, these histories also reproduce what it is that
they are counter to and, in many cases, what *is* reproduced—even in the
work of scholars who may not wish consciously to do so—is a European
genealogy. It is not that forms of universalism are peculiar to Europe, but
that Europe seems to have real difficulties with the universalism it espouses.
While scholars argue for the universalism of what are assumed to be European
categories, they then rarely acknowledge the processes through which that
universalization is enacted, processes of colonization and imperialism
for the most part. Nor do they address the forms of cosmopolitanism that

have emerged in non-European contexts. As a consequence, they limit the possibility of cosmopolitanism properly to be understood 'cosmopolitan-ly'.

From Modernization to (Cosmopolitan) Multiple Modernities

Beck's (2000; 2006) argument for a cosmopolitan approach is based on his critique of the contemporary state of the social sciences. He argues that disciplines such as sociology and political science have been historically bound to nation-states in their emergence and development such that they are no longer adequate to the task of dealing with the problems and processes that emerge at the level of the 'global' world that is now increasingly our common fate. He highlights the increasing number of social processes that are no longer contained within national boundaries and suggests that, as a consequence, 'world society' should now be the starting point of sociological and other research. His argument is based on a perceived transition from a process of singular 'modernization' to one giving rise to co-existing 'multiple modernities'. This shift is understood by Beck as a shift from the first age of modernity—that is, one shaped by nation-states—to a second, global cosmopolitan, age.

Increasing recognition of the global context of sociology is evident in recent arguments against the supposed methodological nationalism of the past (although, see Chernilo 2007, for a qualification of this interpretation applied to past sociological discourse). This view is supported by a shift within sociology more generally towards the paradigm of multiple modernities as a more adequate frame within which to understand global, and globalizing, processes. Key to this development has been the work of Shmuel Eisenstadt (2000, 2001) in conjunction with a core group of European historical sociologists such as Johann Arnason (2000; 2003), Bjorn Wittrock (1998) and Peter Wagner (2001)[4]. In essence, they have argued that the problem with earlier modernization theory was that it understood modernization as a singular, uni-directional process that emerged in the West and, in its diffusion globally, brought other societies and cultures into line with its own presuppositions. Modernization was believed to have initiated a process of convergence and homogenization globally such that the rest of the world would, one day, become modernized, that is, Westernized. However, towards

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4   See the two special issues of *Daedalus:* 'Early Modernities', *Daedalus* 127 (1998) and 'Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus* 129 (2000). For further details on the sociological debates on modernization and the shift to multiple modernities, see chapter 3 of my *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination.*

the latter part of the twentieth century there has been a growing realization that modernization was not coming to pass as had been expected in the heyday of modernization theory (Eisenstadt and Schluchter 1998).

The emergence of multiple modernities, then, came in the context of scholars beginning to appreciate that the differences manifest in the world were not, as had previously been believed, simply archaic differences that would disappear through gradual modernization. Instead, there is an appreciation that societies could modernize differently and that these differences, for theorists of multiple modernity, now represented the different ways in which societies adapted to processes of modernization. There was still a belief that modernity was, in its origins, a European phenomenon, but now, the argument is that in its diffusion outwards it interacted with the different traditions of different cultures and societies and brought into being a multiplicity of modernities. These modernities are defined in terms of a central institutional core that was taken from the European experience and the particular cultural inflections of that core as it was interpreted through the cultures present in other places. Beck concurs with this analysis by arguing that "the Western claim to a monopoly on modernity is broken and the history and situation of diverging modernities in all parts of the world come into view" (2000, 87). The global age, then, is necessarily perceived as being a *multicultural* age, given that multiple modernities are said to be the expression of cultural differences.

Beck (2006) follows the multiple modernities paradigm in its general analysis, but his call for a *second age* of modernity, and what follows from this, is distinct and, I will argue, contradictory. In this age, he argues, not only is modernity now multiple, but the concepts which had been in use in developing sociological understandings in the first age are no longer adequate to the task. This is primarily a consequence of the fact that the standard concepts of the social sciences, according to Beck, were developed to understand a world of nation-states and now that we are in a global world, these concepts are no longer appropriate. What is needed is a new set of categories and concepts that would emerge from reflection upon this new cosmopolitan second age of modernity. While I have also argued that sociological concepts are inappropriately bounded—specifically, that they are 'methodologically Eurocentric',[5] rather than methodological nationalistic— this is not something that is *only now* becoming problematic as a supposedly 'first modernity' has given way to a contemporary now-globalized world.

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5   I owe the coining of this term to Peo Hansen.

Such an approach, I suggest, is as limited as the state-centered approaches under criticism as it is based on the idea that the concepts of the first age of modernity were appropriate to that age and that the only problem is with the application of those concepts to the present and the future (for discussion, see Chernilo 2007; Fine 2007). At a minimum, however, the 'first age of modernity' is as much characterized by empires as by nation-states and so the concepts of that age would be, by that token, as inadequate in their own time as they are claimed to be today. There is little acknowledgement in Beck's work that if certain understandings are seen as problematic today then there is also an issue of whether they were not also problematic in the past and have, in fact, led to misunderstandings of the nature of the present in terms of how it has arisen from that past (for discussion, see Holmwood 1997). As such, the concepts of first age modernity require a more thorough overhaul than Beck proposes in his simple shift to a cosmopolitan second age.

Another significant problem with Beck's call for more appropriate sociological concepts is that his version of cosmopolitanism is at odds with the global age he describes. To the extent that multiple modernities, as the contemporary condition of the global world, are predicated on cultural inflections of modernity, then the world has to be understood as a multicultural world. Beck's version of cosmopolitanism, however, is set out in both explicit and implicit opposition, if not downright hostility, to understandings of multiculturalism. These issues will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

Cosmopolitanism and Multiculturalism

While Beck argues for the singular Western claim on modernity to have been broken and suggests that it is necessary to engage with divergent modernities, the place of Others within his new cosmopolitan paradigm is not straightforward. Cosmopolitanism, for him (Beck and Grande 2007), is something if not already achieved in Europe, is nonetheless defined by the European experience. Its intellectual genealogy is seen to be European as is its political practice. In particular, Beck (2003) argues that the project of a 'peace-loving' Europe, which emerged in the wake of the Second World War, was a cosmopolitan project and one that was the political antithesis of the destructive nationalism that had culminated in the Holocaust. Europe, he suggests, was now to be "motivated by clear ideas of inviolable human dignity, and of the moral duty to relieve the suffering of others" (Beck 2003, np). This duty appears not to apply, however, when those Others exist outside

of commonly acknowledged European frontiers, or commonly accepted understandings of "being European" (see Weber 1995; Ehrkamp and Leitner 2003; Saharso 2007). Quite apart from other anti-colonial struggles involving European states, as Hansen argues, not even a war fought *within Europe*—the Algerian-French War, 1954-62, which resulted in the deaths of over a million people and engaged approximately half a million French troops—"has been able to impinge on the notion of European integration as a symbol of peace" (2002, 488); or as a symbol of cosmopolitanism in practice.

In the contemporary context, there appears to be little recognition of the potential discrimination against those subject to the face veil ban being proposed in France and other European countries (see BBC 2010). What purchase does the idea of 'Europe' and its supposedly distinctive civic traditions have on cosmopolitanism when a number of states seek to repress the exercise of religious freedom of some of its citizens through an over-zealous attention to the clothes that women choose to wear? The political debates regarding "banning the burkha" (see Saharso 2007), call into question the depth of the cosmopolitan commitment within Europe that is otherwise, for Beck, seen to be one of its defining features. The issue, as I will go on to suggest, is that Beck's cosmopolitanism is a cosmopolitanism of similarly constituted individuals that is unable to accommodate Others within its conceptual or political frameworks. In fact, Beck addresses the issue of multiculturalism by pointing to its inherent incompatibility with the idea of cosmopolitanism.[6] He sets up the difference between the two in the following terms.

Multiculturalism, according to Beck, asserts a world of variety and plurality while at the same time presenting humanity as a collectivity divided on cultural grounds. Individuals within this conception, he continues, are seen as the product of their own languages, traditions, customs, and landscapes and have an attachment to their homeland which "is regarded as a closed, self-sufficient and sacrosanct unity" (2002, 36-7). This entails a defense of that homeland "naturally" against imperialism, but also, he suggests, against "miscegenation, internationalization, and cosmopolitanism" (2002, 37)[7]. This then leads to the conclusion, again without any substantiation,

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6   For a discussion of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, see Stevenson (2002); see also Gutmann (1994).

7   This attribution is ironic not least because the term 'cosmopolitan' was used in European discourse to indicate the 'de-racinated' foreigner—frequently, the 'Jew'—whose allegiance to national state formations and political communities could not be guaranteed.

that "multiculturalism is at loggerheads with individualization" and that, within multiculturalism, "the individual does not exist", being simply an "epiphenomenon of his culture" (2002, 37). Cosmopolitanism, however, Beck suggests, "argues the reverse and *presuppose*s individualization" (2002, 37). However, Beck does not elaborate on how a cosmopolitanism of individuals is accommodated within a vision of the world as otherwise structured by different cultures. The concept of "multiple modernities", as suggested earlier, expresses a form of global multiculturalism; cosmopolitanism, then, must also be a cultural issue, and one that, for Beck, is the expression of European culture. In this way, Beck's cosmopolitan version of multiple modernities is more thorough-going in its Eurocentrism than the simple version embodied in multiple modernities.

In a subsequent article, Beck and Grande develop the cosmopolitan perspective by arguing that "it is vital to perceive others [both] as different and as the same", but without lapsing into postmodern particularism (2007, 71). In other words, the active cosmopolitan tolerance of Others has to be balanced by "a certain amount of commonly shared universal norms" (Beck and Grande 2007, 71). It is this, they suggest, that enables cosmopolitanism "to regulate its dealings with otherness so as not *to endanger the integrity of a community*" (2007, 71, emphasis added). Where cosmopolitanism had initially been defined, against multiculturalism, as being presupposed by the individual, it is now being defended as an expression of a particular community *threatened* by others. As Beck and Grande go on to argue, "the *legitimate* interests of others" ought to be taken into consideration in the "calculation of one's own interests" (2007, 71, emphasis added), but there is little discussion on what basis 'legitimacy' is to be established or how those Others are constituted separately from oneself in a way different than within the premises of multiculturalism. What is clear is that the prescription for a cosmopolitan Europe 'united in diversity' takes little account of the diversity within Europe as constituted by its minorities within states.[8]

Beck's failure to address the place of Others internal to Europe—except obliquely, as mentioned, via a reference to "cosmopolitan society and its enemies" (2002)—is exacerbated by the way in which he discusses the issue of Others explicitly seen as external to Europe and the West. Not only does he not recognize cosmopolitanism as also having a provenance beyond the European intellectual tradition, he is loath to discuss cosmopolitan practices

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8   The problematic place of Turkey within a cosmopolitan Europe is another issue within this debate. For discussion, see Ahiska (2003), Baban and Keyman (2008) and Parker (2009).

in other places. Engagement with Others, in this new cosmopolitan age, seems to follow a pattern also prevalent in the previous age: condescension. This is nowhere better illustrated than in Beck's statement that: "the West should listen to non-Western countries *when they have something to say* about the following experiences" (2000, 89, my emphasis)[9]. He then lists four main themes: (1) the possibilities for coexistence in multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multicultural societies; (2) the question of tolerance in a confined space where cultural differences are prone to lead to violence; (3) "highly developed" legal and judicial pluralism in non-Western countries (his use of scare quotes); (4) experience of dealing with multiple sovereignties (such as are a consequence of empire, although this word is not used). The implication is that, when non-Western countries are not speaking about these issues, it is not necessary for the West to listen. This appears to be less a form of cosmopolitan engagement, new and distinct from the nation-state hierarchies of the first age, and more like 'business as usual'.

Beyond the simple arrogance of listing areas where 'we' should listen to 'them', there is also much to comment on in the substance of the list itself. Not least, the aspect that the West and the non-West are presented as two internally homogenous blocs confronting each other as 'actors' in a world that is not recognized to have been structured by historically constituted hierarchical relations. Beck's (2002) argument that he is not interested in the memory of the global past but simply in how a vision of a cosmopolitan future could have an impact on the politics of the present is disingenuous at best. He appears to think that it is possible simply to discuss "the present implications of a globally shaped future" (2002, 27) without addressing the legacies of the past on the shaping of the present. He simply brushes away the historically inherited inequalities arising from the legacies of European imperialism and slavery and moves on to imagine a world separate from the resolution of these inequalities. Any theory that seeks to address the question of 'how we live in the world' cannot treat as irrelevant the historical construction of that world (for discussion, see Trouillot 1995).

Beck (2000, 89) continues to ignore the presence of Others on the global stage with his assumption that the European "social settlement" presents the apex of negotiating the contradictions of the modern world order. There is little discussion of other constructions of social solidarity that have existed such as the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) which, as Shilliam argues, "stretched across 800 chapters in 40 countries on four

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9   The following paragraphs in this section are informed by arguments made in Bhambra (2010).

continents" (2006, 379). Further, where there is some acknowledgment of 'development' in other places it is relativized through the use of scare quotes. The implication is that legal and judicial pluralism is only necessary in otherwise complex and developed Western societies because of the migration of populations to them from places that have such pluralism due to the presence of ethnic and religious differences (for discussion, see Amin 2004). This is then compounded by Beck's subsequent list of areas in which the West is "beginning to adopt non-Western standards of reality and normality *which do not bode well*" (2000, 89, my emphasis). Presumably, the point is that they do not bode well *for the West* since, in his own terms, they are the everyday conditions of existence for the non-West—on which there is no comment. In particular, Beck identifies the de-regulation of the labour market in the West as leading to the "abandonment of the co-operatively organized employee society that froze the class conflict between work and capital" (2000, 89). This is an expression of methodological nationalism, given that he does not comment on the conditions of the international division of labour, and the hierarchies between the global north and south, which were themselves a condition of this 'frozen' settlement[10].

In another, again un-reflexive, example, Beck uses the image of a sand-pit to address the current world situation. He argues that the first age of modernity involved capital, labour and state "making sand cakes in the sandpit", (where the sand pit is the national community) and attempting "to knock the other's sand cake off the spade in accordance with the rules of institutionalized conflict" (2000, 89). The situation in the second age of modernity is akin to business having been given a mechanical digger which is being used to empty out the whole sandpit (2000, 89). The metaphor is peculiarly inept, given the association of infancy with the sandpit and the use of adult-child metaphors to understand colonial relations and responsibilities from a Western perspective. What is clear is that Beck's construction is itself an example of the methodological nationalism he opposes. He appears ignorant of the processes of colonialism, imperialism, and slavery, which 'emptied out' from the sand pit of the colonized, not only mineral resources, but also human bodies, and did so not according to "rules of institutionalized conflict", but through naked appropriation.

In one rare attempt to address the issue of cosmopolitanism "from below", Beck substitutes the term "transnationality" for cosmopolitanism and

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10 For a discussion of the development of the UK welfare state in the context of the 'postcolonial' demise of a system of Commonwealth preferences and re-orientation to the EU, see Holmwood (2000).

writes that this "characterizes not only the globalization elites, but the poor exploited immigrants as well. They are treated as 'excluded others' in the United States, but Haitians, Filipino or Indian immigrants are at the same time active in sustaining 'their' households overseas *and* engaging in political struggles against corrupt regimes" back home (2002, 33; emphasis in original). While Beck does not say 'back home' this is the clear implication at the end of that sentence (in that I don't think he means corrupt regimes in the 'West'); his emphasis on "and" is also telling—the implication being that it should be of some surprise that these immigrants can be active in sustaining households overseas (as opposed to "back home") as well as engaging in politics elsewhere. His refusal to ascribe the notion of "cosmopolitanism" to the "poor exploited immigrants" makes them "excluded Others" from his framework and locates them in nationalistic particularity without providing any information on why this must be the case. Further, there is little explanation about what makes global elites specifically *cosmopolitan* while these immigrants are only *transnational*. Beck's patronizing attitude towards these "poor immigrants" continues a few lines along when he says that: "it is not only the global players who are learning the de-territorialized game of power and putting it to the test, but also some *ethnic minorities*" (2002, 33). "Global players" are not, in Beck's understanding, "ethnic minorities" and "ethnic minorities" are not "global players"; the Eurocentrism implicit in the identification of "global players" is apparent.

Beck's (2000; 2006) argument for cosmopolitanism is part of a long line of social theory that takes Western perspectives as the focus of global processes, and Europe as the origin of a modernity which is subsequently globalized, whether in convergent or divergent forms. Beck's cosmopolitanism is not a cosmopolitanism inclusive of Others who, in his terms, are different in some potentially radical way. He is not interested in what he can learn from them in their own terms.

Cosmopolitanism Provincialized

A "provincialized" cosmopolitanism, as Pollock *et al* (2000) argue, would be made up of dialogues among a series of local perspectives on cosmopolitanism, with no unifying centre. If, as they argue, we were to take cosmopolitanism as *a way of looking at the world,* this would require us to take the perspective *of the world* in our considerations; that is, we would need to be cosmopolitan in our very practices in understanding what it was and is, to be cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitanism, as a sociological or historical category, they continue, should be considered as open and not pre-given in

form or content: it "is not some known entity existing in the world, with a clear genealogy from the Stoics to Immanuel Kant, that simply awaits more detailed description at the hands of scholarship" (2000, 577). Rather, they suggest, we should look at "how people have thought and acted beyond the local" (2000, 586) in different places and across time to generate new descriptions of cosmopolitanism[11]. These would suggest new practices, which in turn "may offer a better understanding of the theory and history of cosmopolitanism" (2000, 578).

The primary argument made by Pollock and others is that the very phenomenon of cosmopolitanism is threatened by the work of purification that insists on regarding it as the product of one culture, emerging from a center and diffusing outwards. If we wish an inclusive cosmopolitanism, it would have to be one outside a centred universalism. Mignolo, in putting forward an argument for a "critical cosmopolitanism", similarly argues against the idea of a "cosmopolitanism that only connects from the centre of the large circle outwards" (2000, 745). His argument for decolonial understandings resonates with Chakrabarty's (2000) call to provincialize Europe, that is, to decentre Europe in our considerations. At the same time, we would need to recognize contributions made in connections of which Europe had no part, as well as connections suppressed in representing the history of European uniqueness. Contra Pagden (2000), we do need to think of cosmopolitanism as something other than the values emerging from a reflection on western liberal democracy (though, this is not to say that there is nothing to be learned from such reflection). The task now is a provincialized cosmopolitanism that can learn from others where we recognize that what they contribute is *not a confirmation of what we already know*, but the bringing into being of new understandings relevant to the worlds we inhabit together. These new understandings both reconfigure our existing perceptions *of the world,* as well as inform the ways in which we live *in the world*.

Some of what is required is captured in Homi Bhabha's earlier work on postcolonialism. The starting point for Bhabha's (1994) explication of postcolonial theory is a history adequate to the political conditions of the present. Those conditions are not simply informed by understandings of 'globalization', but more specifically by an understanding of the postcolonial

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11 See Lamont and Aksartova (2002) for one example in which this has been successfully undertaken. Acknowledging that much of the literature on cosmopolitanism is either implicitly or explicitly associated with elites, they seek "to explore ordinary cosmopolitanisms, defined as the strategies used by ordinary people to bridge boundaries with people who are different from them" (2002, 1).

global conditions which are rarely the starting point for sociological analyses (see Bhambra 2007b). As Seidman remarks, sociology's emergence coincided with the high point of Western imperialism, and yet "the dynamics of empire were not incorporated into the basic categories, models of explanation, and narratives of social development of the classical sociologists" (1996, 314). The potential contribution to the sociological paradigm of events outside the west (and the experiences of non-Western 'others') has not often been considered (see Chakrabarty 2000; Bhambra, 2007a). This is, in part, a consequence of the erasures that are implicit when the remit of sociology is understood to be 'modern societies'—that is, societies engaged in processes of modernization—where the 'postcolonial' is necessarily associated with 'pre-modern' societies, societies that have traditionally fallen to anthropology, or to the interdisciplinary area of development studies. The association of cosmopolitanism with an intellectual genealogy that begins with the ancient Greeks and is located in the modern West similarly prevents any meaningful discussion of cosmopolitanism in a postcolonial context. As Bhabha argues, however, shifting the frame through which we view the events of "modernity", or cosmopolitanism, forces us to consider the question of subaltern agency and ask: "what is this "now" of modernity? Who defines this present from which we speak?" (1994: 244).

This is not a version of multiple modernities, in that it does not offer an alternative other modernity to be placed alongside those already seen to be existing. Rather, it calls on us to interrogate the conceptual paradigm of modernity, as it has commonly been understood, from the perspectives of those Others usually relegated to the margins, if included at all. These Others, constituted "otherwise than modernity" Bhabha argues, exist both in the global south and the global north (1994, 6). Their perspectives are now taken to be central to understanding modernity conceptually. The task, as Bhabha puts it, is to take responsibility for the unspoken, unrepresented pasts within our cosmopolitan present and, in their renewal, to interrupt, refigure, and re-create present understandings adequate to that past (1994, 7). One aspect of this would be for the metropolitan centres of the West to confront their postcolonial histories whereby the "influx of postwar migrants and refugees" would be constituted as part of "an indigenous or native narrative *internal to [their] national identity*" (1994, 6 emphasis added; see also Amin 2004).

It is not only by movement across 'borders' that migrants might be argued to express cosmopolitanism, but also in their very understanding of how those borders came to be constituted and their involvement in reconceptualizing understandings of citizenship and belonging, that is, as cosmopolitan

subjects within nation-state boundaries[12]. This reconsideration of modernity does not relegate difference simply to cultural expression but calls upon that difference to make a difference to the narratives already in place.

For Bhabha, as for Edward Said (1978) before him, the social expression of "difference" is to be contextualized with the historical "emergence of community envisaged as a project", that is "at once a vision and a construction" (1994, 3). As such, the question of difference is not to be addressed simply through its multiple expressions, but by problematizing "the unity of the "us" and the otherness of the "other"' that *produces* these differences in an interconnected and interdependent world" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 14). This is to be understood not in terms of a community of individuals who happen perchance to live in an age of cosmopolitanism—that is, individuals who, in Beck's terms exemplify the cosmopolitan age because they "shop internationally, work internationally, love internationally, marry internationally, research internationally, grow up and are educated internationally (that is, multi-lingually), live and think transnationally" (2000, 80). Rather, they are a cosmopolitan community because of the postcolonial history that brought them into being—they are economic and other migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, temporary workers. Their cosmopolitanism is inextricably linked to their (post)colonial past, present, and future. The cosmopolitanism of 'now' within the West, then, has to be recognized as the outcome of a history that was colonial and then postcolonial; a history to which Others have always contributed whether willingly or not. While there have been few voices identifying a specifically 'postcolonial' Europe (see Hansen 2002 and 2004; Bhambra 2009), there has been an increasing focus on the seeming diversity and hybridity of European cultural constellations that moves us beyond the stale binaries of much of the literature in this area (see Gilroy 1993 and 2003; Stevenson 2006).

Cosmopolitanism, of course, is not simply at issue in colonial and postcolonial migration to the West (see, Yeĝenoĝlu 2005). The exercise of coloniality itself, as Mignolo (2000) has argued, needs to be considered as an important locus of cosmopolitanism, both in intent as well as practice. Mignolo begins

12 Thus, long before the 'rediscovery' of cosmopolitanism in Western discourse, minorities within Western populations were expressing cosmopolitan aspirations in their engagement with wider anti-colonial struggles. For example, Black American citizens were cosmopolitan in their pan-African engagements, while their fellow citizens were engaged with national expressions of citizenship (see Singh 2004). For a discussion of the limits of cosmopolitanism in addressing the situation of refugees and asylum seekers as they attempt to challenge nation-state border controls, see Morris (2009).

his articulation of a critical cosmopolitanism, not from the Greeks, but in the commercial circuits that brought together "the Spanish Crown with capitalist entrepreneurs from Genoa, with Christian missionaries, with Amerindian elites, and with African slaves" (2000, 725). He presents a philosophical consideration of cosmopolitanism that engages with European thinkers but does so from the perspective of the historical debates on the Spanish engagement with the Amerindians in the sixteenth century. By bringing attention to otherwise "silenced and marginalized voices" (2000, 736) within contemporary discussions of cosmopolitanism, Mignolo enriches the debate and opens up productive avenues for further exploring the question of how we live with and across differences. As he argues, critical cosmopolitanism must be truly dialogic where "everyone participates instead of 'being participated'" (2000, 744); that is, he is not arguing for the inclusion of Others in our conversations, but rather, for a recognition of their already existing participation, if only we could listen (see Back 2009).

Beck's version of cosmopolitanism is an expression of cultural Eurocentrism masquerading as potential global inclusivity. As has been demonstrated, however, this inclusivity is dependent upon Them being included in Our designs. It is not an inclusivity that recognizes the Other as already constitutive of, if marginalized within, the frameworks of understanding. Further, while Beck uses the approach of multiple modernities to present the distinctiveness of the present age over preceding ones, he does not deal with the contradiction this poses for his commitment to his version of cosmopolitanism. Multiple modernities are predicated on an understanding of different cultures such that their vision of the global is constituted as a form of global multiculturalism. To the extent that Beck sets up cosmopolitanism in opposition to multiculturalism he denies the basis for the very global age he describes. Concluding an article on "Understanding the Real Europe", Beck writes that "more than anywhere else in the world, Europe *shows* … Europe *teaches* … The catchphrase for the future might be Move over America—Europe is back" (2003, np; my emphasis). Perhaps what is also needed, however, is for Europe to listen, and to learn, for Europe and the United States, alike, to move over. A cosmopolitan sociology that was open to different voices would be one that *provincialized* European understandings, not one based on the perpetuation of 'triumphalist' ideas of Europe's singular contribution to world society.

Provincializing cosmopolitanism would require both a de-centring of dominant understandings of cosmopolitanism as well as an acknowledgement of understandings of cosmopolitanism outside of the otherwise canonical frame of reference exemplified by European thought and practice. This would

need to be done through an address of global histories and interconnected experiences that requires "both critique and the production of a different archive of knowledge" (Featherstone and Venn 2006, 4). New understandings of such conceptual issues, however, cannot simply be added to already existing ones without in some way calling into question the legitimacy and validity of the previously accepted parameters—both historical and ethical. As such, a more thorough-going critique is needed, one which goes beyond *de-centering* to *transforming*. The provincializing of cosmopolitanism is not just a different interpretation of the *same* ideas, but the bringing into being of *new* understandings.

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Minor cosmopolitan doodle 1 by Sikho Siyotula
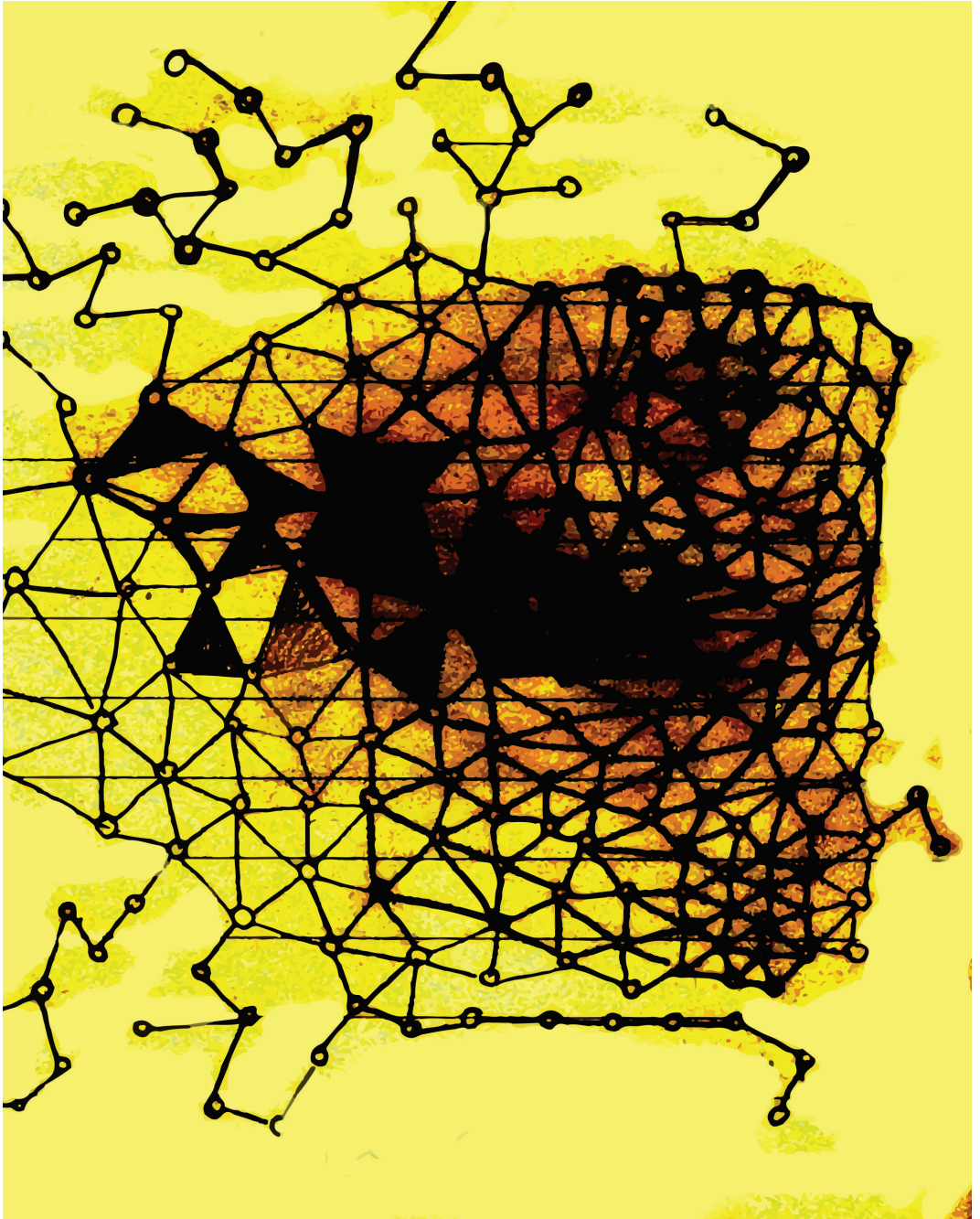
Mobilities

3 Tracing alternative frames of child mobility - a dialogue
by Carly McLaughlin and Claudia Schippel

Although displaced children have become increasingly visible in the last twenty years, the mode of reporting on children who cross borders without their immediate family continues to be one of crisis. Children who cross the border into Europe today without papers and without immediate family are not just people who defy the "sedentary bias" (Chase and Allsop 2013, 28) of the global North that would have people stay in their place. They are also legal minors who have moved outside of the "zones of childhood", troubling Western notions of childhood as a stage when children should be sheltered from the world, not caught up in the messy politics of global mobility. Straddling moral, bureaucratic, and legal frameworks as a child and as a forced migrant seeking the protection of another nation-state, the unaccompanied child asylum-seeker also constitutes a conundrum. Should the asylum-seeking child be treated as a child, or as a migrant? It remains the case that there is still no framework which adequately addresses the needs and rights of unaccompanied child migrants as children and as migrants at the same time. Framed as crisis figures, the dominant response to them remains a humanitarian one, one which foregrounds the childness of child migrants and constructs them as innocent and highly vulnerable victims accordingly. Increasingly, though, there is widespread consensus that the assumption that all unaccompanied minors are highly vulnerable, and in need of care and protection, can be highly problematic for actual children who cross borders alone. As Miriam Ticktin asks, within the framework of humanitarianism, "Where is the room for those who are neither innocent nor guilty, neither victims nor heroes? In this schema, there is no way to recognize them, no law or language by which to give them space to live or die regular or mundane lives" (Ticktin 2016, 259).

The dialogue that follows was borne of our joint conviction that there needs to be a greater dialogue between praxis and theory, between critical reflection on discourses around childhood and forced migration and the concrete realities of supporting young people who leave their home and families behind. How might we begin to refigure the lone young migrant beyond notions of vulnerability, dependency, and trauma? What if we were to look past their childness, to see how gender and race also inform their experiences of migration? What if we encountered young people who cross borders alone not as crisis figures, but as individuals who navigate border

regimes, negotiate politico-legal structures and institutional demands, forming networks of solidarity, support, and care on their journeys? What if we moved away from a children's rights framework for child migration towards a consensus that global mobility is a human right which requires a new language and legal parameters beyond simply those of humanitarian crisis?

<div align="center">*</div>

C.M.: Carly McLaughlin

C.S.: Claudia Schippel

C.M.: I met Mohammad, a young unaccompanied minor from rural Senegal, in 2014, not long after I had completed my initial training with AKINDA, a Berlin-based non-government network that assists unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in finding a potential legal guardian. We met regularly that summer—watched videos of Michael Jackson on YouTube at the youth centre, went sightseeing, ate ice cream. We went to the outdoor swimming pool one day, and as we sat in the hot sun eating cake, Mohammad told me about his journey across the desert to Libya. He reckoned he was about 11 when he left home and got on the back of the truck that would drive him across the Sahara. And now he was in Berlin, going to school, learning to read and write, and learning German. Later that summer, Mohammad told his social worker he would be happy to have me as his legal guardian, and so we began putting the paper work together. Mohammed needed to have his age assessed in order to prove he was eligible for a guardian. This entailed a medical examination at the Charité. As an official letter I received shortly after this informed me, Mohammad went to his appointment, but he refused to undress. That is, he refused to allow the doctor to assess his age on the basis of an examination of his pubic hair. His refusal to cooperate, the letter informed me, meant that no age assessment could be made. But by then, Mohammad had already disappeared. He had cleared the room he had lived in in a youth home, a clear sign, his social worker told me, that he would not be coming back. And, like that, Mohammad slipped quietly out of my life and out of the frameworks—legal, welfare, humanitarian—that were meant to protect him. In order to be protected as a child, Mohammad first of all had to prove he was a child in a procedure that is more intrusive and coercive than most adult migrants have to undergo.

<div align="center">51</div>

As far as I could tell, the narrow frameworks of humanitarianism and child protection, through which asylum-seeking young people continue to be figured, offered Mohammad little protection. I have asked myself often since then, what frameworks might have better served him?

Children's rights organisations advocate strongly for the child first / migrant second principle, i.e. the idea that child migrants should be treated as legal minors first rather than as migrants, in an attempt to ensure that child asylum-seekers are treated according to the national welfare framework of youth protection in the host country. The child first / migrant second principle draws on the vision of childhood laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention continues to be cited as the moral and legal touchstone for ensuring the 'best interests' of the child. It informs 'best practice' frameworks for policy makers and social workers working with undocumented children (see Chase and Allsop 2013, 18). But who is the child whose 'best interests' are served by this framework? And what do those best interests assume about childhood?

The very assumptions about childhood which underpin child-centred initiatives and advocacy campaigns have been criticised for being ethnocentric and heavily reductive (e.g. Pupavac 2001). The anthropologist Jason Hart traces the roots of this global framework for children's rights and welfare to Eglantyne Jebb, who drafted the Declaration of Children's Rights in 1924 (Hart 2006), having previously founded the Save the Children Fund. He argues that the adoption of the Declaration by the League of Nations marks a historical moment "at which the Euro-American gaze began to open out from children at home (especially the poor and 'deviant') towards children across the globe" (Hart 2006, 5). It is this gaze, then, with its Western assumptions about what constitutes the right kind of childhood, that tends to fall on the children of the global south as they cross borders into Europe. Claudia, we have talked often about the need to counter the false universalisation of childhood that continues to underpin representational and discursive practices around children who migrate independently. At the same time, we must ensure that the rights and needs of unaccompanied child refugees and asylum-seekers are adequately addressed. How, in your experience, does a children's rights framework meet the needs of the young people you have met?

C.S.: When listening to young migrants' stories you realise that their childhoods have often been very different from the European idea of childhood. Children who grew up during a civil war and have fled conflict have experienced chaos and fear, have suffered greatly. Many other stories make you realise that there are different ideas of childhood we need to

take into account. Many children I have met support their family with smaller jobs—this is the case for about 50% of children in the refugee camps. In other contexts, children are often on the move from an early age. They might not only live in the household of their parents but move between different households. Children from rural homes might be sent to a bigger town and stay with relatives who become kind of foster parents. The children I have met learn early on to adapt to different surroundings, social roles and obligations.

C.M.: Scholars in childhood studies have long contested the assumption of dependency and vulnerability in connection with children, but it would seem that such ideas about childhood continue to underpin the treatment of unaccompanied minors within national youth welfare frameworks, regardless of whether they need protection or not.

C.S.: Some of the unaccompanied minors I have been responsible for as their legal guardian have protested sharply against the rules and regulations of their foster homes in their new country. They have found it intolerable being patronised by social workers who have tried to regulate their daily lives. Like Patricia, 17 years old, who had been like a mother to her much younger brother and had learned to take responsibility for him very early on after her mother left the family years before.

I have met several others who cannot put up with being patronised like innocent, helpless children. Yusuf, from Mali, had learned to take responsibility for his mother and younger brothers and sisters when he was only fourteen years old. As the first born child, he was obliged to follow his father's last wishes. He gave up school and started to work very hard as a street trader in order to pay the school fees for his younger brothers. He had to grow up very quickly but he was respected in his family and among the elders at the market. Yusuf finds it very hard to realise that everything he has already accomplished in his life doesn't count any more. He often feels humiliated having to follow all those rules and restrictions in his new life….

Such structures infantilise young people and fail to bring out the best in them in terms of potential and skills. Within the EU, in line with the Dublin Convention on the Rights of Children, child protection ends on the young person's 18th birthday. But in Germany, they also come under the legal framework of the German Youth Welfare Law, which offers support for young adults until the age of 27. In practice, the granting of Youth Welfare for young migrants very much depends on a detailed documentation of their incompetence and deficits in order to be eligible

for support. Young people learn that it is advantageous to act as somebody helpless and to avoid showing competence and skills.

This has consequences on young people and their development: learning that only your weaknesses will protect you and help you along means that young people are structurally encouraged to disavow, and ultimately lose sense of, their capacities and strengths. For many young men who come from parts of the world where migration is seen as a rite of passage, the experience of being pushed into the category of a dependent and helpless child is tantamount to a 'rite of reverse passage'.

C.M.: The ethnocentric idea of childhood that underpins frameworks of protection is clearly at odds with many child migrants' own experience of childhood. But in addition to this, the focus on childhood as the grounds for their protection puts the burden on children, and their bodies, to prove their status as genuine children. Age assessment of course forms a central part of many young people's first encounter with European border politics. Elizabeth Chin has sketched out the legacies of scientific racism at work in the belief that chronological age can be determined on the basis of biology (Chin 2003, 320-321). The issue of age assessment shows how child migrants become entangled with histories of racial ideologies and colonialism that have little to do with the child's 'best interests'.

C.S.: The majority of unaccompanied minors cannot prove their age with valid identity papers. Some of them might not even be registered in their home country—they don't have a birth certificate and they might not be sure of their exact age. All of a sudden, they are confronted with a situation where their exact age seems to be so very important! And if authorities don't believe the personal information of a young migrant, they leave the decision to technology that seems to be more reliable to them.

It is well known that medical age assessment procedures may be a horrible experience for a young person who might be neither well-prepared nor accompanied by a person of trust. Further, the methods of forensic diagnostics, which are supposed to objectively determine chronological age, have been criticized as being scientifically dubious (the biological process of ageing differs individually) and ethically wrong (Noll 2016).

Nowadays the German Youth Welfare Authorities are primarily responsible for a young person's age assessment. They follow a legal framework which gives preference to a psychosocial or holistic approach. Only in rare cases, if there still are doubts, are medical examinations undertaken, and only then under the condition that the young person is well informed, is ready for the procedure, and is given the right to contest the results.

C.M.: At the same time, we also need to see this concern over proving children's ages within the wider context of the immigration system's obsession with documents that prove migrants' identity. So, it is not just that they have to prove their identity as children in order to be eligible for child support, but also as migrants who have crossed a European border. And again, as with the bodily markers of age, what counts as proof of identity is entirely Eurocentric.

C.S.: So much of our work involves dealing with problems that arise from different understandings of identity and what counts as official proof: The Immigration Office insists on strictly clarifying the identity of migrants who cannot present official documents. Ambiguities concerning birthdate, name, country of origin may have serious consequences which are difficult to comprehend for people from different cultural backgrounds with a different understanding and definition of identity. These days, there is even a new policy in Germany which means that migrants have to be actively involved in getting hold of their identity papers in order to be considered for a residence permit. We need a greater context-specific understanding of why migrants often cannot produce sufficient documents. In several countries of origin, existent postcolonial administration systems do not necessarily harmonise with cultural traditions. Belonging to a specific family, ethnic group, society or territory will be more important than nationality. In many African and Asian countries, not much importance is given to the exact birthdate of a person. Parents might not register the birth of their child immediately after birth, maybe much later, often due to practical reasons. The day of birth and birthday celebrations don't have much of a meaning. It is rather social status and position, the role and responsibilities of an individual within his/her social surroundings that counts. In Europe, the fetishization of administration easily leads to the exclusion and stigmatization of migrants and refugees. Bureaucratic systems have to be made comprehensible and transparent for people of all cultural backgrounds.

C.M.: But going back to the issue of age assessment, the whole panic around who is a child and who isn't reinforces a child/adult binary division that also causes problems for young migrants …

C.S.: Yes! What happens when a young migrant all of a sudden—following their age assessment—falls from the category of an unaccompanied minor into the category of an adult? Then Youth Welfare guidance and care suddenly disappear and leave a young person in a completely different, uncertain situation. For us as practitioners it is frightening to realize how helpless they are in a situation like that. The young person

might all of a sudden disappear, probably looking for a new perspective someplace else, probably somewhere in a European country where they have existing social networks. In this country, lots of money is invested into Youth Welfare; but as soon as young migrants are accused of having cheated about their age due to the results of an age assessment, Youth Welfare support ends and suddenly they have to cope without it.

On their way through Southern Europe, minority-aged migrants often claim to officials to be 18 or above in order to avoid being trapped in a camp for child refugees. They are not aware of the fact that German officials might not believe them when they later try to register with their true age. They might face the accusation that they did so in order to deceive the system. This happened to a young person I knew called Fady: The Youth Welfare Authorities had accepted him as minority aged, but months later the Immigration Office obtained information from Italy, where he had registered as being 19 years old. Fady tried, unsuccessfully, to get documents from his home country to prove his real age. Finally, he panicked and disappeared.

I met Murat from Morocco shortly before he fell out of the category of an unaccompanied minor in Youth Welfare and into the category of a young adult who was further suspected of being a criminal because he had lied about his age. Murat had registered with a different age on his transit through Italy, now he was suspected to be three years older, a major. It happens very fast: Murat lost his Youth Welfare support, his room in a shared apartment, his social workers, and his legal guardian. He had been ready to qualify, become a tradesman—he already had an offer for an apprenticeship. He lost everything. It was very difficult for Murat to understand what is happening here. A few weeks later Murat disappeared, nobody knows where he has gone. Some of his friends say that he had contacts in France.

In Europe, unaccompanied minors are often afraid of the moment when they reach their 18th birthday and all of a sudden have to face many frightening changes, like losing safe accommodation, the support of social workers, and access to a guardian. They are also left on their own to deal with official institutions, such as the immigration office or the job centre. Most of all, they are terrified of losing their residence permit and being threatened with deportation. They are no longer protected as children. With all those problems they often feel entirely on their own and not well prepared. They might give up their schooling and qualification training and everything that had been prepared for with former carers and social workers. The period of Youth Welfare for the time of one or two years

is not enough and may not be appropriate as a preparation for the times after. Young adults might end up in a situation they had never expected, a hopeless trap. So what use was all the investment in Youth Welfare? Fortunately, the situation in Berlin has changed recently: Authorities might decide that Youth Welfare continues to be granted for some time after a young migrant turns 18. This only goes to show how meaningless the process of age assessment is. I believe very strongly that it is not the chronological age but the special needs of young people under the age of 25 that have to be considered. We need to have needs assessments instead of age assessments!

C.M.: This reminds me of a study done on undocumented minors in the US transitioning into adulthood, a transition which sees them go from being legal migrants as children to "illegal" migrants as adults (Gonzales 2011, 602). And of course, the messiness of categories like childhood and adulthood means that child migrants are also impacted by the discourse of migration, in particular the dualism of good refugee / bogus refugee or good refugee / economic migrant. This panic around the 'real' identity of refugees reflects a growing concern with the moral purity of refugees and what legal scholars like Heaven Crawley have called the "categorical fetishism" that distinguishes between genuine and bogus refugees (2018). The negative stereotypes of asylum-seekers attach themselves to so-called unaccompanied minors, stereotypes which "work in powerful ways to stigmatise unaccompanied children as less deserving and less important than other children" (Hopkins and Hill 2010, 138). This dualism between genuine refugees and bogus economic migrants shapes, even before they arrive in Europe, the stories of migration that children present to authorities …

C.S.: When newly arriving migrants and refugees, including minors, are registered by German officials, they have often been prepared by fellow countrymen or other people of confidence on how to deal with being examined by border officials. Their story of flight is constructed in a way that they might fit into a category which offers protection and a status as refugee. For example, I have met many young migrants who have, following advice they received back home or on their journey, declared themselves to be orphans.

C.M.: What you say, Claudia, suggests how young migrants 'use' their vulnerability as a strategy to gain protection (see Freedman 2017), and their awareness that they need to 'perform' a particular idea of child refugeehood. It shows how children are also actively shaping their migratory experience, navigating border politics …

C.S.: Yes, but I know from my own experience as a legal guardian that the consequences of 'made-up stories' can place a heavy burden on young people. They suffer from the fact that they have to keep lying. Two wards of mine, a brother and sister, had told officials that both their parents had died a long time ago. It came out later that their mother was still alive and lived in another European country. When, later, the children received the message that their mother had died of illness, they got a big shock. They felt so guilty and felt that they were being punished for a horrible lie. Young migrants often have trouble knowing who they can trust, and they can find themselves in very difficult situations if they try and shape their stories to fit the system's criteria of protection and support.

C.M.: But the framework for granting asylum is so narrow that only very few stories will be accepted. The criteria for who counts as a vulnerable, deserving refugee are fixed before young migrants set out on their journeys …

C.S.: Before they even reach Europe, young African migrants realize that they are treated very differently compared to people of Syrian origin. They might see this on their transfer from Libya to Europe, when Africans are forced to occupy the risky seats on the boats while Syrians are privileged. Sub-Saharan Africans often tell us about the discrimination and racism they have faced since their arrival in Europe.

The dualism of good refugee vs. bad migrant seems to be reinforced by the current restrictions and sanctions concerning so-called "safe countries of origin" and migrants without proof of identity. Several factors can cause a young migrant to end up in the category of a good or bad refugee or migrant. It might depend on the country they came from, that is, whether it is categorized as a safe country of origin, or how convincing their story of flight is during the asylum procedure, and also on what kind of decision-maker is in charge. It might depend on the appearance of a young person and his/her educational background.

C.M.: Such experiences reveal how issues such as gender, race and ethnicity, nationality shape young people's experiences of forced migration. This confirms just how important it is for there to be an intersectional approach to youth migration, rather than one which simply hones in on their childness. This approach would allow us to see how age intersects with race and gender in young people's experiences of migration. What might an intersectional approach to the young asylum-seeker look like, that is, an approach that allows us to see them as both a minor and as a migrant, rather than as either/or?

C.S.: Yes, young migrants/unaccompanied minors are a very heterogeneous group, young people with diverse cultural, social, and educational backgrounds, potentials, skills, motivations, desires, and obligations.

C.M.: One thing that always strikes me is how the language we use to talk about young migrants—whether that's child refugee, asylum-seeking child, or unaccompanied minor—renders such factors invisible. For example, in the case of gender: we very rarely—if at all—talk about refugee girls or boys. At the same time, it is very clear that ideas of victimhood and vulnerability are heavily gendered. And there must be other ways in which gender affects the migratory experiences of young people.

C.S.: There needs to be a greater awareness of the differences between male and female young migrants. Generally speaking, the socialization of young migrants has been shaped by a clear gender segregation between males and females.

During the past years only a small number of unaccompanied female minors have arrived in Europe. Most of them come from African countries and the majority are Christians. Muslim societies tend not to allow girls to leave alone without the supervision of family members. I have only ever met one girl—she was called Muna and she had arrived in Berlin with her adult brother. He refused to let her move into a Youth Welfare foster home. Muna suffered for more than two years, missing her parents a lot, until she finally had the chance to apply for family reunion. Girls, who in general are not offered the chance to make their own decisions, strive for self-realization. They might look for a chance to escape from a restricted life. Further, girls, particularly from Nigeria or Vietnam, might be victims of human trafficking and prostitution.

C.M.: Yes, trafficking and forced prostitution clearly show how young female migrants can be susceptible to gender-specific exploitation. But I think there needs to be more attention paid to young male migrants and the way in which norms of masculinity shape their experiences of migration, and perhaps make them highly vulnerable at times.

C.S.: We need to have a better understanding of how gender intersects with the cultural background of young men who come here—what migration means to them and their families. We need to understand what their journeys mean. For example, often male unaccompanied minors from Syria are sent to Europe with the task of applying for family reunion after having been granted refugee status. Young male migrants from other countries may have different reasons. We need to ask questions such as what are their motivations when choosing to migrate: is it to escape from

political and familial power structures they don't agree with, or to search for a new perspective? … This entails knowing more about the cultural backgrounds of young migrants: What makes so many young Fula/Peul from West African countries like Guinea move to Europe? What is the role of their global social networks? Some societies have an old tradition of being on the move. Fula people in West Africa have an old nomadic tradition and nowadays they maintain far-reaching transnational networks as traders: Being on the move is a part of their social identity. Young men decide to temporarily leave their family, to go abroad in search of new experiences in order to demonstrate their capacities, courage and manhood. Misfortune and failure might have dramatic consequences; the social pressure on the young migrant to succeed is very high. Success has to be demonstrated, for example through material gain and wealth.

The Gambia is another West African country with a long tradition of migration and trade. By the end of the 1980s, emigration to Europe, mainly Spain, and North America became a common coping strategy with respect to the difficult economic situation. The 1994 military coup caused large numbers of young men to migrate to Europe in search of better prospects.

That's what Lamine, a young person from the Gambia, told me:

"You know, there are no jobs for us in my country. My friends I and were just hanging around, and we were often talking about how to get to Europe. They call it 'Babylon'. I have an uncle who left for Spain a long time ago. He never came back. As a young man you have to start moving and go away if you don't get a chance there where you are. That's what they expect you to do when you are no longer a child. You have to do something to support your family. Nowadays it is more difficult to get to Europe, most people take the 'back way', via Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Libya. That means you travel to Europe by the back door. That's how I did it. It was very hard and took me many months till I arrived in Italy. Up to now I haven't been able to help my family and transfer any money. How can I do that? I am not allowed to work, I don't have a good place to live, and there is so much stress in my life. Sometimes I call up my younger brother who still lives with my family. They just don't understand…".

Young people from Afghanistan or several West African countries come from societies where an old tradition of migration has to do with the passage to manhood: By accepting the challenge of a dangerous journey with a lot of risks and difficulties, young men demonstrate their masculinity and

strength as adults. This means that all of these initiatives to discourage young men from attempting the journey will simply not work. Through listening to stories of migration from young men, I have become aware of the heavy burden that rests on them in the form of their migration experience. In some places, a failed migration experience would mean a loss of family honour. A failure is regarded as shameful, a disaster for the whole family, the whole community even! For this reason, deportation back to the country of origin is a terrible defeat—a shame to the whole family. A young man who has been deported and comes back with empty hands has lost face! There is no way to reintegrate! As a young man from Bangladesh facing his deportation told me: "I'd rather go back in a coffin than alive!" We need to understand the cultural consequences of deportation for such young men in order for us to understand the pressures they are under here. There has to be an alternative to deportation!

C.M.: As well as disregarding their future, there is a tendency, isn't there, to think of migrants, and especially young migrants, as only existing in the present—without a past, without connections to their former lives. The childhood scholar Karen Wells has pointed out how unaccompanied minors are often imagined as completely alone and dependent on the structures of the host country (Wells 2011, 324-28). But increasingly research has shown that young migrants are often in contact with family members they left behind, or are part of a network of support and care that they either formed on their journey here or that they become part of upon their arrival. What is your experience?

C.S.: I am aware of the fact that social networks are very much involved in the migration processes of unaccompanied minors. Social workers, educators and guardians often don't know much about these contacts who seem to keep themselves in the background. Sometimes a young person mentions contact to some kind of 'uncle', somebody who lives in Berlin or elsewhere in Germany. Sometimes the contact is obviously very close: The young person regularly visits his uncle's family, like on weekends.

Saidou from Guinea told me more about his uncle: "He is some kind of cousin of my father. He came to Germany a very long time ago, he studied in East-Berlin. He is married to a German woman. Once he came to visit in Guinea. I still lived with my family. My father had many problems and he asked my uncle if he could help me to come to Germany. My uncle said that this is very difficult but he had many contacts in Berlin to other people from Guinea. There are many people from Guinea in Berlin, they know each other, and sometimes they help each other".

C.M.: This complicates the idea, and the representation, of unaccompanied minors as being utterly on their own, and suggests that paternalistic youth welfare structures are not necessarily the most appropriate frameworks for helping young migrants or recognising their needs.

C.S.: Yes—young migrants remain closely connected to the homes and families they have left behind, and as a result they often face conflicting expectations and duties—from their communities they have left behind and the institutions here in Germany. They are faced with the dilemma of choosing between being a 'good son' or a good migrant. From fairly early on after their arrival here, there is pressure on many young migrants to demonstrate their success and fulfil their social responsibilities by transferring financial support to those they left behind. And how can they satisfy all these expectations from back home when they are trapped in the insecure situation as an asylum-seeker in Europe?

The high social pressure often forces young people to do both: Illegal or precarious jobs at the same time as trying to fulfil the demands of social workers and legal guardians. If they feel that they only have a slim chance of getting a residence permit they might decide to give up plans to complete their qualifications. Like Moussa, a young Fula person from Guinea, a skilled adolescent with good prospects for an apprenticeship as a craftsman. His future employer had been impressed by Moussa's practical skills. But Moussa gave it all up for a job at McDonald's after facing many legal obstacles and pressure from the Immigration Office.

And just telling the truth to their families, like how difficult and frustrating the situation in Europe really is? "That is not a solution!" Ahmed explains. "They (the family and relatives) won't believe you and will think that you are stingy and don't want to share your fortune with them. They just want to stick with this fantastic dream that in Germany everybody is well-off and rich. And then there are boys who send a selfie of themselves with a sports car…". So, the myth is maintained by people once they are here, even when they see that reality is very different.

C.M.: There seems to be growing interest among scholars in children as transnational actors in different kinds of transnational networks. Can you say something about what you have observed in Berlin?

C.S.: Youth migration movements are very much influenced by transcultural or transnational networks. For example, young Vietnamese migrants are organized in transcultural networks which operate all over Europe. Again, it is important for us to know more about their specific backgrounds: Vietnamese communities in Berlin are divided in two groups: former

boatpeople from South Vietnam and former labour migrants from North Vietnam. A couple of years ago a large number of unaccompanied minors came from Vietnam. It was very difficult for social workers to maintain contact with them. Most of these young people didn't attend school but were obliged by Vietnamese organizations to do illegal jobs in order to pay back the large amount of money that had been invested in their journeys to Europe.

Only very few unaccompanied minors from Vietnam have a voluntary guardian because they simply have no opportunity to develop that kind of personal relationship. The situation of P. was strikingly different, maybe because he had come to Berlin as a ten-year-old boy and was very well protected in a foster home for children. He developed a close relationship with his voluntary guardian and her family. After turning 18 and finishing school he had a good chance at securing vocational training and a residence permit, under the condition that he could present a valid Vietnamese passport. But P. didn't have any documents to prove his identity. He didn't tell his guardian whom he had contacted in order to get hold of a passport, but these people were part of strictly organized Vietnamese networks. Within a few months, his situation had changed dramatically: He started working in a Vietnamese nail studio, without a work contract, and he only sporadically showed up at his youth accommodation. One day he told his former guardian that he was living in a small apartment with other Vietnamese people. His boss had taken his documents and only gave him a small amount of pocket money. Often, he had to work for twelve hours the day and more, even on weekends. He obviously was desperate and felt that he had no chance to escape.

On a different note, I have also seen how religious networks play a significant role in young people's migration experiences. I gained the impression that predominantly female migrants and refugees are active members of transnational Buddhist or Christian networks. Being part of a religious community provides a lot of solidarity and mutual help among the participants. This is something that is overlooked in the West where religion is often not recognized as a factor shaping people's migration experiences.

For example, I got to know Grace from Nigeria, 17 years old and single mother of a six-month-old baby who spends every Sunday with her church community. She explained to me: "We all know and help each other. The women come from different Anglophone countries, many of them have smaller children and there are so many ways we can support each other, like looking for a place to live or a job… Sometimes when a woman is

in serious trouble we collect money to help her. Some of the Nigerian women know each other from Italy where they lived before. The situation in Italy got very bad, no jobs and a lot of problems. The women help each other to settle down in Germany where the situation is much better".

I think it is important for educators, social workers, and guardians to be sensitive concerning the religious beliefs of migrants and refugees. Learning about another religion and sharing special rituals might deepen relationships and create a better understanding of individual needs, as I learned from my own experiences.

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The stories of Mohammad, Fady, Yusuf, Moussa and so many other young people who have come to Germany show that the framework of childhood offers unaccompanied minors only temporary and often erratic refuge from the politics of the border. In the context of forced migration, the child/adult binary is under heavy and constant scrutiny, and is underpinned by ideas of childhood that are constantly shifting. As Elizabeth Chin has shown, "the ways in which childhood is mobilized in the face of mobile children are inconsistent and contradictory" (Chin 2003, 322). The stories we have told here show there is an urgent need to stop cordoning off the lone child migrant as a distinct entity with homogenous needs. An unaccompanied minor is not just a child: there is a need to look at how age intersects with other factors such as gender, socio-economic background, nationality, religion to produce highly individual experiences of forced migration—experiences that do not always fit easily within the frameworks of support and protection that unaccompanied children are often slotted into upon arrival in Europe.

We also need to move away from the perception that unaccompanied children are abandoned, cut off from kin and other kinship and care structures. The unaccompanied child is rarely utterly alone, but embedded in transnational networks of support and care, as well as social pressures and expectations that also shape their migratory experience. We do not want to suggest that unaccompanied minors do not need support and protection; but we do insist that their highly individual needs, vulnerabilities, and rights cannot be grounded in a universal model of childhood, or the framework of children's rights. Furthermore, young people should have the right to global mobility, to make transnational journeys as part of their life trajectories. This right should be one that is not recognised merely within the narrow framework of refugee law, or made possible for the privileged few who have the economic and social capital to come to Europe through legal routes. The

fact of childhood migration needs to move beyond its framing as a crisis so that we can begin to develop alternative routes into Europe which genuinely address the 'best interests' of child migrants. It is for this reason that both of us advocate for a move away from a child-rights-centred approach to child mobility in favour of a human rights framework. This is a framework in which the child / adult binary, as well as the economic migrant / good refugee binary, retreats to the background, and in which the vulnerabilities and rights of all who migrate are brought to the fore. A framework which would have allowed Mohammad to stay right where he was, and eke out a regular and mundane life for himself.

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4 Unruly faces: refugee protest and imperial faciality
by Anouk Madörin

When Syrian refugee Anas Modamani took a selfie with Angela Merkel in 2015, it came to symbolize Germany's often proclaimed *Willkommenskultur* (Welcoming Culture), the notion of a permissive German refugee admission policy that led hundreds of thousands of migrants into the country. Compared to the present situation (2019/2020), the first hours of the European border crisis were indeed marked by a more humanitarian response to people fleeing war-torn countries. Since then, much has changed in tone and style. Particularly the charges brought forward after the New Year's Eve celebrations in Cologne (2015/16), when an alleged case of mass sexual assault and rape against women by a large group of "North African men" presumed to be refugees, created a racist climate of perceived insecurity that allowed authorities to deport migrants more rapidly. In the event of Cologne, public discourse conjured the well-worn stereotype of the racialized Other as rapist, a potent image that can be traced back to interbellum Germany, where accusations of rape against white German women by colonial troops were widespread. After Modamani took a selfie with the German chancellor, he had yet to face another prominent stereotype, one that is deeply entrenched in both public discourse and the technological infrastructures of the European border regime: the refugee as terrorist. Both the figure of the terrorist and the rapist are produced by the same biopolitical regime that targets suspect populations which are seen as attacking the integrity of a national body. Crisis situations, whether felt or real, evoke these figures repetitively, often by way of moral panics, and they dovetail with broader discourses on (in)security, fear of transgression, and other liberal anxieties.

While these figures remain effective templates for sheltering racist and other defamatory discourses, the case of Modamani's "Merkel selfie" opens up another avenue: the enduring fight against being included in such a template. In Modamani's case, this fight is linked to the struggle over the circulation of faces and the jurisdiction over the meaning of these faces. In the current moment of corporate and monopolist governance of our private data, communication, and self-representation, who decides what and who we are, or who we will become? For many people, particularly those who are affected by the governance of citizenship and mobility in the most

vulnerable ways, these questions are answered in a sovereign fashion: they are answered for them. Biometric technologies precisely take on the task of identifying those who cannot be trusted. While they target every person on the move, citizen and denizen, biometrics work in the most precarious ways for those populations considered suspect. In these cases, biometrics, more often than not, decide over life and death.

In what follows, I present the complex entanglement of biometric regimes, and one of its privileged features to capture: the face. I will first give a brief overview of biometric governance at Europe's outer borders with specific regard to the introduction of facial images. With this, I describe the emergence of a genuine European biometric regime and trace how it is to a large extent congruent with EU counterterrorism infrastructure, a conflation that enabled the rise of a refugee-terrorist nexus, which aims to discipline and delegitimize flight toward Europe. By linking European biometric practices to their colonial history, I demonstrate how the image of the face, or the regime of faciality, has not merely produced a template against which to measure the deviant and racialized Other, but effectively fortified White Man's face that allowed to create the conditions for abjecting those not compliant with the template. I conclude by coming back to one of the most famous refugee selfies, the one Modamani took with Merkel, and make the case for understanding this self-representation as contesting the biometric faciality machine, as put forth by the European border regime. The selfie appears in a time when citizenship is, to a great extent, managed through biometric recognition and the datafication of personal information (Kuntsman 2017). To take the selfie seriously thus means to read it against its technological background: the facial recognition technologies used in biometric assessments in general and in asylum procedures in particular.

Biometrics: the truth apparatus of the European border regime

Biometrics have become the dominant means to govern borders. Behind this development is a growing biometric industry offering technological solutions to manage citizenship, borders, and national security. The term biometrics is derived from the Greek terms bios (life) and metron (measure) and, in the most general understanding, refers to the measurement of the human body by applying statistical analysis to biological and physiological data. Biometric technology collects, synthesizes, and analyzes human characteristics and traits such as palm or fingerprints, facial structure, iris patterns, and gait. The collection of biometric information from individuals is called enrollment. Through a fingerprint, for example, the subject gives a

biometric template which then serves as a proxy for each time the subject registers with the system. Often depicted as a clean and fast way to establish someone's identity, biometrics must instead be understood as tackling the problem of life itself: they define the faculties that count as human, and they make sovereign decisions over life and (social) death. Put in different terms, biometrics determine "the break between what must live and what must die" which, for Foucault (20044, 254), is the key mechanism of racism in liberal societies.

In the European context, the 1985 Schengen Agreement presents a hallmark in the making of a genuine European border regime. Often celebrated as fostering freedom of intra-European movement, the measures introduced in the treaty have, in fact, increased control at Europe's outer borders as well as extended racial profiling within the locus of the supra-nation. Only four articles in the accord are about open borders, 138 articles introduce rules regarding visas, asylum rights, and checks at external borders. This suggests that the primary goal of the Schengen agreement was the creation of an enlarged European policing tool and big data hulk that eventually enabled the "wide ranging registration and surveillance of large population groups in the countries concerned" (Mathiesen 1999, 2). Part of the measures "preserving internal security in the absence of internal border checks" (European Commission 2016) was the adoption of the Schengen Information System (SIS). Originally designed as a police investigation tool for the search of lost property, the SIS did not contain biometric data until it was streamlined with EURODAC, Europe's fingerprinting database. The SIS is now a vast database system accessible to all Schengen states that holds records on people's identities. It comprises over 46 million entries (called "alerts") containing information such as name, date of birth, gender, nationality, aliases, arms possession, history of violence, the reason for the alert, and the action to be taken if the person is encountered. Since its implementation in 2003, EURODAC has been used for asylum purposes only, filing fingerprints submitted by refugees to determine whether a person has already applied for asylum in another country. The introduction of these two databases prompted different responses from the public. As SIS targets all citizens arriving at the EU, concerns were swiftly raised about privacy issues and data sovereignty. EURODAC, the database sampling information from mostly people of color, prompted no such critical debate in the general public.

In 2016, the European Agenda on Migration suggested the inclusion of facial images to EURODAC that would be mandatory for people (including minors) who have been apprehended as irregulars either outside or within

EU territory. The move to include facial images alongside fingerprints was justified by stating the challenges some of the member states and border personnel were facing when collecting biometric data. Namely, these challenges include the lasting fight of refugees against being included into biometric databases by damaging their fingerprints with glue or acidic substances or physically resisting the fingerprinting process. The document tackles these resistant practices as it clearly states that facial images can be taken against people's will. These facial images thus share the same genealogy with other "forced portraits" (Rettberg 2014) such as mugshots and photographs taken by police during riots.

Together with the Visa Information System (VIS), the SIS (II), and EURODAC, these three main IT systems deal with visas, asylum requests, and the exchange of information to govern the Schengen Area. These big immigration databases are at the same time used to fight terrorism and other "serious crimes". Both the national police forces of the member states as well as EUROPOL, the EU police force, have access to the data stored in these systems to conduct investigations. Notably, the interoperability of these systems has remarkably advanced in the wake of terrorist attacks. The call for maximizing the effectiveness and allowing wider access to the systems advanced in the wake of the Madrid bombings in March 2004. Another terrorist attack, the London bombings of July 2005, gave final impetus to synergize the databases and more discretionary access to information by law enforcement agencies such as the police. The connection between migration and terrorism is a tenuous one at best.[1] Still, the data infrastructure for European border security shows no clear-cut separation between counterterrorism and migration. Instead, by linking counterterrorism efforts and migration policies, migrants are directly affected by the racist insecurity climates that emerge in the wake of terrorist attacks.

Linked to the practice of biometrics is the carceral infrastructure of the hotspot, a system put in place by the EU to seize the movement of people before they arrive on European mainland. Upon arriving in the EU border archipelago in places like Lesbos or Lampedusa, all incoming migrants are identified, fingerprinted, and migratory profiles are assigned based on nationality and some scant biographical information. By doing this, hotspots impede a high number of people from claiming asylum and thus effectively serve as a bulwark. The official rationale behind this border architecture is

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1   Empirical evidence shows that these two complexes are not interlinked, and terrorists tend to cross borders legally and often have a valid or expired visa, residence permit, or identification card (Baldaccini 2008).

the filtering out of "those who need international protection and those who do not" (European Council 2015). In other words, hotspots serve as filters that aim to separate "economic migrants" from refugees. They further serve as strategic sites for EU border security and counterterrorism alike by vetting migrants as potential security threats, or as one journalist put it, by "culling terrorist wolves from refugee sheep" (Lyman 2015). Here again, efforts in counterterrorism and border management are merged. Furthermore, the hotspot filter classifies people into worthy and unworthy of protection by identifying the nationality and/or ethnicity through determining "apparent" parameters in a process of ethnic and racial profiling.[2]

According to Foucault (2008, 34-35), the emergence of the biopolitical state shifted its penal practices toward the veridictional question: it no longer asked criminals "What have you done?" but "Who are you?" To ask for someone's identity is the biopolitical question par excellence because it assumes that who you are fundamentally determines not only what you have done but what you are potentially capable of doing. By identifying someone via biometrics and racial profiling, current bordering practices not only define a person's identity but at the same time answer the persecutional question: what have you done? Migrant profiles are produced depending on where someone is from and how they look like. The classificatory order inherent in these profiles then decides whether this person has committed a crime or not, particularly whether the migrants have crossed a border unlawfully and must be deported without due process. Contrary to the international law that anchors the right to seek asylum, both detention and deportation from European borders frequently take place without habeas corpus.

Colonial ordering in European hotspots

The profiling system applied at hotspots and other EU border facilities stratifies people into different classes. These asylum procedures produce "a hierarchical order, a nomenclature reminiscent of the orientalist and racialized practices of European colonialism and imperialism" (Rodríguez 2018, 20). Just as the imperial powers classified and segregated the colonized population into different racial groups on a scale of blackness and "nativeness", the postcolonial taxonomy put in place by the European border regime pertains to racial/colonial ordering. This process is rooted in

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2 People from West African countries, for example, are precluded both from claiming asylum and from the Relocation program, while Eritreans, Syrians, and Iraqis are allowed to start the asylum procedure (Tazzioli and Garelli 2016).

the history of the production of the racialized Other, and it further recalls the governance of the "dangerous classes" in the European metropoles: "the distinguishing into deserving and undeserving poor" (Bhambra 2015).

Racism, in the words of Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007, 243), "is the ordinary means through which dehumanization achieves ideological normality", while at the same time, the practice of dehumanizing people "produces racial categories". In this light, the biometric apprehension of refugees on the fringes of the border regime is less about identification than about the sovereign labeling of persons into preexisting groups and racial profiles. To identify people corresponds with identifying a type, and this process is encoded into the term 'identity' itself. In its etymological history, the term identity not only refers to the individual as such but to the sameness with another group: the history of identification is thus not so much "a history…of individuality as of categories and their indicators" (Caplan and Torpey 2018, 51). In Foucault's terms, the background against which individuals are measured is called the metabody, and this metabody defines and overdetermines individuals by evoking their ancestors' presumed criminal attitude.[3] Moreover, the swift segregation of migrants into different hierarchies pertains to the tactic of divide and rule as it attempts to prevent solidarity among groups and the formation of a collective political subject (Aradau 2016).

Colonial biometrics

The colonial history of biometrics, that is, the slew of disciplinary practices borne out of scientific racism, invented, and essentially depended on these classifications. Although these disciplines are now denounced as fraud science, anthropometry, craniology, and physiognomy all left their durable marks on modern biometrics. As long as biometrics are still used to create racist typologies of the less-than-human, it is crucial to evoke the history of disciplines that were created with the foremost goal to aid and abet white supremacy. While slavery tacitly guaranteed European racial supremacy, its abolition led to the growth of scientific racism that claimed to be able to prove the inferiority of other "races" as a given fact. One key figure at the time was Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840), whose

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3   In his study of 19th century psychiatry, Foucault argues that in order to accommodate the physical absence of a sick body in which to locate pathology, psychiatrists generate a kind of fantastical metabody that incorporates a congeries of symptoms suffered by the patient's ancestors as etiological causes. A similar kind of metabody can be discerned in discourses of contemporary genetics, as evinced by the construals of Richard Dawkins and David Hull of the gene as replicator (Mader 2010).

craniometric experiments in racial anthropology ordered and ranked humans into different racial groups according to skin color and aesthetic judgment (the "Caucasian", "Mongolian," "Malayan", "Ethiopian" and "American"). Blumenbach's typology is considered the starting point of the discipline of anthropology and articulated a taxonomy that would form the basis for the increasingly rigid racial classifications of the 19th century. His chronometric schema of five races reinforced the superior position of the white male European over all other "races". It led him to the conclusion that "the white or Caucasian was the first and the most beautiful and talented race, from which all other races had degenerated to become Chinese, Negroes, etc." (Bernal 1987, 219).

Blumenbach was familiar with the work of Johann Lavater, an 18th-century physiognomist who attempted to identify character traits from facial features by pictorially imaging people in silhouette. This practice was dedicated to detecting hidden causes legible only by specialized interpreters "by reasoning from the exterior to the interior" to "discover solid and fixed principles by which to settle what the Man really is" (quoted from Stafford 1993, 84 and 95). Lavater's physiognomy served as a foundation for racial-genetic biology and anthropology. His methods experienced a resurgence during the Weimar era and would later become a weapon of mass destruction as they formed the basis for Nazi racial theories (Gray 2004). In Blumenbach and, even more so, in Lavater's physiognomy, we see early examples of how the face was used as a truth apparatus. Its singling out and capturing was believed to reveal someone's real identity in the form of race, criminal character, or moral flaws and virtues. Contemporary facial recognition software used in biometric identification and mass surveillance continues to draw on scientific methods, which rest on the notion that an isolated representation of the face can give away a person's truth. The attempt to "bind identity to the body" (Gates 2005, 14) via the singular representation of the face fractures the body into dehumanized facial traits and disavows the fact that faces change over time and space. Similar to the measuring instruments built into the disciplines of racial science, today's facial algorithms treat the face as a static repository for identity over time and place. Recent examples for this episteme are the building of algorithmic software that attempts to detect a person's sexuality (Wang and Kosinski 2018), criminal status (Wu and Zhang 2016) or personality, including whether someone is a terrorist (Storm 2016), by using a single facial portrait.

The obsession with the face resides in what Zach Blas (2013) termed "global face culture", a culture driven by "impulses to know, capture, calculate, categorize, and standardize human faces". From the anthropometric portrait

to the mugshot to today's biometric facial images stored in EURODAC, the privileging of the face strips the body of its three-dimensionality by reducing lived experience and the body's abundant visceral life into a single facial surface. In the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, "faciality" establishes the conditions of subjects to have and assume a face by subjecting the entire body under the regime of the face. According to them, the birth of faciality began with Christianization, when Europeans spread the Christ-face across Europe and the globe:

> If the face is in fact Christ, in other words, your average ordinary White Man, then the first deviances, the first divergence-types, are racial: yellow man, black man. … They must be Christianized, in other words, facialized. (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 197)

From Blumenbach's perfect Caucasian to Leonardo Davinci's vision of ideal corporeal symmetry in the form of the Vitruvian Man, the White Man face serves as a template from which all others are derived and racialized. Racism, according to Deleuze and Guattari (2004, 197), "operates by the determination of degrees of deviance in relation to the White-Man face". Present biometric technologies are built on the template of the White Man, as they, for example, have difficulties detecting the faces of people of color or the fingerprints of Asian women (Browne 2010). Biometrics are thus "infrastructurally calibrated to whiteness" (Pugliese 2007, 57), and at the same time introduce the scientific means to establish and justify typologies: the bonafide traveler, the bogus refugee, the criminal, the terrorist.

The Christ-face is not only encoded into technology as androcentric whiteness but also as a broader template of representation, often in combination with suffering (figures 4.1 and 4.2). In response to the November 2015 Paris attacks, some Balkan governments decided to block refugees that could not prove citizenship from Syria, Afghanistan, or Iraq. The measures were enacted only four days after the attack, and led to the rejection of all incoming people, except those from white-listed countries, as "economic migrants". Although the perpetrators of the attack had either French or Belgium citizenship, the event was instrumentalized to rally fear against migrants and refugees and suspended the free movement of people within the Schengen zone. France summoned the state of emergency as part of a national anxiety that regarded the contours of the former empire as under siege. The nation remained in a state of self-proclaimed crisis for two years and only abandoned the status after it was replaced by an extensive counterterrorism law that gave authorities more discretion in fighting violent extremism.
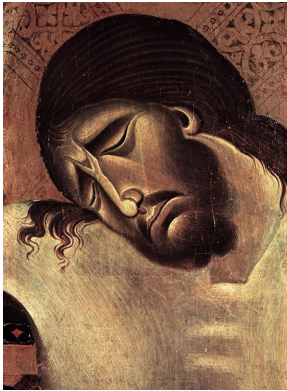
figure 4.1 Suffering Christ of the Cimabue crucifix (detail). Crocifisso di Cimabue nella chiesa di San Domenico ad Arezzo, Tempera on wood, 1268-71

figure 4.2 Refugee protest in Idomeni. ©:Yannis Behrakis/Reuters, Stranded Iranian migrants on hunger strike, 2015

Unruly faces

In protest at these decisions, a group of Iranian and Kurdish migrants who were stranded at the Greek-Macedonian border in Idomeni sewed their lips together and went on hunger strike. Captured like the Cimabue crucifix, the Passion (from the Latin verb *patior*, to suffer, bear, and endure) of Christ emerges here to align the suffering of the other into a standardized and familiar template of pain. This photograph, evoking Christ as the zero template from which all other faces emerge as derivatives, might well provoke com-passion from a Western audience: the suffering-with the other that is often considered as not capable of feeling pain. It might further realign the suffering face into the teleological and necessary suffering of the Passion, and thereby cast the violence inflicted on bodies as contingent upon their behavior, and not as systemic and gratuitous. The imperial regime of faciality emerges in a twofold way here: it first provides the deviant template of the terrorist against which the Other is marked as potentially dangerous; and second, it centers the spectacle of suffering onto the mutilated body and not the systemic violence targeting it. The group of refugees protested precisely against that. They defied the system that profiled them as not deserving protection, an action that was borne out of the racist panic conflating refugees with terrorists. By inflicting violence on themselves, they made visible the violence inherent in these classifications and demonstrated the necropolitical effects that states

75

of emergencies have, in the wake of terrorist attacks, for those affected by them. By sewing their lips together, they protested against the regime and its technological backbone that speak for and silence them: who are you and what have you done?

Anas Modamani's legal battle is another case of fighting against imperial faciality. Modamani arrived in Germany in July 2015 after leaving his friends and family behind in Darayya, a suburb of Damascus. His arduous journey took him across the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece, and then, along the Balkan route, he moved from one crowded refugee camp to the next. Only a few days after he arrived in Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel visited his refugee center outside of Berlin. Modamani's selfie would instantaneously go viral and develop a life of its own. In the weeks following his snapshot, Modamani was held up as a model refugee and invited to German talk shows. He was considered to give a face to the many people seeking protection in Germany at the time. He comforted the public with his commitment to learning the language and his close relationship with the German host family. As his selfie with Merkel continued to circulate online, rumors began to spread, linking him to terrorist attacks; one of the first false posts identified him as Najim Laachraoui, one of the terrorists behind the 2016 Brussels bombings. In a montage contrasting their portraits, the story claimed that Merkel "took a selfie with a terrorist", a misidentification that spread to Facebook and began to be shared by hundreds of people. Modamani was further associated with the truck attack on a Berlin Christmas market in the same year, and with setting fire to a sleeping homeless man. Besides evoking the label of the refugee-as-terrorist and subjecting Modamani to the status of always already criminalized because he had crossed a border, the confusion at play here is not incidental. It is inherently tied to biometrics in general and to its colonial history in particular. One of the founding moments of biometrics can be traced back to British colonized India when colonizers first used fingerprints to suppress an uprising by Indian conscripts against colonial rule in 1857. The technology presented a new classificatory knowledge and sought to enforce law and order upon an unruly population that was perceived—in racist terms—as an undistinguishable colonized mass. Just as British officials were not able to "tell one Indian from another" (quoted from Cole 2009, 64), Modamani's misrecognized facial features are part of a racism underpinning technological infrastructures that have significantly increased under digital conditions: all derivatives from the White Man template are thought to look the same and are thus, interchangeable.

From his cousin's home, Modamani began a self-designed campaign to counter the misinformation by writing directly to the people who shared the

fake news and the posting on Facebook, calling the rumors "treacherous and shameless". As months passed and more posts started appearing, Modamani began legal proceedings against Facebook, claiming it had failed to take sufficient action against the defamatory posts he flagged. His charges present the first instance formal action was taken against Facebook in Germany concerning fake news. In January 2017, the German court ruled against him and decided that Facebook does not have to seek and delete defamatory posts linked to him. In this case, Facebook, at least in legal terms, reassured its hegemony over the circulation of faces. When the filing cabinets of the 19th century storing criminals' biometric data and portraits were superseded by digital databases targeting criminals and non-criminals alike, this process allowed for the acceleration of the faciality machine in time and space. In Modamani's powerful stance against the company, he not only defied the racialized template of the terrorist but went against the faciality machine that (de)authorizes faces according to citizenship status and race. His struggle highlights that under conditions of digitality, Facebook's facial archive becomes a dangerous locus for expropriating identity in the service of imperial faciality. In this context, to reclaim face against its attributed template becomes unruly as it rejects the way faces are governed by systems that still bear the imprint of scientific racism.

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5 On the manifesto: colonial pasts and European futures in *The Great Replacement*

by Lucy Gasser

The deadly shootings that killed 51 people in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019 were preceded by the online publication of a manifesto professing the intentions of the terrorist responsible.[1] This manifesto, dubbed *The Great Replacement*, is a document that presents a quandary, because to pay attention to it is to some extent to give its terrorist-author and his ideas visibility. To ignore it, however, might constitute a missed opportunity to better understand the structural problems of which it is symptomatic. Discounting altogether the discourse the terrorist draws on and perpetuates arguably serves to deny the need to deal with the systemic issues at stake, and allows him to be "dismissed as a misfit and a loner, a crazed product of an isolated, extremist milieu with no links to the mainstream" (Moses 2019, 201). As a document that draws on existing discourses of racism and *white* supremacy, it presents a potential resource for understanding the background and evolution of such discourses (see Crothers and O'Brien 2020; Campion 2019; Bangstad 2014). A more refined understanding of these issues can be useful to developing strategies to counter their agenda. It is in pursuit of this latter goal that I mobilise a careful close reading of the manifesto, in which its terrorist-author will remain deliberately nameless. I would warn readers that this entails discussing racist ideas. I write as a *white* person, and as such as a beneficiary of the systemic privilege various structures of *white* supremacy bestow.

In what follows, I want to consider the particular type of document constituted by the manifesto as a genre of sorts. The Christchurch terrorist's adoption of the form is not unique in *white* supremacist terrorism, and it has become increasingly clear that such documents travel and cross-pollinate, revealing a capacity to inspire other such acts (see Dearden 2019), and other such documents. As such, the genre itself and the discursive practices to which it appears to lend itself warrant some examination.

The Great Replacement draws on a well of pre-existing discourses in its efforts to describe a narrative that would justify the murder its terrorist-author calls for. This narrative is premised, in particular, on the presumption and promulgation of a righteous and ongoing colonial relationship between Europe and the settler colonies of Australia and New Zealand. This colonial relationship and the temporality it furnishes, in turn, are necessary to the manifesto's wielding of a particular narrative of Europeanness, characterized by racial homogeneity and necessary to justify the terrorist-author's claim on a 'European' future.

Regarded loosely as representing a genre of a kind, a manifesto is a document that aims to cause change in the world. It embarks from the premise of the inadequacy of the status quo and sets out to articulate its insufficiencies and propose an itinerary for redress: to move the world from where it wrongly stands to where it rightly belongs. To make manifest that which it deems good, the manifesto must also move its reader to action. To be moved to action, those readers must be *moved*: their emotions must be set in motion, so that they might set about putting their bodies in motion.

Etymologically, the *manifesto* shares its roots with 'manifest'. A manifesto aims to make manifest: to make something of nothing, to make actions of words; to insinuate the inevitability of its path to the future while paradoxically calling for that path to be cleaved. The word likely stems from the Latin noun *manus*, meaning 'hand', coupled to the adjective *festus*, meaning 'hostile'. As the expression of a hostile hand, the manifesto seeks to raise the hand that is its etymological grandparent, to take something into hand, to lend a hand to its worthy cause. "Raising a hand" is a tellingly ambivalent phrase. It might be an expression of democracy, meaning to put your hand up, to speak out, to make yourself seen and heard. It might be an expression of fascism in the form of a salute. It might be "to raise a hand to someone" as the euphemistic expression of a gesture that pre-empts violence. The last is a particularly apt description of the manifesto under discussion.

It is an impatient genre, in that it seeks to propel the now into the future. It is fashioned as the beginning of something, but also as a culmination. As Janet Lyon articulates this threshold temporality, the manifesto as genre "both generates and marks a break in history: it is both a trace and a tool of change" (Lyon 1999, 16). In this sense, it is starkly future-oriented, while betraying a keen preoccupation with the past: making a claim on the future by laying out its rendition of a 'more accurate' history. Written in an anticipatory mode, it walks a tightrope between arguing for the inevitability of change, and a call to action to bring about that change, essentially undermining that

inevitability. A call to action is set to slide along the hostile hand to become a call to arms.

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In *The Great Replacement*, it is a willful misrepresentation of the history of colonialism that is harnessed to produce a narrative of justification for the murder it precedes. The terrorist-author describes his country of birth, Australia, as a "finger on the hand of the body of Europe" (18).[2] From finger to hand to the body of Europe, he is at pains to situate the country of his birth, Australia, and the country of his crimes, New Zealand, as extensions of the globally sprawling body of the British Empire. Writing in the anticipatory mode of responding to an imagined interlocutor's question—"Why do you care so much about Europe, aren't you an Australian?" (18)—the terrorist-author responds:

> Australia, just like the rest of the colonies of Europe, is simply an off-shoot of the European people. A finger on the hand of the body of Europe.
>
> The origins of my language is [sic] European, my culture is European, my political beliefs are European, my philosophical beliefs are European, my identity is European, and, most importantly, my blood is European. (18)

It is colonisation and its ongoing legacies that serve to demarcate the realm of the 'European'. Implicit in the bodily metaphor is an understanding of Australia and New Zealand as the extremities of an organic, whole imperial body: to sever his homeland from Europe would be to amputate a limb. Blood flows from the heart of the body in Europe to its outstretched digits in the Pacific: the tacit vulnerability of the appendage is intimated by the fact that the body can survive the amputation, but the finger won't.

The imagery of far-flung limbs betokens a latent sense of their implied peripherality, and by extension the peripherality of the Europeanness of the terrorist-author's positioning. British imperialism posited its antipodean colonies as far-flung outposts of its colonial civilising mission, which would produce a long-lived legacy of the image of Australia as "the last 'white bastion' with geographical remoteness but cultural and ideological closeness to Britain" (Affeldt 2014, 26). The manifesto's narrating of (*white*) Australianness in the image of (*white*) Europeanness hopes to collapse geographical distance with cultural and racial closeness, in order

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2 *The Great Replacement* (2019). Available online. Subsequent citations will be limited to in-text page numbers.

to validate the importance and necessity of the ongoing existence of a bastion of 'European civilisation'. The claim on ethnic entitlement can be embedded in established narratives of Australian right-wing extremism in which "[e]thnocentric discourses elevate an imagined white identity that is believed to be authentic and nativist to the Australian historical landscape, despite being a settler society" (Campion 2019, 222–23). Simultaneously, the manifesto's particular framing of this branch of Europeanness as an extremity communicates an internally fracturing awareness of the precarity of the repeatedly asserted family tie.

The terrorist-author aims to legitimate his acts through recourse to an account of historical events that would cast the violence he calls for as justified. This narrative entails a peculiar temporality, which sketches a truncated history that begins at the point most convenient to legitimising the terrorist-author's claims but is also capable of looping back to a revised earlier history if necessary. This is a temporal logic bequeathed by the narratives of colonialism. It is a fundamentally colonial story that furnishes the fiction of European arrival in Australia as alighting on *terra nullius*, uninhabited land, uninscribed earth, which the colonists valiantly tamed and made fruitful. The manifesto leans, in this regard, on myths it doesn't have to invent for itself. Its story entails the obliteration and erasure of Indigenous peoples who inhabited these lands before the arrival of Europeans on what were to become colonised territories. Claims on the land that predate colonial invasion cannot be accommodated by this narrative of justification and must therefore be ignored or elided. Colonial arrival must serve as the 'beginning' of the history of these territories in order to enable the terrorist-author's prior and thus ostensibly legitimate claim for *whites* as the rightful heirs to that land and its bounties.

Early colonists in Australia were resilient to evidence to the contrary, such that they found a way to restructure the temporality of colonisation when it suited their aims. The 'discovery' of megaliths near Mount Elephant in Victoria, for example, which proved the presence of a pre-existing civilisation, was manipulated to serve the colonial narrative. As Bruce Pascoe points out, "[c]olonists recorded inflated accounts of the structures and then informed the press that only Europeans could have built them" (Pascoe 2019, 220). In this way, they were corralled as evidence of an even earlier European presence so that colonisers could further "legitimize their right to inherit the Australian continent. European colonization literally became a process of (*re*)possession of a lost domain of their heritage" (McNiven and Russell

2005, 113; my emphasis).[3] The bracketed prefix indicates the legitimation of appropriation as *re*-appropriation.

The Great Replacement follows a temporality of convenience that echoes this colonial logic. The terrorist-author does this by construing his act as righteous *re*taliation to prior violence on the part of those he opposes, to assert a rightful *re*-claiming of territories that have been subject to "invasion" (13) by Muslims who continue to "occupy" (6) and "colonise" (13) supposedly European lands. He does this by framing al-Andalus, the Ottoman Empire, and current-day migrations in the language of invasions, colonisation and occupation. This serves to tell a story in which 'European' lands need to be retained for or returned to their rightful inhabitants and owners (on *white* possession, see Moreton-Robinson 2015), and defended from a Muslim danger which is threatening them not for the first time, but *yet again*.

These histories are cherry-picked or downright false, and the looping temporality is wielded as is convenient. Wholeheartedly endorsing British imperialism, while indicting so-called Muslim 'colonisation' is, moreover, jarringly ironic. Its capricious delineation of the past serves *The Great Replacement*'s claim on the future. The genre of the manifesto has a particular temporality which is, after all, also fundamentally forward-looking. A claim on the future is furthermore what animates the rationalizations of those who commit genocidal acts more broadly, which they frame as "preventative self-defence" (Moses 2019, 203). The terrorist-author of *The Great Replacement* sees the future as in danger: there is a need and a duty to "ensure a future" (5), more specifically a "racial future" (25), tied to the need to safeguard the "Europe of the future" (38). As the terrorist-author would have it, that future is endangered not only by the purported incursion of Muslim peoples into supposedly 'European' spaces, but by what he presents as dangerously high birth rates in these communities. According to him, the "invaders are the ones over populating the world. Kill the invaders, kill the overpopulation and by doing so save the environment" (22). He aims to construe his act as saving both a 'European' and a planetary future, as he seeks to present his victims as an unmanageable strain on an already overburdened planet.

His concern for what he understands as a danger to the planet marks out the Christchurch killer as what he himself dubs "eco-fascist" (15), as part of

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3   This is not unique to colonists in Australia, as a parallel narrative was mobilized to explain away evidence of precolonial civilisation in the extensive settlements at Great Zimbabwe by attributing them to "Phoenicians from Carthage" (Chigumadzi 2018, 25). On this, see the work of Sikho Siyotula, whose artworks appear in this volume.

his narrative entails the unsustainability of overtaxing the planet with these higher birth rates. For the narrative of a so-called 'Islamisation of Europe', there is a wealth of prior work for the terrorist-author to draw on. It is a view perhaps most (in)famously articulated in the controversial *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within* (2006) by Bruce Bawer, and *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis (2006)* by Bat Ye'or. Ye'or presents a concept of "Eurabia", which for her denotes the new geopolitical entity into which Europe is mutating: a marriage of Europe and Arabia. This is the product, in Ye'or's logic, of Europe's bowing to its increased 'Islamisation'. The terrorist responsible for the attacks in Norway in 2011 included lengthy passages from Ye'or in his manifesto. This cache of anti-Islamic discourses also includes Renaud Camus' *Le grand remplacement* (2012), from which the manifesto and various subsequent iterations of the conspiracy theory have arguably taken their name.

In the manifesto's narrative, as in those of these other Islamophobic treaties, Europeans are in danger of being replaced. The European body is in danger of degeneration due to change in its physical constitution. For the Christchurch terrorist, the extended colonial European body is in danger: *white* bodies are represented as being under threat by the proliferation of Brown bodies.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Repeated invocations of the terrorist's own 'Europeanness' reveal a latent sense of the dubiousness of his claim on it. Only by insisting on the enduring wholeness of the colonial body of the British Empire can the terrorist-author insinuate himself, as well as the countries of his birth and crimes, as belonging to Europe. His assertion of belonging is necessary to justify his investment in and claim on Europe and its future. The manifesto's understanding of Europeanness is evidently racial and emerges most plainly as a declawed stand-in for *whiteness*. In the manifesto's self-imposed Q&A session, the terrorist-author articulates whom he considers *white*: "Those that are ethnically and culturally European" (17). The conflation of European and *white* furnishes him with the discursive legitimation of his stake in defending and fighting for 'Europe'. Though in Australia, as elsewhere, not all Europeans have been historically regarded as equally European, or as equally *white*—as in the case, for instance, of Italian migrants to Australia (see Pugliese 2002).

By identifying himself as "[j]ust a [sic] ordinary White man, 28. Born in Australia […] My parents are of Scottish, Irish and English stock" (5), the terrorist-author stakes his claim in European ancestry: his blood, so he would

have it, is European blood. The once-dubious *whiteness* of the Irish in some contexts (Jackson 1963; Hickman and Walter 1997) can also have no place in this story: Europeanness must be homogeneous for this narrative to work.

The discourse of Europeanness developed in the document is integral to the manifesto's dichotomous construction of an *us* and a *them.* This is arguably a generic necessity of the form. Lyon indicates the essential performativity of the manifesto—or at least its foundational ambition towards performativity— as a "a genre that gives the appearance of being at once both word and deed, both threat and incipient action" (Lyon 1999, 14). For Lyon, "'we' becomes not only the nomenclature of a speaking group, but also a rhetorical device to *evoke* audiences, and to mark the distance in ideological ground between those created audiences and their scripted oppressor" (Lyon 1999, 23–24). By speaking for a 'we', it aims also to create that 'we', to call into being a unified 'we' capable of action.

The terrorist's development of a coherent 'we' is strained by his own Europeanness as one that implicitly requires justification. This reveals a latent insecurity that unleashes his moral panic about the potential loss of the *meaning* and *value* of Europeanness:

> The idea that all it takes for a Han chinese [sic] man to become German is to be born on German soil is as insane as a German born on Mars becoming a Martian.

> Europe is only Europe because of its combined genetic, cultural and linguistic heritage. When non-Europeans are considered European, than [sic] there is no Europe at all. EUROPES [sic] VALUE IS IN THE EUROPEAN PEOPLE (62)

Europeanness must lie in those things that he possesses. For that possession to be meaningful, a lack of those qualities he deems European must exclude others from the 'we' under construction. If Europeanness can too simply be acquired, it loses its value: "When anyone can be a German, a Brit, a Frenchman, then being European has truly lost all meaning" (62). His is a Europeanness that needs to be buttressed by asserting repeatedly its exclusivity and the non-Europeanness of others.

The terrorist-author aims to suggest the 'peripherality' of his chosen target point—New Zealand—as strengthening the message of terror he hopes to disseminate. He is moved to find value in its purported 'remoteness' by its sending an even more potent warning signal. As he sees it,

> an attack in New Zealand would bring to attention the truth of the assault on our civilisation, that no where [sic] in the world was safe, the invaders were

in all our lands, even in the remotest areas of the world and that there was no
where [sic] left to go that was safe and free from mass immigration. (11)

Marking New Zealand as among the "remotest areas", he frames his target
as chosen for its purported peripherality. His message of fear will be stronger
for communicating that *even* here, there are Muslims, and *even* here, there
will be reprisals. Despite these claims, his insistence on the Europeanness of
his own country and the one in which he executes his crimes—and in which
ironically he is an immigrant—really serves to emphasise an acute sense of
dubious Europeanness. The act of terror functions as an act of entreaty to
remind the European centre of its distant periphery, the imperial body of its
forgotten limb.

In the context of oftentimes strained relations *within* Europe between its
eastern and western parts, S. Sayyid offers a reading of the virulence of anti-
migrant rhetoric, and specifically anti-Muslim racism, in parts of eastern
and central Europe. He argues that one way to account for this racism is to
understand it as an index of the perceived vulnerability of these Europeans'
Europeanness in relation to western Europe. Islamophobia emerges, in this
reading, from a "crisis of European/white identity" (Sayyid 2018, 422), and
he too marks a slippage between European and *white*. This crisis incites
a desire to externalise the problem: "the articulation of Islamophobia
buttresses the Europeanness of this other Europe" (Sayyid 2018, 432). It is
those, so the logic of his argument, who feel their Europeanness endangered
and unacknowledged, who require Others on to whom to project non-
Europeanness in order to stake a stronger claim for their own essential
Europeanness. In a more spatially inclined framing: those who perceive
acutely their own peripherality are keen to claim closeness to the centre by
establishing a greater peripherality elsewhere.

As the document of the terrorist's supposed motivations and agenda, the
manifesto marks an opportunity to examine the mechanisms by which its
terrorist-author tries to claim his Europeanness. He does this by asserting the
non-Europeanness of Others, and thereby trying to establish a narrative of
entitlement which serves as justification for his actions. His Europeanness
means that some things are his "BIRTHRIGHT" (54), as well as that he has
a *duty*—"racial responsibilities" (56)—and that as such, his acts of violence
are not merely justified, but called for, because they are in fact a means
by which to serve his understanding of justice. This narrative can only be
construed as just if the integrity of the 'we' and 'them' units is maintained,
and this depends on establishing his Europeanness as well as 'their' non-
Europeanness. Yet the terrorist-author's repeated insistence on his own

Europeanness, to draw a parallel from Sayyid's articulation, belies a deep sense of the dubiousness of his claim.

British colonialism has furnished the manifesto with some of its crucial premises and logics. The terrorist who claimed the lives of 77 people in Norway in 2017—to whom the Christchurch killer explicitly gives a nod of admiration, and whose approval he claims to have gained—is used to serve as vindication for the acts in New Zealand. He and his actions can productively be understood as "embedded within a wider network" (Crothers and O'Brien 2020, 252), in which discourses of colonial pasts and of Europeanness are complicit.

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Finally, the resilience of the colonial temporalities that are manifested in this document points to an ongoing need to make colonial pasts more visible to a broader audience, and critically deal with the manifold repercussions of their naturalised narratives. Recognising the ways in which Europeanness is used to operate as a synonym for *whiteness* is just a first step here. In the context of this particular manifesto, undermining the value attributed to Europeanness is one way of undercutting the terrorist's construction of a 'we' and, crucially, his own inclusion in it. The use of Europeanness in *white* supremacist rhetoric, as well as in general, warrants investigation. As Alana Lentin has noted, even otherwise commendable anti-racist efforts still need to "be cognisant of the failure to dispute the value of Europeanness" (Lentin 2004, 14). It is precisely the discursive manipulation enabled by a failure to dispute the value of that Europeanness, which the discussion of this manifesto crystallises.

In a narrative that follows the same contours as the colonial civilising mission, many European institutions are still wont to present a figure of Europe as the fountainhead of 'progress' and in subsequent iterations as inherently progress*ive*. Such a conception is enabled by an externalization of the problem of racism, when that racism is constructed as coming from without. As Sara Ahmed puts it: "[t]he multicultural nation can itself be taken away by the presence of others—who do not reflect back the good image the nation has of itself—such as intolerant racist others" (2010, 134). As such, racism has frequently been wielded as *not*-European to comfort those (*white* Europeans) who like to understand themselves as liberal and tolerant.

The racism of the Christchurch terrorist is unthinkable without recourse to 'Europeanness'. *The Great Replacement* reveals starkly the ambivalent uses to which discourses of Europeanness can be and have been put. This

ambivalence precipitates a call to examine carefully what values Europe and Europeanness are imbued with and to what ends these are made to work. It also prompts a critical consideration of the complicity of various articulations of Europeanness in producing these narratives. Questioning these can provide resources for the development of "effective and nuanced counter-narratives" (Campion 2019, 223).

Building counter-narratives entails actively making the image of what a 'European' looks like more heterogeneous; diversifying what 'European' means in mainstream cultural imaginaries. Recognising racialisation practices within Europe—so that existing diversity and unevenly attributed 'Europeanness' are taken into account—can help facilitate this. Effective counter-imaginaries would serve to make the conflation of European and *white* as bizarre as it should be, but which also mainstream European politicians participate in reproducing. *The Great Replacement*'s narrative is premised on homogeneous 'Europeanness' as homogeneous *whiteness*. This cannot account for difference within these constructed categories, such that the once dubious *whiteness* of, for instance, Italians in Australia, the Irish in England, and east-central Europeans in western Europe, constitute implicit disturbances in the fabric of this Europeanness. Terrorist attacks foster extreme positions—as does the hortatory rhetoric of the manifesto genre's dichotomous us/them discourse. Insisting on the heterogeneity of Europe and Europeanness serves the development of a counter-narrative that frays the stitching-together of an 'us' and a 'them' along the lines willed by *white* supremacy. In this way, as a document that generically pivots on seeking to produce these categories, the manifesto's agenda can be fundamentally undercut.

In order to better understand how the discursive resources for such narratives are generated, it is productive to examine the values attributed to the figure of Europe. What have become 'mainstream' right-leaning political parties and politicians provide discursive fodder to *white* supremacist movements (see Baker and Shear 2019; Croffey 2019). By honing the skills of recognising which narratives and premises are mobilised to what ends, those interested in combatting *white* supremacist ideologies may become more attuned to how they are wielded and weaponised in everyday conversation and mainstream media, acquiring literacy in decoding these arguments and the premises upon which they are built.

The names of those killed in the terror attack in March 2019:

Abdelfattah Qasem

Abdukadir Elmi

Abdullahi Dirie

Ahmed Gamaluddin Abdel
Ghani

Ali Elmadani

Amjad Hamid

Ansi Alibava

Areeb Ahmed

Ashraf Ali

Ashraf al-Masri

Ashraf Morsi

Asif Vora

Linda Armstrong

Maheboob Khokhar

Mathullah Safi

Mohamad Moosid
Mohamedhosen

Mohammed Imran Khan

Mohammed Omar Faruk

Mohsin Al Harbi

Mojammel Hoq

Mounir Soliman

Mucad Ibrahim

Muhammad Haziq Mohd-
Tarmizi

Muhammed Abdusi Samad

Atta Elayyan	Musa Vali Suleman Patel
Daoud Nabi	Muse Nur Awale
Farhaj Ahsan	Naeem Rashid
Ghulam Hussain	Osama Adnan Abu Kweik
Hamza Mustafa	Ozair Kadir
Haroon Mahmood	Ramiz Vora
Hosne Ahmed	Sayyad Milne
Hussein Al-Umari	Suhail Shahid
Hussein Moustafa	Syed Jahandad Ali
Junaid Ismail	Talha Naeem
Kamel Darwish	Tariq Omar
Karam Bibi	Zakaria Bhuiyan
Khaled Mustafa	Zeehan Raza
Lilik Abdul Hamid	

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6 Weaving worlds together: an Afropolitan perspective on shweshwe fabric

by Anna von Rath

A couple of years ago, I went to South Africa for a research project on Afropolitanism. I spent a couple of months in Cape Town and before returning home to Germany, I bought a piece of shweshwe fabric as a souvenir. I like sewing and this printed, dyed cotton fabric promised to serve for an enjoyable project. Shweshwe is widely used for traditional clothing in South Africa. Originally dyed indigo, it is now available in a variety of colors often dotted with circles in different sizes that form intricate geometric patterns. When buying the fabric, I remember that I already anticipated a feeling of discomfort. I chose a color and design that I considered to be rather discreet. My actual thought was: It does not look too African.

Back in Germany, when I want to start a new sewing project, I sometimes take my piece of shweshwe. I hold it in my hands and look at it for a while. I still like its dark blue color and the regular, small design of white dots. It's a strong cloth, not too heavy, probably easy to sew with. But the idea of actually making a piece of clothing for myself from it increases my initial feeling of discomfort. I usually put it back into my box of collected fabrics for later use.

My recurring reaction to the fabric exposes my fear that I—a *white*[1] European—will face negative judgment when wearing something made from a fabric that people read as African. My fear is how my choice of dress will be perceived by others and being called out for cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation refers to the adoption of elements of other cultures and their distortion or deformation. It refers to wrongdoing or misuse, especially when the concerned party ignores their own position of power over the culture from which they "borrow" (cf. Sow 2011, 417). As a *white* European, I am in a privileged position due to the legacies of colonialism. Therefore, it seems

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1   Throughout this essay, I use the terms *white* to describe a socio-political position and not the color of a person's skin. I write *white* in italics to emphasize and criticize that *white* refers to a political position of power. I want to mark the *white* position as such to counter the widespread practice of making it the neutral position by not naming it.

that my usage of shweshwe could easily be read as a willful act of ignoring the colonial violence that marks the relationship between Europe and Africa.

The concise guideline for politically correct behavior implied by the discourse of cultural appropriation seems to be to stick with one's own culture. This sounds simple enough at first. But my research on Afropolitanism leads me to question whether there is such a thing as a clearly defined "own culture" and whether a valorizing of cultural purity should really be the aim. For one thing, Afropolitanism as represented by the renowned political theorist Achille Mbembe focuses on the "historical phenomenon of worlds in movement" leading to colliding cultures and hybridization (2007, 26-27). In addition to that, there are many public figures associated with Afropolitanism who promote African fashion in the global North. To name only one example, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has launched a #WearNigerian campaign on social media. For every public appearance, she chooses an outfit made by a Nigerian designer in hopes of bringing global attention to Nigerian fashion in support of the industry. This campaign suggests that people living in the global North—including *white* people—should buy from African fashion designers.

In this essay, I will have a closer look at Afropolitan ideas of cultural ownership, the history of shweshwe fabric and their potential implications for dealing with cultural products in the contemporary, globalized world. It's unlikely that these investigations will lead to any clear-cut recommendations for action. Rather, Afropolitan theory invites people to question and rethink established norms, to practice a radical open-mindedness even with regard to one's own opinions and worldview. The idea that all human beings are interconnected is central to Afropolitanism. This focus implies that we share more than established categories may have us think, but when wishing to develop an ethical and political way of being and acting in this world, everyone is positioned differently vis-à-vis entangled historical processes.

Achille Mbembe's Afropolitanism as a critique of cultural ownership

The way people dress, whether in clothes made from shweshwe or other fabrics, clearly participates in expressing the self. Getting dressed plays a symbolic, communicative, and aesthetic role. Shweshwe is generally connected to representing 'Africanness'; it is considered to be the fabric of traditional dresses worn by Xhosa and Sotho women. The connection of a certain style or clothing tradition to a particular culture gives rise to many

questions: does a traditional clothing practice indicate cultural ownership? Is it disrespectful to adopt cultural practices of other cultures—such as dressing in a certain way? Achille Mbembe would probably say no.

Afropolitanism, as described by Mbembe, is a new name to characterize contemporary African self-expression that broadens the meanings of 'African'. With his notion of Afropolitanism, Mbembe stresses that cultural exchange forms a central part in any form of self-expression: people are mobile and their contact naturally brings about an exchange of goods and ideas. It is his understanding that Africanness is created by those who inhabit the continent and create African art and culture (2007, 26). With his theory of Afropolitanism, Mbembe argues against original cultural ownership. His re-reading of African history insists upon the significance of people's movement, which makes it impossible to speak of "autochthony" or "authentic customs" (27).

Mbembe's proposition includes diasporas who have come to live on the African continent: Asians, Middle Easterners and Europeans. He is adamant about the participation in African art and culture by these diaspora groups who, for various reasons, settled in Africa in the past centuries. The encounters between different people on the continent had an impact on so-called traditionally African clothes. Mbembe explains that

> [t]hey all arrived with their different languages, customs, eating habits, clothing fashions, ways of praying, in other words their ways of being and doing. Today the relations between these various diasporas and their societies of origin are complex. Many of their members see themselves as fully fledged Africans, even if they also belong somewhere else. (27)

Such mobility and cultural encounters are a phenomenon that Mbembe detects as a centuries-long, continuous, shape-shifting element of everyday life of people living in Africa. No matter whether they came as colonizers, indentured laborers, or in search of their roots, they can all be(come) Africans. Mbembe's scenario of colliding cultures caught in the maelstrom of war, invasion, migration, and intermarriage of various religions, creates something new, but fully African, based on the exchange of techniques and trading goods (27). These encounters always have elements of intermingling and exchange simply through exposure to difference. But Mbembe acknowledges that encounters between the people who arrived, lived in or left Africa have been subject, at times, to extreme violence. Mbembe emphasizes that "sometimes … we have not been able to choose freely", but Africans learned to domesticate and use what was at their disposal (28).

Ashleigh Harris summarizes that "Mbembe's Afropolitanism is as much a tracing of Africa in the world as it is a history of the world in Africa" (2017, 244). In fact, shweshwe fabric is a good example for a history of the world in Africa and the "interweaving of worlds" (Mbembe 2007, 73). Shweshwe has not always been African, but became African through encounters between Swiss and German settlers, and Xhosa and Sotho people. Tracing the history of shweshwe fabric provides insights into the violence that these encounters between different cultural groups often entail.

How shweshwe became African

Europeans started to settle on the southern African coast from the 15th century onwards. Only slowly did the settlers begin to travel inland with the plan to missionize and claim ownership over the land. Among African leaders, it became quickly known that the *white* people posed a threat to their leadership and they adopted different strategies to deal with these invaders. The leader who interests me most is King Moshoeshoe I. In the early 19th century, Moshoeshoe reigned over the land that is present-day Lesotho. Moshoeshoe is well-remembered for his diplomatic skills. One of his strategies was engaging with *white* people to learn about them and thus secure a safe future for his people and territory. The distinctive indigo blauwdruk that is shweshwe fabric was popularized by Moshoeshoe and is most likely even named after him (Kuper 2013).

In *Begging to be Black,* the *white* South African writer Antjie Krog explores questions of belonging and her narrative reaches back to the days of Moshoeshoe. Krog writes about the king of the Basotho that

&Q& Moshoeshoe must have been acutely aware of the encroachment of white people in their wagons: initially only one or two at a time, and always moving on. Then came more, who stayed longer and in bigger groups, provoking bloodier confrontations to enforce their frameworks of ownership. Moshoeshoe would have realized very quickly that he did not yet have the right negotiating tools to deal with them when they finally turned their eyes to the luscious red-grass plains stretching north from the Maluti Mountains. (Krog 2009, 50-51)

Moshoeshoe knew that there was no way of avoiding the *white* people who flowed into the country. He also knew that they posed a threat. Therefore, he invited two missionaries to settle in Basutoland to learn from and about them. His goal was to be able to develop an effective strategy for negotiating with *whites* for which he needed to know their ways of doing things.

In the hopes of establishing *his* terms and conditions, Moshoeshoe initiated the encounter between the Basotho and the *white* Europeans. But when the missionaries arrived in Basutoland, he quickly came to realize that the willingness to learn from each other was one-sided. The missionaries brought their prefabricated opinions with them and focused on spreading their supposedly higher values and more sophisticated views.

The very first encounter set the tone. Moshoeshoe had sent his sons to greet the missionaries when they arrived. This was meant to show respect. However, Krog explains that the missionaries experienced the dress and conduct of Moshoeshoe's sons as unfitting:

> Although this was meant in good spirit, the missionaries were filled with misgivings: to be welcomed by jolly bareback riders, dressed in old leopard skins, naked legs dangling over steaming horses, did not seem appropriate to the importance of the occasion. (Krog 2009, 58)

Clearly, what people wear can be deciphered in various ways. What was meant to be a gesture of respectful welcome seemed to create the opposite effect by confirming the missionaries' stereotypes about Africans. No saddles for the horses and no fabrics for clothes to fully cover the body differed from European ways of doing things. The missionaries lacked knowledge about the local customs and immediately judged the Basotho according to European understandings of appropriate behavior. They judged a local gesture of respect as bad manners and wrongly connected this observation to an inherent backwardness of *all* locals, inaccurately generalizing the different people(s) of the continent.

The missionaries' presumptions made it impossible to exchange ideas as equals. Moshoeshoe had to experience that the missionaries considered themselves superior not only in their way of dressing, but in all spheres of life.

> Moshoeshoe spent many hours explaining to the missionaries the sensible value of customs like polygamy, lobola, initiation and rainmaking in weaving a community together, but he always came up against the whites' inflexible belief that the Western way was the only worthy way of living on earth. Those outside this 'true' way were inferior. They could enter the privileged domain through conversion, but black people quickly realized that conversion made them 'like whites' but never equal to whites. (Krog 2009, 114)

Moshoeshoe defied conversion, refusing to confirm the missionaries in their belief that their ways really were the best. But he was more open-minded than the missionaries and appreciated learning about their way of doing things, and comparing them to his own people's customs and habits. He sent some of

his people to be educated at the mission stations and especially appreciated the *white* people's way of dress-making, an interest that is reflected in the fact that shweshwe fabric is nowadays named for the king of the Basotho.

By the end of the 19th century, Basotho women had gradually replaced their animal skin garments with dresses made of shweshwe cotton (cf. Pheto-Moeti, Riekert, and Pelser 2017, 25-26). This was clearly a result of interaction with the missionaries. Not only did the Basotho take the teachings of the Europeans seriously, Pheto-Moeti, Riekert and Pelser observe that "young women who were educated at mission stations began to dress in European style dresses" (2017, 25). They adapted their outer appearance to the preferences of the missionaries.

On the one hand, shweshwe speaks of intercultural exchange. On the other hand, the fabric symbolizes a clear division of power. The encounter between the Basotho and the European missionaries shows that it was impossible for King Moshoeshoe to gain the upper hand in the negotiations, no matter how much he and his people adapted to European customs and habits to appease the inopportune guests. Therefore, Moshoeshoe's diplomatic reasoning and his interest in shweshwe can be read as a not fully voluntary reaction to the increasing pressure exerted by *white* people and their wish to rule over African land and peoples. Moshoeshoe tried to soften the relationship with the foreigners by accommodating their tastes and worldviews. His diplomatic concessions clearly speak of an increasing oppression. Sara Ahmed points out that the root of the word *oppression* is from *press*: being pressed into certain forms, restrained and restricted by surrounding forces (2017, 50).

Moshoeshoe's situation of being oppressed by Europeans who—among other things—used such a mundane thing as clothes for exerting their power connects to broader questions of dress and colonialism. Especially the way people dressed became a point of pressure during colonialism. Jennifer Craik explains that

> [i]n conjunction with conventional techniques of persuasion and acculturation, dress codes were often treated as integral to the process of subjugation. Along with indigenous languages, local dress codes were suppressed as if the acquisition of a new visible identity worn on the body ensured the acquisition of a new 'modern' cultural identity. Clothes became a weapon between colonisers and colonised. First, the colonisers used clothes to impose the authority of 'western' ways; later, local people used indigenous clothes to resist that imposition. (Craik 1994, 27)

Shweshwe fabric represents an unequal power dynamic between Africans and Europeans in the past, but also in the present. Nowadays, the power

imbalance continues, but it has taken different forms. Shweshwe has become entirely African. The European heritage of the fabric is largely ignored. But it seems that a European taste for the "exotic" slowly starts a process of (re-) appropriation.

Cultural forms, power relations and the necessity to negotiate

In South Africa, shweshwe is nowadays, to a large extent, sold to foreigners like myself. In Cape Town, shops offer shweshwe notebooks, pouches, wallets, shorts, and caps at every predictable tourist destination—all along Long Street, at the Old Biscuit Mill, at the Watershed, etc. European tourists and expats have developed a taste for products that can be read as 'authentically African' and, therefore, 'exotic'. The products can be taken home as a reminder of the journey to South Africa and an expression of one's worldliness or cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Not surprisingly, contemporary European fashion designers often take inspiration from African fabrics, designs and styles, too.

> Exotic themes have become a leitmotif of new fashions through the incorporation of themes such as jungle or tropical imagery, 'exotic' peoples and cultures, elements of 'folk' and 'ethnic' costume, and recycled items from earlier fashions. Frequently, exotic motifs from tourist destinations or from post-colonial cultures form the basis of fashion derivations. (Craik 1994, 38)

While the interest in African fabrics may be understood as an expression of admiration, it is still an inherently racist form of exoticization. The shweshwe products as well as the designer clothes described by Craik form an aestheticized version of Africa. This aestheticization constructs Africa as 'other' and generalizes the continent as a place where you find colorful fabrics and inspiration. In Europe, only non-*white* people and regions are perceived as exotic, which appears to be a colonial legacy. The term "exotic" became part of the German language during colonialism. Etymologically, the term means "foreign" or "alien". (cf. Arndt and Ofuatey-Alazard 2011).

That said, in his essay on Afropolitanism, Mbembe still warns against retreating into nativism and dualistic thinking patterns, i.e. the idea of sticking to one's own culture and avoiding anything that might belong to another culture. Mbembe calls the focus on particular cultures' imagined roots, origins or authentic customs highly problematic. He even criticizes African movements that preceded Afropolitanism, such as pan-Africanism, African nationalisms, and African socialism, for foregrounding racial or national solidarities. According to Mbembe, these important approaches to

making sense of Africa have become outdated for being too engaged with dissociating from anything European/colonial (2007, 28). As a consequence, they fail to acknowledge that people's mobility and encounters have (had) a strong impact on that which is now African. Shweshwe has become truly African through violent encounters with Europeans. The fabric and the dyeing technique are not originally African, but they have become African through adoption and adaptation. An Afropolitan stance refers to accepting the fact that people move around the African continent, to and away from it, that mobility creates new cultural forms and that nothing can ever be pure. Mbembe suggests that people develop an ethics and politics of openness towards each other when they accept their interconnectedness.

In contrast, Mbembe explains that nativism often leads to sustaining violence. Other scholars support his claim. Peter Geschiere and Francis Nyamnjoh explore why notions of autochthony are still so appealing in our contemporary, globalized world. They conclude that

> autochthony can best be studied as a trope without a substance of its own. It can be used for defining the Self against the Other on all sorts of levels and in all sorts of ways. Autochthony discourses tend to be so supple that they can even accommodate a switch from one Other to another. (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2001, 184)

The division into "self" and "other" can create new systems of power or simply uphold existing ones. Such systems clearly already exist, even if they are socially constructed. *White* supremacy, for example, is a system created for the benefit of certain socially-constructed groups of people. This system has not been implemented overnight. Rather, it has been developed over centuries. Mbembe suggests that the Afropolitan stance acknowledges existing systems and divisions through careful analyses of globally entangled historical processes, but that the aim should then be to move beyond constructed binaries. He argues that differences should not be obscured and Africa should emerge as a global force among other forces (cf. Balakrishnan and Mbembe 2016), which is also why he insists on an Afropolitanism existing next to other cosmopolitanisms. Afropolitanism envisions that people eventually *can* co-exist, that they can recognize similarities and differences, that they share what is good and change what is not.

The open-mindedness for other people's ways of doing things within Afropolitanism marks the development of worldliness:

> the capacity to generate one's own cultural forms, institutions, and lifeways, but also … the ability to foreground, translate, fragment and disrupt realities

and imaginaries originating elsewhere, and in the process, place these forms and process in the service of one's own making. (Mbembe and Nuttall 2008, 1)

Thus, Afropolitanism criticizes the continuity of the global imbalance of power rather than cultural appropriation. Afropolitanism is in favor of mixing cultural forms, while retaining an ethical and political stance. Therefore, an application of Mbembe's theory of Afropolitanism would not deny anyone the use of shweshwe fabric for their clothes. But a political and ethical Afropolitan stance would demand careful self-reflection and evaluation of the context. Mbembe asks that people develop an awareness for the interweaving of worlds and a cultural, historical, and aesthetic sensitivity. This is his provision to avoid any accusation of violation or unjust appropriation.

Afropolitanism is, however, no systemic solution to the already existing unequal forces on the global market. Businesses continue to focus on their own profits and an application of Afropolitan ethics and politics seems not to be in line with this goal. Thus, European fashion houses freely appropriate elements of African cultures for their own financial benefit and for securing their leading position globally. Even the production of shweshwe more recently is controversial: until 1992, shweshwe was mainly manufactured in the UK. Only then did the South African textile company Da Gama obtain the trademark rights to produce the heavy cotton locally (cf. Holmes 2013). But the Da Gama company clearly insinuates different relations of dependency by using the name of the Portuguese colonialist Vasco da Gama. Nowadays, Chinese counterfeit production floods the market with cheaper versions of shweshwe. South African shweshwe designers like Bongiwe Walaza find themselves confronted with the difficult choice of whether to buy the more expensive, higher quality local fabric, or the cheaper Chinese versions (cf. Holmes 2013).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's #WearNigerian campaign offers an example of an Afropolitan intervention into the knottiness of market forces. She uses her reach to draw attention to fashion designers who lack power and privilege in the global market and to change people's consciousness. Her campaign confirms that Afropolitanism mainly offers an impetus for change in spirit: Afropolitanism is hopeful and open-mindedly aspires to create new solidarities and work towards better futures.

Conclusion

Getting dressed is such a convenient instrument for expressing the self and political opinions, because everybody wears clothes. Craik points out that "[f]ashion systems are important because of their accessibility and visibility as commentaries on political exigencies as well as practical ways to negotiate the conflicting departments of existence" (1994: 30). Looking at my piece of shweshwe, I can identify it as a Da Gama fabric by its width and starchy layer (cf. Holmes 2013). I am relieved to know that I supported a local business. Within a capitalist system, consumer choices with their limited impact are clearly still relevant. Apart from that, I wonder about how to act as an individual vis-à-vis globally entangled history. While I can trace back the origins of shweshwe to my own cultural group, I acknowledge that it has become one of the many symbols of colonial injustices. Would wearing it in full knowledge of this history be an identification with the colonial power and therefore a demonstration of complicity? Or does the predictable outside reaction to the fabric as African confirm that some cultural elements can be fully appropriated by the oppressed and become theirs? These questions gesture towards the complicated issue of for whom people dress. My fear of being accused of cultural appropriation or exoticization is directed towards outside judgment I might not even be in agreement with.

My research of Afropolitanism changed my view of the idea of cultural appropriation. Afropolitanism does not provide me with a code of conduct or a set of generally applicable rules, but it invites me to explore historical processes, to reevaluate the present and to carefully negotiate different positions. Mbembe's expression that Afropolitans interweave different worlds (2007, 28) resonates with me. Similarly, Antjie Krog presents sewing as a desirable way to think not only about clothing items, but also about the world in general. Krog's answer regarding how to break through any kind of (imagined) dividing border between people is "suture". She suggests that "perhaps 'suture' is the word that can wash this world. Carefully, to stitch, to weave, this side to that side, so that border becomes a heart-hammered seam" (2009: 123). I end by recognizing the complexity of global history in the form of my small piece of shweshwe fabric. Different peoples have contributed to shweshwe and while writing this essay, I decided to further transform it. I used my South African shweshwe fabric and a French sewing pattern to make a pair of shorts in Germany.

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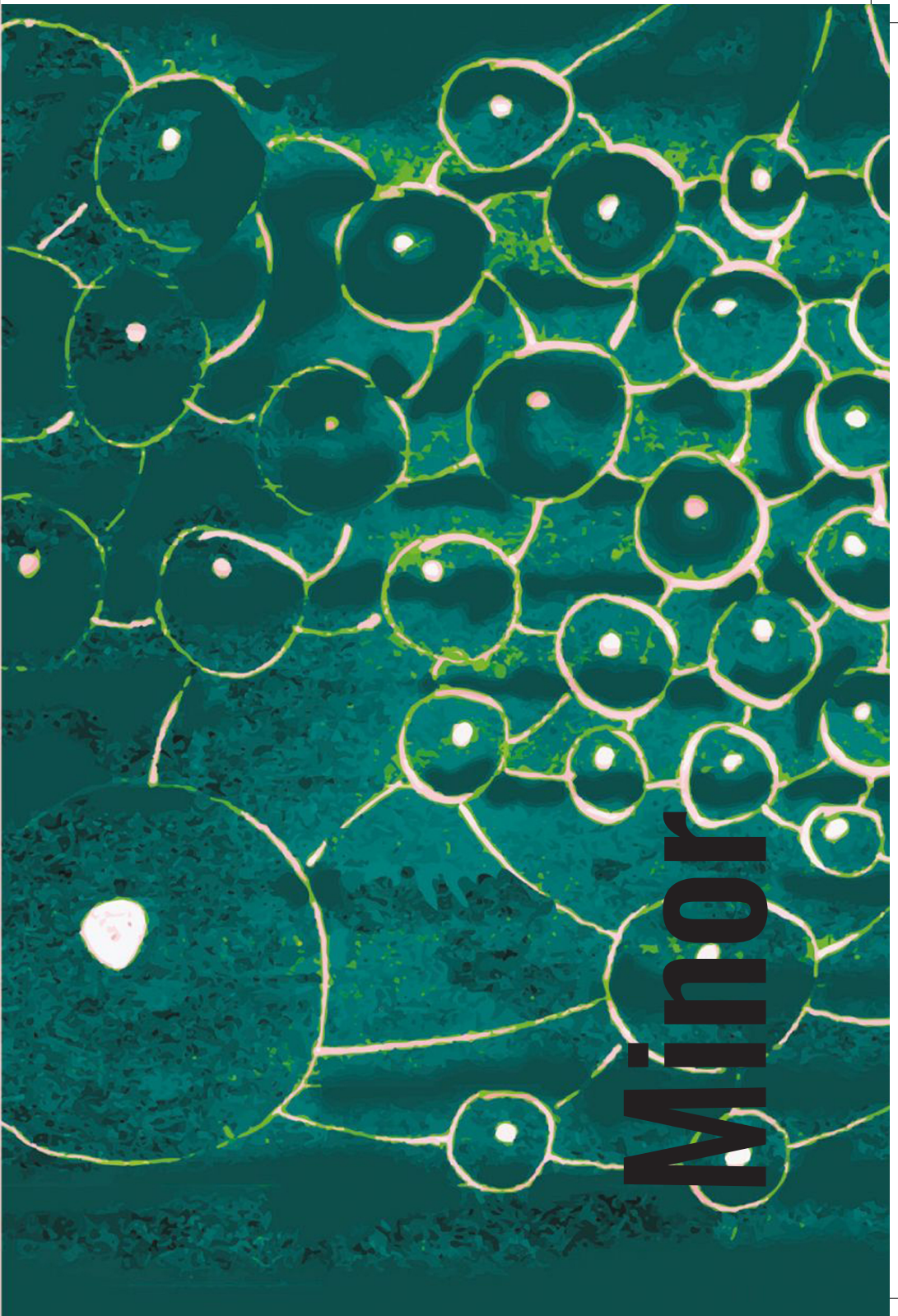
Minor

7 *White* supremacy, *white* innocence and inequality in Australia

by Alana Lentin

This contribution previously appeared on the author's website (alanalentin. net) in March 2019. It was originally developed for a speech given in Australia on the occasion of "Harmony Day". "Harmony Day" was conceived as anti-racist, but has instead rather become an occasion for celebrating the country's cultural diversity.

My 8-year old daughter was getting ready for "Harmony Day" the other day, laying out her Indian clothes and choosing which bindi would go with them, and she said to me, with great earnestness, "*White* people don't have any culture, they're just Australian". From the mouth of babes.

I thought she'd hit a particularly poignant nail on the head. While once a year, those who Australians euphemistically refer to as 'diverse' are allowed to parade their culture in food and clothing, white Australians just are. John Howard's decision to cement his rejection of the notion that racism exists in Australia by renaming the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination "Harmony Day" has resulted in a day when *white* people can pat themselves on the back and say—as successive Australian Prime Ministers repeatedly do—that Australia is a "successful multicultural country" and aren't they a tolerant and entirely non-racist bunch while sampling hummus or samosas.

So why then are *white* people so uncomfortable with being called *white*? Why are *white* people in Australia and elsewhere around the global north so at pains to deny that their *whiteness* has any impact on the way they move through the world? And why do they tie themselves up in knots to ensure that we know it's not "all *white* people"?

Before I get to a discussion of these ideas, I want to address my relationship to *whiteness*.

I am undeniably *white*. I move through the world with the ease that having *white* skin and European features permits. So why do I say 'they' when I speak about *white* people? On the one hand, it would be fair to criticize me and say this is sleight of hand. And I have no problem owning the privilege that comes with *whiteness*. I am acutely aware that those privileges are not

shared by my partner or my daughter. For example, no one ever doubts that my daughter is mine, although she has dark skin, hair and eyes, though I know that the same would not be true if she were the blonde one.

The reason I think about *white* people as 'them' is that I grew up Jewish in Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s. There, I knew I wasn't *white* (although I wouldn't have used that language at the time) because to be *white* meant being Irish and Catholic. The late scholar of race and settler-colonialism, Patrick Wolfe, wrote that colonialism is a "structure, not an event" (1999, 2). A similar thing is true for *whiteness*: it is more than identity, it is a structure. Despite the undeniable benefits that proximity to *whiteness* endows even on light-skinned Black people, there are still significant ways in which racialized people can never be completely *white*.

However, structures exist in contexts. In Catholic Ireland I knew I wasn't *white*. But how did that change when I moved between there and my country of birth—occupied Palestine/AKA Israel? Israel's colonial occupation of the Palestinians is motivated by a false racial logic of Jewish superiority. Despite the narrative of the need for a homeland for the stateless Jewish people and the undeniable persecution we faced in Europe, Israel can only be understood as a *white* supremacist political entity, established to extend European rule over the native Palestinians and establish a regime of racial supremacy over Black and Brown Jews. As a European Jew, Israel was established for me and I was intended to be its beneficiary.

It's easy to proclaim myself a race traitor, but I and other *white* people need to seriously consider what that means in practice. Unangax̂ Indigenous scholar, Eve Tuck and her colleague Wayne Yang wrote that "decolonizaton is not a metaphor" (2012). We can decolonize and de-*whiten* our minds but it is an entirely different matter to create ways to achieve this materially. Nonetheless, we need to start a conversation about how to do so.

Talking about *whiteness* means treading a careful path between admitting the personal complicity of all *white* people in maintaining the global regime of *whiteness*, and not reducing every statement about *whiteness* to individuals. Because although we benefit from being *white*, we only do so because an arbitrary physical attribute—having *white* skin—has been made the external symbol of a system of power that still shapes global power and politics. And *whiteness* sometimes transcends actual skin colour, as George Zimmerman, the partly-Peruvian killer of African-American teenager Trayvon Martin in Florida in 2012, attests.

When *whiteness* is brought up in political discourse—and we see this often in social media—the immediate response is "but not all *white* people", or

"not me, I'm a good *white* person". To me, this exemplifies the fact that *white* people understand the unfairness of the benefits they accrue through *whiteness* as a system. However, one way to dismantle that system is to refuse to perpetuate it by attempting to cleanse it from within. You cannot say "not all *white* people", because to do so is to propose that *whiteness* is redeemable; but it isn't. This should be the first stage towards better understanding.

Once we have understood that *whiteness* is a system, and like other unjust systems—racism, colonialism, capitalism, gender, etc.—needs to be challenged and ultimately dismantled, it is possible to think about the benefits and privileges we get from *whiteness* in a depersonalized way. So, we can say, "yes I benefit from being *white* but that doesn't mean it is bad that I have *white* skin; it's the way I was born, so what can I do to make it so that I don't have privilege just because I happen to have *white* skin?" We need to ask ourselves why asking this is so hard for so many people.

First, it is important to understand that race is a system that maintains *white* supremacy on a global scale. That is its primary purpose. People implicitly understand this and they don't want to be thought of as racist. The dominant understanding of racism that most people have is a moral one—being racist is bad. People don't want to be thought of as bad and so they reject the notion that *whiteness* creates inequality and disadvantage, because they feel that they are being accused of racism.

Now, many of these people are racist but knowing this doesn't help us to actually get rid of the problem. Race and *whiteness* are constructs—they are principles around which societies have been organised. They are powerful because we rarely speak openly about this fact because, officially, we are all against racism.

The main reason it is hard to have a conversation about *whiteness* that does not descend into petty recrimination is because there is a profound lack of racial literacy in a country like Australia. *White* supremacy is seen as an exclusively American phenomenon. Perhaps it conjures up images of the Ku Klux Klan and burning crosses, or today's Alt Right. However, what we are confronting is far more widespread and common than that. Australia was founded as a *white* supremacist project—to create a British outpost in the "South Seas". This did not originate with federation, but with the original act of colonization, which required the entire dispossession of Aboriginal people and culture for its success. This is the same in other colonial states, the US, Canada, Israel, New Zealand and South Africa being the most prominent.

In an influential article called "*Whiteness* as Property" (1993), the US critical legal scholar Cheryl Harris explained that *whiteness* in the US—a country founded on the theft of Indigenous land and made wealthy through slavery—is not a matter of biology or identity; *whiteness* itself is a property that is handed down through the generations. She explains that

> [t]he origins of property rights in the United States are rooted in racial domination. Even in the early years of the country, it was not the concept of race alone that operated to oppress Blacks and Indians; rather it was the interaction between conceptions of race and property that played a critical role in establishing and maintaining racial and economic subordination. (Harris 1993, 1716)

The very concept of property was coded as only understandable to *whites*. We see this also in Australia through the foundational myth of terra *nullius*. Harris again writes,

> [the racialisation of Native Americans] embedded the fact of *white* privilege into the very definition of property […] Possession—the act necessary to lay the basis for rights in property—was defined to include only the cultural practices of *whites*. This definition laid the foundation for the idea that whiteness—that which whites alone possess—is valuable and is property. (Harris 1993, 1721)

So, in the US, like in Australia, possession of the land is established as *white*. In the US, following the end of slavery, despite the promise of 40 acres and a mule, ultimately Black people were denied that right because it was realized that it would terminally end exclusive *white* property ownership. The highly selective and utterly colonialist native title system in Australia has the similar aim of ensuring that possession of land is maintained as a *white* sphere of influence.

Ongoing moral panics about Chinese participation in the property market in Australia can be seen as another example of this: loss of *white* control over land and property is experienced as a deep crisis. This is because *whiteness* is institutionalised in the moment of colonial occupation and possession.

It is why there is a whole structure of legitimation around colonialism: Indigenous societies could not have survived without the advent of *white* education, infrastructure, etc. The myth of progress is necessary for the justification of *white* possession, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015) calls it.

This is exactly what occurred in the now infamous Australian TV "Sunrise on 7" breakfast show where an all-*white* panel advocated for the removal of Aboriginal children from their families "for their own good" (NITV 2018).

Commentator Prue MacSween's open support for the policies that led to the Stolen Generations was spoken without irony, considering that there has never been a time when myths of *white* benevolence did not supersede the rights of Aboriginal families to care for their own children.

This is only a partial account of how *white* supremacy is institutionalised and maintained. Ask most people what they know about these systems and you'd be met with silence. Instead, the response is often what Dutch-Afro Surinamese Black feminist scholar Gloria Wekker calls "*white* innocence" (2016). *White* innocence is the result of the confected ignorance and denial of knowledge of the impact of colonialism on present day societies in which colonization is ongoing.

Wekker explains that there is a complete mismatch between how the Dutch see themselves—as tolerant, benevolent and non-racist people—and the facts: that Dutch society is founded on hundreds of years of colonial exploitation directly responsible for its current wealth.

Transposed into the Australian context, this can be seen every time the country has a hand-wringing moment and well-meaning *white* liberals ask, "Is Australia racist?" There have been countless articles and even a TV show with this title. Every time a new atrocity occurs on Manus Island, Nauru, at prisons such as the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre or Kalgoorlie where 14-year-old Aboriginal boy, Elijah Doughty, was run over and killed by a *white* motorist, *white* liberals say things like "we're better than this" or "when did Australia become so racist?", "remember when we used to be better". This is part of the fiction that contributes to the maintenance of *white* supremacy, the idea that *white* people and institutions are inherently progressive and that any manifestations of racism are the product of extremist behaviour that is not representative.

In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The facts of the matter are, as Lisa Lowe explains in her brilliant book, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015), racism spread across the globe at the same time as liberal systems of government were being expanded. A major tool of race is the underlying assumption that the majority of the world's people do not know how to govern themselves and need *white* people to show them the way, through liberal government.

As I write in my book *Why Race Still Matters*, "[t]o identify *whiteness* is to name racialized power" (Lentin 2020, 90). However, *white* people often hear this as a naming of themselves as individuals, rather than as beneficiaries of a system that they could contribute to dismantling for the benefit of everyone. That is why it is so common for *white* people to dislike being

called *white*. Calling someone *white* is heard as akin to calling someone racist. To make this association is to be 'anti-*white*'. And this 'new racism' is seen as dominant in a world where anxieties about *white* demographics reign.

Some of my students (thankfully a minority) want to know why—although there is no truth to this—Aboriginal people get special privileges to attend university. Because we have been taught that *white* systems of rule are inherently equal and democratic, many people see it as unfair if any measure is taken to try to level a situation of inequality.

The belief is that if something is given to someone who has originally been denied their rights, then someone else has to suffer. But this is inherently untrue. Affirmative action where it exists (and it does not exist in Australia) has the aim of extending equal treatment to everyone, not taking rights away from anyone. However, because *whiteness* is founded on possession and exploitation, and the systems it founded—principally capitalism—make these into a value, people find it very hard to believe this. So, we continue to peddle the myth of meritocracy and the sufficiency of hard work.

The discomfort *white* people have with being named as *white* belies a deep understanding of the deep illegitimacy of *white* rule. The belief that every mention of *whiteness*, let alone privilege, constitutes an attack on white people means that *white* people understand that there is something profoundly unjust in the fact that *whites* continue to dominate politically, financially, in the media, education, in terms of health outcomes and so on.

Sarah Keenan, a critical legal scholar from Birkbeck College in London, has proposed that the offer, extended by Australia's Home Affairs minister Peter Dutton of asylum to *white* South African farmers is an example of *white* fragility. As Keenan explains, Dutton sees Australia as part of a global alliance of *white* nations and people under attack. Despite the fact that only a tiny proportion of asylum seekers reach Australia's shores, the system of mandatory detention for asylum seekers both on and offshore is legitimized by the idea that Australia is under attack from people who don't share "Australian values" and who would usurp their good will.

White farmers, who undergo a process of returning land to rectify the highly unequal system in South Africa in which *white* people make up 8% of the population yet control 72% of the farmland, are interpreted as being in need of humanitarian protection. The hypocrisy of this in the face of the plight faced by refugees locked up by Australia goes without saying. Over and above this, the signal that Dutton is sending out is that *whites* in Australia and South Africa are more deserving of protection, that the plight they face

113

is greater, than people facing actual humanitarian crises because white life is more fragile, and ultimately of higher value.

It is easy to distance ourselves from Peter Dutton and call him a potato and a Nazi, or a Nazi potato, but this is another arm in the arsenal of white supremacy—white comfort. Progressive white Australians like to tell themselves that Dutton does not speak for them. They comfort 'themselves' by distancing ourselves from his words. However, the very point is that we cannot pick and choose which elements of the whiteness project we can live with and which are beyond the pale. We cannot say things, common everyday things heard in Australia, like "wouldn't Aboriginal people be better off without welfare?" or "isn't Islam incompatible with the Australian way of life?", and see this as disconnected from other statements that make us feel uncomfortable, that go a little bit too far, that we can't live with.

To dismantle white supremacism white people should really be unable to live with any of the daily realities that mean that we don't have to hear our way of life discussed as though it were a mere matter of neutral debate with no effect on people's actual experience. A start to the process of ending white supremacy requires white people to stop and think every time we move to utter statements about white innocence, white ignorance or white comfort, and to ask ourselves why they trip off the tongue so easily. Instead, we might say: "I know I benefit from being white, what can I do in my small way to make this less so?"

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8 The always already of anti-Blackness –
Sara Morais dos Santos Bruss interviews Jaye Austin Williams

This interview took place in early 2019, translated for publication in the German-language literary magazine Kritisch Lesen. Interestingly, at the time of this interview, the convergence of the COVID-19 crisis and the George Floyd killing as catalyzing event for global mass protests had not yet occurred. During the editing of this interview for its publication in English language here, the United States was taking part in the ritual of mourning George Floyd, who died at the knee of a police officer buttressed by three other police officers. Floyd's was the third in the most recent series of deaths of unarmed black people at the hands of the police state in the United States, and there have been others since. Williams thus prefigurates what we can now read as a contextualization of Afropessimism in the lived experience of the contemporary moment.

S.M.: Sara Morais dos Santos Bruss

J.W.: Jaye Austin Williams

S.M: We are living in a time when the apocalypse never seems far away. The political left has been marked by a sense of pessimism, at least since the beginning of the 21st century, perhaps even since the perception of failure after 1968. Afropessimism, too, seems to discuss a dystopia come reality. Can you give us an introduction into what Afropessimism actually is and how it relates to apocalyptical or dystopian thought?

J.W.: When thinking about how to define Afropessimism, Jared Sexton's essay, "Afropessimism: The Unclear Word" (2016a), comes to mind. It's a response to so many misunderstandings about the term. I understand and pursue it as a theoretical disposition, rather than as a school of thought, that challenges the notion that people of African descent can 'simply' attain to a heritage or past in the same way that members of other formations can. It does this by centering transatlantic slavery as a very specific rupture—what Dionne Brand refers to as "a tear in the world" (Brand 2001, 4). If we examine Black existence from that point of rupture, then we must consider the blunt force of the violence with which "civilized" structures, dating back as far as the 7th century A.D. during the Arab slave trade, created the conditions that make that rupture possible, and which forge the process of racially marking and then transmogrifying

human bodies into cargo—or to borrow Hortense Spillers' formulation, "into flesh" (Spillers 2003).

So many people get caught up in the idea of the progression and civilizing of the human as a universal endeavour. But that gallops past the "Middle Passage" and how the transatlantic transactions continue to reverberate into the present moment. It also disavows the continuing need to refashion that cargo into modern-day captives.[1] Another way of defining Afropessimism is as a "metatheory" (cf. Wilderson 2020)—an analysis of theories through which many are thinking about the gobal predicament of blackness codified as "the world". And reading the world as it is, is not to see it as "dystopic," per se, because a dystopia is drawn from an anxiety that imagines just how bad things can get. Afropessimist thought posits that we're already there, and that we've been there for some time. It problematizes the presumption that dystopia and apocalypse comprise a world condition that we're approaching. I might go so far as to say that what is perceived as apocalyptic for many might actually be utopic through an Afropessimist lens; or vice versa: What is utopic for many might constitute the enduring apocalypse that is black suffering.

S.M.: So, what you're saying is that dystopia is quite the opposite of what a system that privileges white supremacy connotes as "life," and that the general societal anxiety about life's end, the apocalypse, is where Afropessimists say Black "life" could begin?

J.W.: Yes. The world's apocalypse is where "life" as we can't possibly imagine it at present might begin for those marked black. At that break. Or, to put it another way, what would be the end of this world (and we're not talking here about the *literal* world, as in the planet, but rather, the socially and epistemologically structured world), would be something completely different; something that might resemble social life for Black people that is not encumbered by the ongoing conditions that position it so precariously or that snuff it out altogether. Look at the old zombie movies—they're terribly instructive. *White Zombie* (cf. Halperin 1932) was a cautionary for "civilized" humans who prized humanity and the sanctity of white femininity about the dangers of Voodoo, because the Haitian slaves out in the fields, who were meditating on freedom, were believed to be the reason for the increasing zombification (walking lifelessness) of white people. A little more than thirty-five years later, *Night of the Living*

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1   See Matthieu Chapman's examination of antiblackness and the slave trade that presages the transatlantic transaction(s), in *Anti-Black Racism in Early Modern English Drama: The Other 'Other'* (2017).

Dead (cf. Romero 1968) depicts a Black man (Ben) doing everything in his power to be protective, authoritative, and proactive in keeping the encroaching zombies away from the motley assemblage of human survivors inside a house whose owners have already been killed, only to have his efforts undermined at every turn. In the end, he has been trying to protect, despite their thanklessness for his labours, they are done in by the zombies. Ben, by contrast—and despite appearing in view with a gun in hand like the humans hunting the zombies—gets taken out by a citizen's bullet authorized by the sheriff. Questions about: Who is human and who isn't? Who is redeemed in the end? Who gets to enjoy catharsis? Who's left standing (living)? Who will constitute the "living dead" after the closing credits roll? It seems to me that Ben's death coheres the world of the living for those who remain.

S.M.: Does the cultural currency that "the end of the world" seems to have right now surprise you?

J.W.: No. It doesn't surprise me at all. Because I think this world doesn't know how to imagine anything *beyond* currency. There always has to be some sort of profit or exchange. This world doesn't know how to think outside that paradigm. In fairness, I would say that the cultural currency, as you say, comes from a very real, increasing anxiety—a global anxiety—that there is an escalation; a perfect storm that is palpably feared by many: the environmental stuff, escalating political tensions in the world and so on. So, the fact that these arrangements around "dystopia" are themselves gaining a kind of currency is not at all surprising. I just think that for many black folks (and not everyone who is black is necessarily attuned in the same way—which is a complicated subset of this discussion) it's like, welcome! (laughs) you know, the world *as* disaster has been our (black folks') reality for a long time. So, what many in the Commons perceive as "crisis" is just more of the same for us.

S.M.: So, the Afropessimist response would be to keep calm and carry on?

J.W.: Well, nothing so glib as that. Just because you're on the inside of an ontological crisis, doesn't mean you can't see that the globe is in trouble and that the environment is bad. Again, it's important to make that distinction between the epistemological world and the planet. Afropessimism is not a gesture of apathy, as many tend to understand that term. It is, initially, a gesture of *recognition* and reportage. So, you do things that you feel moved to do. If you are moved to aid in the topical or analgesic relief of immediate ills, you do that. Or, one might recognize something habitually unrecognized and articulate it in whatever context

one can. For example, the United States' virtual non-response to Hurricane Katrina was horrifying, but not at all surprising to black folks. Sexton (2007) points to one of the most revealing things about the public's response once it did finally awaken to the fact that people were drowning, being otherwise killed, or pitched out of their houses: there was more of a show of emotion and concern for the dogs that were now homeless, found paddling through the flood and such, than for the people who were standing up on rooftops, waving and trying to be rescued. *This* is what we must recognize when we're talking about currency and value; which lives are valued and which aren't; which lives are regarded as human and which aren't—no matter the declarations made to the contrary. And in this instance to which Sexton is referring, which non-human, sentient lives are valued more than others that are biologically human, and *why*? Once we begin to pay attention to that, we have to ask ourselves: whose distress, whose suffering constitutes a crisis in the social schema, and for whom?

S.M.: That Katrina example really speaks to my next question about failure. Because the general narrative when such so-called natural disasters happen is that something has failed, or that capacities were unfulfilled. But what I hear you saying is that the black body's relationship to failure is different—so how is the question of "the flesh" tied into infrastructural failure, or even, to individual failure?

J.W.: I would refer to Sexton again, as part of a whole constellation of thinkers—among them, Patrice Douglass, Selamawit Terrefe, Joy James, John Murillo, Christina Sharpe, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Sylvia Wynter, Dionne Brand, Cecilio Cooper, Mlondi Zondi, Frank Wilderson, Saidiya Hartman, Hortense Spillers and so many more I'm not naming here—who are suggesting that we flip the paradigm and ask, are we really talking about "failure" here? Or are we talking about *success*? Because we're dealing with a structure of antiblackness, the success of which is wholly dependent upon the failure or dereliction of black life at its most complete (cf. Sexton 2018). This structure is one that not only white people buy into; the entire "world" buys into it.

For example, people tend to think of mass incarceration as unique to the United States. But if you think about the carceral state as extending beyond just prison cells, and if you're watching how the machinations of capital accumulation maneuver through it, turning captive bodies into neo-plantation workers, through the increase in corporate profiting from industry by way of outsourcing its captive labor, you can see the global enterprise it has become. And cohering it all is the persistent accumulation of exponentially more black than other bodies. So, we're not talking about

"failure". We're talking about the implementation and fungibility of mostly black bodies into what is actually a very successful capital matrix by and because of that fungibility. But the fact of that exponential difference becomes elided by the prison abolition movement's concern for how mass incarceration impacts people from all walks of life—which is absolutely true. But we've got to train a critical eye on a key occlusion: that black bodies *define* and *constitute* were the prototypes the state of captivity serving for the systems that profit from it, such that the circumstances that "explain" their presence on the prison rolls (legal transgressions) are merely symptoms of something deeper. Other bodies (brown, poor white, disabled, queer, among them) become ensnared in that system causally and circumstantially, while actual transgression of the law or of other social norms, as Wilderson points out, is not required for black people to be regarded as an antagonism to both society and its laws—which is to say, their *very being* is presumed transgressive (Wilderson 2010). So, whatever one's purview on the carceral system (and while we might be speaking about the American context most immediately, I am also taking into account *global* carceral systems that act upon black bodies and being), its project of expansion and profit is quite *successful*, such that its "failing" of black people can't enter the discussion in good faith because, as Audre Lorde reminds us, black people were never meant to survive as aspiring humans within those systems (cf. Lorde 1978, 31). In short: black bodies have always been deployed to buttress the success of these matrices of capital, and to animate and absorb the violence that is necessary to maintain them.

S.M.: Given that reference to Audre Lorde, doesn't the existence of blackness in today's world suggest some form of resilience? What I am getting to is the question of whether the realization of the situation leads to some form of empowerment or agency?

J.W.: One of Hortense Spillers' essays calls for an "intramural protocol of reading" (2003, 277). This gets me to thinking a lot about the immense schism within black intramural discourse today. And of course, there is the positivist disposition that invests heavily in the notion of resilience; that we have, in fact, survived despite the violence(s) to which I've just referred. What I would say in response is that I don't exactly disagree. Some of us have survived in the face of all of this. In other words, I don't take umbrage with the fact of our survival, but I have also called into question elsewhere the celebration of survival as an endgame, while so many others can not only live, but also enjoy freedom, and so many of us have neither known real freedom nor survived. What about addressing

the conditions that demand, constantly, that we *must* survive; that we *must* exist in the face of all these things. (cf. Williams 2015) That demand is a way of deflecting attention away from the violence that constitutes *both* our living *and* our deaths. So, I don't proudly wear the badge of resilience. I ask, instead, why that should be the benchmark of black life? I also acknowledge the paradox: that many of us are and have had to be resilient. But this sobers me. It is reprehensible that we are branded as survivors rather than as people who can simply *live*. So, I think we have to interrogate the implications of "resilience" and the kind of conciliatory notion it is; not only for black people, but for those who need to tell themselves that black people have "agency" and "power" because they are resilient. James Snead's analysis of G.W.F. Hegel's equating of the African's resilience with backward untouchability raises a profound question: What does such insistence upon black resilience both occlude and bring to bear? (Snead 1981)

S.M.: What do you think of the potential for art and literature to address infrastructural inequalities, or to address—perhaps even evoke—a sense of resistance in order to explore the realm of the political?

J.W.: I define myself as a drama and cinema theorist, so the literatures I deal with most directly are plays and films. I am most comfortable with these, as I come from a first career in the professional theatre and I then moved into examining cinema and its potential to help analyse "the political," as you say. And I grew up with jazz, blues and R&B, which certainly soothed and buoyed the souls of us black folks when we most needed it (cf. DuBois 1903). So, I think the arts have always been modes of interrogation of the world and its conditions. For example, Suzan-Lori Parks is one of the dramatists whose work I've performed, directed and written about quite a lot (cf. Parks 1995; Williams 2013). I think Parks was interrogating the ontological breach between blackness and human being, back in the 1980s, way before it was "sexy" to do so; before many who were seeing her work really understood what she was doing.

I went to see a play of hers called *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* at a small performance space in Brooklyn called BACA Downtown and it blew my mind. (cf. Parks 1995) She was daring to center Black suffering—not as inherent pathology, but as structural/societal condition. But then it became in fashion to know and produce her work, and she became better known and started to accrue a kind of currency. There is a cost to this, because all too often, the more popular one's work becomes, the potential for it to actually rupture the conventional theatergoing contract and instead, open critical discursive space actually

abates. There is a commercial demand their work must meet. So, I'm imagining she said, okay, let me break this down for you. And then she wrote a play called *Topdog, Underdog*, which continued her meditation on the [Abraham] Lincoln - [John-Wilkes] Booth dynamic and how it repeats and reverberates in modernity (Parks 2001). The protagonists are two black brothers, named Booth and Lincoln by their father as an ironic joke. They play out the dynamic to its fatal conclusion. But there are problematics, again, in assigning that dynamic to black characters and distilling it as if it weren't a deeply embedded, ontological undoing, rather than just a disgruntled reactionary actor's grievance against a president who (arguably) "freed" the slaves; or, merely a grim set of circumstances as played out and narrated through the interaction between two brothers. Parks understands this. But I'm not as confident that all of those who saw the play's distillation truly got the nuances ignited by that fatal dynamic's displacement from the ideologically-divided historical figures of Booth and Lincoln, onto two black brothers existing amidst raw abjection. Well, Parks won the Pulitzer Prize for that play. A recognition richly deserved! But art that reaches greater numbers of people through its distillation can run the risk of losing the potency it has at its rawest, most 'experimental', when it blows people's minds precisely because it engulfs them in an unflinching analysis that isn't necessarily palpable. It's work! As both brothers say at one time or another, "Watch me work, now, watch me work!" (Parks 2001). We can push this even further: "... Work along with me, now, let's all do the work!" But that's not the (traditional) "contract", you see. What persists instead is this gap between mainstream demands, and the more explosive force that artists' works have when they are at their least distilled.

S.M.: Would you say that making the work palpable to the masses opens it up to appropriation?

J.W.: Well, yes, but it's even worse than that—it has to do with what Hortense Spillers (1987, 67) refers to as pornotroping. Spectacularizing black suffering and death piques the pleasures of the libidinal economy—both the thirst for power over and the desire to consume blackness, in whatever ways one can, without actually being black.[2] A part of this cultural ritual—

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2   In *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*, Wilderson cites a conversation with Sexton, in which the latter defines 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 2010, 9).

the normalizing of these complicated processes—also makes black bodies carry the burden of those needs and desires, routinely. This burden sustains the collective cultural imagination and renders legible both the apocalyptic (just how horrid suffering and death can be) and the utopic (just how sublime sex can be when it is underscored by black music). These constant demands and more are what comprise the intensity and complexity of black suffering on the daily. There have been an increasing number of analyses of an entertainment on Broadway in the U.S. called *Hamilton*. It is a musical that has garnered a great deal of attention, awards, and tours the country and abroad. There's even a digitally filmed version of it that will be widely available soon, courtesy of Disney. It was conceived by a very talented artist named Lin-Manuel Miranda, who was curious about the historical figure of Alexander Hamilton, the first secretary of the U.S. treasury, and his complicated marriage. Miranda conceived this hip hop musical with a predominantly black and brown cast, who, in turn, bear the burden of depicting historical characters who were not black—who owned slaves, in fact. To make these black and brown bodies bear the brunt of the telling of these human stories and existential dilemmas raises deep ethical questions that are thankfully being raised by a growing number of theorists who are interrogating the project and the kind of appropriation it constitutes, beyond simply the cultural (cf. Woods 2019). This kind of displacement of culpability abets the collective unconscious in a way that eases the burden of confronting the nation's founding fathers in a way that would hobble the romantic, and worse, 'universal' ideals founded on slavery.

I doubt the cost of a ticket to Suzan-Lori Parks' play ever got to the exorbitance of *Hamilton*, and it only ran for four months on Broadway.[3] *Topdog, Underdog* was an excellent production of a brilliant play, but that isn't the point, is it? The point is, black cultural production is so often taken up and utilized to animate the pleasures and self-congratulation of those who partake of it, while entirely deflecting/refusing/discarding the interrogation that is at the work's core.

So yes, "appropriation" every which way. (laughter)

S.M.: Which returns us to the question of political agency. You've already suggested that Afropessimism assesses a very limited realm of movement for blackness. In anti-capitalist thought for example, despite all neoliberal tendencies, there is this hope of one day overcoming capitalism even

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3   The Broadway production, directed by George C. Wolfe, opened at the Ambassador Theatre on April 7th, 2002 and closed on August 11th the same year.

though we don't really have the tools for it (yet). Do you think that there is some sort of agency that allows for such an "event horizon" that rests within human agency? What do people have to do who want to critique the status quo?

J.W.: I mean, critique away! Critiquing the status quo is a part of active resistance, which is a constant fly in the societal ointment. But let me explain with another metaphor. It risks oversimplifying something vastly complicated, but it's handy: if you slap a fresh coat of paint and new shutters and other bright, shiny things onto a house that's termite-ridden, it'll look like a nice house. But once you start to pull the floorboards up and expose its foundation—and let's say the foundation constitutes the ethics upon which the house's design and construction are based—and you find it has been eaten away. The termites, in this example, are what Spillers calls "the investments and privations of rhetorical wealth" (Spillers 1987, 65). And these amount to the "appropriation" we were talking about earlier, that I think Spillers helps us see is an insufficient description of what is really going on. She is speaking about and within the literary realm, which functions as a kind of current along which the libidinal economy and its predatory desires and imaginings travel. But it is certainly transferable to this handy metaphor. So, as we stare at that rot under the floorboards, there are those who will ask, why would we invest in this? And let's say that the currency required to do the extensive repairs to replace the foundation is political ontology. But, with so many holes in the foundation, the house doesn't have the structural integrity to hold an ethical political ontology. One can't feasibly re-build from such damage, let alone try to borrow, using "resilience" as collateral for such a futile repair. What kind of existence would that really be? It comes down to the fork in the road between (a) investing in the reparation of a termite-ridden house, and (b) saying, "That shit's gotta come down!" Because, in all those "invesments and privations"—the appearance of the house, what owning it symbolizes, and the pleasures derived from possessing it and whatever currency its appearance may glean—what you have is an accrual of investments in mimicking and performing for and within the establishment as its gatekeepers and watchdogs. As Jared Sexton (2017a) suggests, the issue of freedom versus captivity has to be thought through far more deftly, and beyond some flattened dichotomy between the two, since each is deeply complicated.[4] As Wilderson has said, and I concur

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4   In "Preface: The Perfect Slave," Sexton refers to a figure of such mimicries and performances that act to uphold the status quo without critique (2017a, xi). To this "end," Afropessimism is not an investment in social death, but rather, a pivot into

(and paraphrase him here): you may think you got problems, but you don't really have problems until you are a black person looking down the barrel of a gun held by a black cop. Because that cop has made an investment in being the finest (the 'baddest') example of law and order there is. So, there's the real rub: the horrible fusion of black performance with anti-black state violence. This question of being beyond repair, beyond rescue, and certainly, beyond the "bad apple" narrative that circulates when police kill unarmed black people, is the question in which we must tarry.

S.M.: And do you think that there is a difference in positionality with regard to the terms of engagement, critique, or taking a stand? Do people have an obligation to do certain things? Do people outside the US have different obligations? Not sure if "obligation" is the right word…

J.W.: No, but I'm glad you've asked that. Contrary to one of the most prolific misconceptions, Afropessimism is not a school of thought. It's not a cult of people going to study with some guru. There are many different thinkers from an array of disciplines who happen to share a perspective that meditates unflinchingly on the ethical breach that created the conditions of antiblackness as a world-making and world-perpetuating fundament.[5] And those predisposed to neoliberal progressivism and its convictions to the advancement of a moral, all-inclusive society, believe this mode of critique to be in violation of the latter mission, which amounts to the investment in the improvement of a world that Afropessimism's analysis would assess as beyond repair where an ethical relation to blackness is cancered. So, I hear you asking, in the face of this, do I just stop doing what I am doing? No. But the objectives that drive my actions are different. This is why "antiblackness" is such an important term. It renders specific, the condition that black people suffer globally—their varying, localized symptoms, notwithstanding.

This question of agency has become a kind of tyranny. I have called this "the hope marathon", which ruffles the feathers of those who have invested in the project of striving to be embraced by the world and its

blackness; a willingness to be in the abysmal as means of cognizing the vastness of black (social) life, and that that life is, in effect, death to the world.

5   See Kihany Miraya Ross, "Call it What it is: Antiblackness" (2020). Alluding to Wilderson and Afropessimism, Ross, a professor of African American Studies at Northwestern University, describes Afropessimism's framing of "antiblackness [as] index[ing] the structural reality so that in the larger society, blackness is inextricably tied to 'slaveness'". She further deduces antiblackness, aided by this framing, as "the inability to recognize black humanity".

various projects (cf. Williams 2015). Black folks are expected to have to run this marathon, because it animates and justifies the overlapping projects of social justice and equal rights. But where does this demand come from? I can interrogate the larger global structures, and still, to whatever degree possible, aim to lessen some of the immediate suffering I see around me. I don't have to be hopeful in order to do that. In fact, the less hopeful I am, the more on purpose I am. But the idea that it is only hope that spurs intervening action is tyrannical because it is only hope that leads to a sense of futurity. And in order to do that, we can't bear to see what the world is and is becoming, because for so many, to see is to become paralyzed and do nothing. Paradoxically, Afropessimism has been persistently accused of advancing apathy and inaction in the face of the world's abysmal treatment of black people. In fact, these have *never* been central to Afropessimism as a theoretical disposition.

S.M.: I was just thinking that Stuart Hall was gesturing towards "black" being a term that is a lot bigger than just black people…

J.W.: I'm glad you cited him. The many festschrifts commemorating his work in cultural and Diasporic Studies stand as testament to his profound importance to Black Studies writ large.[6] There is often a misrecognition of how the differences in inflection between Black thought that underscores the wealth, vastness and value of blackness, and Black thought that trains its analytics on the ways in which cultural production magnetizes symptoms of antiblack violence that satisfy collective unconscious demands are actually in alignment and exemplify, in their respective labors, the vastness of blackness they each recognize; just from different vantages. This is, to a larger extent, what Sexton's project is about—for example, thinking and imagining blackness as "theory itself", such that its potential to think *beyond* (or above, or below) the world becomes the center of gravity, where *blackness* is concerned. This is about more than docketing an appeal to that same world for *its* recognition of what blackness is (cf. Sexton 2012). So many black scholars have been thinking beyond the very construct of the human, and imagining beyond the (epistemic) world that has piqued all this analysis because it persists in dishonoring blackness (cf. Sexton 2017b).

But we also have to deal with the terrible obverse of this, which Fanon (2008 [1952]) talks about in his illustrative analysis of the little boy on

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6   For a nicely representative primer to Hall's work, see *Selected Political Writings: The Great Moving Right Show and Other Essays*, edited by Sally Davison, David Featherstone, Michael Rustin and Bill Schwarz.

a train who's afraid he's gonna be eaten by the black man sitting across from him. This shared phobia that blackness will blanket the world and everything will disappear, that the world will disappear into the dreaded black hole is a primal terror that finds its palpable explanatory power in how Fanon elaborates negrophobia—the phobogenic response specific to the fear of blackness. And so, it's not new that there are constantly, to borrow Michelle Alexander's term, "refashionings" (Alexander 2010) of antiblackness, some of the symptomatics of which will travel to and have an effect upon other racial and cultural formations. But to keep vigilant about the fact of antiblackness is *not* to presuppose that other formations don't suffer. Rather, it's to remain unflinching in centering the fact that black people suffer, period—not exceptionally, but specifically—and, to tarry in *black* reflection around what that means. That fact gets lost in the multi-racial/multi-cultural zeitgeist. Sexton's first book, *Amalgamation Schemes: Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism*, elaborates this in exemplary fashion (Sexton 2008). Yet, centering antiblackness unsettles many people; even some black activists who, at one time were extremely radical, but have since bowed under the press of multi-cultural, "color blind" progressivism.

It's wearying, this work. And also fortifying, being the (theoretical, philosophical) labor that it is. The deep, aggressive misrecognitions about "antiblackness" and "Afropessimism" make this paradox all the more electric. And somebody's gotta do it. Somebody's gotta be focused on what the world refuses to confront: the explanatory power of a structural, rather than phenomenological, existential/experiential or performative, analysis alone. These latter, deriving through interactive experiences, are *symptoms* of the prior, and must be diagnosed as such. And, in truth, as I continue to read and to re-read, I'm learning from Sexton, among others, that the necessary work also goes beyond "simply" understanding structure.

S.M.: I, too, need a minute to process. Because I would argue that if you were to apply Afropessimist thought to Europe, you would quickly get to anti-Muslimism—what people call Islamophobia - and see how the refugees and other people arriving here or even those already here are compartmentalized into this same paradigm of life that is not deemed worthy or valuable.

J.W.: This is where Wilderson's assertion of "the ruse of analogy" is so important (Wilderson 2010). What I try to help students to understand, taking Wilderson's important cue, is the distinction between "otherness/abjection," (which can happen to many different racial or cultural

formations), and structural positionality *beyond* the categories that distinguish "us" from "them"/"the other". We talk about those who are "marginalized", for example. But then there is the ~~being~~ that is *beyond* the margins.[7] And I think that which is beyond the margins is not so easily explainable as merely "difference". "We hate you because you're different, and because you hate us and/or want what we have/want" is one longitude of existence; the dogmatic, reactive othering of Islamic people as dangerous because "they" fly planes into buildings and kill "civilized" people, so, we have to keep them controlled—either through captivity, torture and/or exclusion. This is a reflexive response to a perceived transgression; the idea that a certain formation of humans, through their religious convictions and affiliations, have perpetrated a horrible transgression against another formation of humans—the perceived "us". Early racialized slavery was the impetus that eventually turned sub-Saharan Africa into a marked category of non-(human) being, or object/thingness. This categorization differs from people who are abjectable, murderable, extinguishable, violable and who can seek redress for these violations (the prior), from those who cannot—not simply because they are "different", but because they *are*. Period (the latter). Existential grammar is insufficient to describe this predicament, and so, the total abjection of blackness as a category often gets mistakenly described in existential terms—discrimination, othering, and so on—even though the scope of the predicament exceeds these descriptives. This is the difference between a perceived transgression and an ontological antagonism, for which no language existed for the longest time. Afropessimism gestures toward a lexicon that pushes existential terminologies and long-standing notions of "being" further. At the same time, however, black people, globally, tend to recourse to making performative adjustments indicative of that

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7 I invoke, along with numerous other scholars, this sign—what Jacques Derrida refers to as *sous rature* (under erasure); in this instance, signifying "*being* under erasure". This signification, while useful in calling attention to *being* (that is) out of place and time, is also insufficient, because it implies the presence of (human) *being* in a "moment" prior to erasure. In the New World context, however, the obliteration of African being into the vortex of racial slavery makes one's Africanness (identification as human and African/African-descended) unlocatable beyond (and because of) the violence of the slave-making process, which commences at the "moment" of capture. But when, exactly, is that? This is not to suggest that black people cannot perform a feeling of heritage reclamation (through rituals of cultural pride and identification). Rather, this mode of signification, at the very least, casts focus upon the structural violence that continually undoes any coherence between the world and (sentient) being(s) marked black, or: black ~~being~~.

dearth of language, by striving to be included within, and climb higher on whatever hierarchical scale defines, their immediate context; what we might describe as making a continual appeal for the recognition of their goodness, their worthiness, their cultural abundance, and their societal value.

So, this mode of analysis has nothing to do with negating the suffering of "other" people—the refugees you're talking about, and others who are abjected—or making some sort of comparison for the sake of asserting whose suffering is greater. If anything, black activists are exhaustively burdened with having to signal their inclusiveness of everyone's plights. We're talking about different longitudes, or loci of suffering; those that exist within world orders, and black suffering, which, as Sexton, Wilderson, Hartman and others articulate, is *without* or *beyond* them. This is the fact of blackness. Not of "black experience"—which can be "measured", in a sense, performatively, *as if* within the world, "just like everybody else"—but of blackness itself, which, when considered beyond the world's positioning, uses and misuses of it, demands a different set of terms, and certainly a different constellation of questions. I tend to describe blackness as functioning as the "tain of the mirror", the black matter that enables the glass to reflect. Nobody regards the tain, yet it has a utility that the world needs in order to behold itself (and this is not necessarily the same as seeing, reflexively) (cf. Williams 2013). This utility, a cohering mechanism at the cost of its own relationality, can be traced back to the European Enlightenment and beyond. They saw "the Dark continent" as an abyss: no history, no past, no heritage; nothing, except for the abundance of natural resources, including beings deemed, to invoke Spillers again, reducible to flesh (Spillers 1987). This demarcation is monumental, and world-making. So, do (human) beings exist who are experientially "blackened"? Absolutely. And that experience is distinct from the ontological (structural) break between blackness itself, and the affective "blackness-like" experience by which some non-black formations are marked and then perceived as "other-transgressor" within the world. It's also distinct from the black "experience" that performs (appears) as if it is analogous to other peoples' existential challenges.

S.M.: And how would gender play into the tension I sense between blackness and black experience as you describe them?

J.W.: It's complicated. To center the breach that racial slavery constitutes is to pursue a differently-inflected conversation on gender and gendering; one that a growing constellation of black radical scholars—feminist, queer and trans, among them—are boldly taking up, recognizing that on one side of

this treacherous coin is the reality that to be tumbled out of human being is to be ungendered (Spillers 1987, 68). On the other, is the performative register, at which the troubles around gender inequality are the fulcrum: i.e., fighting for women's ability to earn wages and make life choices equal to men's, or fighting to destabilize the gender binary that negates (non-racialized) trans identity reconfigurations beyond gender, and so on. But the black, slave-descended woman's complexities far exceed merely wage equity and are anathema to the agency-girded assertion to defy gender designation. This is to say, that Black transness signifies, as the character Miss Roj describes herself in the 1986 satire, *The Colored Museum*, the quintessential "extraterrestrial" (cf. Wolfe, 1985-1988). These designations are often missed because what is legible are their respective worldly performances as 'people' who appear to be within the parentheticals of civility, but toward whose struggles the world is both indifferent *and* antagonistic. So, their performances are symptomatic *complications* to their otherwise dishonored, 'inside/outside' existences. The ghosts of slavery are always haunting those performances, including the ways in which civil/social societies continue to ungender, dishonor and exploit them—and worse. So, what we're talking about is the irreconcilable tension between the absence of political ontology, and the performativity of existential symptoms that make the figures in Wolfe's play, like black folks in 'real life', appear to 'live' as human beings.

Let's take another layer of gender and its presumed differences: the black domestic context wherein some black men perpetrate sexual and/or physical violence against black women. There is a constellation of feminist scholarship analyzing hypermasculine performances by black men that presumes—I would offer, misguidedly—that black men are regarded as "men" in and by the world, to begin with; and that, through the exertion of force, they are asserting a human, gendered capacity through physical domination. But no amount of physical force can render the declarations "I am a man" and "I am somebody", two of the defining gestures of the Civil Right Movement, any more true for black men when applying a structural analysis. At best, these affirmations signified a desire to be recognized as men. So, while physical violence is certainly destructive, and inflicts injury and suffering (which I in no way condone), it is a performative *symptom* that exceeds an analysis of mere gender difference. Both the physical violence and declarations in this example demonstrate precisely how black males are suffering the overdetermination of inhumanity onto them, such that, while they can exert *force* over those who are less capable of matching it (cf. Fanon 2008, 5), they enjoy no

more (structural) capacity than those they may abuse. Put another way, this hyper-expression of violence, while a terrible and distorted response to that overdetermination, is not the same as amassing and exerting *power,* when a white man half the size of his black male counterpart might lose in a physical fight, yet have far more power in all that he could bring down on the "opponent's" head in the way of the law, and all other manner of societal (structural) girding. When black women, as the most abject of the abject, suffer intramural violence, along with what they so often suffer elsewhere, including in the workplace (in my case, the academy)— dying at higher rates than non-black women because of the accumulated stress of trying to meet so many spoken and unspoken demands; not least, having to absorb the rage and frustration they share with black men (cf. James and Farmer 2003). So, it is important to understand that gender dynamics in the performative register must not be conflated with the structural realities of which they are the symptoms. Black men and black women share the same structural position, as performatively inside, but ontologically outside the human social schema, a positionality that, in effect, ungenders them both.

S.M.: This issue of black women being ungendered is also not a new critique, and this is something that most feminists will admit today…

J.W.: Absolutely, and yet it persists as a controversy, or at least, as an anxious question because of this unavoidable desire to recuperate black people as agents of a better (improved upon) world so that those who work in support of that mission can feel better about themselves for wanting something better for black people.

S.M.: In a conversation between you and Frank Wilderson, he asked whether you thought Afropessimism has a concept of redemption or catharsis (2016). Your response offered a critique of the very teleology implicated in that— so I would like to repeat the question: what of catharsis or healing?

J.W.: In that interview, I spoke about liberal progressives who presume that they are operating in good faith in trying to redeem everybody as part of the universal "we". The problem with trying to recuperate through catharsis is that you swerve away from tarrying in the wound which, paradoxically, intensifies the rage that echoes forth from within it, rather than healing it. Jared Sexton is hugely instructive in his formulation, pushing Jacques Lacan's definition of "dehiscence" even further, toward a descension deeper into the wound that is antiblackness, and slavery's two economies

(political and libidinal).[8] Barack Obama provides a good example because, no matter what your political affiliation, in the context of the U.S., one must acknowledge him as a man whose pedigree would position him beyond any rebuke or reproach with regard to presidential comportment. He attains the highest office possible in the U.S., is devoid of any apparent personal scandal for his entire two terms. Yet, this notwithstanding he gets called a liar, out loud, by a Republican congressman in the middle of a joint address to Congress.[9] This was unprecedented in the recorded history of the American presidency. I can think of an array of scoundrels who've occupied that office, who were *never* subjected to that. It's what Orlando Patterson calls the "general dishonour" to which the slave is subjected (Patterson 1982). It was yet another reminder that there is no degree of ascension that will elevate blackness beyond the continuous vulnerability to such dishonor. I mean, Obama's shit couldn't have been more 'correct'. And still, he could not avoid being subjected to the unrelenting performative evidence that he, nonetheless, scandalized that office. All of this intensifies the wound that Sexton implores us to lean more deeply into in order to better understand that there is no 'outside' of this predicament.

S.M.: No outside, but perhaps hope for the end of the world (laughs).

J.W.: And such hope is no idle wish. I think when people hear this shorthand for Afropessimism's aims, they recoil against it without reading the extraordinary formulations that people who take up Afropessimist theory are bringing to bear. So, let me be clear. When I talk about "the end of the world", I am talking in theoretical terms. Because the global anti-black project and the way it keeps black people captive—literally, by way of incarceration or within conditions of impoverishment and other forms of abjection and encumberment—has not, heretofore, created the conditions for a well-girded, resourced black insurrection. And, as we've been discussing, why would it? That said, "the end of the world" is not

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8   In the interview entitled, "On Black Negativity, or the Affirmation of Nothing: Jared Sexton, interviewed by Daniel Barber," Sexton explains that "dehiscence has a helpful polyvalence—thanks to Richard Yoder for speaking to this—indicating, in surgical medicine, the opening up of a wound along the lines of incision (either because the wound was inadequately sutured or has become infected or subjected to further trauma)".

9   For a straightforward elaboration of the 2009 incident, see David S. Owen, "Othering Obama: How Whiteness is Used to Undermine Authority," which contextualizes the public dishonoring of Obama's presidential comportment through a framing of whiteness as a structuring property that undermines, in this instance, black authority.

folly. It is an imagining of the world's ethical reckoning with blackness. Afro-pessimism dares to ponder, theoretically, why that encounter would be necessary to any imagining of black *life*, and what it would look like.

S.M.: So, I guess we in a sense return to the language of leftist liberalism and ethics of being and care and whatever…

J.W.: Yes, that is nearly always the demand, and that's tricky because the language of leftist liberalism both fails and tyrannizes black people continually. But to indulge it for our purposes here, if we're speaking in terms of the analgesic relief of suffering in the moment, then it's important that we dispense care in whatever ways we can. Christina Sharpe's formulation around radical care is informative in this regard (cf. Sharpe 2016). But recognizing the difference between topical care, akin to the administering of first aid, and "deep tissue" care is key, but also daunting in the face of a world that withholds both and certainly the latter, from black people. This issue of care and what defines it becomes a tautological exercise, too, because you can't presume care to be synonymous with ethics where ethics don't exist. In the "world", as we've been discussing it here, care becomes a gesture *toward* ethics, at best. Stopping an injured soldier's bleeding in the heat of a battle that's part of a questionable war is what we're talking about. The tourniquet is immediate, critical relief. But it is also topical; it is not a solution to the ethical questions about *why* the war is being waged and at what cost. The cut might heal, but what degree of accounting will it take in assessing the less evident wounds that soldier has sustained? And when there is overwhelming financial and ideological investment in that war, posing ethical questions about it will more likely be dismissed. Within the black intramural, care is a gesture that has unbearable stakes, since our capacity to save one another from the violence of this world is not commensurate with our desire to do so. A world that thinks it means us well, but murders us at every turn, exonerates those who injure and murder us, refuses our interventions and analyses, yet thrives on our cultural and intellectual production as well as on our precarity and suffering, is treacherous terrain, at best. I'm being reminded of this over and over again. When black people render critique of the main, it's fascinating to note how easily the tyrannical hype of leftist-liberalism defensively rears its head. And so, we start talking in terms of utopian/dystopian, because such contrast concerns human kind more generally. That's the thing about language that is so menacing. After all, whose utopia constitutes whose nightmare…? And whose life constitutes whose death?

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9 Reaching the limit, or how Kathy Acker used Blackness to abandon Haiti and arrive home safely

by Mariya Nikolova

Sometime in the 1970s, the now-rebel-icon of queer literature Kathy Acker was commissioned to write a short pornographic novel and travelled to Haiti to do her research for it (Danticat 2004, vii-viii). The book that came out of this, *Kathy Goes to Haiti,*[1] illustrates both how minor figures move—in text, and in discourse—and the major themes in Acker's oeuvre that have moved literary critics since. The following study focuses on these questions from the perspective of Critical Race Theory and brings forth the issue of structural racialization in the narrative construction of movement.

On the one hand, *Haiti* can be considered a niche and undertheorized novel. At the time of writing it, Acker had not yet[2] become "the pirate-queen of avant-fiction" (Olsen 1997), a cult experimental writer praised for emancipatory, cutting-edge ideas (Borowska 2019, Colby 2016). Tailored to fit a particular publishing market, *Haiti* bored Acker and she quickly dismissed it as "dumb" and "conventional" (Acker 1992). The following analysis shows, however, that Acker's later reputation regulates interpretations of the novel, that her image as a subversive, innovative writer has *moved* into the text and navigated readerly focus and the text's framing. However marginal, *Haiti* is often understood to confirm Acker's political and creative achievements—more specifically, Acker's capacity to cut away from dominant ideology. Diverging from this position, I discuss how the novel borrows from and extends rather than dismantles dominant ideology.

Thus, I aim to examine not only how images of transgression are construed, but also their reverse movements—how dominant episteme invests these images with meaning, and how texts function under the regulation of discourse. Framing the novel as a parody and so a deconstruction of imperial desires, white literary criticism buries Acker's narrative transgressions towards Blackness. When recognized, these transgressions are often seen as a sort of undoing of colonial stereotypes, an expression of anti-racist

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1   Abbreviated *Haiti* from here onward.

2   According to Peter Wollen, Acker gained commercial success around 1984 with the publication of *Blood and Guts in Highschool* (1998, 1–12)

politics that exposes white violence and works against it (Guinn 2013, S. Riley 1991). In the following, I argue that Acker not only uses Blackness as a "raw material" (Hannah Black, qtd. in Greenberger 2017) through which she builds her literary personae, but that she also solidifies images of Black bodies as incapacitated and negative. Albeit ironized, this characterization serves as a background against which white women (protagonists and authors alike) can appear as moving forward and transformative.

The reception of *Haiti* also points to this excess. Literary criticism has praised Acker's creativity and fight for freedom. As Clare maintains,

> Acker's insistence that freedom is a process and not a product contributes to a body of work that always tries to imagine something new or different […] and keeps open the possibilities for change. (Clare 2018)

Calvin Warren suggests, however, that it is "black suffering and death [that become] the premiere vehicles of political perfection and social maturation" (2015, 7). From this perspective, the way *Haiti* ironizes notions of Blackness as lacking the capacity to generate anything only redoubles white ideology—both in repeating racist stereotypes, and by repeating the celebration of women like Acker. Not surprisingly, the rare considerations of race in *Haiti* have focused on Acker's ethical and political triumphs. Shannon Rose Riley claims, for instance, that Acker "sticks a little knife up the annals of the U.S. national imaginary" and *Haiti* is "a nagging reminder of the almost entirely erased history of the U.S. military occupation of and of long-standing white anxieties in the U.S. about interracial sex and desire" (1991, 34).

Marilyn Manners commends Acker for her "alternate episteme" and the "dismantling of the universality of whiteness" (2000, 108). Riley and Manners do not address the problems emerging with the teleology of white renewal. They also miss the fact that its narrativization is often parasitic in relation to Blackness and built through an antagonism best abbreviated as Moving Whiteness—Static/Backward Blackness (Morrison 1992). As Sherene Razack asserts, "[w]e know the black body by its immobility and the white body by its mobility" where mobility is always already orientated towards, and indicative of, (new) being (2002, 13).

the story

The story is simple. Kathy, a young white American girl, leaves home to explore sexual pleasures in Haiti. There she meets many men—mostly Black and always lusting—and a few white women—sickly and stuck in Haiti. Adventurous and wandering, Kathy tries to get wherever and whatever she

wants. This proves difficult because Haitian men stall her, nothing happens in Haiti, and Kathy's own naïveté slows her down. Kathy's desires—to somehow simultaneously move across, through, to and away from Haiti—and her orgasms with Roger Mystere, one of the "mulatto robber barons" with whom Kathy falls in love (Acker 1978, 53), are the only turbulent moments in the text. Bracketed by Kathy's arrival and her anticipated return to America, sex scenes turn on a loop and mirror the persistency with which Haitian men drive Kathy crazy, and in circles. At the end of her journey, Kathy returns[3] to America having gained not only hedonistic enjoyment but also maturity and self-determination. Reviewing *Haiti* on *goodreads*, one reader declares:

> This book made me feel like someone's mother. My goodness Kathy make me nervous about Haiti. I lived in Haiti, and I know that's a very very bad place to … hitchhike, sleep with random people, wander to towns that you don't know … and the like. I half expected her to get hurt or killed. I suppose she did fine, but still—what a tense read for me! (Pewterbreath 2008; ellipses in original)

Protecting Kathy is not an entirely unsubstantiated desire if the novel is read as linear and straightforward. Although twenty-nine years old and occasionally reminding Roger that she is a woman (138), Kathy consistently appears as childish and hasty. She gives in to every desire (her own, and that of strangers), feels disorientated and lost as a tourist, and lacks all forms of security and prospects.

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3   In response to a presentation of a draft of this article in October 2019, Julian Murphet pointed out that Kathy does not actually return to America in the end of the story. Similarly, Shannon Rose Riley contends that the novel "works structurally to leave the reader at the voodoo doctor [and] it is unclear whether Kathy will ever return to the US" (1991, 43-44). I disagree with this reading and suggest instead that the story orientates both *Haiti's* reader and Kathy towards her return to America. I argue that by abandoning Roger and the boys at the pool, Kathy leaves Haiti even if only metaphorically—she cuts her ties to Haiti and is finally ready to move on. Furthermore, the story ends with Kathy's altered state—she is "more dazed than before" and faces the sun (Acker 1978, 170). Dazed as if she has just experienced a dangerous journey, Kathy survives her quest, and overcomes physical and spiritual darkness. Kathy stares at the sun—the grandiose celestial body and source of life—which acts as a metaphor for America's dominance and capacity to shed light or shadow over its "dependent" states (like Haiti). As a personification of Acker, Kathy also returns to America in Acker's later texts (e.g. in *Great Expectations*). Therefore, Kathy orientates her journey to America, leaving readers with the impression that she will make it back home despite *Haiti* ending before she manages to do so.

In a different reading, Kathy's naiveté and precarious position are only feigned, and the character is "not as simple as she initially seems" (Ross 2016). On the contrary, Kathy's promiscuity implies "a new type of gender freedom," (ibid.) and marks Acker's social critique whenever freedom is refused to female characters in the story. Both images of Kathy highlight some sort of heroic impetus. As naive and vulnerable, Kathy consistently demonstrates her curiosity and capacity to risk. This recklessness lends itself to a feminist reading.

Embarking on a journey despite all odds, and in a place where "women in Haiti don't go around alone" (22), Kathy remains remarkably undisturbed and determined. Undoubtedly, the capacity to survive and proceed hinge on Kathy's luck in the story, and on Acker's decision to keep the plot empty of action and conflict. The heroism suggested by the second reading lies in feminist critiques of patriarchal oppressions. Kathy continually disproves of misogyny and patriarchy in the story, and this pronunciation has been generally understood as the main function of the character (S. Riley 1991, Guinn 2013). Kathy spells out Acker's concerns about female sexuality and emancipation and dares to do so in pornographic bluntness. In this sense, the protagonist Kathy appears an unambiguous personification of Acker.

After all, Acker is often celebrated as a writer who dares to live on the edge and fight against oppressive normativity. As Katie Mills notes,

> Kathy Acker brings to avant-garde literature the angry gender politics [and her] novels sketch out the goal of female protagonists to find a voice that will "transport" them to new places. (2006, 180)

Acker's capacity to risk and disobey is also described as restorative. For instance, Ralph Clare understands her work as social criticism and underscores its links to originality and renewal:

> In a world in which liberal democracy is itself in crisis, Acker's work is more relevant than ever. Change the political genre, fight for something new, Acker's work urges us, because conventional politics in the post-factual, image-driven age is failing and unable to evolve. (Clare 2018)

Clare fixes transformative potential to Acker's break with conventional politics. Like most critics, he sees recourses to change and "something new" as typically Acker-ean. Interpretations of *Haiti* follow a similar vein. Shannon Riley and Clay Guinn have commended it for deconstructing the travelogue as a tool of hegemony and as a critique of imperial instincts. Furthermore, Guinn argues that Acker's parody works against the longue

durée of dehumanizing Blackness. Alongside this appraisal, Guinn references the feminist Sara Mills:

> Sara Mills, for example, suggests that the female travel writers exist outside of the traditional imperial relationship. Female writers, Mills argues, 'cannot be said to speak from outside colonial discourse, but their relation to the dominant discourse is problematic because of its conflict with the discourses of "femininity," which were operating on them in equal, and sometimes stronger, measure'[…] These are important voices in postcolonial scholarship, but I do not find them applicable here. While it is tempting to think of Acker in terms of a female voice, she was often skeptical of feminist categories […] and often sought to subvert them. In *Haiti,* the heroine is obviously female, but I believe that she is more a representative of American hegemony than she is restrained by it. (2013, 17)

Guinn relates Acker to feminist reconstructions of history but implies that she surpasses their deficiencies. Or, Acker is seen to expose Mills' exoneration of white women from anti-Black violence, and, therefore, overcome Mills' and Kathy's racism. The novel is thus framed as a corrective of feminist failures, or at least as their timely reprimand—white women also exoticized Haiti and exercised power, and they did it in real (literal) and literary movements. In a certain way, Guinn charges Acker's acknowledgement of feminism's errors with the implication that the capacity to recognize failure helps Acker escape rather than simply reflect on it.

On the one hand, Guinn's account suggests that Acker has overcome herself by criticizing white women's sexual exploitations of Haiti, that is, by exposing women's participation in imperial projects. As a personification of white female imperialism, Kathy's character enables Acker to critique imperialism, to expose and ironize it. On the other, Guinn frames Acker's protest as a collapse of identity – Kathy figures not so much as a female character but as a representation of American hegemony (17). If one examines *Haiti* informed by Guinn's analysis, one could conclude that while Kathy travels to Haiti in pursuit of sexual freedom, the parody of the journey manages to distance Acker from white feminism's failings. Such a reading would infer that Acker's text has successfully undone the past and managed to move Acker—through Kathy—forward. Or, Acker appears as transformative and working towards a better future, the "something new," as Clare (2018) maintains.

Within the framework of parody, however, the story is expected to undermine precisely such images of white womanhood. As ironical, the text should mock Kathy's heroic struggles towards "a new world. A new kind of woman. Or a new world for women" (77). Yet all Kathy's movements,

even the most purposeless and parodied ones, are geared towards her survival as a transformative character. Whether she proves to renew herself despite her immaturity, or thanks to her sexual autonomy, Kathy embodies white women's capacity to transform courageously. She thus stands in direct opposition to what and whom the narrative defines as a burden, as backwardness which paralyses Kathy's desires for "a new world".

mobility vs. stasis

It is not too far-fetched to assume that the few white women Kathy meets have shared her enthusiasm and liveliness when they first moved to Haiti. Betty, Roger's wife, complains to Kathy that nothing moves in Haiti and even dogs or books cannot be imported (61). Although lethargic and stunned when Kathy meets her, Betty remembers and longs for a different life. She exclaims: "[w]hat I really want is a horse. I've always adored horses […] If I had a horse, I could go anywhere around here" (60). Yet, living in Haiti (and with Roger) has smothered Betty's energy. She can only talk about her past in America, and fails at every opportunity to change her situation in Haiti. Betty is also portrayed as bloodless and imprisoned (61, 66). In contrast, Kathy yearns to move, improve and change. She feels the urge to emancipate Betty. Kathy says to Roger:

> She's very scared, Roger. She's so scared she almost can't function any more. She doesn't have any blood in her. No one has to be as pale as she is. It's unhealthy. You've got to let her get a job or at least have transportation so she can get out of here now and then. (73)

A moment earlier and a moment later, Kathy sleeps with Roger and asks him to leave Betty. Yet, Kathy's naiveté empties her request of malice and egoism. On the contrary, Kathy consistently behaves in a friendly way towards Betty, and treats her with kindness and understanding. The simplicity and flatness of Kathy's character, and her childish honesty, predetermine her words as straightforward and genuine. Thus, Kathy appears concerned about both Betty and Roger, and not so inadvertently, with women's liberation from oppressive marriages, the right to pursue happiness, and a new understanding of sex as free, uninhibited pleasure.

Kathy's demands for better treatment of women appear courageous, almost self-sacrificial, if one considers her naiveté. Unlike men's fooling around and women's inefficiency, Kathy's movements are marked as intrinsically political. Kathy tells us that she does not want to be a mere tourist whose transitory movements leave the place unchanged. On the contrary, Kathy

wants to set Betty free, to share with her the benefits of (self)love. In fact, Kathy consistently offers her body to people in need. Throughout the story Kathy gives in to everyone, and gives away everything—her time, money, and body. The result is an endless repetition, complete disorientation. Every day seems the same, every sex encounter repeats the previous one. Kathy is stuck:

> Gotta run. Gotta get out. Gotta get moving. Get out. Escape. Escape. Burst open. Stop. Get the fuck out of here anyway I can. Dig my way out […] I want to go home, mommy. I thought this was a passion, but it's not. Emotions are like thoughts. They come and go. They're not me. I can play at being in one, being one, but it's not me, it's just playing, and after a while it makes me sick. I don't know what to do anymore, mommy. Mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy mommy. (87)

To overcome herself, Kathy needs to learn not only how to protect herself and navigate Haitian space, but also how to use what she has to her advantage. It is logical then that narrative resolution occurs when she is told "you have a great force in you. You must go upwards" (165-66). The story thus nears culmination when Kathy realizes she has a strength driving her, that the progress to a better place is intrinsic to her body.

The realization is further enforced by a distinction Kathy draws between her restless self and the sterile, unproductive people she meets in Haiti. Kathy remarks, for instance, that "the land is very flat and women and houses are almost invisible" (110). In fact, the more Acker describes Black female characters as hidden and part of the background, the more feminist Kathy's hunger for movement appears. She is portrayed as capable of change (her mind and destination), and as the only one ready to risk (herself) in the name of bettering the monotonous present. The consistency of this desire throughout the story suggests that moving forward is intrinsic to Kathy's character. Kathy reminds herself: "[y]ou've got to use your intellect to keep you in line […] you're going to go too far out […] you've got to have more cause" (77).

Contrasting with Kathy's energy, Haiti is represented through immobile Black bodies and is abstracted through their anonymity and interchangeability. Haitian women appear to be both everywhere (23-24), and nowhere. This contradiction extends Black women's invisibility and makes them part of the background—recognizable only when Kathy feels like noticing them. Like Kathy, Black female characters are marked as girls but, contrary to her, they never grow to be women. Instead, Black female characters appear in the plural, selling sex or cleaning, but never in control of their bodies.

As Hortense Spillers writes, whiteness re-constructs Black women as "the beached whales of the sexual universe, unvoiced, misseen, not doing, awaiting their verb" (2003, 153). In *Haiti,* Black women are invisible and useless: neither Haitian men nor Kathy need them, and the plot continues despite their absence. When Black women appear in the story, they are useless and interchangeable. Thus, even Black women's only role in the story—to offer sex—is fundamentally different from Kathy's gift of sex and sexual politics. Roger confesses:

> Every day I'm with four or five different women. I spend my lunch break with one woman: maybe I take her to the beach. Then I bring her home in the afternoon. I make a dinner date with another woman and I take her around to the hotels so I can check out what other women are around. Meanwhile I've made a date to meet another woman around ten o'clock in a bar. I go to the bar and spend an hour there. Like tonight I had made a date to meet a girlfriend of mine at Le Poison […] I have dates with women all the time. Sometimes I bring one girl with me to meet another. (148)

Towards Kathy, Roger becomes jealous and obsessive (79-84). He falls in love with her, and makes her promise that she is going to be with him "all the time" (82), and that they "will do everything together" (84). The contrast between singular love and a monotonous overindulgence with available women marks Kathy as different. Sex with her offers something more; she manages to grab Roger's attention and keep it. Furthermore, Kathy reconfigures her subjectivity through the politics and power of sexuality. Contrasting the monotonous sex of Haitian women, Kathy's sexual encounters are specific and daring. They appear as cutting-edge and an experiment with readers' patience and puritanism, a symbol of white women's new, liberating capacity to reclaim sexuality (76-77).

Antithetical to Kathy's urges is the unspoken presence of Black women in the story and their insignificance in and to the plot. While Kathy re-maps identity, moves towards culmination, and embodies possibility and future, Black women appear barren, or do not appear at all, barred. Thus, the only time Kathy notices that Black women are pregnant, nursing babies, or aging is at the end of the story when Kathy has already recognized her own capacity to grow. Although pregnant, Black women remain as nameless as before, part of a faceless crowd. Rather than signify Haitian agency, this newly-emerged fertility and presence frame Kathy's maturation and spiritual awakening. First lost and unconscious, Kathy is finally shown to herself (169).

Another indication for Kathy's maturation is her decision to leave the Haitian boys she meets by the pool, and thus her own childishness. Marking youth's playfulness while Kathy was interested in Haiti, at the beginning

of the story the boys raise her curiosity and attract her. Kathy finds their company refreshing and an escape from Haitian men. The longer she stays in Haiti, however, the more burdensome the boys become and the more threatening their desire to keep Kathy in Haiti appears. The boys' sexual needs turn explicit and begin to resemble those of Haitian men. Kathy says to one of them: "You're too young. I'm twenty-nine years old and you're only twelve". The boy reassures her: "In Haiti there is no age. I'm a man like the Mystere" (107). Soon after, Kathy realizes she needs to grow out of her fascination and fetishism, and to move forward and away. Consequently, she abandons herself as a tourist (and by extension, white female tourism) and chooses to return to the USA, the place construed as harboring the possibility for growth and renewal (Berkovitch 2012; Jillson 2004).

Although Kathy meets an abundance of Black men, their representation nullifies Blackness as much as the absence of Black women in the story. The most successful male characters, the Mysteres, are locked in a tradition of nothingness. Whatever money they make is lost mid-sentence only for the next generation to inherit the pattern of cyclical gain and loss:

> The grandfather of the present M. Mystere made and lost a million dollars. The grandfather's son made a million and lost a million two times and then went crazy. The present M. Mystere started out life with this heritage and nothing else. Like his grandfather and father, he made and lost a million. (53)

Black men are visualized as interchangeable, a faceless constant. They are depicted as children, and always already contrast Kathy's desire to grow (up). In the effort to satirize Blackness as dull and stiff, Acker uses repeated, tiresome negations. Thus, the more inactive Blackness appears in the story, the faster Kathy moves towards culmination (98).

Similarly, and in accord with white ideology, Kathy repeats that nothing progresses in Haiti (19, 160). On the one hand, this formal repetition empties meaning; on the other, it piles up meaninglessness itself. A feeling of repetitive nothingness arises in the text—all of Haiti seems like a background and a burden to both Kathy and *Haiti*'s readers. In this light, the form props the story: Kathy struggles to move in a dead space in which Black men are part of the scenery and Black women are nowhere.

Kathy's relationship with Roger redoubles the juxtaposition between Kathy's drive and Black incapacity. Her turbulent sexual desires give her an incentive to travel, change, and grow. Conversely, Roger's fascination with Kathy stuns him – he cannot leave his wife, nor offer any prospects to Kathy. Instead, Roger behaves like the boys by the pool and stalls her, refusing to

take advantage of the "better" life Kathy promises him. As for her, a brighter future, one without Roger, awaits:

> Someday there'll have to be a new world. A new kind of woman. Or a new world for women because the world we perceive, what we perceive, causes our characteristics. In that future time a woman will be a strong warrior: free, stern, proud, able to control her own destiny, able to kick anyone in the guts, able to punch out any goddamn son-of-a-bitch who tells her he loves her. (77)

racializing images and imagination

It is important to note that Acker reinforces the above narrative choices through racializing language as well. She not only tells the story of symbolically nullified Blackness but uses formal experiments to solidify this notion. Thus, the portrayals of Black bodies as naturally incapacitated are relayed in the text through tautologies and repetitions. For instance, Kathy sees "the town [as] absolutely still. A dead mass of houses and shacks and slums piled together, jumbled, shackled, no reason at all, just there" and reiterates that this can be nothing else but "death. Stillness" (98). To settle this formally, Acker employs a stubborn repetition:

> *men* and *women* and *girls* and *boys* and *babies* sit and argue and sell and buy and *stand around* and eat and *walk* […] the shacks begin again and *all the people walk and sit* and talk and carry baskets and have *dogs* and quarrel […] There is *dust* everywhere. *Dust* on the road, *dust* in the air, *dust* on the skin, *dust* on the straw and wood shacks. The distance is a *light tan* haze. The shacks are *light tan* and grey […] *Women and a few children walk* in these ruts […] *dogs* and chickens run from the shacks into *the street* […] the *road's* a hard dirt *road.* It *winds around, goes up and down, basically it moves north-south*…The *road's* flat and runs directly *north and south*. (9, italics mine)

The repetition appears in the description of Black space and is a good example of how anti-Blackness is not broken by the postmodernity of Acker's aesthetics. It is a repetition that exhibits the shared imaginations and stereotypes that Guinn praises Acker for dismantling. Acker displays Blackness as homogenous, leading nowhere, and invisible—a display Guinn's argument relies on, and frames as a parody that succeeds in its political aspirations. Contrary to Guinn, I argue that this piling of words adds to dehumanizing Blackness by accumulating its descriptions and rendering them meaningless. The meaninglessness echoes Acker's portrayal of Haiti because the textual space dedicated to the landscape seems as contagiously repetitious as Black characters. In other words, the text reiterates the emptiness Kathy sees in Haiti.

For critics like Guinn, Acker's narrative choices create something new and quintessentially different from the racism of Acker's foremothers. Like Guinn, Victoria de Zwaan sees Acker's parody as a recycling of the original text "into a more deliberately and overtly intertextual metafiction" (1997). De Zwaan follows Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. (1993) in asserting that Acker's recourses to parody should not be restricted by narrow definitions of the technique. While I generally agree with this, I want to stress that textual repetitions in *Haiti* function differently than those in Acker's other appropriations. One reason for this is that *Haiti* offers no alternative representation to a stereotype used to justify colonial violence. As Steve Martinot and Jared Sexton argue, the "repetition of derogation becomes the performance of White supremacist identity" (2003, 5). In a similar vein, Denise Riley notes

> In its violently emotional materiality, the word is indeed made flesh and dwells amongst us—often long outstaying its welcome … On occasion the impact of violent speech may even be recuperable [sic] through its own incantation; the repetition of abusive language may be occasionally saved through the irony of iteration, which may drain the venom out of the original insult … Yet angry interpellation's very failure to always work as intended … is also exactly what, at other times, works for it. (2005, 9-10)

In *Haiti*, the exaggeration of racism, which is Acker's intended parody, fails the moment it re-produces the very image Acker set out to criticize. Objects and subjects in the story are inconceivable outside Acker's images. Thus, the story forces Black characters into continuous symbolic colonization through its re-readings. As Saidiya Hartman argues in "Venus in Two Acts", the violence exerted upon Black bodies is suspended in repetition insofar as their narrated dis/appearance redoubles the scene of oppression and becomes the only way they are summoned by imagination. She further asserts that

> the stories that exist are not about them, but rather about the violence, excess, mendacity, and reason that seized hold of their lives, transformed them into commodities and corpses, and identified them with names tossed-off as insults and crass jokes. (2008, 2)

Admittedly, *Haiti* was never intended as a realistic account. It is *only* an artistic intervention. However, the particular focus on, and representation of, Blackness is not only Acker's. In fact, projects like *Haiti* continue to appear and showcase white women's political art (or creative politics).

capitalizing on Blackness

Let us take for example Dana Schutz, a white contemporary artist who produced a piece in response to gun violence in the US. Like Acker, Schutz has publicized her interest in art as the "place where the hierarchies of the world can be rearranged" (qtd. in Artnet, n.d.). Put otherwise, Schutz also sees her work as an opportunity to expose and re-imagine reality. In her 2016 painting "Open Casket", Schutz portrays Emmett Till, the Black boy who was lynched by two white Americans in Mississippi in 1955. Like *Haiti*, the painting zooms in on Blackness. In fact, Schutz repeats the movement of Acker's gaze—her painting depicts the intensity of a dead Black body. Schutz's work is not a parody like *Haiti* but its image is constructed in a similar way. Blackness is highlighted, it is where the white artist *goes* to articulate social criticism. In an open letter to the Whitney Biennial, which showcased Schutz' painting in 2017, artist and writer Hannah Black states:

> I am writing to ask you to remove Dana Schutz's painting "Open Casket" and with the urgent recommendation that the painting be destroyed and not entered into any market or museum […] the painting should not be acceptable to anyone who cares or pretends to care about Black people because it is not acceptable for a white person to transmute Black suffering into profit and fun, though the practice has been normalized for a long time […] a similarly high-stakes conversation has been going on about the willingness of a largely non-Black media to share images and footage of Black people in torment and distress or even at the moment of death. (qtd. in Greenberger 2017)

Black writes further that although Schutz might have been motivated by shame of white violence, her artistic appropriations and use of Black suffering as "raw material" derive from its logic. Hannah Black is not alone in deeming Schutz's work problematic. The open letter was accompanied by serious criticisms against the fetishization of Black pain, the ease with which (white) morality is read into anti-Black practices, and the feigned naivete with which white cultural producers continue to utilize Blackness (Ziyad 2017; Muñoz-Alonso 2017).

Recalling the work of another white artist, Ti-Rock Moore, Hari Ziyad reminds us that Schutz is only one of many who capitalize on Black suffering. "Under the hand of the likes of Schutz and Moore", Ziyad writes, "Black death becomes less a call to awareness, more a titillating spectacle" (2017). At the heart of the question lies not censorship as Coco Fusco suggests (2017), but an unredeemable distance between white and Black positionality (Wilderson 2010). This distance cannot be bridged because

the embodiments of opposing and irreconcilable principles or forces … hold out no hope for dialectical synthesis, and because they are relations that form the foundation on which all subsequent conflicts in the Western Hemisphere are possible. (Wilderson 2010, 29)

In other words, while themes and images may share similar contours,[4] the cultural work and imaginative labour embedded in, and seeping from, these images is quintessentially different. Eve Tuck and C. Ree say in one voice:

Damage narratives are the only stories that get told about me, unless I'm the one that's telling them. People have made their careers on telling stories of damage about me, about communities like mine. Damage is the only way that monsters and future ghosts are conjured. (2013, 647)

There are two meanings of "damage narrative" implied here. Firstly, damage points to the focus of representation, to the dominant visuality that highlights hurt (the hypervisualization of Black suffering to which Hannah Black refers). In Schutz's example, this is Emmet Till's death, in Acker's it is Haitian poverty and social paralysis. Hortense Spillers exposes this focus and mode of representation as the colonial practice of reducing Black bodies to flesh for white voyeuristic pleasure, something Spillers calls "pornotroping" (1987, 67). Schutz's painting and Acker's *Haiti* both cash in on damage; they are damage narratives because they derive "profit and fun" forcing Black pain to the spotlight.

The second meaning of damage is contained in the fact that the story is not told by the person or community experiencing suffering. In this sense, a damage narrative is one that produces further damage, it is an oppressive exertion of white imagination onto non-white bodies. The violence of reproducing an already real scene of violence is doubled in white authorship/authority to claim Black bodies ad infinitum (Aldridge 2016). From this perspective, Acker's saturation of stereotypes about Haiti can never possibly un- or re-do the "image" itself. The reference cannot go away by being ironized. On the contrary, the act of anti-Blackness is locked before, and in, the text. Postmodern form and parody might, indeed, abandon realism, but there is a reality here (or, rather a white construction of reality) that is in excess of Acker's technical ambition.

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4   Fusco excuses Schutz' work by arguing that *both* white and non-white artists have represented Black suffering.

conclusion

The point I want to emphasize is that the radical sexuality Acker narrates—Kathy's capacity to transcend patriarchal claustrophobia and her initial reason for moving—is realized on Black flesh and through Black fetishism. This is not a minor transgression. Where Kathy arrives as a new woman is where Acker redeems white subjectivity and where she fixes Black being. Thus, whatever the intention behind parodying Blackness as lifeless, its negations remain the only way it summons representation. We, as readers, can only acknowledge the lack, the misnaming, but this is where we are left off, too. Here Black bodies are made doubly fungible—once, to sustain the parody and a second time in Acker's own writerly success. As Hartman explains

> the fungibility of the commodity makes the captive body an abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others' feelings, ideas, desires, and values; and, as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master's body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and dominion. (1997, 21)

Haiti situates Kathy in the middle of anti-Blackness: Kathy travels to Haiti to immerse herself in Blackness, exploit Black bodies, and by contrasting their "inferiority" and "backwardness", shines through and is able to re-imagine herself as a new woman (170). The premises of white ideology and the way it structures the world remain intact. Nothing happens in Haiti after Kathy leaves and even Roger, whom Kathy has desired so passionately, disappears from the narrative unnoticeably. Kathy remains the same but better. *Haiti* highlights her new self and remains where white ideology imagines it fixed—under the author/ity of progressive white figures.

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10 Passing on the torch to "light out the territory ahead": conflicting discourses of (arrested) mobility in *Geronimo's Story of his Life*

by Jens Temmen

Introduction[1]

In the introduction to the collaborative autobiography *Geronimo's Story of His Life*, co-author Stephen M. Barrett depicts his attempt to capture the story of legendary Apache chief Geronimo as, literally, a wild ride:

> Geronimo refused to talk when a stenographer was present, or wait for corrections or questions when telling the story. Each day he had in mind what he would tell and told it in a very clear, brief manner. He might prefer to talk at his own tepee, at Asa Daklugie's house, in some mountain dell, or as he rode in a swinging gallop across the prairie; wherever his fancy led him, there he told me what he wished to tell and no more. On the day that he first gave any portion of his autobiography he would not be questioned about any details, nor would he add another word, but simply said, 'Write what I have spoken,' and left us to remember and write the story without one bit of assistance. (Barrett [1905] 2017a, xvi)

By way of relating Geronimo's unwillingness to simply sit still while telling Barrett his life's story, as well as his refusal to take additional questions, the preface gestures towards the allegedly asymmetric relationship between the two co-authors in exerting authority over the written text, and connects this relationship with the larger context of the narrative of U.S. westward expansion into Native American territories.

The collaborative book locates Geronimo's story within the history of the so-called 'Apache Wars' of the late nineteenth century. The name

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1 This contribution is based on a comparative analysis of *Geronimo's Story* in the context of U.S. imperial strategies of territorial control and management in Jens Temmen, *The Territorialities of U.S. Imperialism(s): Conflicting Discourse of Sovereignty, Jurisdiction and Territory in Nineteenth-Century U.S. Legal Texts and Indigenous Life Writing* (2020).

'Apache Wars' and its one-dimensional representation in popular culture belies the multilayered character of this conflict. Instead of a singular war between the United States and 'the Apache', it instead involved several overlapping disputes: The struggle over dominance in the North American Southwest between Mexico and the United States and a number of Native American nations, with constantly shifting alliances and loyalties among all participating parties (Guidotti-Hernández 90-92). The book contributes to a more simplified representation of the conflict, however, in which the Apache are singled out as the main antagonist of the United States in its allegedly preordained and fateful expansion over the North American continent. Through this, *Geronimo* reiterates popular motifs of the time—westward expansion, the frontier myth, Manifest Destiny, and the 'vanishing Indian'— that connect the conflict between the Apache and the US to the larger context of a struggle between Native 'savagery' and Western civilization which was, in hindsight, considered to be formative for U.S. national identity (cf. Huizar-Hernández 2017, 52).

According to Arnold Krupat, the collaboration between Geronimo and Barrett on the book re-enacts, in that sense, the frontier setting it celebrates, by signifying a "reciprocal relationship between two cultures in contact [but never] one between equals" (Krupat 1992, 33). Krupat thus identifies an asymmetry of power and a clear binary opposition regarding the agendas of the white co-editor Barrett and the prisoner-of-war Geronimo, which mirrors the mythical frontier line between 'civilization' (the United States) and 'savagery' (Native Americans). In its own national narrative, the United States celebrated having successfully pushed this frontier boundary west over the North American continent, transforming 'wilderness' into 'civilization,' and pacifying and 'civilizing' a 'savage' Indigenous population. In a similar sense then, Krupat claims, *Geronimo's Story* is shaped by Barrett's attempt to affirm this frontier narrative through the motif of Geronimo's capture by US troops and Barrett's own successful capture of Geronimo's story for posterity.

Philipp Deloria reminds us that this spatial logic of the frontier also intersects with a particular conception of temporality. According to Deloria, the idea of the "vanishing Indian" presented Native Americans at the turn of the twentieth century as having missed out on modernity and as having "almost dropped out of history itself" (Deloria 2004, 6). Deloria describes how, according to US imperial narratives, Native Americans found themselves in this vexed position: as they claimed their territories, they were left to choose between becoming 'civilized' and losing their 'nativeness' in the process, or rejecting western civilization and thereby remaining transfixed in time—

without agency and as a curiosity piece of a past now overcome (cf. Deloria 2004, 5). Either way, Native Americans were bound to vanish.

Deloria's analysis highlights again a pertinent link between ample mobility and the restriction of movement on the one hand, and civilization or the lack thereof on the other, and clarifies how vexed this connection is at its core: while the US underlines its claim to civilization (e.g., the ability to settle down) by marching off into a glorious future, it is their alleged lack of civilization (e.g., their inability to settle down) that confines Native Americans to the past. In spite of these inconsistencies, this discourse had far-reaching consequences for Native Americans. When Frederick Jackson Turner, in hindsight, infamously declared the frontier closed in 1890, Native Americans were henceforth considered and treated as trapped in the past indefinitely (cf. Owens 1998, 28).

This complex entanglement of mobility and temporality is central to *Geronimo's Story* and is negotiated at various points in the book. In the course of this contribution, I will take a closer look at one particular instance in the book, which relates an encounter between Geronimo and other Indigenous groups at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. The encounter itself and the loaded backdrop of the World's Fair encapsulate, I would argue, Barrett's attempt to align *Geronimo's Story* with the narrative of US westward expansion. Very generally, however, and in light of the aforementioned, Geronimo's movement and the inaccuracy of content resulting from it becomes a shorthand in the book for Geronimo's (and by extension all Native Americans') proud but ultimately irrational character: from the perspective of Barrett and his *white* American audience, a Native American chieftain whose 'savage' people are slowly and tragically—yet inevitably—vanishing in the face of US civilization and expansion, should be grateful for the opportunity to record his story for non-native posterity (cf. Barrett [1905] 2007b, v). In the eyes of Barrett, Geronimo's unwillingness to settle down during their interviews not only weakens his position as author, but also serves as a gesture to how the alleged inability of all Native Americans to literally settle down and adapt to western civilization ultimately confines them to the historical past.

Barrett's grip on the book seems to be strong at first glance. Viewed through the lens of western traditions of storytelling, Geronimo's alleged surrender of authority over the content of the book does seem to weaken his position as author as well as his chances to see through his own agenda in the text. Hertha D. Wong reminds us in *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years* (1992), however, that understanding autobiographical utterances of Native American authors necessarily challenges scholars to look for "three-

dimensional storytelling performances and two-dimensional pictographic stories" beyond the "mono-dimensional linearity of written narrative" (12). With this, Wong reminds us that privileging the written text as the sole source of both agency and identity does not do justice to various Native American traditions of visual or performative acts of storytelling. Geronimo's insistence on telling the story on horseback, in a mountain dell, or anywhere else on the move, could be read as such an act of performative storytelling, which is easily overlooked because it comes at the price of accuracy of content. Considering Wong, Geronimo's insistence on authority over the process of writing the book then seems very strategic. Geronimo's seemingly haphazard mode of storytelling in the end finds its way into the narrative and anchors Geronimo's presence as a co-author within the book, even if this position seems somewhat vexed (cf. Sands 1998, 9). In other words, while Barrett dismisses Geronimo's mode of storytelling as mere "fancy" in the preface, he nonetheless includes it in the text, allowing Geronimo's swinging gallop across the prairie to literally and figuratively override Barrett's carefully crafted authorial position. It is from this vexed position of Indigenous co-authorship that Geronimo attempts to campaign in his book for the return of the Apache to their homeland in the Mexican American borderland—a proposition quite incompatible with their status as an allegedly vanishing people.

My contribution to this volume takes a closer look at the relationship between movement and capture in *Geronimo's Story*, and how both tie in with authority over the written text. I will point out how this negotiation reveals different and competing trajectories, imperial and decolonial, within the text that gesture either to a temporal and spatial confinement of Native Americans or the empowerment of the notion of a future of Native American life within the United States. While the analysis here focuses on the notion of minor mobility within in the context of 19th century US expansion into Native American territories, these findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding, I would argue, of how playfully transgressing spatial and temporal boundaries via texts can be a performance of resistance for some Native American authors.

"To pose—and disappear"? Capturing Geronimo

As touched upon above, Geronimo's movement and mobility are presented as inherently detrimental to his position as author. Barrett's authority over the text seems to grow, in comparison, by quite literally arresting Geronimo's movement and by gleaning what Barrett considers to be a coherent narrative

from what he is told. Barrett's claim to this authoritative position of a self-ascribed is encapsulated in a photograph included in the book and titled "How the Book Was Made" (cf. Fig. 10.1).

HOW THE BOOK WAS MADE

figure 10.1: Photograph of Barrett, Geronimo, and Asa Daklugie, titled "How The Book was Made"; inside cover (Geronimo [1905] 2007, vi)

The picture alludes to the notion of capturing Geronimo and his story on several levels. Most apparently, the use of the then advanced technology of photography as a medium to represent the process of writing the book, offers a sharp contrast to Barrett's description of the way that Geronimo would have "fancied" to tell his story (see quote above). Given the long exposure time necessary to produce a relatively sharp photograph in the early 1900s, the picture itself suggests that Barrett was indeed able to make Geronimo sit still for quite a while. The setting of the photograph seems to translate this capture of Geronimo's mobility into a successful second capture: the preservation of the story of the 'savage' and 'uncivilized' Apache. The picture's staged setting—in the 'wilderness' with Geronimo dressed in traditional garb—clearly caters to the expectations of Barrett's

158

white audience, whom Barrett wanted to supply with stories, pictures and "facts" about a 'savage people' bound to vanish (Barrett [1905] 2007b, v). Read through this lens, the arrangement of the three contributors—with Geronimo taller than the others, translator Asa Daklugie squatting and Barrett sitting and eagerly listening—physically illustrates the process of transmitting the story. Barrett's position, replete with pencil and notepad, at the receiving end of this process, represents his own diligence and scientific authority. This arrangement also alludes to how, viewed through the settler colonial gaze of Barrett and his *white* readership, the Apache's story may be saved for posterity with the help of Barrett, but also that Geronimo's role in this picture was the same as that of any 'vanishing' Native American: "to pose—and disappear" (Krupat 1985, 38).

By zooming in on the collaboration between Barrett and Geronimo to connect notions of mobility and capture with questions of authorship, authority, and civilization/savagery, the photograph also attempts to reproduce on a smaller scale the relationship between the Apache and the United States, which the book as such focuses on. While Geronimo and his Apache tribe were already surrounded by legend before the book was written in 1905, for fighting back against and outsmarting the US army and Mexican troops for much of the 1850s through 1880s, the book's opening image is an attempt to rein in the legend. The corroborating position of the photo seems to give credit to Barrett's self-proclaimed reputation as an 'Indian expert' and add to the selling point of the book—Geronimo is under the authority of the US military and almost impossible to gain access to (cf. Barrett [1905] 2007a, xiii-xviii). The image thereby introduces the story as only readable and understandable through the lens of Geronimo's status as prisoner-of-war. At a later point in the book, the text does indeed recall Geronimo's daring and violent exploits in fighting the US Army and Mexican troops—particularly his strategy of being constantly on the move and crisscrossing the then newly drawn border between the two nations in order to avoid capture (cf. Griswold del Castillo 1990, 59). Yet, while the description of Geronimo's and the Apache's extraordinary strategic mobility might seem sympathetic, even celebratory at times, the opening of the book works as a constant reminder to the reader that the Apache and Geronimo are a people on the wane, and that, from a settler colonial perspective, their path eventually and inevitably led to capture and incarceration at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. In that sense, the photograph straddles both levels—the story of how Geronimo's story was written down, and the story of his resistance to US expansion—by essentializing them as struggles over mobility and capture, over Indigenous movement and the US imperial arrest of this movement. Here again, as alluded to in the introduction, the

book reveals that it is clearly connected with the larger framework of the frontier narrative and its bedfellow, the "vanishing Indian", and that the struggle over Indigenous mobility and capture in the text has a temporal dimension to it as well.

And yet in spite of Barrett's tireless efforts, the photograph, in a manner similar to the preface, again unwittingly documents the inconsistencies of the narrative he seeks to promote and affirm in the book. Anita Huizar-Hernández notes that while *Geronimo's Story* does indeed connect the individual encounter between Geronimo and Barrett with the collective encounters between Native Americans and US settlers, the notion of a simple binary frontier setting does not do justice to the complexity of collaborative authoring, which in this particular case also included the translator Asa Deklugie (who is spelled "Daklugie" in his own writing) (cf. 2017, 51). In other words, the presence of translator Asa Daklugie in the photograph, who adds a third authorial voice to the writing process by funneling back and forth the exchange between Barrett and Geronimo, disrupts the perception of the book as a space of binaries. Instead, Daklugie embodies Louis Owens' (Choctaw) concept of the frontier as a highly unstable "hybridized contact zone," which is not as asymmetrical as the narrative of U.S. expansion wants us to believe, and in which the existence of a multitude of perspectives and voices is possible (cf. 1998, 26). In a similar sense, Daklugie's presence distorts a clear ascription of authorship and authority in the text, making *Geronimo's Story* an actually "opaquely polyvocal narrative" (Huizar-Hernández 2017, 50) that resists a clear alignment with the agendas of Geronimo and Barrett— or Asa Daklugie for that matter. What the photograph does document, then, is a complex authorial relation that not only questions Barrett's claim of authority over the text, but also highlights that the book is rather a space of a struggle, in which voices and agendas of all three authors can co-exist, clash and even overlap (cf. Sands 1998, 9-10; Brumble 1988, 12). In the case of *Geronimo*, these voices include Barrett's vocal championing of the official history of US westward expansion, Geronimo's call for the Apache's return to their homeland from their prison at Fort Sill and for safe future, and Asa Daklugie's somewhat opaque voice as a translator. At least two of these voices seem to have very different understandings of the temporality of the text, which are shaped by conflicting conceptions of the life writing format. In *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years* (1992), Hertha D. Wong argues that Western autobiographical writing, particularly in the nineteenth century, tends to be a revision of the past in the present—usually by a man looking back on a life lived in full. Wong identifies a contrasting tendency, in Native American pre-contact life writing, to shape:

a present (and sometimes a future) life in the present moment. Once again, this process is more like that of a diarist capturing the immediacy of the recent moment in a dairy entry than that of a memoirist pondering and reformulating the long-ago past into a unified and chronological narrative. (17)

Wong's description of the temporality of western autobiographical writing clearly resonates with Barrett's agenda of writing the story of Geronimo's life to affirm, in hindsight, the narrative of US expansion. For Geronimo, by contrast, who wrote the book to campaign for the return of his people to Arizona, the text was all about shaping the present and future of his people.

Conflicting temporalities at the World's Fair

The conflicting agendas of Geronimo and Barrett and their temporal dimension become particularly visible in a chapter titled "At the World's Fair", which depicts Geronimo's participation at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair exhibition, a year before the book was written. Early in this chapter, the book relates an encounter between the Apache chief and a group of native inhabitants of the Philippines:

> There were some little brown people ["Iggorrotes from the Philippines"; Barrett's footnote] at the Fair that United States troops captured recently on some islands far away from here. They did not wear much clothing, and I think that they should not have been allowed to come to the Fair. But they themselves did not seem to know any better. They had some little brass plates, and they tried to play music with these, but I did not think it was music—it was only a rattle. However, they danced to this noise and seemed to think they were giving a fine show. I do not know how true the report was, but I heard that the President sent them to the Fair so that they could learn some manners, and when they went home teach their people how to dress and how to behave. (Geronimo [1905] 2007, 119)

The encounter is packed with layers of meaning: To Barrett, who wishes to increase "the general store of information regarding vanishing types" (Barrett [1905] 2007b, v), the encounter is one of tragic closure, and thus concludes a central theme running through the course of the book. From Barrett's perspective, Geronimo's description of the "Iggorotes"' (or Igorot) lack of civilization and his approval of them being offered an education by the United States, unwittingly affirms a crucial justification for U.S. expansion both on the continent and in the Philippines: the benevolent tutelage of 'savage peoples' (cf. Lo 2017, 107). Simultaneously, in being directly contrasted with the Igorot, Geronimo seems to affirm that his own tutelage has come to a successful end, and that his very own journey of becoming

'civilized'—spent mostly as a prisoner-of-war in the United States—is over (cf. Lo 2017, 111-112). The tragedy in this encounter lies in the fact that, to Barrett, Geronimo's description of the Igorot's 'savagery' also reflects Geronimo's own status as a colonial subject. As much as the encounter seems to be about justifying the US imperial campaign in the Philippines, at the expense of the Igorot, the scene also highlights a resemblance between the Igorot and Geronimo, and thereby affirms Geronimo's and his people's eventual and inevitable vanishing (cf. Lo 2017, 112; cf. Deloria 2004, 5-6). Although he claims superiority to the Igorot, Geronimo is depicted as remaining ignorant of the fact that the framework of their encounter still suggests that he is looking into a mirror image of 'savagery': Geronimo's claim to being superior to the Igorot in terms of civilization and education is, after all, belied in the text by the fact that Geronimo is an exhibit himself, sent, just like the Igorot, to St. Louis on the orders of President Roosevelt to 'inform and entertain' an American audience lusting for the exotic spoils of its westward expansion.

The World's Fairs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were designed as a reoccurring celebration of the successful past and future of United States expansion. According to Philip Deloria, two performances were integral to this celebration: the frontier lecture by Frederick Jackson Turner and William "Buffalo Bill" Cody's Wild West show (62). Turner's infamous lecture "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" at the Chicago fair in 1893 theorized the notion of the frontier experience as crucial to U.S. national identity and in hindsight identified 1890 as the year that the frontier had been closed. Cody's spectacular Wild West performances, which reoccurred during several of the World's Fairs, connected Turner's notion of the end of the frontier, and the end of its allegedly characteristic struggle between U.S. 'civilization' and Native 'savagery' that accompanied it, to the lasting pacification of Native Americans on the continent (cf. Deloria 2004, 60, 62, 65; cf. Saranillio 2018, 33).[2] To that end, Cody's shows included Native American actors in these performances, who sometimes re-enacted the very battles in which they had actually been defeated in the first place (cf. Deloria 2004, 62). This inclusion did not only make a mythical and violent past that fundamentally shaped US national identity safely consumable for its *white* audience. It also drove home the point that within the narrative of US expansion, Native Americans had no future and could not occupy "the same

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2   According to Philip Deloria, Native Americans are a centerpiece to this narrative: In 1893, U.S. expansion on the continent was framed as a continuous "Indian war", which only came to a successful close with the bloody massacre of Lakota men, women and children at Wounded Knee in 1890 (cf. 62).

space and time as their white audience" (67). With the Native American threat contained and its story woven into the U.S. national narrative, the U.S. could turn towards its new campaigns of expansion overseas (cf. Saranillio 2018, 33).

These narratives and discourses coalesce in the encounter between Geronimo and the Igorot. From a settler-colonial perspective, like that offered by Barrett, Geronimo was a Native American performer who continued to remind the *white* audience of a 'savage' and 'primitive' past that the United States had overcome (cf. Huizar-Hernández 2017, 65). His encounter with the Igorot illustrates the closure of the frontier as a passing-of-the-torch moment that celebrates and legitimizes the successful pacification of Native Americans and their relegation to a 'primitive' past. Within this narrative, Native Americans are temporally and spatially confined to the continental phase of U.S. expansion. The end of this phase forecloses a sovereign and independent future for Native Americans in the United States.

Anita Huizar-Hernández suggests, however, that the text hints at the possibility that Geronimo might have used the book's relation of his performance at the World's Fair as a way of sneaking his own agenda into the book. Huizar-Hernández notes that the chapter on the World's Fair, and Geronimo's alleged admiration for the United States expressed therein in particular, seem out of place in comparison to the rest of the book, which is at times quite critical of the United States. Huizar-Hernández argues that Geronimo strategically adopts an ambiguous position here so as to not alienate his *white* readers, while still subtly criticizing the continuous imprisonment of his people by the U.S. army (2017, 64):

> I am glad I went to the Fair. I saw many interesting things and learned much of the white people. They are a very kind and peaceful people. During all the time I was at the Fair no one tried to harm me in any way. Had this been among the Mexicans I am sure I should have been compelled to defend myself often. I wish all my people could have attended the Fair. (Geronimo [1905] 2007, 120)

Huizar-Hernández (2017) cites Geronimo's keen sense of enterprise, which leads him to capitalize on his participation, as a clue to understand his intentions:

> Though he was supposed to be passively on display with other vestiges of a primitive past, he soon began to actively profit off of the fairgoers, selling his clothing, his photographs, and even his autograph to eager customers. Conquered captives and vanished Indians lacked the agency to capitalize on their own celebrity; they were artifacts, not actors. (65)

Read through this lens, the text reveals that Geronimo attempts to strike a balance between overtly showing his admiration for the United States, while still affirming his agency, autonomy, and his capacity for civilization and thus gesturing towards a future for Native Americans specifically denied by the logic of the frontier. Geronimo's refusal to stick to the script and his vocal campaigning for a future for his people disrupt his performance as a passive exhibit of a 'savage' past and amount to a refusal to vanish. The incommensurability of Barrett's agenda and Geronimo's performance, both as co-author and as an artifact, tie in the book with what Louis Owens describes as the continuous struggle to contain Native American life within the U.S. national metanarrative (cf. Owens 1998, 26):

> When Frederick Jackson Turner conveniently declared the "frontier" closed, he imagined for America that the Indian had been effectively subsumed into the national metanarrative. A century later, we know Turner and America were wrong; the Indian continues to "light out" from the territory ahead of the rest toward new self-imaginings, continual fluidity, and rebirth. (Owens 1998, 28)

It is Barrett's obsessive looking-back, as if trying to help Turner close the frontier, which opens the opportunity for Geronimo to manipulate the book in its negotiation of the present and the future.

The interpreter and the future of Apache life

In the final part of the book, "Hopes for the Future"—which is written to depict Geronimo, in 1905, directly addressing the reader—these conflicting temporalities and agendas take effect on the book. Here, Geronimo repeats his plea for justice for his people and the return of the Apache to Arizona (Geronimo [1905] 2007, 125). The text concedes several times that the number of Apache has dwindled, but also remarks that this process can be stopped with the return of the Apache to their homeland (cf. Geronimo [1905] 2007, 125): "but our people are decreasing in numbers here, and will continue to decrease unless they are allowed to return to their native land. Such a result is inevitable" (Geronimo [1905] 2007, 126). The text thus reiterates some of the themes identified in Geronimo's encounter with the Igorot—most importantly the 'vanishing Indian' trope, which seems to underline the inevitability of the closing of the frontier. This final chapter quite overtly accuses the United States of being at least an accessory to the Apache's slow extinction, particularly in their decision not to allow the Apache to return to their homeland (cf. Geronimo [1905] 2007, 126).

To Barrett and his early 20th-century *white* readership, however, the text's critical tone and its accusations are eclipsed by the 'vanishing Indian' trope that frames such hopes for the future as inherently futile. Through this lens, Geronimo's final invocation of a return of the Apache to Arizona necessarily reads as fueled by the tragic hope for a future that is specifically denied by the U.S. imperial narrative: "If this cannot be done during my lifetime—if I must die in bondage—I hope that the remnant of the Apache tribe may, when I am gone, be granted the one privilege which they request—to return to Arizona" (Geronimo [1905] 2007, 126). As a conclusion to a book that connects the life story of Geronimo to the overarching narrative of U.S. continental expansion, the implication of Geronimo's own death clearly evokes the end of the frontier that he embodies. In such a reading, the western notion of autobiographical writing comes to bear fully: here, Geronimo is depicted as an old man looking back on his life, articulating some regrets, but also implicitly and tragically lamenting his inability to change any of it.

Considering Wong's aforementioned discussion of the different temporalities of Native American life writing, the final paragraph could also be understood to be a gesture for Apache posterity to continue their fight for return beyond Geronimo's life. But rather than a general lament over the hopelessness of their situation, Geronimo, I would argue, seems to have a specific addressee in mind for his hopes for the future: the interpreter Asa Daklugie. Despite being mentioned early on as an integral factor in making the book—and thus becoming a third party to the overall authorial process—Daklugie continues to be only an implicit presence for the remainder of the text. He is depicted in four of the photographs—most importantly in the picture titled "How The Book Was Made," which I discussed in the beginning of this contribution. Unlike this picture, the remaining photos are not always focused on him. Yet in one of them, the original caption reveals that, besides being Geronimo's official interpreter, Asa Daklugie was also supposed to succeed Geronimo as leader of the Apache after his death (cf. Geronimo [1905] 2007, 63).

Whilst specific passages are accredited to Geronimo and Barrett, *Geronimo's Story* does not include any passages that are accredited to Asa Daklugie, which makes identifying his agenda and role even more difficult than in the cases of Geronimo and Barrett. However, an interview series conducted in the 1950s and 1960s by *white* editor Eve Ball with an elderly Daklugie sheds light on his story of how he came into the position of translator to Geronimo and Barrett (Ball 1988, 174). Here, Daklugie is depicted as revealing that he was selected to be sent to Carlisle Indian Industrial School by Geronimo himself, to escape potential death as a prisoner-of-war, and to receive the

training to be able to lead his people in a world dominated by *white* settler society:

> Not all selected were descended from chiefs, but they might be the leaders of the Apache in the future—provided that there was any future. Without this training in the ways of the White Eyes our people could never compete with them. So it was necessary that those [missing word] for leadership prepared themselves to cope with the enemy. I was trained to become the leader. (Ball 1988, 135-36)

The school, infamous for its guiding motto, "kill the Indian to save the man", coined by its founder, Richard Henry Pratt, was instrumental to the United States' campaign to 'civilize' Native American children by training them to become farmers, artisans and housekeepers. True to its motto, this allegedly benevolent and tutelary program was based on the destruction of Native American culture and life: the children trained at Carlisle were abducted from their families *en masse*, forced to westernize their appearance by cutting their hair and only wearing western clothes, and were physically punished for speaking their Native languages. Whether Geronimo actually and personally sent Daklugie to Carlisle for the reasons stated above cannot be verified through Eve Ball's interviews. As was the case in *Geronimo's Story,* the book and its stories were heavily edited by the *white* editor, Ball, whose introduction to the book employs the 'vanishing Indian' trope to justify her collection of Apache stories for posterity (cf. Ball 1988, xvii, xx). A report card that Daklugie himself filled out and filed at Carlisle Indian Boarding School sometime between 1912-1916 to have his daughters enrolled, demonstrates that he did, in any case, commit to and indeed succeed Geronimo in campaigning for the restoration of the Apache to their land (see fig. 10.2 opposite).

The way that Daklugie's statement repeats Geronimo's agenda behind the collaboration with Barrett in *Geronimo's Story of His Life*—while defiantly undermining Carlisle's settler colonial agenda of systematically severing the cultural and familial ties of its students—hints at Daklugie's role in *Geronimo*. In light of Daklugie's defiant statement, his triple role of co-author, interpreter and successor in *Geronimo,* while utilitarian to Barrett, was crucial to Geronimo. While Barrett may have interpreted the role of Daklugie as a vehicle through which to facilitate exchange between the two co-authors, Geronimo, by contrast, seems to have considered the collaboration with Barrett as a vehicle to empower Daklugie as his successor. It is remarkable how both Geronimo and Daklugie similarly subvert the roles assigned to them in the narrative of US expansion: Geronimo by breaking out of his role as a tragic 'vanishing Indian' prisoner-of-war, and Daklugie

by using his training at Carlisle to further the restoration of the Apache community to their homeland (and then rubbing this subversion in the face of the officials at Carlisle later on through his report card).
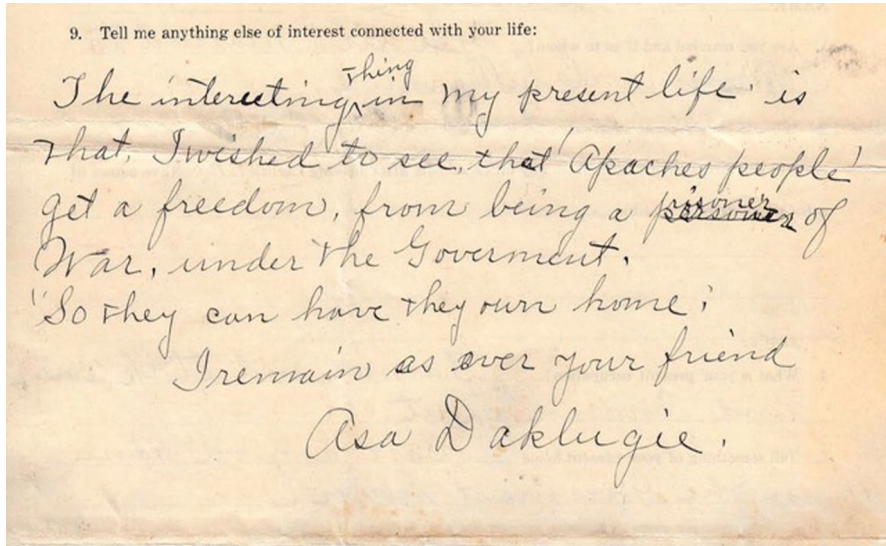
figure 10.2: Excerpt from Asa Daklugie's Carlisle report card ("Report After Leaving"): "The interesting thing in my present life is that I wished to see that 'Apache people' get a freedom, from being prisoners of War under the Government. 'So they can have they own home.'"]

Daklugie's central role in *Geronimo* is foreshadowed already in yet another layer of meaning of the photograph titled "How the Book Was Made" (Fig. 10.1, Geronimo [1905] 2007, 124). Rather than representing the complex translation process between Geronimo and Barrett, the photograph's arrangement of the three authors of the book—with Barrett sitting on the left, Geronimo occupying the middle and being taller than everyone else, and Asa Daklugie squatting on the right—depicts, I would argue, Geronimo's attempt to pit Asa Daklugie, as the embodiment of the future of the Apache, against Barrett and his revision of past U.S.-Apache relations. Instead of posing and then disappearing—to paraphrase Krupat—Geronimo and Daklugie posed in defiance and moved on. In that sense, Geronimo's final call for a return of the Apache even after his death is not a repetition of the Igorot scene, in which, as I have already argued, Barrett attempted to enshrine a passing-

of-the-torch moment from one colonial subject (Geronimo) to the next (the Igorot). Instead, the final paragraph of the book provides a counterweight to that moment, by passing the torch from Geronimo to Asa Daklugie, who is supposed to "light out" from the territory ahead—to paraphrase Owens—and, by that, foster hope for the continuity of the Apache beyond Geronimo's own life and story.

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11 Documenting for the Raj: Manu Lal's paintings for the East India Company

by Saumya Jaipuriar

One of the first written records of painters of the city of Patna, in the North-East of India, is in an early nineteenth-century British survey of some of the towns under British control at the time in 1811-12. Francis Buchanan-Hamilton (1936), who wrote the survey report, described the painters while taking about the fine arts of Patna:

> The painters (Mosouwer) possess a good deal more merit than those in the district hitherto surveyed, although they are as far behind Europeans as the statuaries are. They have many sets of miniatures representing the princes of the house of Timur, and, especially in the minute attention to various parts of dress, these are well executed. (Buchanan-Hamilton 1936, 612)

The painters of Patna went on to develop a hybrid Indo-western style of painting called *Patnakalam*. It is one of the regional schools of painting which developed from the interaction between indigenous art and western illustration, often clubbed together under the umbrella term, Company painting. Manu Lal (c1770-c1830) was one of these painters. Manu Lal's paintings provide a good framework to piece together the story of the birth of *Patnakalam* which is inextricably linked to the documentarian project of the East India Company. There were other artists, such as Hulas Lal, Sevak Ram, and Pyare Lal who inaugurated the school. But Manu Lal stands out because of the existence of a comparatively large number of illustrations with his name on them in public archives of Indian colonial documents.

The various schools of Company painting had artists with a background in indigenous schools of art who were then recruited to make illustrations for and by the British officials of the East India Company. The Tanjore School of Company painting, for instance, had local painters initially trained in the traditional Tanjore style of painting. The Lucknow School painters had almost the same background as *Patnakalam* painters but a recognisably different style because of differences in the nature and extent of British intervention. *Patnakalam* painters were descended from the artists of the royal ateliers of the Mughal court who migrated to Patna via the nearby city of Murshidabad (Archer 1947, 2). As an early collaborator, Manu Lal produced close to a

hundred illustrations and sketches mostly of natural history subjects for his British commissioners. He travelled to Sumatra as part of the entourage of an East India Company official, Richard Parry (1776-1817), who was posted there as the Resident at Fort Marlborough in Bengkulu City. Before that he worked in Calcutta on an ambitious catalogue of local flora and fauna.

Manu Lal was not unique in rendering his service to Company officials in this manner. During the course of British colonisation of India, various Indian painters worked for British officials, botanists, and non-professional enthusiasts to produce numerous paintings and sketches. It was not always seen as art, and it often made the artist invisible. The reason that we know little or nothing about most of these artists has in part to do with the structure of the relationship between the colonising master and indigenous subject. Especially as the nineteenth century wore on, and the inherent contradiction between Enlightenment ideals and colonialism were papered over by imperialist thought, the native assistant started to disappear. Manu Lal was painting at the cusp of this transition. Like some of his other contemporary artists, like Sheikh Mohammad of Karraya and Sita Ram of Calcutta, his name survives, but only just.

How did an artist trained in a court tradition come to paint exotic plants and birds for the Company? Specific political circumstances in late eighteenth-century Britain saw a steady stream of university educated Scottish officials coming to India (Bryant 1985, 38). An inevitable result of this was a sustained and continued intellectual legacy deriving from Scottish Enlightenment which informed the official policies and projects in India. While the East India Company slowly transformed from a trading enterprise to a colonizing agent serving British imperialism in the Indian subcontinent, the fascination with the exotic turned into a compulsion for empiricist gathering of knowledge. Ambitious statistical surveys of various kinds, from geographical to ethnographical, were carried out to document, name and systematise sociological, cultural, topographical and other kinds of knowledge. One aspect of this was the identification and classification of plant species. William Roxburgh (1751-1815) took over the Calcutta Botanical Garden, Bengal Presidency in 1793 as Superintendant and set out to make an exhaustive survey of Indian flora which resulted in the production of more than 2000 drawings by Indian artists. For over twenty years, Roxburgh employed local artists, Manu Lal among many others, to produce illustrations to supplement his written plant description. Similar enterprises were carried out in several other colonial centres. In Madras Presidency, Robert Wight (1796-1872) and Hugh Cleghorn (1820-1895) had between them four decades of research for which they roped in two talented

local artists, Rungaiah and Govindoo. An allied enterprise of documenting animal species was also carried out in the same manner.

The inclusion of botanical illustrations in a modern taxonomical catalogue is not strictly required for the identification of the species. Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) a Botanist in Uppsala University introduced a taxonomical system of binomial nomenclature, a naming system that called every plant by its genus and species. This was the first truly modern taxonomical system and became almost universalised during his lifetime (Stafleu 1971, 203). Even though Linnaean taxonomy does not require visual guides to identify a species, his books contained images and he acknowledged the work of botanical illustrators. Given the robust pre-existing tradition of botanical illustration in Europe it was conceptually impossible to imagine a complete system regarding classification of flora without supplementing it with a visual guide. The first printed books describing flowers, such as *Herbarum Vivae Eicone*, published in 1530 by Otto Brunfels in Mainz, were intended as visual guides to assist in the identification of plants and herbs for collection for medicinal purposes. Through the subsequent centuries, botanical illustration continued to evolve. The visual language of the floral illustration by the late eighteenth century in Europe drew from the latest developments in botany as well as from a long artistic tradition of depiction of artefacts from nature, in being both naturalistic and schematic.

Ten years after Linnaeus' death, the Linnaean Society of London was founded after his natural history collection and letters were acquired by English botanist James Edward Smith. Colonial administrators in India, like William Roxburgh, Robert Wight, Hugh Cleghorn and others, were all associated with the society. They brought Linnaeus's ideals of documenting the entire natural world with them to India and began putting these into practice in attempting ambitious projects to create catalogues spanning decades. They followed standard contemporary practice in Europe in line with the convention of producing catalogues of plants with visual illustration to supplement the scientific description.

In Europe in the eighteenth century, illustrations were never categorised as highly as fine art. Botanical illustration was not autonomous but a supplement to the written word. The technique of making these illustrations was also significantly different. For instance, Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708-1770), a well-known German illustrator living in Britain, made his botanical paintings on vellum using body colour (Blunt and Stearn, 2000, 163). Illustrators also made sketches which were then engraved and colour printed in the form of published books. The distinction between high art and utilitarian drawing is less straightforward in the context of eighteenth-century Indian art. All

major styles of painting, ranging from elite court painting to folk painting, were either miniature or mural. Mughal painting, made in the imperial ateliers during the Mughal era, was mainly in the form of book illustrations, and standalone miniature paintings which were sometimes bound to form a volume. A western style division between fine art and functional illustration did not exist. For indigenous artists, making botanical illustrations was not much different from making floral paintings.

In Mughal paintings, flowers were of great importance. They appeared sometimes naturalistically, as in part of the composition, sometimes stylised, as in depiction of things with floral motifs, such as carpets and canopies, and sometimes as a combination of the two, as in borders. Many Mughal painters specialised in floral motifs and designs. Certain animals, such as peacocks, horses, and elephants were fairly frequent components of Mughal painting compositions. Traditional Mughal miniatures were painted in gouache using natural pigments bound with gum Arabic on handmade paper. While there were named artists renowned for their talent, Mughal painting was largely collaborative with a team of artists working on various aspects of a single composition. When the ateliers broke down and the artists migrated to other cities, they began to paint individually.

In eighteenth-century India, the steady decline of Delhi as the seat of art patronage with the diminishing power of the Mughal court, led to its artists migrating to other cities in search of patronage. The city of Patna, an eastern hub for trade and transport on the Ganges with a comparatively stable political atmosphere, attracted a group of such artists. In 1800, Patna became the headquarters of one of the eleven Provincial Committees of the Bengal Presidency. Manu Lal was most likely a second-generation descendant of a Mughal artist. His style shows strong roots in Mughal training especially in his line work. He signed some of his paintings in beautiful nashtaliq calligraphy, "raqim i in taswir Manu La'l musauwir sakin i Azimabad" which translates as, painted by Manu Lal, painter from Azimabad (name for Patna under the old Mughal dispensation). Considering his self-identification with Patna, it is not unreasonable to speculate that it was his city of birth.

The tentative dating of his earliest paintings may be used as a coordinate for estimating a rough timeline of his early years. Richard Wellesley (1760-1842), Governor General of Bengal between 1798 and 1805, had a large collection of watercolour drawings of plants, birds, mammals, fish, and insects made for him by Indian artists. Some of the paintings in this collection were made by Manu Lal. The movement of people from Patna to Calcutta for work and trade has historical provenance. During Company Raj, this was further reinforced by the relationship between Calcutta and Patna of

regional capital and provincial headquarter. Manu Lal, likely an established artist of repute, was brought to Calcutta to work for this collection as well as on the project at the Calcutta Botanical garden.

Manu Lal's work in the Wellesley Collection uses traditional gouache opaque water colour. It is comparable in size to Mughal miniatures. The brushwork too is unmistakably Mughal-like. On the other hand, the objects are drawn on white mill-made British paper on a bare background with great attention to relevant details so as to make it a scientifically realistic rendering of the species. The employment of Indian artists like Manu Lal by British botanists marked the beginning of Company Schools. Much later these hybrid styles went on to play a significant role in the making of modern Indian art.

Richard Parry was an East India Company careerist who came to Calcutta in 1793 and worked there in the treasury in various capacities for more than a decade. He was appointed as Resident of Fort Marlborough in Sumatra in 1807 and he left in 1811 to come back to Bengal on account of failing health. Shortly after, he left for Britain. He was appointed as a Director of East India Company in 1815 and died two years later aged 41. Parry had likely commissioned Manu Lal while in Calcutta or had been otherwise familiar with his work. He brought Manu Lal with him to Sumatra to paint local plant species. Manu Lal made nearly two hundred drawings of plants and animals from Sumatra. As with most such illustrations made for official purposes, these were added to the Company archives and are now part of the India Office Records collection in British Library, and the Kew Garden Archive in London.

Manu Lal's Sumatra paintings are interesting for various reasons. Unlike his earlier work, many of these are comparatively large, roughly 45 cm by 30 cm. Their pigment composition is of a much lighter consistency. The colour palette, though vibrant, is quite limited which gives these paintings a muted quality. Manu Lal's precise line work is evident in these paintings in the minuteness with which each petal is drawn (fig. 11.1). Special care is taken in depicting the structure of the fruit (fig 11.2). These paintings are far more in line with the conventions of western botanical illustration of the time compared to earlier attempts by painters from Patna. The lyricism and tendency towards patterned composition, ubiquitous in Mughal art can still be seen in the layout of these paintings. As if to counter their art, the documentary purpose of these paintings is reinforced by the addition of their scientific name in English by Parry.

figure 11.1: Manu Lal, Ixora Coccinea, c.1810, pencil and water colour on paper, 45 x 30 cm, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

The East India Company's imperial ambitions in the late eighteenth century laid the foundation for centuries' long colonisation of South and South East Asia, first by the Company itself and later by the British crown. It also created new and interesting patterns of movement within these territories. This movement and the cultural interaction it might potentially give rise to, was mediated and regulated by the Raj. Nevertheless, it was remarkable it happened at all. There is no record of Manu Lal's life in Sumatra except in reference to his paintings.

One of the most surprising drawings made by Manu Lal is not a botanical painting at all. It is an almost monochrome sketch of a man from the Mentawai tribe of Nassau or Poggy Island off the west coast of Sumatra. The Mentawai people are numerically a small tribe who led an isolated nomadic hunter gatherer life in the eighteenth century. They had basic trade relations

with neighbouring communities but early attempts by the British to introduce pepper farming for commercial purposes did not succeed (Crisp 1799 78).

figure 11.2: Manu Lal. Horsfieldia Crassifolia, c.1810, pencil and water colour on paper, 45 x 30 cm, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

A monograph published in the journal of the Asiatic society in 1799 was among the first to carry a sketch of the Mentawai people (figure 11.3). This sketch shows a man and a woman in traditional clothes, their tattoos on display. The composition of the sketch and the way the figures are posed bring to mind the Romantic rhetoric of the noble savage leading a primitive life in harmony with nature. The orientation of the two figures—bodies faces turned to each other, engaged in conversation—suggests a society in no need of turning towards their voyeur. Manu Lal's drawing, on the other hand, offers a different view.

figure 11.3: Inhabitants of the Poggy Islands, Asiatic researches, or, Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal for inquiring into the history and antiquities, the arts, sciences and literature of Asia, vol 6 (London, 1799), 77.

Manu Lal's sketch of the Mentawai subject is comparatively small in size, 24 cm by 14 cm (fig. 11.4). In his element, working on a scale he was used to, given his primary training, he rendered the tattoos in great detail. The markings on the back of the hand recall the geometric patterns in Mughal calligraphy. The figure is drawn holding a bow and arrow. The background is completely bare except for some little daubs of colour by his feet. The absence of background suggests a continuation of the same system of classification as the plants. After all, Carl Linnaeus in his *Systema Naturae* (1767) had attempted to provide a taxonomic framework for all nature, including

peoples. The impression is of a representative type rather than a portrait. While the sketch in the monograph (fig. 11.3) seemed to evoke an idea of a sort of pagan Adam and Eve, Manu Lal's sketch very squarely presents the Mentawai man as a specimen for scientific study and classification. The graded racism inherent in ethnographic studies of the time is complicated in this instance as the Western stereotype about racial difference and European superiority is ventriloquised through a document maker from a subject race. The painter and the subject must have had moments of shared bafflement at their role in a narrative about them but not of their making.

Manu Lal returned to India with Richard Parry in 1811. He may have produced scenes of everyday life and so called firka occupation sets—a set of miniature drawings depicting various caste-based occupations—in Patna on his return. A firka set attributed to him from before his employment by Parry is known to exist (Losty 2019, 71). Around the same time, other draughtsmen painters from Patna like Sevak Ram and Pyare Lal who had worked for the British were also beginning to produce similar paintings for the market which were primarily bought by British residents and visitors as souvenirs and curiosities. These painters created a new hybrid style of painting by incorporating elements of western illustration and loosening the rigour of their classical training. Over the course of the century this initial interaction developed into a recognisable school of art, *Patnakalam*. In its later years, *Patnakalam* evolved further to became one of the best recognised Company schools specialising in producing 'authentic' Indian souvenir paintings. The movement of artists like Manu Lal was constrained by and in the service of the Raj. Yet it was remarkable for the artefacts it produced for the colonial documentarian project. It was also pivotal in the making of a school of art with an enduring legacy.

figure 11.4: Manu Lal, An inhabitant of the Poggy Islands, near Sumatra, c.1798-1811, ink and water colour on paper, 24 x 14 cm, British Library, London.

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Practices

12 Mapmaking as wayfinding: reflections on writing about Edouard Glissant's politics of relation

by Moses März

"L'important c'est de trouver notre propre trace
et notre propre manière de fréquenter le monde"[1]
—Édouard Glissant (Christiani 1993).

In 2011, I met Ntone Edjabe, the founding editor of the Pan-African literary magazine *Chimurenga* for an interview on the balcony of the Pan-African Market in Cape Town's Long Street, where the magazine's editorial offices were located at the time. I had been a fan of *Chimurenga* since I had found one of their small *Chimurenganyana* booklets titled *Variations on the Beautiful in the Congolese World of Sounds* written by Achille Mbembe (2009) two years earlier. I then tried to read all of the magazine's previous editions and was amazed as much by its content—crossing the boundaries of literary genres and combining everything of interest to me in the worlds of politics, music, literature—as by the magazine's changing formats and beautiful layout. What struck me the most was that it did not try to make an effort to be understood. The people and books that were referenced appeared to be self-evidently important. If I did not know them, it was up to me to find out, an editorial approach captured by the magazine's subtitle *who no know go know*. Our meeting took place months before the launch of the first issue of the *Chimurenga Chronic,* which was announced as a time-machine in the form of an imaginary newspaper that travelled back into the year 2008 to report about the outbreak of large-scale xenophobic violence across South Africa anew. I told Edjabe about how I appreciated that the magazine allowed me to explore, at my own pace, a world that no one had told me about. Edjabe's response was to refer to a Caribbean writer whose name he could not recall at the time, but who had written about the 'right to opacity', a notion he opposed to the paradigm of transparency. I was intrigued by the fact that the writer's name had slipped Edjabe's mind, but even more so by

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1 "What matters is to find our path and our own way of being in the world", my translation.

the idea that his work was somehow of importance for the way *Chimurenga* understood itself. That is how I found Glissant.

The first couple of pages I read from Glissant were an extract from *Poetics of Relation*, Betsy Wing's 1997 translation of *Poétique de la relation* (1990). With the kind of expectations I had, and with such a book title, it was difficult not to be disappointed. At first sight, the main themes I encountered were the familiar concerns with identity, culture and history that were typical for much of postcolonial literature. At the time, a young generation of South African students had grown impatient with the 'culture talk' of postcolonial literature and called for a return to the anticolonial writings of Frantz Fanon. The reasoning behind this was that South Africa still had to be decolonised before one could even begin speaking about postcolonialism, a belief that eventually led to the Rhodes Must Fall uprisings in 2015. Fanon had written *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) in the midst of the Algerian war of liberation against France and died of leukaemia at age 36. Glissant had lived up to the age of 82 and had increasingly addressed more 'cosmopolitan concerns' once the struggle for independence of his native island, Martinique, turned out to not stand a realistic chance of success. Still, to me there was something in Glissant's style of writing, something about the tension between the poetics and politics of relation, between writing and organisational action, that I wanted to know more about. And towards the end of a brief chapter called *For Opacity*, where Glissant describes his understanding of opacity in his typically elusive manner as "[t]he opaque is not the obscure, though it is possible for it to be so and be accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence" (1997, 191), it clicked. I had found the question and answer complex I wanted to interrogate in my PhD thesis:

> How can one reconcile the hard line inherent in any politics and the questioning essential to any relation? Only by understanding that it is impossible to reduce anyone, no matter who, to a truth he would not have generated on his own. That is, within the opacity of his time and place. [...] This same opacity is also the force that drives every community: the thing that would bring us together forever and make us permanently distinctive. Widespread consent to specific opacities is the most straightforward equivalent of nonbarbarism. We clamour the right to opacity for everyone. (Glissant 1997, 194)

The certainty of Glissant's response to his own question was as puzzling as what he *actually* meant by the right to opacity. In *Poetics of Relation* he did not get any more specific. So I read on.

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One of the earliest pieces of advice I received when I turned my interest in Glissant into a research project, was to read Glissant's work as a whole,[2] if I wanted to convincingly make the case that he was a political writer. I naively followed this advice and began reading his books without any systematic order, but according to whatever version I could find. What complicated and slowed-down the reading process was what I perceived to be my less than proficient knowledge of French and the unavailability of most of Glissant's work in translation. I often had to stop, take a break, and continue elsewhere, because I could not make sense of what I had read. In these moments, it was consoling to find out that even the most established Glissant scholars ran into similar difficulties. His claim for a right to opacity and deliberate address to a 'future readership' meant that most of his writing is "at the very edge of what is readable", in Mary Gallagher's words (2008, 94). The three Martinican novelists, Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, who refer to Glissant as the founding figure of a new generation of creole literature in their manifesto *In Praise of Creoleness*, also admitted that they "received his texts like hieroglyphs in which we were able somehow to perceive the quivering of a voice, the oxygen of a perspective" (1990, 890). I figured that the obstacles to 'understanding' Glissant's literary work could not be reduced to fluency in French, its creolised version, or familiarity with the context from which it emerged.[3] If one were to stand any chance of 'understanding' Glissant, I was learning, one would have to read Glissant in between the lines or 'beyond the words', an expression evoked by the Martinican poet Monchoachi in the creole expression "*déyé do pawol*".[4]

The difficulties associated with reading Glissant also translated into a difficulty of writing about his work. As part of what Alain Ménil refers to as his "remarkably singular language" (2011, 32), Glissant's style of writing has also been interpreted as performing a contestation of university discourse. Alexandre Leupin has made the argument that on an epistemological level, Glissant's work seeks to disrupt some of the main conceptual oppositions that underlie the formation of the modern academic disciplines, such as the separations of form and content, theory and practice, body and mind (2016,

2   That is, twenty-one book-length essays, eight novels, two theatre plays and the collection of his works of poetry.

3   Critics like Chris Bongie have attributed his elusiveness to the aristocratic trait of a resolutely "high-brow writer" (2008, 342), whose political efficacy is as questionable as the virtue of a "therapist who cannot communicate with his patients" (141).

4   This phrase was mentioned in a talk given by Jacques Coursil at a conference dedicated to Glissant's *Caribbean Discourse* called *La Source et le Delta* (Fort-de-France, November 5-6, 2019).

19). Some disciplines in the humanities have become more accommodating of artistic practices and poeticism, but the problems in describing or theorising Glissant's philosophical concepts remain. In that regard, it seems as though the seemingly paradoxical definitions of, for instance, the Tout-Monde as a "non-totalitarian totality", a sense of history as a "prophetic vision of the past", a conception of knowledge based on the belief that "nothing is true, everything is alive", or Relation as the "consciousness of all the differences of the world without leaving out a single one" have been deliberately formulated in such a way that their meanings cannot be fixed, that they cannot be defined. Glissant's name, which translates as 'slippery', is programmatic in this sense. Writing an academic thesis about a work that resists being explained thus always ran the risk of being a paradoxical endeavour.

A question that has accompanied my PhD project on Glissant's politics thus became how I ought to write it. Not necessarily whether it would be as opaque or poetic as Glissant's writing, but whether I would manage to, formally, not contradict the very point I was trying to make: If my thesis was going to be that his political practice had something valuable to contribute to contemporary decolonial struggles, and if the way in which he articulated his practice mattered as much as its contents, this meant that the manner in which I conveyed this practice would have to somehow reflect the importance of this aspect of his work. In that regard, I realised that I would not be able to proceed in a straight line from problem statement to solution, from one theory to another, or in a classical analytical fashion. Instead, I felt that my best option was to first sketch the entire landscape of the political dimension of his oeuvre—the political to be understood here in the broadest sense possible—to eventually get a sense of its overall shape or direction.

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While I was grappling with these questions, I began working for *Chimurenga* on an issue called *New Cartographies.* The collaborative mode of working in the editorial team differed radically from the academic culture I had become accustomed to. For every piece of writing that was going to be included in the *Chronic*—which had turned into a quarterly publication at this point—questions pertaining to the appropriate language and form had to be addressed. For some of its readers and contributors, *Chimurenga* is a kind of home, a global spiritual or intellectual community outside and across geographically and institutionally determined spaces, as well as an actual community of friends, a physical space that functions as a sanctuary from

Cape Town's coloniality. For me it also became a school where I learned another way of reading and writing with others, a mode of research "reliant on anecdotal knowledge passed through intimate connections, rather than through sanctioned cultural spheres" (Smit 2017). In theoretical terms, this kind of practice has been described by Fred Moten as Black study, where blackness is distinct from 'black people' and denotes a way of being in the world along with a transdisciplinary and collective mode of learning and teaching, informed by lived experiences, encounters, improvisations and political solidarity outside established educational institutions.[5] In the process of putting together the actual maps that formed part of the *New Cartographies* issue, researchers and visual artists worked together on mapping 'data' that was taken from academic papers and books, newspaper articles, novels and existing knowledge in the group. Out of this collective practice would later grow my own interest in mapmaking as a method that combines science and art in a way that I consider to be a political practice in its vocation to make visible a particular vision of the world.

Initially the very existence of *Chimurenga,* and later the editorial debates around the *Chronic,* inspired and encouraged me to experiment with different forms my work on Glissant could take. The first among them was an essay titled *Fragments of Glissant,* which was made up of an anachronistic collection of anecdotes, mixing biographical episodes with his philosophic ideas. There was no coherent idea behind the text other than my interest in the political dimension of Glissant's work, which the secondary literature had relegated as being only of secondary importance. After I had read most of his essay books, I simply took from them what I felt was most important, without attempting to theorise the political practice that I saw running across these short glimpses into his work. The hope was that the main gist would be deciphered by the reader.

As part of a *Chronic* special issue on 'science fiction' my next experiment was a comic I produced together with Graeme Arendse, *Chimurenga*'s graphic designer. The three-page graphic story *Salut Glissant* shows an encounter between Glissant and his friend Patrick Chamoiseau, after Glissant had

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5   In an interview with Stacy Hardy titled *The Alternative is at Hand*, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney define Black Study in the following way: "Black study is the irreducibly social mode of concern that blackness enacts in its constant, preservative differentiation of and from itself. [...] We think of it as a coenobitically monastic kind of thing—a Thelonial, rather than Benedictine, monkishness. The laws it makes are against rule, against the rules. It happens in churches but also in clubs; it happens in cells and in the holds of ships. It persists, under duress, as criticism and celebration" (2013, 18).

passed away in 2011 (Arendse and März 2016).[6] Again, as in *Fragments of Glissant*, the comic works without an actual narrative. Chamoiseau comes to visit Glissant, who is waiting for him, sitting on his own grave. The two then go for a walk along the black beach of Le Diamant and end up taking a boat to Diamond Rock. During their walk, the two friends chat about the meanings of Glissant's concepts, the weather and the lagging recognition of his work in Martinique. When Glissant laments, "You know what I like to say, they will never understand me", Chamoiseau responds "They could at least name a street after you, like they did for Fanon". Playing with the notion of his right to opacity, and with the African tradition of conversing with the ancestors, both characters are depicted as shadows after the first panel. Even more so than in the essay, *Salut Glissant* is an actual performance of the kind of literature Glissant himself produced. For a moment, I felt like I had found the perfect form. As a specific genre of fragmented writing, comics—in contrast to conventional prose—disrupt the continuous flow of reading. By exercising the opposite of 'taking the reader by the hand', these fragmented or 'gappy' texts do not hide their constructed nature behind a facade of organic wholeness.[7] Most of Glissant's work could be seen as forming part of this style of writing. In novels like *Tout-Monde* (1993) and *Sartorius* (1999) in particular, there is no guiding narrative that ties the seemingly unrelated episodes of peoples in dispersed times and places across the world together—other than the fact that they are all included in the same book. For the most part, what Glissant seemed to be doing in these books appeared to me like the sketch of an alternative vision of the world or the contours of an imaginary community sharing this worldview. If a map mainly consists of creating relations, it is not surprising that the self-proclaimed philosopher of relation should revert to mapping as a method. With this in mind, I drew a map that was mainly based on Glissant's novels *Sartorius, Tout-Monde,* and *Ormerod* (2003). The map shows individuals and collectives, like Georg Büchner, Anton Wilhelm Amo, the Herero people, Bob Marley and the fictional character of Mycéa, who, according to Glissant, all belong to the invisible nation of the Batouto, spiritual descendants of an imaginary African nation sharing a particular vocation of *seeing the invisible.* The map shows their location and movements as well as their invisible connection as belonging to one community. What gets lost is, of course, the poetic way in which their stories are told. Mapping is, after all, a process of reducing information. It could thus be considered a violation of Glissant's right to

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6   Valerie Loichot's article Édouard Glissant's Graves (2013) was an inspiration for the comic.

7   I thank Dirk Wiemann for pointing out this aspect of the politics of form to me.

opacity as "that which cannot be reduced". And why map the Batouto? Why make them visible? And why, in the same vein, make Glissant's political practice visible? In *Caribbean Discourse* (1999), Glissant still equated the protective presence of the forest that accommodated the maroon communities that had fled from the slave plantations to the kind of stylistic marronage and opaque writing practices performed by the intellectuals of his generation.[8] What had changed for him in the half a century that had passed since the decolonial struggles of the 1960s was that "Today the Batouto allow us to see them, because there is no longer any place that is absolutely invisible, and only our visionless blindnesses prevents us from perceiving them"[9] (2003, 301). Above all, the Batouto are made visible in Glissant's fictional work because they are the world-community, the "people that is missing", as stated in the epitaph to *Sartorius*. Analogously, I based my thesis on the assumption that Glissant's politics of relation might, in a way, be missing today.

<div align="center">*</div>

But a PhD thesis asks for more. Academics might enjoy writing about maps, comics, and fiction but a map, a comic or a piece of fiction would hardly pass as a thesis. From this perspective, the question can be posed whether my formal experiments were merely reproductions or representations of what Glissant had written or said. In that case, I might just as well leave @*GlissantBot* to do the talking, a twitter channel that automatically churns out quotes taken from Glissant's work every 15 minutes—the celebration or ridicule of the 'gappiness' of Glissant's work taken to the extreme (The Otolith Group 2017). For a while, this option was not altogether unattractive. After all, the approach to knowledge Glissant proposed in *For Opacity* suggests a more intimate relationship between the object and subject of study, if not the disappearance of this separation. In contrast to the French verb *comprendre*, which includes the verb 'to take', with "the movement of hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves. A gesture of enclosure if not appropriation", he suggested the gesture of "giving-on-

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8 "The forest is the last vestige of myth in its present literary manifestation. In its impenetrable nature history feeds our desire. The forest of the maroon was thus the first obstacle the slave opposed to the transparency of the planter. No way forward in the trees" (1999, 82-83).

9 "*aujourd'hui les Batoutos se laissent deviner par nous, parce qu'il n'est plus un lieu du monde qui soit invisible absolument, et que seuls nos aveuglements sans voyance nous empêchent de le concevoir*", my translation.

and-with that opens finally on totality" (1997, 191-92). The risk associated with endorsing an approach of passing on, of relaying and of remaining uncertain about Glissant is that of unreadability. Unreadability here in the sense of not actually understanding the text or remaining unmoved by it, as Alexander Garcia Düttmann mentions in his reflections on the experience of translating Jacques Derrida's work into German. According to Düttmann, a certain degree of suffering due to the unreadability of a text is part of the fun: "because the untranslatable is what forces the translation onto the translator".[10] As long as translators want to remain translators, they have to believe in the possibility of unravelling, of detangling the text in the belief that what moves them can also move the reader of the translated text.

Although I had, at some point, become disillusioned with the prospect of finding an adequate language to write about Glissant academically, I kept producing draft chapters in the hope that things would eventually fall into place. Because of what I felt was a disjuncture between my academic work and the editorial work, I had kept these two spheres relatively separate from one another. The one was a means to an end, the other an end in itself. But after several years of reading Glissant, the initial advice of reading his work as a whole slowly kept making more sense. The landscape I had been sketching was beginning to expand and branch out in more telling ways. Eventually it became possible to discern its actual shape and the direction Glissant's political work was taking. What I at first conceived as several different political strategies Glissant had employed throughout his life, could actually be joined together. What I had missed or simply not understood because of my distance from Glissant, or my lack of literary training, I could make up by getting an overview of everything he had written that somehow related to the political, without relying on the categories employed by others. This perspective allowed me to discern a general direction in his political work that would have perhaps remained invisible from a study of a selection of his writings, or of his activist engagements alone. The direction I started to discern was of a flight into the world, a movement I framed as an intellectual practice of marronage (see figure 12.1).

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10 "*weil allein das Unübersetzbare ihm die Übersetzung aufdrängt*" (2019, 137, my translation).

MARTINIQUE 2000s

NEW YORCK CITY

THE INVISIBLE BATOUTO NATION

CITY UNIVERSITY N.Y.C
CUNY

MANIFESTE POUR LES PRODUITS DE HAUTE NÉCESSITÉ

LA TERRE LE FEU L'EAU ET LES VENTS

L'IN-TRAITA-BLE BEAUTÉ DU MONDE

failed attempt to turn Martinique into a "Pays biologique du monde"

2011

failed attempt to return to IME

US-SOUTH 90s

Honorary President

IPW
INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENT of WRITERS 1993

Soyinka Derrida and others

BLACK-WHITE UNIVERSITY POLITICS

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY
LSU

Center for French Studies '89

FAILED EFFORTS TO CREATE WEST INDIAN FEDERATION

CARIBBEAN FEDERATION

Comfort Hotel '78

Albert Bevillle dies in plane crash 1962

de Gaulle

BANNED

travels to Ibadan

«Acoma»

IME
INSTITUT MARTINIQUAIS D'ETUDES

Césaire administration in Fort-de-France

MARTINIQUE 70s

MARTINIQUE 40s

André Breton
Wilfredo Lam
Lévi-Strauss
Aimé Duprestre
Pierre Mabille

US-NAVY SEA BLOCKADE 1940-1942

DEPARTMENTALISATION 1946

rapid election campaign

Fort-de-France Mayor

French Deputy 1945

«Tropiques» 1943

Frantz Fanon

Lycée Schoelcher

Aimé Césaire

1928

Morne Bataudin

Figure 12.1: Mapping Glissant's Politics of Relation by Moses März

In historic terms, maroons in the Caribbean escaped from the confinement of the slave plantation into the surrounding forests and hills, alone or with others, where they sought to survive, create a new life and communities that would be structured along radically different norms than the slave society from which they fled. The idea to abstract from this specific historical phenomenon to describe Glissant's political practice was not only based on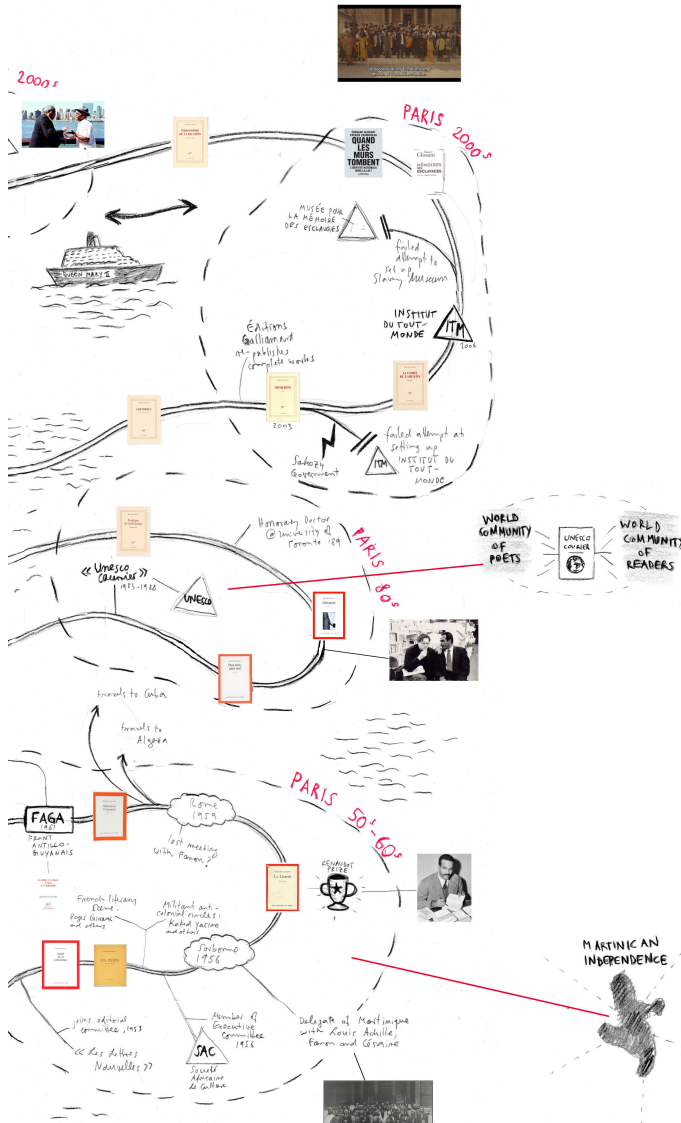 his own theorisation of marronage in *Caribbean Discourse* and *Poetics of Relation*, but also on its strong presence in his fictional oeuvre, and the observation that his personal trajectory could be seen as taking the form of a flight from the island of Martinique into the whole-world, or Tout-Monde, which Glissant defined as being made up of an "infinity of differences and shaped by constant and unpredictable changes" (1993, 176). A movement of marronage, not a case of errantry or circular nomadism, because from my perspective this sequence of acts forms part of a political tradition that proceeds from the premise that the heavy shadows of slavery and colonialism can only be cast off through the creation of a new vision of the world, of humanity and the relations fostered among humans and the natural realm at large. Since Glissant's intellectual practice was made up of a complex mix of fiction, poetry, life-writing, organisational initiatives, public interventions and the proposition of abstract political models, filling the overall shape of this movement of marronage with contents required reading his political practice in a relational or holistic manner.

*

To have the courage to actually *write* the map that would be my thesis, I still had to come to the realisation that, instead of discovering and reflecting a political practice that was somehow hidden in Glissant's work, I had to actively create it through my interpretation. And it was during a conversation at the University of Potsdam with Lucy Gasser that I realised that I, unconsciously, had been working with mapping as a method all along.

Over the course of the preceding years, I had developed a fairly consistent cartographic method that developed into a series of maps included in the 2018 issue of the *Chronic* called *The African Imagination of a Borderless World*. Inspired in part by Glissant's "Map of the Diaspora" at the end of *Caribbean Discourse*, we explored how the movements of intellectuals, musicians and writers performed what we called the "non-universal universalism" of Pan-Africanism. The process of creating these maps is relatively straight-forward.

194

I start by reading the material I want to map. This might range from several articles, a book chapter to someone's complete work. While rereading my notes and highlighted passages in the texts, I make a first set of sketches on blank A4 sheets of paper. I do not have to worry about this confinement because I can add as many additional pages to it as I need by gluing them together. With most maps, the first round of sketches covers about ten to twelve pages. In the next step, I spread the pages out in front of me on the floor, since tables tend to be too small. In a second take, I emphasise the main lines or shapes by retracing the initial drawings. Usually then, if not at a later point in time, I can make out the general shape or direction the map is taking. Is it an evolution? A dislocation? A spiral? A back-and-forth movement? A divergence or merging together? Once the main image is clear, I try to reduce the information to the essential points, to such a degree that the map becomes legible, which usually requires a reduction of 50 or 75 per cent of the content. To give emphasis to certain aspects that are particularly important, I use a coloured pen to draw over the pencil sketches. This forms an added layer to the overall shape of the map. Another layer might consist of quotes taken from the research material or images that do not necessarily serve to illustrate the map, but make points that I would not be able to make in writing or drawing. Most of these steps are done by hand. But thanks to the computer I can do final touches digitally, rotate something, scale it down etc. In the case of my thesis, I had not done any drawings but I had digitally filled hundreds of pages with words. The degree of their congruence or density varied significantly. What had remained fuzzy in the drafts were aspects that I did not deem to be of great importance, so I chose not to go into detail with them until I could discern the general contours of the actual 'map'.

Generally speaking, what I find attractive about maps is that they can be read in different ways, that they offer different points of entry and tend to be generous in their sharing of information. Whereas the text works from the top to the bottom of a page, guiding the reader in a straight line, the map operates more laterally and allows for more erratic readings. The kind of maps I am interested in are also by nature subjective and do not claim to be the only way one can represent a particular story. They do not try to be complete either, in the sense of covering everything, like the solid block of a full page, but are content with leaving some white spaces or question marks that allude to everything that remains unknown. In that sense, it is not surprising that the map has been of particular interest for postmodern writers. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari—who by the way were close friends of Glissant—for example, wrote in the foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus:*

> The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways; in this sense, the burrow is an animal rhizome, and sometimes maintains a clear distinction between the line of flight as passageway and storage or living strata. A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back 'to the same.' The map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged 'competence'. (1987, 12-13)

If I had to explore the theoretical implications of mapping as a method further, I would say that what drew me to maps was not necessarily a critique of cartographic reasoning (Olsson 2007) or the intricate entanglements of the colonial project with mapping the land, the bodies and subjects it sought to control (Garuba 2002, 87-96). My interest in maps thus differs slightly from the "radical cartography" of Philippe Rekacewicz, who has demonstrated how "there is no such thing as an innocent map" (2015) and that "what we map is mainly ideologies" (2015). Although I am aware of the manipulation that takes place in the subjective process of filtering data, my interest in maps did not arise out of a desire to counter the universality of the Mercator map, in which the North disproportionally dominates the globe. Yet, especially following on from the editorial conversations we had as part of the issue on *The African Imagination of a Borderless World*, an inspiring idea came from Achille Mbembe's proposition that the African political archive potentially offers an alternative imagination to the dominant Euroliberal paradigm and its reliance on the notion of impermeable borders and categorical separations. In terms of mapping, Mbembe's arguments can be extended towards a crucial difference between the Western cartographic tradition and what he generally calls the African model. In the case of the latter,

> places were not described by points or lines. What mattered the most was the distribution of movement between places. Movement was the driving force of the production of space and movement itself […] What mattered the most was the extent to which flows and their intensities intersected and interacted with other flows, the new forms they could take when they intensified. So movement, especially among the Dogon, could lead to diversions, conversions and intersections. These were more important than points, lines and surfaces—which are as we know cardinal references in Western geometrics. (2018)

At a basic level, apart from the aesthetic privileging of certain symbols over others, which Mbembe evokes, I took this to mean the need to emphasise relations over separations in my maps, of showing what connects A to B,

instead of what keeps A and B apart. While I am aware that, as *Chimurenga*'s Stacy Hardy cautions in *A Brief History of Mapping* "[o]ne never maps a territory that one doesn't contemplate appropriating" (2015, 3), I hope that my appropriation of Glissant's politics of relation performs more of a gesture of giving-on-and-with and less a process of grasping,

> not a map in which to locate or recognize oneself in a predetermined plane with fixed coordinates [but one] where things may go off in unforeseen directions or work in unregulated ways, a map meant for those who want to do something with respect to new uncommon forces, which we don't quite yet grasp. (Rajchman 2000, 141)

*

I would like to end these reflections on method with a more conventional sense of maps, and with the transformative power of literature. In December 2019 I had the opportunity of visiting Glissant's native island Martinique for the first time. On the fifth day of our stay we took the *taxi collectif* from Fort-de-France to the seaside town of Le Diamant, which turned out to be a lot more touristic than I had imagined. We paid a brief visit to Glissant's grave, and spent the afternoon swimming in the ocean and sitting on the black beach facing the Diamond Rock, majestically rising hundreds of metres out of the water on the horizon. On our way back to Fort-de-France we drove past the *Nègre marron* monument, of which I had included an image in the *Salut Glissant* comic, but which I had mysteriously not been able to find during our walk through Le Diamant. Looking for it on Google Maps back at the apartment I saw that the street running up into the hills from the roundabout on which the maroon monument was standing had just recently been renamed Rue Édouard Glissant. Although I was under no illusion that concrete political proposals had to be articulated and defended to effect the renaming of the street, I liked the idea that my comic might have indirectly contributed to the name change through what Aimé Césaire called the *armes miraculeuses*. In the interpretation of the Guadeloupean novelist Maryse Condé, these 'miraculous weapons' are nothing but words: "Those words that so often we pronounce without paying attention to them [...] have the power to create and destroy, to give birth and to transform. They can bring about a new world, built on the ruins of the injustice and corruption of the old one. Their power is at the same time poetical and political" (1995, 18). Whether the imagined dialogue in *Salut Glissant* played a role in the change of the street name or not, I was delighted that Glissant's name was now visible in the landscape of Martinique. I could not have asked for a more poetic confirmation that I was headed in the right direction.

197

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13 Collective listening: tracing colonial sounds in postcolonial Berlin
by Irene Hilden

zitendawili zishile,	The riddles are already done,
na hadisi zimalize	and the stories are finished,
ngano zihitimile,	and the fables are completed.
msisaili zote pia.	Don't ask for more.

(Unknown author: ca. 1895)[1]

Who is this? Who wrote and recited these lines? Who selected riddles, stories and fables, and what meaning do they have? These questions not only apply to the above four-liner, but also, and more importantly for this essay, to colonial sound recordings. Who gave their voice to be recorded and who refused to do so? What does someone's voice say about the speaker and the content recorded? Colonial archives are full of historical sources that raise more questions than answers. This, however, should not be discouraging, but rather be an inspiration to look for new modes to deal with these questions and the difficult legacies they point to.

In my ethnographic work on sound recordings from the Berlin sound archive (*Lautarchiv*), I explore possible ways of how to approach and investigate historical sound files in the present. The sound archive's core consists of an extensive collection of shellac records, compiled for scientific purposes

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1   These four lines form the beginning of the poem *Chairi kwa Wazungu* (*Poem for the Europeans*), composed by an unknown author from Bagamoyo in present-day Tanzania. Carl Velten (1862–1935) initially published the poem in a volume on *Prose and Poetry of the Swahili* in 1907 (367–70). For the poem's translation in its full length (by Katrin Bromber), see Miehe et al. 2002, 372–74. I made a selection of the poem's four-liners to open each section of this essay. For me, the lines of poetry symbolize moments of subversion and critique, surviving in the colonial library. As the author wrote the poem "for the Europeans", I feel that they are in some sense directed at me. It remains up to my readers to decide whether the lines appeal to them, and, if so, in what way.

by German scholars between 1909 and 1944.[2] My focus is on the archive's holdings whose production was underwritten by colonial arrangements in the metropolis of Berlin. The sound recording this essay revolves around was made in 1934. It is the acoustic testimony of Bayume Mohamed Husen (1904–1944) who came from East Africa to Europe at the end of the 1920s.[3] Initially intended as a speech sample for language teaching in Swahili, the archival source now represents a compelling yet ambiguous trace of a colonial subject. On the one hand, the acoustic file appears as a material expression of a Black person living and working in Berlin, produced and archived at the hegemonic knowledge institution of the university. On the other hand, listening to the mediated voice of Husen evokes a poignant experience of sensing a long-gone presence. An investigation of the sound object and its content allows me to concentrate not only on the practices and historical figures involved in the making of the recording. It also offers the possibility to shed light on the epistemic framework of a colonial knowledge regime and its legacies.

Mohamed Husen's voice was recorded at the then newly founded Institute for Sound Research (*Institut für Lautforschung*) at Berlin University (today's *Humboldt Universität zu Berlin*). On the audio recording, Husen recites an ethnographic text about Swahili wedding traditions. Primarily meant for language instruction, the sound file was published together with corresponding texts in a publication series called the Sound Library (*Lautbibliothek*).[4] The linguist Arnulf Schroeder (1911–1945) was in charge of both the recording and the editing process. More than written or visual sources, acoustic testimonies convey the impression of coming particularly close to historical subjects by listening to their corporeal voice. At the same time, reconstructing the circumstances under which the mediated sound came into being is a difficult task. Husen's audio recording is thus

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2 For a comprehensive history of the *Lautarchiv*, see e.g. Mehnert 1996; Mahrenholz 2003; Lange 2017.

3 From the time of his arrival in Germany, he was known as Bayume Mohamed Hussein, which became Mohamed Husen, presumably a self-chosen, Germanized adaptation (Bechhaus-Gerst 2007, 11–12). In the following, I therefore opt to use the name Mohamed Husen.

4 Under the title *Sound Library*, the publication series was irregularly published between 1926 and 1952. For an overview of the series until 1932, see *Lautabteilung* 1932.

an ambiguous historical source that requires multidirectional and possibly speculative readings.[5]

To approach Husen's testimony today, and to make sense of the sonic source from a postcolonial point of view, I sought out collaborators. Not only did I lack language skills and cultural knowledge, I also did not want to repeat an act of epistemic violence by perpetuating an exclusive power over interpretation. Together with the anthropologist and Swahili speaker Jasmin Mahazi, I invited other Swahili speakers to take part in a workshop in Berlin, in which we listened to the sound recording collectively. By bringing together different perspectives, expertise, and positionalities, the workshop format aimed at a collaborative engagement with the historical material.

The life of Mohamed Husen is deeply entangled with Germany's colonial past. The different chapters of his life define turning points in terms of both Husen's own biography and Germany's military, public, and academic legacies. Born as Mahjub bin Adam Mohamed in today's Tanzania in 1904, Husen became a child soldier during the First World War. As so-called Askari soldiers, Husen and his father, like many other colonized men and boys, joined the German colonial army.[6] In 1929, Husen came to Germany to claim pending payments for him and his deceased father's work. After the Foreign Office rejected Husen's claim, he began working as a waiter and actor in the Berlin entertainment industries. With the world economic crisis and the rise of the National Socialists, Husen witnessed how the exoticizing amusement industry became an increasingly precarious employment for Black people and People of Color (e.g. Lewerenz 2017, 153–57). For this essay, it is also important to know that Husen held the position of a so-called African teaching assistant at Berlin University. Mainly serving to train future colonial officials, military personnel and merchants, Husen co-taught Swahili courses at the Seminar for Oriental Languages (*Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen*) from 1931.[7] When he started a family with a *white* woman, this added to the racial discrimination he was exposed to, leading to

5 Following social anthropologist Sharon Macdonald, I suggest a multidirectional methodology that develops a relation between different perspectives as well as the past and the present in order to find alternative and new ways of dealing with historical material and established narratives (2003, 101–02).

6 It is likely that Husen's father was one of the victims of the *Battle of Mahiwa* fought between German and British Imperial forces in October 1917 (Bechhaus-Gerst 2007, 37).

7 The *Seminar* was founded in 1887 and was renamed *Auslandshochschule* in 1936. Later, it merged into the University's Faculty of Foreign Studies, opened in 1939.

his arrest by the *Gestapo* in 1941. After three years of imprisonment, Husen died in the concentration camp *Sachsenhausen* in November 1944. Born in the period of Imperial Germany's formal colonialism, he ultimately did not survive the prevailing racial inequalities of the repressive Nazi state. In 2007, a tripping stone (*Stolperstein*) was installed in front of the Husen family's last place of residence in Berlin *Mitte* at *Brunnenstraße* 193. It was the first commemorative stone dedicated to a Black victim of Nazi terror and persecution since the inception of the decentralized memorial project in 1992 (Bechhaus-Gerst 2007, 162).[8]

In recent decades, public awareness of and scholarship on histories of colonial migration(s) to Germany have increased. Likewise, the number of works accounting for early Black presence and historicity in Germany before the second half of the twentieth century has grown (e.g. Ayim, Oguntoye, and Schultz 1986; Grosse 2003; Aitken and Rosenhaft 2013; Diallo and Zeller 2013; Bechhaus-Gerst 2018). Scholars and activists alike have done a pioneering job in reconstructing Husen's life story by consulting an impressive number of archives and sources (e.g. Reed-Anderson 1997, 2000 [1995]; Oguntoye 1997a; Bechhaus-Gerst 1997, 2007). Tracking down and marking the presence of people of African descent living and working in Germany, and in doing so trying to include their stories in German historiographies, represent significant milestones in academic terms. Yet the effort has been even more important for challenging, and slowly shifting, established historical narratives and collective memories.

Proceeding from my archival work, this essay discusses the conceptual and methodological choices I deemed necessary in order to engage with Husen's recording in a *sensitive* and *collaborative* manner. Addressing the question of what a postcolonial and ethnographic approach to colonial sounds might look like, I suggest the practice of *collective listening* as one possible way of rethinking the politics of listening and producing knowledge.

mkusanyize hadisi,	You've collected stories,
mandishile na warisi,	written by the descendants,
ilimu zenye kiasi	valuable knowledge,
pia mwalizipapia.	also you consumed it.

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8 For further literature on Husen, see e.g. Oguntoye 1997a; Reed-Anderson 2000 [1995]; Breiter 2002; Bechhaus-Gerst 1997, 2007, 2013; Stoecker 2008; Knopf 2013, 2018; KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme 2018.

Developed by Margit Berner, Anette Hoffmann, and Britta Lange (2011), the approach of *sensitive collections* indicates that, when dealing with anthropological collections, it is not only the collectibles themselves that are to be examined. The histories of their production, transmission, circulation, and consumption are also relevant. Only this broader framing, Lange argues, allows for shedding light on problematic practices, power relations, and contexts of epistemic or literal violence connected to anthropological collections and the institutions storing them (Lange 2011, 19). For a long time, in museum and academic contexts, solely human remains and material of sacred or ritual significance were considered sensitive material. While there is no doubt that this material appears as the most drastic result of (colonial) contexts of injustice, it seems, nonetheless, important to expand the perspective on anthropological knowledge production and its archives. Ultimately, this also entails reconsidering the understanding of what constitutes anthropological and ethnographic collections in the first place. Anthropological depots (be they in museums, universities, libraries, or private households) not only hold ethnographic artifacts. They also contain knowledges in the form of ethnographic information, measuring data, moldings, visuals, or sounds of bodily and thus personal features. For thinking through sensitive collections, the issue of how to deal with anthropological data in the present and future is a crucial point of consideration. Likewise, the question of who should be included in this discourse is of particular importance since, in most cases, sensitive collections are invisible and inaccessible to wider circles and the public (Lange 2011, 39).

After more than eighty-five years, the practice of recording Husen appears as an act of objectification, of turning a person into an object of research supposed to represent both a language and an anthropological sample. Accordingly, one of my first questions was whether the archived file—as part of a larger sensitive collection—merely stands for modes of objectification and racialization. These modes emerge not only against the backdrop of the recording activities at the Institute for Sound Research, but also when exploring more broadly the role of the language departments' non-*white* teaching staff. Since its founding in 1887, the Seminar for Oriental Languages employed many Black people and People of Color as assistants and lecturers (Pugach 2007). How, I had to ask, was my current account of Husen any different from practices back then when considering his sound recording as my point of departure and object of research?

Film director and scholar Eva Knopf raises a similar question. In her documentary film *Majub's Journey* (2013), Knopf was particularly concerned with Husen's role as a (background) actor in German colonial and

propagandistic film productions realized between 1934 and 1941.[9] Knopf's point of access in her cinematic work is the visual footage of Husen, stored and accessible in national archives. Explaining the dilemma, she feels caught up in, Knopf writes:

> Showing these images also means updating the racist stereotypes shaping Husen's film roles and carrying them into the future. Not showing them means forgetting Mohamed Husen in the archives, or at least refraining from the attempt to write Husen back into (film) history. How, then, can his story be told? (2018, 84)[10]

Similarly, I ask what postcolonial futures for the *Lautarchiv* may look like. This concern is particularly important in light of the fact that parts of the *Lautarchiv*'s records are the result of, and served as evidence for producing and shaping colonial knowledge and difference. Pointing to their "inexorable historical embeddedness in the logics of colonial power," anthropologist Brian K. Axel states, "archival documents may be understood as simultaneously the outcome of colonial processes, integral to the continuing formation of such processes, and the condition for the production of historical knowledge" (2002, 14). In what follows, I plead for revisiting archival documents in order to understand and challenge the logics of colonial power and to alter the conditions under which historical knowledge is produced. As editors to a special issue of *Social Anthropology*, Paul Basu and Ferdinand de Jong, in turn, waver between two possible decolonial moments in their thinking about colonial archives. On the one hand, they ask whether accepting archival decay ought not to be taken as a sign of decolonization. On the other hand, they see possibilities of 'second lives' of colonial archives by means of a re-appropriation by postcolonial subjects (2016, 5). Through my engagement with Husen's recording and the practice of collective listening, I hope to add new aspects to the debate of decolonizing the *Lautarchiv*.

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9   In total, Husen was part of twenty-three film productions realized between 1934 and 1941 (Bechhaus-Gerst 2007, 114). For more on film productions of the Weimar period and the question of race and representation, see Nagl 2009.

10 "Diese Bilder zu zeigen, bedeutet, auch die rassistischen Stereotype, die Husens Rollen prägten, zu aktualisieren und in die Zukunft zu tragen. Sie nicht zu zeigen, würde bedeuten, Mohamed Husen in den Archiven zu vergessen, oder zumindest den Versuch zu unterlassen, ihn noch einmal in die (Film-)Geschichte einzuschreiben. Wie aber kann seine Geschichte erzählt werden?" All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

bassi wacheni jawabu	Stop to give an answer,
la kujibu makatibu,	to reply to the officials.
nandike nini, sahibu?	What should I write, my friend?
na yote mmesikia.	You've heard everything.

My access to Husen's historical audio recording was limited to appraising the quality of his voice, describing the noise of the recording device, and noticing pauses, hesitations, or other irregularities. Can I trust the historical translation? What does the person's voice, their stumbling, hesitating, or pausing convey? How does one assess the relationship between the content and the way the content was vocally transmitted? In order to approach these practical and intersubjective questions, I sensed that it would be worthwhile and, in fact, necessary to consult other people. Thus, with the help of Jasmin Mahazi, I invited Swahili speakers to engage with the sound recording and share their views on the material and its (social) content. A collaborative approach allowed my engagement with the source material to be broadened and intensified. I believe that it was, at least to some extent, possible to contest and cede interpretational sovereignty, although I am well aware of the fact that *I* remained the one evaluating the outcomes of the session.

To me, collective listening is a way of renouncing traditional academic knowledge production by recognizing different bodies of knowledge and experience as relevant for the meaning and interpretation of sound. In her work, media historian Kate Lacey historicizes shifting modes of listening, showing that listening is an active rather than a passive practice (2013, 1–4). Focusing on the politics of listening, Lacey argues that listening collectives ought to be understood as discursively produced groups of people interacting with and in political and social spheres. Following Lacey's emphasis on listening publics, I understand collective listening as a mode in which the qualities of plurality and intersubjectivity matter (Lacey 2013, 8). In other words, listening is seen neither as a merely receptive mode of consumption nor as an isolated, individual experience. By contrast, collective listening is understood as a situated and actively engaging, yet open-ended practice.

In total, eight participants (including Jasmin Mahazi and myself) took part in the workshop, which was organized at Humboldt University of Berlin in January 2019.[11] All participants were involved either in the academic field of

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African studies or active members of the East-African diaspora in Germny.[12] After lis tening to Husen's sound recording collectively, our conversation began as follows:

Asmau Nitardy:	He was definitely reading something out loud. From a book.
Lutz Diegner:	Yes, it wasn't his text.
Vitale Kazimoto:	It wasn't written by him, he had to read it.
Stephanie Lämmert:	Exactly.
Lutz Diegner:	So one would say, an absolutely unnatural speech situation. And then this sing-song is very special.
Asmau Nitardy:	Yes, exactly.[13]

These were the first impressions shared by the participants. The comments show that the listeners immediately reacted to the way in which the speaker vocalized the things heard on the record: Husen read out, he did not speak freely. The words and sentences sounded "unnatural"; other remarks described them as "impersonal", as spoken "without feeling"—"without a

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12 At the time of the workshop, Rukia Bakari was a doctoral fellow at the Institute of African Studies, University of Leipzig, and visited Berlin to participate in the workshop. Frank Daffa was pursuing a second degree in African studies at Humboldt University, where he occasionally taught Swahili. He had first heard of the story of Husen when attending a screening of Eva Knopf's documentary film at the Goethe Institute in Dar el Salam in 2014. Vitale Kazimoto was a long-standing member of the Tanzanian diaspora in Berlin. For more than twenty years, he, too, taught Swahili language and literature at Humboldt University. Kazimoto was familiar with the historical figure of Husen and his story but did not know much about the sound recording. Lutz Diegner and Stephanie Lämmert both studied and then worked in the field of African studies. Diegner was a lecturer for Swahili at Humboldt University, while Lämmert was a post-doctoral researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin. Diegner felt it was his responsibility to engage with Husen's story. After all, he saw his and Kazimoto's appointments as a continuing legacy of the institution's history. As a manager responsible for East Africa, Asmau Nitardy worked for the German-African Business Association (*Afrika-Verein der deutschen Wirtschaft*) in Berlin. She took part in the workshop out of personal interest.

13 Asmau Nitardy: "Er hat definitiv was vorgelesen. Also, aus einem Buch." Lutz Diegner: "Ja, das ist nicht sein Text." Vitale Kazimoto: "Es ist von ihm gar nicht geschrieben, er muss lesen." Stephanie Lämmert: "Genau." Lutz Diegner: "Also man würde sagen, absolut unnatürliche Sprechsituation. Und dann noch dieser Singsang ist sehr speziell." Asmau Nitardy: "Ja, genau."

feeling for the language". Husen's intonation was referred to as a peculiar "sing-song", meaning the emphasis of the so-called stress accent of the Swahili language.[14]

For me—the only person in the room without an understanding of Swahili, but nonetheless familiar with the sound recording and the sing-song tone referred to—it was striking that all listeners were in agreement after their first listening experience, thus reinforcing each other's observations. I had provided the participants with some basic information about the speaker's biography and the recording situation in 1934. After Jasmin Mahazi and I had invited people to take part in the workshop, I sent them the digital version of the sound file in preparation for the event. The recorded text is divided into two files, corresponding with the front and back side of the record. Both soundtracks contain little more than four minutes of sound (which was comparatively long, given the technical capabilities of the time). The text itself consists of fifty-one sentences, each describing one step or act of a Swahili wedding, beginning with the groom's parents searching for an adequate future wife, and concluding with remarks on how husband and wife should treat each other when sharing a home.[15]

While the listeners focused mostly on the speaker's voice and the pace and flow of his delivery, their initial remarks also relate to the recording's content. Why did Kazimoto and Diegner feel so certain that the text was not written by Husen? Why did Nitardy declare that "he was simply *used* to reproducing it as sound"?[16] These impressions do not derive only from the "unnatural", "hesitant", "distanced", and "impersonal" voice, as described by the participants. The listeners shared the opinion that a man born and raised in regions of eastern Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century would not deliberately choose to talk about intimate details of Swahili wedding customs in public. "Did he have to do this", one of the participants asked, "or was it his decision to talk about this topic?"[17]

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14 The quotes are taken from my transcription and translation of the workshop, which took place at Humboldt University on January 16, 2019. We conducted the workshop mostly in German and partly in English.

15 Apparently, the record ended before Husen could read out the text in full. For this reason, the last five sentences are only available in the accompanying textbook (Schroeder 1935).

16 "Und er wurde einfach benutzt, das wiederzugeben als Ton."

17 "Musste er das machen, oder war es seine Entscheidung, dieses Thema auf sich zu nehmen?"

Like the workshop discussants, I also directed my interest towards the recording's content. Nitardy, who wondered whether Husen had chosen the topic of the recording himself, described the content as "*culturally insensitive*". To her, it was "unusual" and "not so natural" that a *man* would share intimate details about Swahili marriage—an event she considered to be a "woman's affair". Before attending the workshop, Nitardy had listened to the sound file together with her husband and mother, who had had similar reactions. She told us that her husband had a sense of embarrassment, and that her Swahili mother felt a little uncomfortable while listening to the recording. Her mother speculated that the recorded voice may have been a European who learned Swahili tinged with a Tanzanian accent. Recognizing the practices indicated in the text, her mother considered it odd that a man would formulate and record the information in such vivid detail—an extent of detail people would go into, but usually not publicly.

I have deliberately chosen not to reproduce the actual text. To me, it is problematic enough that this particular text and many others of its kind, elaborating on cultural traditions in a disrespectful manner and with an insensitive choice of words, are accessible in public university libraries without contextualization. My decision not to reproduce the content stems from the conviction that the text is offensive, hurtful to people, and should not be displayed. For most of the participants, it was particularly the choice of words and details that drew a negative picture of something that, in other contexts, would be associated with pride and honor. For them, the language was emblematic of a Western perspective and the colonial gaze seeking spectacle and difference. Consequently, I think the more important question is what the historicity of the sound document can tell us about regimes of representation and colonial knowledge production. In addition, the listeners' observations led to a questioning of the access policies of the archive. What does the expressed unease portend for the current archival practices of the *Lautarchiv*? What does it mean for the future of the *Humboldt Forum*, which is supposed to house the archive from 2021? Should the recording still be accessible to anyone who requests it from the archive? Would it be enough to include some sort of disclaimer or warning as part of the online catalog to avoid the possibility of painful listening experiences?[18] Who would, or should, make these decisions and on what grounds?

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18 While not consistently, more and more institutions employ the practice of including a trigger warning in their digital archives, making users aware that historical contents can contain wording that may be outdated or offensive.

kwa kizungu andikeni	Write in European style,
wasia na khati za deni,	wills and credit documents.
lugha lolote tieni,	Use any language.
pia tutazipokea.	We will accept them.

What followed from the collective listening were two striking insights. First, the listeners shared the opinion that the information and details included in the recording must have hailed from a woman, a female informant. Second, the participants assumed that a German scholar was clearly involved in the compilation of the text. To most of them, the chosen language and wording were so 'typically' German: rich in detail and pedantic in form. Diegner suspected a German scholar to have composed, or at least edited, the text based on somebody else's knowledge. He also suspected the scholar might have written down the text in German before retranslating it into Swahili. "It was written down just like that", Nitardy commented, "without a feeling for or thinking about who was going to read it".[19]

In light of the discussion, my pondering over Husen's sound recording and its content, over anthropological research practices and the male gaze, had reached a completely new level. In my research on the *Lautarchiv*, I am concerned with the fact that female presences in historical archives in general, and in the sound archive's holdings in particular, are often imparted by material *about* women rather than *by* women. Women never, or at most rarely appear as speakers or knowledge carriers and producers themselves. Yet, not only did Husen's recording speak *about* women, but the very content stemmed *from* and should have been articulated, if at all, *by* women. With regard to the history of early anthropology, it was usually privileged male and *white* scholars who established their ethnographic research on (participant) observations, in addition to knowledge they received from "native middlemen"—informants, interpreters, and translators (Pugach 2012, 6). Often, the people they worked with were well-respected men among their community because of their gender, age, and membership in local or cosmopolitan elites. Subsequently, not only the colonial eye but also the gaze of local men mattered. It also follows that the gendered (male) gaze could occasionally occur in a collaborative, doubly effective mode. In other words, female presences were excluded from the order of knowledge dominated by both colonizing and colonized male subjects.

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19 "Es ist einfach so geschrieben, also ohne Gefühl, ohne Nachzudenken, wer das dann lesen würde."

In the context of the colonial and gendered making of knowledge, the publication *The Customs of the Swahili People* (*Sitten und Gebräuche der Suaheli*), edited by Carl Velten (1862–1935) and published in 1903, represents only one of many examples. The book's ethnographic subject matter ranges from birth and children's games, the main occupations of men and women, to slavery and legal conventions. The book, Velten writes in the preface, consists of a body of texts, noted down by "native informants" on his request during a stay in East Africa (1903: V). However, Velten, who served as an official translator to the imperial government, does not specify when and where this stay took place, and with whom he interacted. Was he in contact with one or several local researchers, with men or women? What was their social background? Contrary to many others in his field, Velten at least mentions that he edited the texts together with Mtoro bin Mwenyi Bakari (1869–1927), who had been a Swahili lecturer at the Seminar for Oriental Languages in Berlin since 1900.[20] Yet, for historian Katharina Oguntoye, it is a clear-cut case: "He [Bakari] authored a book about *The Customs of the Swahili People*, which was the most important source for the social and cultural history of the Swahili before colonization. The book was published under the name of his superior, Dr C. Velten" (1997b, 20).[21] On the one hand, it seems crucial to disclose the fact that it was often not the editor inscribed on the book cover but the informant or translator who narrated, authored or edited the collected texts, stories and poems. Sometimes, the editors credited the informant or assistant's name in the preface; yet most of the time, they did not. In this way, they concealed and silenced authorship and collective modes of knowledge production. On the other hand, most of these collections of texts appear as products of epistemic violence and practices of *Othering*, as Husen's case exemplifies compellingly.

In this light, the four-liners commencing each section of this essay, and belonging to a longer poem by an anonymous author, constitute a remarkable exception. Bearing the title *Poem for the Europeans* (*Chairi kwa Wazungu*), each verse is highly critical of the colonial government and practices of collecting material and intellectual property of colonized subjects in East

20 Bakari was born in Tanzania in 1869. He came to Berlin in 1900 where he started working at the Seminar for Oriental Languages. For more on his life in Germany and his role as a Swahili lecturer, see e.g. Oguntoye 1997b; Wimmelbücker 2009.

21 "Er [Bakari] verfasste ein Buch über die 'Sitten und Gebräuche der Suaheli', das die wichtigste Quelle für die Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der Suaheli vor der Kolonisation war. Das Buch erschien unter dem Namen seines Vorgesetzten Dr. C. Velten."

Africa. Velten included the poem in a volume on *Prose and Poetry of the Swahili* (*Prosa und Poesie der Suaheli*, 1907). In a footnote, he comments:

> In the year 1895, in a circular note at the insistence of the editor, the Swahili people of the coast were asked to write down riddles, sayings, fables, etc. and to send them to the government. Thereon, a poet from Bagamajo [sic] sent this poem as his response without, however, mentioning his name. The poet belongs to those dissatisfied elements who refuse to make friends with the reign of the Europeans. (1907, 367)[22]

Swahili expert and translator Katrin Bromber supposes that Velten included the piece of poetry despite the author's critical attitude because of the poem's artistic quality (2003, 48). Ironically, he inserted it in a collection of panegyric poems praising German colonial rule and rulers.[23] Velten probably saw no problems with the ways in which he was collecting knowledge, which were criticized in the poem. Nor did he take seriously the author's demand, articulated in the last line of the first verse: "*Don't ask for more*". It seems paradoxical that this vocal criticism (even if anonymous) would not have caught recent scholarly attention if it had not been published in the 'colonial library' (e.g. Mudimbe 1988; Desai 2001). Does it develop its resistant quality and subversive potential only today? How did readers receive it back then?

Returning to the gendered dimensions of appropriating knowledge, I had to think of a paragraph in Diedrich Westermann's (1875–1956) account of the missionary as anthropological field-worker. Westermann is considered as one of the founding figures of African studies in Germany. In 1934, he became the director of the Institute for Sound Research. In an article from 1931, the scholar draws on his approach to the gathering of (sensitive) ethnographic information.

> While it may be valuable to obtain authentic records of the life of the people from others, it is still more important to observe and study the actual thing at first hand. A division of the work between men and women is worth considering, as a woman will be able to get into touch with the life of the women much more

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22 "Im Jahre 1895 wurde die Suaheli-Bevölkerung an der Küste durch ein Suaheli-Rundschreiben auf Veranlassung des Herausgebers aufgefordert, Rätsel, Sprichwörter, Märchen usw. aufzuschreiben und an das Gouvernement einzusenden. Ein Dichter aus Bagamajo [sic] sandte darauf dies Gedicht als Antwort ein, ohne aber seinen Namen zu nennen. Der Dichter gehört jedenfalls zu den unzufriedenen Elementen, die sich mit der Herrschaft der Europäer wenig befreunden können."

23 The collection of poems refers, for instance, to Hermann von Wissmann (1853–1905), Lothar von Trotha (1848–1920), and Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859–1941).

easily than a man, and this opens up a large field that can only be dealt with by women. Among the missionaries there are today many women, who, by their education and knowledge of African languages, are specially qualified to take up this neglected part of the work and to say what the African woman is, what she does, what she thinks, and what the present changes in woman's life mean. (1931, 170)

Significantly, women have always been part of colonial encounters between Western missionaries, travelers, or researchers and members of *othered* groups—most prominently in the role of accompanying wives on both sides.[24] Yet these female presences and contributions have been silenced. They have been invisibilized by incorporating the women's share in their husbands' work or banishing it to the footnotes (e.g. Karttunen 1994; Tedlock 1995; Loosen 2014). Today, it seems impossible to determine whether the information included in the sound recording's text originated from a female narration. "We simply won't know", is the prosaic answer by anthropologist Barbara Tedlock who has famously written about the "silent wife-ethnographers" and their (often unpaid and unacknowledged) contribution to their husbands' ethnographic work and writing (1995, 271). Consequently, I am inclined to ask: What about the silent wife-informants? Their role seems to be an even more unacknowledged and silenced chapter in anthropology's collective history. In the above-quoted paragraph, Westermann does not address ways in which scholars had previously been collecting information—without the help of trained and "qualified" women. He similarly does not consider that it was this "neglected part" of a woman's life in particular that might entail sensitive knowledge. Two pages later, however, he does declare that "[i]t must not be forgotten that there are certain things that must not be mentioned and that the native is naturally loathe to tell a stranger anything about the life or customs of *his* people" (1931, 172, my emphasis). Westermann's depiction of gender division ties in with the assertion of one of the workshop participants, Stephanie Lämmert, who argued that Husen's sound recording "is a source that likely shows more about the colonial gaze [...] and also somehow about this cooperation between the colonial gaze and the male gaze".[25]

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24 In colonial territories and missionary sites, *white* women were also present as, for instance, missionary sisters, teachers, or nurses. In her monograph on German women in colonies of the South Pacific, Livia Loosen explains that her initial aim was to focus her research on perspectives of indigenous women but that she was not able to do so because of the paucity of sources (2014, 39–42).

25 "[…] das ist ne Quelle, die vielleicht irgendwie mehr darüber zeigt, wie vielleicht der koloniale Blick gewesen ist. […] Und auch irgendwie diese Kooperation zwischen

yote tukayafuata,	We'll followed [sic] all of this.
hatuna kutatata,	We don't argue.
kulla neno mwalipata,	You got every word.
sina kuwatilia.	I don't have anything to add.

In her closing remarks of an article on anthropological collecting during colonialism, Britta Lange asks: "How *systematically* do our [Western] sciences and the knowledge derived from them build upon situations of duress, and how *inherent* are such practices of transgression in our [Western] theories" (2013, 66; emphasis in the original)?[26] To rephrase these questions as statements, I would say: Western sciences and the knowledge derived from them build *systematically* upon situations of duress, and such practices of transgression are *inherent* in Western theories. In my view, only after admitting this fact does the next step, the attempt to decolonize the epistemic frameworks Western theories, institutions, archives, and disciplines rest upon, become possible. Only then can one identify (sometimes ambiguous) situations of duress and persistence of epistemic violence. Only then can one avoid further acts of transgression, in terms of the violation of cultural, religious, social, or gender-specific boundaries.

Against the backdrop of Husen's sound recording—a source of colonial knowledge production—I have laid out the sensitive nature of the archival document. Understanding the sound object as evidence of colonial power and the colonial knowledge regime, it remains Husen's corporeal voice that we listen to and project certain associations onto. "He was in a colonial jam", is the way in which Frank Daffa tried to make sense of Husen's position and decision to do the recording. Did Husen indeed feel at a loss, or did he simply perform a job without taking it too personally? Did he feel caught up in between his own cultural values and Western curiosity, this genuine 'craving' for knowledge? Might this be one reason for the hesitant and impersonal tone of voice, which all listeners described as their first hearing impression? Lämmert shared the perception that she "thought that this hesitance, which one senses, rather has something to do with the fact that he was maybe somehow distancing himself from the content instead of reading

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dem *colonial gaze* und dem *male gaze*."

26 "Wie *systematisch* bauen unsere Wissenschaften und das daraus abgeleitete Wissen auf Zwangssituationen auf, und wie *inhärent* sind unseren Theorien solche Praktiken der Grenzüberschreitung?"

the text for the first time".[27] If one literally understands Husen's distancing from the content, one may wonder if this was a move Husen claimed for himself more generally. He understood his lifestyle as 'modern' (rather than traditional); he advocated Western science (rather than non-Western knowledges); and he felt equal to his collaborators in the colonial metropolis (rather than with the people in his former homes).

Reflecting on the decision to organize a collective listening workshop, the participants' impressions of and thoughts on the acoustic source were crucial in the attempt to approach the sound recording differently and in a collaborative mode. Sometimes, the shared experiences were very subjective and personal. In other parts, they were concordant with my assumptions and the thinking of other listeners. All workshop participants tried to make sense of the event in the past. We tried to get a feel for the past moment by paying special attention not only to the recording's content but also to the mode in which the content was transmitted, to the speaker's intonation and timbre, the pace and flow, and other nuances of vocal expression, which could never have been expressed in the same way in a written source. It was through the presence of Husen's voice that some participants sensed a connection to the historical subject. For some, the link was Berlin, the city they live in; for others, it was the university, the institution they also work for or study at. Rukia Bakari, for her part, felt a linkage on yet a different level, sharing the intuition that "the informant must have been a woman to have given those details. So maybe that was my connection at that point that maybe there is a woman involved 'cause the man wouldn't give those […] details […]".

tama yangu, nikomele	I end my poem.
haya yangu matungole,	This is my composition.
uamke walilele,	Wake up, those who have slept,
huna tena kusinzia.	and don't sleep anymore!

I end my essay. This is my composition. This text represents my way of engaging with the sonic trace of the historical figure of Husen, as well as with colonial knowledge production and the (im)possibility of 'second lives' for colonial archives. Constructing a new archive by means of new reading strategies and the practice of collective listening, this essay maneuvered

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27   "[D]eswegen habe ich gedacht, dass dieses Holpern, das man ja doch irgendwie spüren kann, dass das eher damit was zu tun hat, dass er sich irgendwie von dem Inhalt distanziert vielleicht und nicht damit, dass er den Text zum ersten Mal abliest."

between notions of adding to the colonial archive, giving thought to a possible 'second life', and creating a whole new archive consisting of contemporary and intersubjective experiences, projections, and speculations.

My aim was to show how exploring particular moments in the biography of a single character makes it possible to elicit entangled histories of colonial Germany. I took the sonic document as a starting point for thinking about the making and transmission of colonial knowledges in the past, leading to a collaborative engagement with these knowledges in the present. In this way, I was able to deal with the problematic practices associated with the production of Husen's sound file and the accompanying written material. Creating a new, experimental, and situational field site by setting up a collective space for listening to the acoustic trace together, Jasmin Mahazi and I opened a path back into the past, enabling the formation of a new archive in the present.

Positioning themselves in relation to the things heard, all listeners established connections between the voice and its producer, between Husen's perceptible, or rather audible, discomfort and the formalized setting. We discussed the relation between the described cultural practice and the way it was translated into the colonial knowledge system, both in a discursive but also in a literal sense, as the recording was used for purposes of colonial education. Together we developed relationships between the past and the present, between one's own subjective listening experience and that of other listeners. This exchange illuminated not only possible ways of reading, or rather listening to, the source material. It also allowed us to contextualize the difficult circumstances under which the material came into being, how it was archived and how it is accessed today. It is my belief that the notion of sensitive collections, as well as the practice of collective listening, was helpful in order to find a mode in which to approach and speak about the sonic material.

My priority was to foreground a hitherto forgotten trace and to rethink what can be known about Bayume Mohamed Husen and his life in connection to both colonial and postcolonial Berlin. Do we understand Husen as a pawn in the hands of the powerful? Or do we consider his actions as competent maneuvers between different, yet entangled, worlds and borders, attempting to contest and cross racial boundaries? Husen fought German bureaucracy to be paid as a fully recognized member of the German colonial army; he aspired to make a career as an actor and performer in the German colonial film and entertainment industry; lastly, he strove to receive credit for his knowledge and language expertise, which was utilized in academic and colonial enterprises. Husen went far, but he never fully succeeded. He did

not receive adequate payment, he did not become a successful actor, and he decided to leave the institution of the university because of its discriminatory environment. His life decisions seem to have always been of an existential nature: Decisions on how to live and make a living in a state under colonial rule, in a colonialist and (soon to become) fascist metropolis. Ultimately, Husen was not able to survive the racial (dis)order of things. Remembering Bayume Mohamed Husen today means remembering a colonial past that does not end with Germany's formal colonialism, but persists in personal biographies, institutional settings and knowledge systems.

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14 "They call it love, we call it labour": how acts of care were repoliticised in India

by Madhurima Majumder and Sara Morais dos Santos Bruss

A scene in South-Delhi, December 2019. Big colourful murals on walls meet strangers from afar, art exhibits on both sides of an overbridge. Beneath it, colourful lights and several art installations. A nearby bus stop transformed into a makeshift library for children to read, write and draw. At the centre is a large tent with several mattresses. A seemingly endless crowd of women sitting together with placards and posters. They are talking, cheering, singing. Most of them have their children around. In front of them a stage with women passing each other the mic. On the grounds, a colourful crowd, where visitors mingle with residents, unusual in the otherwise segregated communal spaces throughout India. Not too long after arriving, an outsider would be offered hot tea. If anyone stayed long enough, many concerned faces among the women would inquire if they were hungry and invite them to share their meal.

This scene is incongruent with what we usually imagine to be a protest site. But it was a regular day at Shaheen Bagh, the neighbourhood where women were protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in India. India saw a massive restructuring of citizenship laws under the present right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP has a history of propagating Hindutva or Hindu-Nationalism, a doctrine that gained popularity during the late colonial period in India. Hindutva relies on a monolithic idea of Hinduism to seek political supremacy of a unified Hindu identity. This not only posits the ideal Indian subject as Brahmin or Caste-Hindu, but has in the last couple of years also served to further alienate non-Hindu, lower class and informal communities. In the face of these dominant shifts, the new amendments threaten vulnerable groups like Muslims, Adivasis (the 'indigenous', usually rural and nomadic populations), Dalits and lower income groups. Among the dissenting voices across India, women, especially poor Muslim women, have been the loudest. They gave the sporadic protests a momentum, created a space for different groups to converge and concretised it into a movement. Although not feminist by name, the protests embodied a number of feminist demands, as it centred on care and denaturalised the gendered dichotomy of

production and reproduction. What can a supposedly global feminism learn from those often not considered in their lived realities?

In November 2019 across India, women and minority groups began occupying public space to protest the introduction of the CAA, National Populations Registry (NPR) as well National Registry of Citizens (NRC). One of the central areas of protest was the predominantly Muslim suburb Shaheen Bagh in South-Delhi. It is one of the poorer districts of the monstrous city that attracts the wealthy while often neglecting its own— New Delhi, the infamous Moloch of sexual violence, the political 'centre' of India. The Shaheen Bagh neighbourhood is home to a variety of precarious lifestyles that were casually included in the protests when the neighbourhood shifted many a domestic function—cooking, washing, serving tea, but also giving advice and more general care-related and emotional labour—to the public of the streets. Women chit-chatting, children playing, it seemed that the otherwise male-dominated public sphere had suddenly been feminized. Nabiya Khan, a university student, wrote on this protest "*pehenke chudiyan, bindi, burqa aur hijaab, aayega inquilab*"—the revolution will come wearing bangles, bindi, burqa and hijab. This protest stood out, as it used care as a form of resistance against a government that refused and systematically denied care for all its citizens.

Tales of violence

To understand the protest, it is important to understand the location. Shaheen Bagh is a poor Muslim neighbourhood with sparse infrastructure from the Delhi municipality. Its inhabitants have limited access to clean water, subsidised electricity or decent roads. To its north, Jamia Millia Islamia, a central public university established in the 1920s. The university is central to many people's aspiration to a better life in this neighbourhood.

On 15 December 2019, Delhi Police and RPF (Reserve Police Force) forcibly entered the university campus under the pretext of catching miscreants trying to spread violence. Leaked CCTV footage from the library shows police barging in on unsuspecting students studying in the library. But dominant media outlets readily reproduced the narrative, thus circulating the impression of a state bringing its deviants—students with a predominantly Muslim background—under control. And thus, when police beat the students with impunity, it shook the women of the neighbouring community. After all, this was the place they had or were hoping to send their children with aspirations for a better life.

These were women whose lives were led mostly within the private spaces of their homes. Without any formal organisation, they called out to each other to come out of their homes and do something. "*If not now, then when*?" they said. It started with a few women young and old with their children, a small tent, a few mattresses and a few men forming a chain around them. Soon the tent grew and so did the numbers of mattresses. As the protest in Shaheen Bagh grew in numbers, this otherwise obscure space from the peripheries became the main point of convergence for the entire country: Shaheen Bagh was demanding attention from the political centre. Protests from around the city gathered and centralised at Shaheen Bagh, as the reports of violence ran through the city.

There were times when the number of people gathered would swell to several thousand in the evenings and dwindle to only a few hundred in the morning. But the protests remained alive and present in the public eye. The site of the protest, a highway that connects South Delhi with Noida, is a busy route of transportation for goods and people. The smooth flow of traffic, especially the transportation of goods, is literally as well as metaphorically the vein that feeds neoliberal productivity in urban spaces (Amin and Thrift, 2002). Thus, any disruption to it threatens the flow and would be dealt with in utmost seriousness, as lawyer-activist Amit Sahni gathered after filing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) with the Delhi High Court. In the subsequent reply to Sahni from the Supreme Court, its response pointed out that though protesting was integral to democracy, the protesters of Shaheen Bagh had crossed a line (PTI, 2020). Although the Court refused to comment directly on the issue of CAA, it suggested the protest was no longer acceptable as it disrupted the smooth flow of traffic and goods and thus inconvenienced people.

The root of contention

The occurrences at Shaheen Bagh started as a response to the impunity with which police tried to suppress a student protest. But the movement has its roots in a historical disagreement that has been running through Indian politics since independence from British colonial power, the question of the legitimate Indian subject. Since 2015, at least, such a subject can be defined by land ownership, passports, bank data and university degrees (cf Barbora 2019). The CAA, passed in December 2019, grants citizenship for undocumented refugees from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan, but only to those who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Christians. The NPR is a survey to prepare a list for a comprehensive database of every

usual resident in the country. These databases would contain demographic as well as biometric particulars. Many see this as a gateway to implementing a nationwide Citizens Registry, as the government has given conflicting statements regarding its validity from time to time. The NRC process, which was implemented in the Northeastern state of Assam, demands extensive legal documentation from or before 1971 to prove citizenship of an individual. As already suggested, this process generated an increase in inequalities, both in terms of identity and on a material basis. For the documents that can be presented as evidence convey an aura of bourgeois seriousness.

> The data collection process for the NRC tended to disaggregate citizens on the basis of property, lineage or employment record in the formal sector. It also collated on the basis of ethnic identity, gender, and religion, leading to almost four million individuals scrambling for more documents and filing objections on how the process was carried out. (Barbora 2019)

University diplomas, land ownership papers or documentation attesting to steady employment became a basis upon which individuals could prove they had resided in India for the required amount of time, making them eligible for citizenship. But women and queers rarely own land in India—this is true across caste and religion—and NRC and CAA bind women to their heteropatriarchal relations, to the often violent effects of distant marriage and endogamy. That these relations not only produce women in domesticity but also bind them to specific subservient class positions, is one of the strongest analyses Dalit lawyer B.R Ambedkar produced as early as 1917, uniting the plight of women with the economic struggle against what he called Brahmanical patriarchy and the Indian caste system (cf. Rege 2016).

But the quest and scramble for legitimacy, in light of a lack of documents, is also true for vulnerable groups like Adivasis, Dalits, landless, environmental migrants, orphans, disabled, queers or hijras (India's transsexual femme communities), whose bodies do not match the identity registered by the state. In fact, a large section of the population slips through the cracks of governmental identification and documentation as most of the policies do not account for the non-linear lives of poor working class people, a group that has large overlaps with these vulnerable groups. Thus, even though the NPR is based on self-identification, it might have a devastating effect because those who fall through the cracks and don't have the social capital to reinstate their name on the register can effectively lose their citizenship rights. This was not unknown to the government, as demonetisation and Aadhaar (a system of biometric governance relying on a centralised digital database), in the years before, had demonstrated the problems of formalising an informal community.

Demonetisation refers to the 2016 resolution to fight corruption by stripping 500 and 1000 Rupee notes of their monetary status. It was an attempt to formalise a country and fight corruption. However, many informal labourers receiving their money in cash were suddenly left with pay that was no longer worth anything. The informal economy in India still accounts for more than 80 percent of all employment. This is not inclusive of the vast majority engaged in agricultural activity (ILO report 2018). Hijras and queers, in particular, have been historically forced into informal labour, as British laws through the colonial era installed mandatory heterosexuality and identified hijras as a caste of their own. Today, many earn their living as sex workers and although it is technically legal to do so, brothels that make up their living and working spaces are illegal and socially frowned upon (Nanda 1996). According to the research site *Feminism In India*, these numbers are the second highest in the world, superseded only by Kazakhstan, a country with a GDP that is 94% lower than India's (cf. Shah 2020). A 2015 UNDP study revealed that 80% of women do not own bank accounts and that they thus depend on male relatives or spouses to manage their banking activities. While demonetisation left secret stashes of money that women hid from their possibly violent husbands or controlling families worthless, digital identification via the biometric Aadhaar scheme had equally detrimental effects, especially on the rural poor. Introduced as a system to manage social welfare, the programme failed to provide welfare services to farmers, whose fingerprints became illegible as they were altered by manual labour and harsh weather conditions. As an effect, these farmers and rural workers were not able to receive the social benefits the system was allegedly installed for, as the biometric system could not affirm the identities of those eligible for social welfare benefits. The same is true for widows and queers in rural areas, who are subject to the same working conditions, but can rarely expect help if they lack a family that takes care of identification for them. Both instances of state-governance and bureaucratisation thus had harrowing social effects, as it was the informalised way of doing things that often allowed marginalised subjects at least some room to manoeuvre.

No central leadership

As already suggested, the NRC and CAA process generated a further increase in inequalities, both in terms of identity politics and on a material basis. Shaheen Bagh's response to these regulations was not initiated or organized by any formal group, political figure or veteran activists. It was truly people-led and it did not have a central leadership for the entire duration of this movement. Most of these women had little political life or even public

life before the protest. However, this is not to say they were unaware of the nuances of politics behind the CAA. This is one of the reasons why this movement could build solidarity with other marginalised communities such as Dalit groups, farmers, Shikh, queer and hijra community, student groups, several left-wing groups, and so on. Though this movement grew exponentially and several activists and public figures took stage, it was accepted and understood that the real leadership of this movement lay not with those on the stage but with the large number of women who sat before it, giving life to the protest site. The protests not only addressed the issue of amending citizenship, they also focused on the communal and authoritarian agenda of the present government by focusing on previous policy disasters such as demonetisation, mandatory Aadhaar linking of public services, budget cuts from education and health, premature introduction of goods and service taxes and the failing economy. By focusing on these issues and finding solidarity in other movements, Shaheen Bagh truly became a space to reflect on how the present government—in the year 2020 and since 2014—has slowly amended laws and introduced policies that change the core of the constitution in order to get closer to their goal of 'Hindu Rashtra' (Hindu Nationalism).

The redistribution of care into the public and across bodies can be seen as giving value to those often considered as outside the system of producing value, those deemed to be somehow tied to domesticity and still considered politically irrelevant. Learning from their engagement means tying it to a larger historical perspective that feminists have been claiming for years, the acknowledgement that care work is labour and should be recognised as such.

Care, labour, violence: the intersections of feminism

> They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work. They call it frigidity. We call it absenteeism. Every miscarriage is a work accident. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are both working conditions ... but homosexuality is workers' control of production, not the end of work. More smiles? More money. Nothing will be so powerful in destroying the healing virtues of a smile. Neuroses, suicides, desexualisation: occupational diseases of the housewife. (Federici 1975, 1)

In 1972, an Italian feminist collective started a campaign demanding remuneration for the unacknowledged labour housewives and women performed in the domestic sphere. Among them, socialist feminist Silvia Federici. Federici's analysis pointed out that asking for wages was not going to bind women to the domestic role, but rather give them the monetary

means to begin their liberation from it. Any labour that was disconnected from the demand for value and appreciation—from the politicisation of that work as part of systematic production of value under capitalism—would tie women further to their role as subservient maintainers of the social order. According to Federici, the working class would only be liberated when it recognised that its current division of labour also divided the working class in their struggle. "Wages Against Housework", as Federici's famous 1975 publication linked to the movement was called, not only degendered housework as "women's work", but also was a call of solidarity, for those most oppressed under capitalism to unite.

The Shaheen Bagh protests are thus a repetition of an old motif: the most oppressed women and the most exploited workers rise up against their oppressors, despite supposedly insurmountable differences. They do so not because of an explicitly "feminist" understanding of womanhood that beckons an essentialised identity, but because the exploitative systemic injustice of capital hits them the hardest at various levels. One can not only see Shaheen Bagh in lineage with Federici's call to focus on carework, but with historical struggles like the 1917 workers protests in India or Russia, and other political struggles across time that have the reproductive roles of women at their centre. Other historical strategies, such as political lesbianism in the 1970s, were not only about personal decisions and the rejection of (specific) men as heads of the household. Rather, their focus lay on creating an understanding of the fact that reproductive work is a systematic aspect not only of women's oppression, but also of the maintenance of the capitalist and bureaucratic state (Jeffreys 1981). In extension of this argument, gender-based encroachments, cat-calling and sexual violence must be seen as the policing of women's bodies both in public and in the private home.

Gendered forms of oppression are not only material but also psychological and affective, and often find additional expression in the form of sexualised violence. The systemic quality of this violence resonates in the protests against it across the globe. The ubiquity of the 2019 protest "Un Violador en tu camino" (a rapist in your path) by the Chilean group LasTesis, showed how patriarchal state and systematic oppression on the basis of the individual interact. This protest was not only about sexual assaults by the anecdotal individual 'bad guy'. It sought to critique a system that, in addition to reducing certain bodies to sexual objects, has kept women and queers forcibly out of wage labour relations that might facilitate a common class consciousness. They have been left isolated and alienated in their shame, which, incidentally, is a reading that ascribes economic meaning to the omnipresence of #metoo (cf. e.g. Fair 2017). When sexual violence occurs,

women and queers are still disproportionately affected and unprotected because state authorities do not act transformatively, but punitively, authoritatively, or incredulously in the face of female and queer experience reports. This is the case across a government's political party association and across the globe. But also in the movements of the autonomous left, 'The Woman Question' (as if it were only ever a women's question) continues to degenerate into a Marxist side contradiction. It should not be forgotten that the women's movement in the global North initially excluded Women of Colour, thus negating the participation of the (care) workers on whose backs the liberation of the *white*, bourgeois, heterosexual woman could be represented as a story of progress. In protesting these conditions, women and queers not only recognise the collectivity of their experience but have also been able to find indemnification through communities of care.

Although not directed at sexual assault specifically, Shaheen Bagh, too, became a space where care, relations and kinship ties were redistributed and made to performatively stand at the centre of a larger question of organisation and the function of the state. Returning to Federici (1974), the public performance of care must be seen as an explicitly feminised variant of strike or protest that denaturalises, just as it accentuates the centrality of women's labour within an exploitative system. At the very latest, the Corona crisis of 2020 has made visible to all that women and queers do most of the so-called systemically relevant work, but receive only a fraction of the wages. Studies on care capacities were then still being carried out by men, while women and queers continued to manage the actual care and had little time to conduct studies.

These movements have, in light of the pandemic, withdrawn from the public eye; however, they reproduced themselves in the most diverse places in the world and thus connected people, especially women, in the knowledge that patriarchal violence also has a direct effect on the material basis of life and restricts possibilities. These current and historical struggles cannot be reduced to individual decisions or questions of 'wrong' behaviour, but reflect systematic inequalities and react to them—beyond a specific identity of 'woman' or bourgeois feminism. Thus, Shaheen Bagh must be read not only as a protest about the singular specificity of individuals, but also in terms of understanding how identity and materiality interact. Women and queers are oppressed and marginalised not only because their physical bodies are read as gendered, i.e. due to identity politics (today often equated with non-material struggles of subjectivity and representation), but precisely because of their social position. In other words, class politics is important in developing common struggles.

Subservient sheets, revolutionary streets?

> Women have always found ways of fighting back, or getting back at them, but always in an isolated and privatised way. The problem, then, becomes how to bring this struggle out of the kitchen and bedroom and into the streets. (Federici 1975, 4)

The sentiment at the Shaheen Bagh protest site seemed to sing a plurivocal response to Federici's problem. Instead of only bringing the struggle into the street, the women of Shaheen Bagh had brought the entire kitchen and bedroom with them. Cooking, sleeping, washing, the day to day activities that sustain a society in domestic privacy were now in the streets for all to see and participate in. Thus housework, although predominantly performed by women, was made visible and to some extent degendered, as men showing solidarity hurried to help the women. The women of Shaheen Bagh redefined resistance not as an aggressive takeover, but as a peaceful sit-in, an extension of the domestic onto a public space.

A remarkable feature of the Shaheen Bagh style of protests was the presence of children. There were sit-and-draw competitions, libraries, volunteers helping them to finish their homework, game competitions to keep the children engaged and entertained. Care and care work was central to this form of resistance. A large part of the narrative pivoted around fighting for and protecting the future of the nation and in effect their children. In fact, the protesters described themselves as mothers of Shaheen Bagh. The protesters claimed legitimacy for their resistance by invoking their domestic role of caregiver and expanding it to a national scale. As women, they care for the well-being of their families and so were pushed into standing against systematic perversion about who could be a citizen of India. They resist because they care. A popular song of resistance for these protests was "*Hum Kagaz nahi dikhayenge*" (we will not show documents). The lyrics suggest resisting communal hate with love. The song counters the state's demands of papers from its citizens to prove their belonging to people's demand from their state to care for them. Another popular song at these protest sites was *Hum dekhenge*, a poem by Faiz, an Urdu poet. The poem is about bearing witness and using memory as a tool against fascist power. *"Tumhari Lathi Se Tej Hamari Awaaz Hai"* (our voices are more powerful than your batons) was another common slogan. The women protested because they cared, and care became the language of resistance as they demanded care from the state. This resonates strongly with Federici's manifesto, where she claims:

> It is one thing to organise communally the way we want to eat (by ourselves, in groups, etc.) and then ask the State to pay for it, and it is the opposite thing to ask the State to organise our meals. In one case we regain some control over our lives, in the other, we extend the State's control over us (Federici 1975, 7)

The nuanced difference may not have been perceptible to outsiders, but the women of Shaheen Bagh were using community organising as a symbolic practice of resistance. It is through this resistance that they redefined citizenship as an act of belonging. Shaheen Bagh quite literally gave direction to the protests, situating it as intersectional, economic, and reproductive. The neighbourhood became a symbol for all anti-CAA protests and produced its political subject as care workers reproducing the 'social'. Resolute to redefine citizenship, women across the country sat day and night, oftentimes with their children in one of the harshest winters. The 100-day protest at Shaheen Bagh and others like it across the country came to a halt due to the pandemic. In the protest's short yet significant duration, the women could not revoke the CAA but managed to deter the government from aggressively pushing for NPR.

As the pandemic hit in March 2020 and the state could once again demonstrate the extent of its power, hopeful observers of the protests were hit with a sense of despair. But in learning from these moments and movements one might centre not on what they achieve but more on what they stand for. Shaheen Bagh is the expression of frustrations and disillusionment that led to the women's resistance. The women claimed visibility. Especially in a country like India, where the claiming of public space, seemingly without purpose, is read as scandalous for women (cf. Padhke, Khan and Ranade 2011), the importance of such gendered performances cannot be overstated. In this sense, 'identity politics', often critiqued as uninterested in economics and materiality, was reconnected to the question of class, and the protests introduced a specifically care-related perspective. The demands are not necessarily new, as they overlap with Federici's (and others') historical positions. But a perspective centring on the worker's struggle neglects this intersection as much as a perspective merely talking about a generic question of womanhood. Feminist researcher Alka Kurian has described this perspective as "Fourth Wave Feminism" (Kurian 2020), but remembering Women of Colour feminists such as Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, Sharmila Rege, or, indeed, Marxist feminist Silvia Federici means positing this struggle in lineage with historical feminisms that have always advocated for intersectionality, class struggle, and the ambiguity of a global category of womanhood.

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15 "Intersectionality is a practice":
Lucy Gasser and Anna von Rath interview Emilia Roig

This interview with Emilia Roig, founder of the Centre for Intersectional Justice (CIJ), took place on December 6, 2019 at the offices of CIJ in Berlin, with Anna von Rath and Lucy Gasser. Roig discusses what it means to do intersectionality work in Europe and touches upon the context specificity of this work as well as the important role of community support.

A/L.: Anna von Rath and Lucy Gasser

E.R.: Emilia Roig

A/L.: What is intersectionality? Could you give the definition of intersectionality that the Centre for Intersectional Justice works with?

E.R.: Our working definition of intersectionality is very simple. We say that intersectionality is about fighting discrimination within discrimination, protecting minorities within minorities and tackling inequalities within inequalities. What this really means is that we are looking at inequalities within categories that are usually seen as monolithic and homogeneous. For example, we look at inequalities between women, we look at inequalities within the group of migrants, within the group of People of Color, within the group of people with disabilities, within the LGBTQI community. We look at patterns of discrimination within those categories. That means we have a multi-dimensional perspective towards social inequalities and discrimination.

Another definition of intersectionality that I like is looking at social inequalities and discrimination from a trickle-up approach instead of a trickle-down approach. Currently, inequalities are tackled according to a generic category, which is usually the most privileged category in each group. For example, we would look at privileged, *white*, straight, Christian women and then the postulate would be: if we manage to reach equality for those women, we're set; the whole group will reach equality. But from a trickle-up approach, we say the opposite. We say, let's look at the most disadvantaged person in that group. In a hyperbolic example,

234

we would look at a person with a disability, who also happens to be trans, lesbian, Black, Roma, and wears a hijab. If that person's interests, rights, and access to resources are secured, then, by means of extrapolation, all queer people, all people with disabilities, all women, all trans people, all LGBTQI people will also have access. We go from a trickle-down approach to a trickle-up approach.

There is a misunderstanding about intersectionality. Critics say that we are looking at a very particular identity. Then intersectionality would make no sense anymore, because it is such a specific view, such a specific identity that doesn't speak to the norm or that doesn't speak to the groups that we want to tackle. That is the wrong approach, the wrong way of seeing things. If we look at this person we can reach everyone. There is a quote by Kimberlé Crenshaw—I think it is my favorite quote by her, although it is rather unknown and only I seem to have fished it out of one of her panels—she said, "a truly intersectional feminism can reach everyone on the planet". This is how I interpret it.

A/L.: Could you briefly introduce the work CIJ does?

E.R.: The Centre for Intersectional Justice is an advocacy organization that aims to reclaim the concept of intersectionality and to refill it with its political meaning. That is something that I find important because intersectionality has been used a great deal in institutions that replicate the status quo—or at least ensure that it remains as it is. This erases the subversive nature of intersectionality, and of *race* in a European context. The Centre for Intersectional Justice aims to infuse that political meaning of intersectionality in these institutions.

Our work is organized around three pillars: advocacy, research, and training. We work at various levels and with various sectors. We also speak in established, high-level institutions like the European Commission or the European Parliament.

A/L.: Intersectionality, similar to the term diversity, is sometimes criticized for having become too fashionable and therefore devoid of meaning. What would you tell critics about why it is a useful concept to think with? How can intersectionality be applied?

E.R.: There is well thought-through, constructive criticism of intersectionality, mostly coming from academics who are trying to bring the concept forward and unleash its full potential. Their criticism does not come from a patronizing standpoint, but there have also been patronizing critics, mostly *white* feminists, who understood intersectionality as a good idea

coming from Black women, but which still needed to be developed into a real theory.

So, there are academic critics who say intersectionality is very useful, and who try to find out what else it can do. Then, there are critics from the mainstream who say that intersectionality is divisive or that it is not applicable in real life; that it is reinforcing identity politics. This is true: it is reinforcing identity politics, but I don't see identity politics as a bad thing in the first place. It is an important stage in the dismantlement of systems of oppression. At some point, we hope to not need identity politics anymore, that we will indeed transcend identity. The problem is that many of these mainstream critics haven't wrapped their heads around intersectionality. They criticize it from a place of unexamined assumptions about and projections of what it actually is. A lot of it has to do with frustration and their own fear of being made obsolete. Many times, this kind of criticism comes from feminists who are oblivious of race, sometimes by design, sometimes by omission. It also comes from people on the left who over-emphasize the role of capitalism as an isolated system, not granting that racism and patriarchy are constitutive of capitalism and that it is impossible to address it in isolation.

Intersectionality is a useful concept and it is central to any analysis of systemic oppression, systemic inequalities and systemic discrimination. It shouldn't be used as a *nice* add-on. Intersectionality is not an alternative; it is the only choice we have if we really want to understand, challenge and dismantle these systems in a holistic way.

Intersectionality can be used in many different ways, which is where its strength and power lie. It is a policy tool, it is a legal analysis tool, a sociological perspective. It is an empowerment device; it is so many things at the same time. It can also be used at different levels, for law and policy-making. It can be used in communities; it can be used for social movements, coalitions, solidarity and also at the individual level to better understand one's position—and for empowerment purposes. Contrary to what some people say about intersectionality being a nice idea in theory but not working in practice, intersectionality *is* a practice. That's also the reason why the Centre for Intersectional Justice exists. Intersectionality calls on us to rethink the ways we have been doing things. Of course, it is not a tool that we can currently use and apply to the anti-discrimination system as it is, simply because intersectionality criticizes this very framework. If we want to apply intersectionality, all existing structures of tackling inequalities have to be changed and reshaped. Intersectionality is inherently practical, much more than many want to admit.

A/L.: Let's hone in on what exactly it is you do at CIJ. CIJ articulates some of its aims as engaging with policy- and lawmakers at national and European level to bring about change in a legal system that is currently blind to intersectional discrimination. How precisely do you do this; what does this work entail? And how do you perceive the levels of your effectiveness, generally, on a national level and on an EU-wide scale?

E.R.: Yesterday, I was at the EU Parliament at a hearing for their gender strategy 2024. They are currently working on this strategy and it's a chance to bring intersectionality onto the agenda, to make it part of the strategy. Not in the same way in which it was done in the past, meaning that a paragraph would be included saying "there is multiple discrimination, we need to make sure that we look at this". Instead, we want to try to reshape the way we think about discrimination, bringing in all its different dimensions and corresponding measures to fight them. Currently, anti-discrimination measures almost solely focus on the individual aspect, which means putting in place laws to tackle individual people who have discriminated against someone else. We advocate for looking at structures, laws and policies within institutions themselves or within systems themselves to tackle those.

Currently, the fight against social inequality and the fight against discrimination happen in parallel. There is not much overlap between the two. What we want to say with an intersectional approach is that it is impossible to fight social inequalities without fighting discrimination. If there are inequalities between people, it means there is discrimination taking place somewhere. There cannot be discrimination without inequalities, and there cannot be inequalities without discrimination. At the moment, the advocacy work that we do is centered around changing the discourses and narratives that surround discrimination and that is a lot. It may seem like a small step. What we really want is to change laws and policies, which we also already do. We are, for example, tackling religious dress restrictions against Muslim women. We are doing this with very specific laws, but mostly, what we try to do is to change the narrative to completely disrupt the ways in which policy-makers and law-makers have talked about the meaning of social inequalities in the European context.

At a national level, our work is more attached to specific causes, programs, or bills. It's a bit more specific. The discursive level is definitely present, but at EU-level, it's more about changing the narrative. Because it takes a lot more time in terms of changing policies. By the time it comes to national levels, it's taken a long time. So strategically, the discursive

approach is the most significant at EU level. We aim to change the narrative mostly for policy-makers, but also for the general public. We are part of an ecosystem: there are many other voices emanating from the general public, but we're very few people at the policy-making level; and on intersectionality, we almost stand alone. So that's why it makes a difference. At the media level, in journalism, it's already happening. And in academia, it's already happening. Intersectional perspectives are already in use. But there was a gap that needed to be filled at policy-level.

A/L.: Is CIJ's perspective invited by these establishments, or do you ask to go?

E.R.: We don't ask to go, we are invited. That's really good because initially, when I founded CIJ, I thought that we would have to do a lot of outreach, getting in touch with MPs and other political decision makers. We don't have to do that. They get in touch with us. We've been invited several times by the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe; individual EU member states have invited us. Currently, our strategy is to go where we're asked to go. We want to go with the demand and work with people who actually want to learn more about intersectionality. It seems the most effective way of getting the work done.

It would be a waste of time to go to conservative parties and talk to them about intersectionality. It would be very draining. We have very few resources and we need to channel them wisely. Where there is no genuine interest in working on those issues, our impact will be low. We encounter resistance, no matter what. So in the work we do, we try to go where people want us to be. For example, within cultural and artistic fields, and in technology, our work has been very well received and the impact has been high.

We also do research. We've received research requests/contracts: one from the Ministry of Labor in Belgium to transpose the concept of intersectionality into their anti-discrimination and diversity policy. One for the European Network against Racism to analyze the intersectional gaps in EU policies and law making and anti-discrimination. We did the same thing for DeZIM, the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research. That is the type of research we do.

On the training front, and I think that is also very important and highly impactful for us, we are asked by institutions of all sectors, non-profit, private, public, to help them be more intersectional in the way they tackle diversity and discrimination, either in their programming, grant making or internal HR management. We have worked with grant-makers, which

is very impactful because money is a defining force. We provide guidance on how to be more intersectional in their work, but we also do diversity trainings for teams. We teach diversity from a very political standpoint, which is often not done by diversity trainers. We really look at privilege and disadvantage and try to create collective action from within. So far, it's been great. We see that we have been successful because we receive even more requests. We're being recommended, which is encouraging.

People underestimate how much change can come from the private sector. Of course, we at the Centre are inherently critical of capitalism. We understand that there are some limitations to what companies can do and at the same time, all of us in all institutions are embedded in capitalism, even the government, so it is impossible to say we only work with the government and NGOs because they are outside of capitalism. That isn't our approach. We have seen that many of the companies we work with have been extremely fast in applying change and are extremely open to a critique of power, which is not necessarily the case in other sectors—also not necessarily in the non-profit sector or social justice organizations.

A/L.: How did you gain visibility? How do people know about CIJ, especially since it is only two years old?

E.R.: A lot of people working in the field of intersectionality are very cautious, especially about the way they say things. They don't want to ostracize anyone and thus they water things down. At first, I had the fear that we would be pushed back to the margins and never be able to come back to the center. Little by little, I noticed that there is a way to communicate about these things without losing the radical message that intersectionality has to offer, but make it accessible to people and rally them around it. I think that's been very appealing. I'm grateful to my networks for that because I have very open networks from very different fields; some of them from a centrist, neoliberal sphere that I don't identify with, but that come in very handy. Some people in those networks are open to our work and they are the ones who have resources. They are the ones who have power. The visibility of CIJ comes from the many talks and platforms that I have been visible at. Every time there is an audience of 100 to 500 people in a room, it creates a multiplier effect.

Maybe it also has to do with authenticity. I decided that I had a goal with CIJ, and that I didn't want to adapt our message to an audience at the expense of our true mission. We need to be courageous and not fear losing followers. So when I go to the European Parliament, I talk about patriarchy and *whiteness*, even if it makes people cringe. I speak about

239

these things, and I've noticed that it creates even more appeal. It means that authenticity has not only managed to get the message across, but also to create interest in bringing about change. In light of everything else that happens, we need more radical voices.

A/L.: Does the definition of intersectionality change with context? Why is it particularly valuable to think about intersectionality and apply it in the German context? Are the challenges you face in your work different in Germany to elsewhere?

E.R.: Yes, definitely. I can speak to Germany and France, because these are two contexts where race is very problematic. So let's speak about Germany. Because race is unspeakable in German ("Rasse"), I tend to replace it with the word 'Race' in English. It stumbles against less resistance than I thought, because every time I say it, I'm also explaining why it's important and why it needs to be said, and why it's important to continue to think in racial terms in German. As long as there will be racism, we will need to talk about race. There is an illusion of living in a post-racial era in Germany, which makes it very difficult to speak about social inequalities from a racial angle, although we continue to use proxies such as ethnicity, religion, culture and migration. These proxies are heavily racialised in the German context, and generally in Europe. But it creates divisions within racial minorities, giving the illusion that every group is affected by very different dynamics when in fact it's the same: it's still white supremacy. And so I would say that intersectionality here in Germany has been mobilized without race, and that's highly problematic, because race is central to the emergence of intersectionality. Without race there would be no intersectionality; race is its raison d'être. So it's a lot about trying to re-center race in the discourse, and move away from the proxies to encompass race as a category, and racism and white supremacy as systems.

In the French context, it's very similar, but for quite different reasons. The story is not that we've reached a post-racial era, but that France was never racist in the first place, and that it's a colorblind country where people are brothers and sisters, equal and free: liberté, egalité, fraternité. So any time racial minorities try to emphasize difference, it is met with tremendous resistance and rage. It's a tactic to put racial minorities back in their place: you are not allowed to speak about your lived experience, you must stay in your subordinate position, not challenge our national creed, or your position as a colonized body in the French space. That is a big challenge, and it's so hard for voices raised against racism to be heard in the French context.

A/L.: To follow up on this: do you find that in your experience of using specific terminology there have been changes, perhaps specifically in Germany, or even France? It seems like there have been many more books, also in German, published by Black German activists, a lot of them women.

E.R.: Yes, definitely, change is happening, so that's the good news. I tend to see the resistance—AFD, Trump and all the conservative right-wing voices and movements—as a hiccup in history. They see what's happening and think: this cannot be, we need to do everything in our power to avoid this change. But it's taking place. So it's no more than an expression of the change that *is* taking place. Otherwise, they wouldn't be so scared. There would be nothing to *resist.*

In Germany, it's happening too. It's almost heart-warming (but that would be too generous a word) to see that even established *white* people are thirsty for, are ready for that change. For instance, I've been asked to be in the German Nonfiction Book Prize jury this year. I'm the only Person of Colour, of course, but I'm there. And they wanted me to be there. I didn't apply. They contacted me. So change is happening. Another example is that I was also in the selection committee of the EU funding programs for diversity.

Even if it can sometimes come from a place of tokenism: knowing too well that an all-*white* jury is no longer credible in 2020. Maybe that's the reason they invite me, but I won't let myself be used as a token. I have things to say and interests to represent. I make sure that questions of oppression, racism, power, and privilege are a part of the selection process. In Germany, progressive *white* people are open to these changes and are pushing for them; and that's something I don't see in the French context. I don't see *white* people making sure that other voices come to the forefront as much as it is the case here. Voices of color emerge on their own, carve out spaces for themselves. But it may simply be my impression and have to do with the fact that I'm not living in the French context. Maybe there are historical reasons for this that have to do with the self-image of German people, especially on the left, that create this openness to other voices which is less present in the French context. It may also have to do with the fact that my voice here in Germany is less threatening than in France, the country I grew up in.

A/L.: One of the core values of the center is that its work should be transnational. Why do you value this so highly? Do you understand this transnationality to extend beyond Europe, and if so, how?

E.R.: Yes, definitely. We have very strong alliances with the US, for instance with our president Kimberlé Crenshaw. A lot of our inspiration comes from the US, comes from liberation movements and racial justice movements that have a history in North America. Here, we cannot speak of a racial justice movement as such. It does not mean that people of color have not fought for justice here too, but they were less visible and also their numbers were not as high, meaning it was easier to silence them. Without everything that has happened in the US, in the civil rights era, with the abolition movements and so on, we wouldn't be here. We need to recognize that, without falling into imperialist traps. There's a lot of criticism along the lines of paying too much attention to thinking from the US, of buying into imperialist reason. But that isn't it at all. Saying this is also an oppressive tactic. Anti-Blackness, racism, and colonialism are global systems; patriarchy is a global system; capitalism is global. They spill over borders. Our strength is also being able to recognize that. It's also why within Europe, we need to have transnational alliances, simply to show that anything that affects us moves beyond national borders. These are global systems that can only be overcome or combatted if we extend our solidarity, and extend our strategies beyond nationalism, because the nation-state is also something we want to overcome in the end.

A/L.: CIJ is a small organization with a big, global community. What is the role of the members of that community? How do these people contribute to CIJ? Why does community matter for the work you do?

E.R.: The community is everything. Everything that we are stems from the community. My own political awakening doesn't come from me, it comes from generations of people before me, it comes from a lot of people around me, and around CIJ. It's a collective process. We're taking the role of speaking to policy-making spheres that are quite opaque, and not necessarily permeable to radical social movements, and that's the role that we're endorsing. But the community is behind us and we feel that; we feel the need for it, because we receive a lot of encouragement and gratitude from our community. They thank us for what we do, but at the same time, I want to say: we do this because of you and we're doing this thanks to you. It's a two-way process. Community is so important. I like to speak of a matrix. When we step out of the matrix, it's important to have people outside to understand our vision of the world and the change we want to achieve. Without that, it can feel very lonely and isolating. So even

if we're a small organization and don't have the means to bring people together as often as we want to, we work to cultivate the community as much as we can.

A/L.: What would you have ordinary people do to participate in the work you do, if you would have them contribute? What is your position on the role of the structurally privileged in contributing to this work?

E.R.: It's extremely encouraging, and I'm extremely grateful for all the help that people offer. The only problem is that right now, I'm by myself because my colleague Miriam Aced is on parental leave, so it's difficult to make use of all the help that is being offered, simply because it requires time to delegate and organize, and currently, the time is just not there. I would say something like this interview is very helpful: providing a space and a platform to speak about the work of CIJ is tremendously helpful. Also, people who recommend us, who talk about us, who follow us on social media, who engage with us, that is helpful. Generally, I think that's the most help that we've received so far: people being behind us, carrying us to more places, and making sure that we get access. For example, the people who invite me to be on commissions are helpful; the people who nominated me for the jury. And of course, people who actually work at CIJ.

It's all about giving voice.

I'm currently working on an Arte documentary. It's a year-long shooting process. In that sense, giving voice and a platform that is mainstream and very broad is also valuable. It's a group or privileged *white* men, and I feel incredibly hopeful to see that, instead of taking something out of me and packaging it, I have a very central role in the project. I can bring in my ideas and my perspective to a large extent. So that would be an example.

Another would be that I'm currently writing a book. The process of writing it and having received a lot of enthusiasm and trust from the publishing house have been very helpful. So, I think people in positions of structural power can use that to give voice and to be humble. It's all about resources and sharing them. There's a limit to it, because very few people are going to quit their jobs and give it to a structurally disadvantaged person. And that's normal, and human, and I'm not going to blame anyone for that. But it's also in little things that help can be given.

A/L.: CIJ is still a young organization. Which of its achievements are you most proud of so far? What are the difficulties you encounter in your work? What are your goals for the next couple of years?

E.R.: I would say that I'm proud that we still exist, and I'm proud that we're here to stay it seems. I'm proud that so far we've had to make very few compromises, and that's something I hadn't really expected. We've been able to speak our truth to power, in many different arenas and platforms that I thought would be resistant to our perspective, so that's also something I'm proud of. I'm proud of all the people who stand behind us and are courageous and supportive.

The difficulties for the future I see are in the amount of work that goes into running an organization. My hope for the future is that someday CIJ doesn't need to exist.
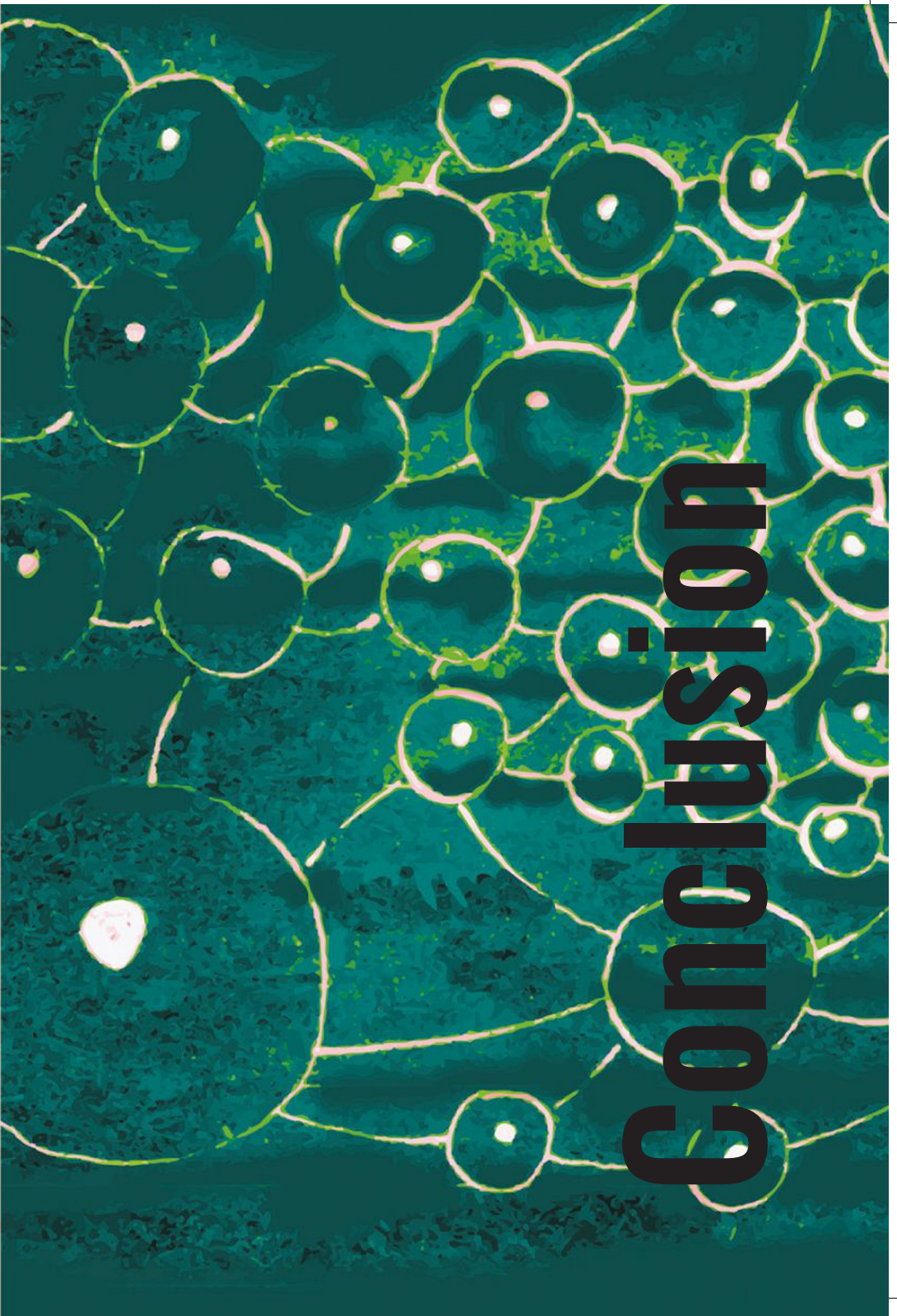
Minor cosmopolitan doodle 2 by Sikho Siyotula

Conclusion

16 Doing minor cosmopolitanisms in an anti-cosmopolitan world
by Dirk Wiemann and Lars Eckstein

"For the first time in 500 years, the Americas and Europe are separated again", remarks Brazilian actor-activist Kay Sara, a member of the indigenous Tariano community, in the revised script for a speech that was originally scheduled to open the 2020 Viennese Theatre Festival (*Wiener Festwochen*). Of course, both her opening address and her visit to Vienna had to be cancelled due to the Corona pandemic, just like the whole event that Sara had been invited to inaugurate: given the Covid-induced 're-separation' of Europe and the Americas, Sara could not address the packed hall of the *Burgtheater* on a first night but had to resort to having her speech published in the leading Austrian newspaper, *Der Standard*, where it appeared on May 16, 2020, only a few days before we write this contribution. In her script, Sara observes that she would have been the first indigenous person ever to have spoken in the *Burgtheater* and that, if not for Covid, her speech would have been about her collaboration with Swiss theatre activist Milo Rau in a production of *Antigone*—a production that, had it not fallen victim to the virus, would have taken Sophocles' tragic drama to the fiery heart of the burning rainforests of the Amazon:

> The chorus would have been composed of the survivors of a massacre that the Brazilian government has inflicted on a group of landless agricultural labourers. We would have produced our Antigone on an occupied stretch of an important highway winding through the Amazon rain forests—those forests that are ablaze at this very moment. It would not have been a theatre event but an act of resistance against the state power that is destroying the Amazon. (Sara 2020; translated by DW)

This act of resistance would clearly have been locally specific and contextually embedded, but nothing about it would have been parochial or demotic. First, it would have bridged vast spatial, temporal, and cultural distances by creating imaginary links between the here-and-now of the struggle for forest protection and the conflicts articulated in a tragic play from far-off ancient Greece. Second, by drawing on Sophocles' drama, it would have joined the polyvocal company of numerous *Antigone* recontextualizations all over the world: a motley corpus of productions and rewritings from postcolonial,

Black, feminist, queer and indigenous standpoints that invest Sophocles' tragedy "with relevant and current, socio-cultural, political and economic underpinnings, so that the play can symbolize present-day issues" (Djisenu 2007, 80-81) and at the same time "help to articulate and define new cultures by consciously performing their *differences* from the Greek 'original'" (Mee and Foley 2011, 3). Third, the Amazon version of an indigenous *Antigone* would have been directed frontally against the central power of the nation-state, more specifically the far-right Bolsonaro regime and its "profound disdain" for the most basic tenets of human rights and democracy as well as social and ecological justice (Hecht 2019). Fourth, it would at the same time have been a move against those transnational corporate networks of agrobusiness as well as cellulose and timber industries that use the Amazon basin as a particularly profitable arena of extraction. And lastly, it would have articulated its situatedness in the local and the national with an emphatically worldly perspective which undergirds many indigenous struggles for ecological justice not only in the Amazon basin, but also in the Arctic, the forests of central India, the Australian outback and elsewhere.

Combatting an ecocide of global dimensions, these struggles are energized by the insight that "the local is not purely indigenous but a 'cradling' of the global within one particular site" (Dimock 2007, 277). Struggles like these are therefore *minor* and *cosmopolitan* alike, grasping the local as nested in the planetary and, by the same token, the planet as a web of locales. In such a perspective it will be obvious that land-grabbing, deforestation and extractivism not 'only' destroy the habitat and sustenance of multitudes of human and non-human inhabitants of the rainforests of Brazil and Ecuador but also endanger life on earth at large. Should the spoliation of the ecosystem not be stopped immediately, Kay Sara insists, "the heart of the planet will stop beating in the next ten years" (Sara 2020).

The major cosmopolitan response to the current rerun of the devastation of the Indies is well documented: two days before the 2019 G7 summit hosted by France, Emmanuel Macron declared in a tweet that "our house is burning" and that the massive rainforest conflagrations in Brazil amounted to an "international crisis" to be discussed with top priority first at the imminent summit and subsequently at the UN plenary gathering. On Macron's initiative, in a first impromptu move, the EU offered 22 million euros to be spent for immediate fire-fighting support—an offer that Bolsonaro aggressively rejected as an insult, calling for an apology: not because of the risibility of the sum on offer but because of the inherent 'arrogance' of a gesture smacking of first-world development aid condescension. In further rebukes, Bolsonaro accused Macron not only of interfering with internal

251

affairs (thereby denying the planetary dimensions of the ecological damage) but more than that, of a 'colonial mindset' aimed to perpetuate Global North supremacy. In a diplomatic rebuttal of these invectives, Macron reiterated that the immolations were by no means an affair internal to Brazil; however, instead of abiding with a cosmopolitan perspective and insisting on the planetary impact of the fires, Macron himself resorted to a national and, more worryingly, colonial logic when he produced the argument that his country, due to its overseas possession of French Guyana, was an "Amazonian nation too" and hence an immediate stakeholder fully legitimized to involve itself actively in the affairs of the region (Viscusi 2019). The 'burning house' that Macron had initially invoked thus significantly shrank from the inclusive but beleaguered habitat of humanity as a whole (the fragile planet whose finitude drives Kant to formulate the 'cosmopolitan right' in his treatise on perpetual peace) to a set of circumscribed territories under the sovereign rule and control of institutionalized actors. Confronted with planetary ecocide on the one hand and diplomatic rancour on the other, the major cosmopolitan outlook thus collapses and submits to the possessive logic of nation-state sovereignty. As a result, next to nothing remains of the worldly horizon that Macron initially evoked; instead of a shared 'house' that we all inhabit, the planet gets overwritten, again, by the borders of nation-states. Whatever happens in these enclosed territories will be domestic affairs that no actor from the outside is supposed to interfere in.

We rehearse this debate not in order to triumphantly denounce the helpless or hapless representative of a major cosmopolitanism that all too easily compromises and succumbs to particularist vested interests, neo-nationalism and a new disregard for international agreements and procedures. We would like to highlight instead that such failures of major cosmopolitanism can be perilously damaging to minor cosmopolitan projects: they strengthen the newly dominant logic of post-truth, post-democracy regimes that have for the past ten years or so begun to implement outright anti-cosmopolitan projects entailing "reduced trade interdependence and reduced migration" and tailored to "benefit a small fraction of citizens and companies" (Hillebrand 2010, 16). More than that, the waning of the hitherto official major cosmopolitan consensus and the tangible weakening of supranational institutions deals a severe blow to minor cosmopolitan projects and movements that in the absence of transnational scenarios will increasingly find themselves alone with the Bolsonaros of this world.

What are the prospects for minor cosmopolitan practices, strategies and tactics when the massive global rollback that we have been witnessing for the past ten years or so has put not only minor cosmopolitanisms but

virtually *all* cosmopolitan projects under siege? Neo-nationalism, right-wing populism and economic protectionism, cultural tribalism, racism, homophobia and religious zealotry are on the ascendancy almost everywhere, ushering in a powerful wave of anti-cosmopolitanism that is reactionary in the literal sense of the term: namely as a rejection of what is perceived as an "excessive amount of interdependencies" (Balsa-Barreiro 2020, 3). In a period in which, arguably for the first time since the 1930s, international integration itself is on the retreat at almost all levels (Irwin 2020), not only are the minor cosmopolitanisms of indigenous rainforest custodians like Kay Sara severely imperilled but even the major cosmopolitan outlook that Macron with his appeal to supranational cooperation represents. Under such auspices, it becomes apparent that globalization, for better or worse, formed the indispensable substratum of the manifold and often discrepant "neo-cosmopolitanisms" (Gunew 2017, 74) of the early 21st century, including the minor. Accordingly, anti-cosmopolitan neo-nationalism, protectionism and separatism pull the carpet out from under the feet of major and minor cosmopolitans alike.

This, of course, does not mean that globalization is unproblematic as such; certainly not, especially as long as it is intricately—and often tacitly—linked and virtually synonymous with neoliberal subsumption and neo-colonial extractivism. Cosmopolitanisms, especially in the minor key, have always consistently opposed the dominant dynamic of globalization-as-empire that tends to *make the world a globe*, i.e. an abstract and undelimited space of universal equivalence and quantifiability as a smooth playing field for "the global project as such: planetary financialization" (Spivak 1999, 70). In sharp contrast, cosmopolitan visions and practices urge for and work towards the reverse aspiration, namely to *make the globe a world* (cf. Spivak 1999, 391): a shared common space of convivial and sustainable co-existence. While projects of (minor) cosmopolitan worlding are thus certainly incompatible with the hegemonic global design of neoliberalism, they are all the same enabled by, even dependent on, the translocalizing tendencies that globalization unleashes: *Antigone* can only be recontextualized as an indigenous act of resistance on the condition that it has first been brought "from far-off fifth century BCE Greece" to the Amazon in the 21st century by powerful global flows that promulgate "ancient Greek drama […] as part of a globalized culture" (Djisenu 2007, 72). Such cultural items have most often been authoritatively implemented as universally normative (*Antigone* enshrined as 'world literature' understood as a canon of timeless masterpieces); but perhaps in the logic of an "enabling violation" (Spivak 2003, 17), the same coercive process has also made these cultural resources

available for unforeseen adaptations in the service of local, oppositional or trans-oppositional minor cosmopolitan projects of worlding (see, e.g., Bhabha 1999; Scott 2004). Thus James Gibbs, discussing versions of *Antigone* in contemporary Ghana, asserts that "the postcolonial playwright can make use of the Classics. Material associated with the former colonial power can be commandeered and exploited: […] West African exposure to Greek drama was far from 'tragic'. In many ways it was liberating" (Gibbs 2007, 71).

For this reason, minor cosmopolitan projects will be severely inhibited by the new enclosures and cultural purisms that anti-cosmopolitanism re-erects. Constelling "the local, parochial, rooted, culturally specific and demotic" with "the translocal, transnational, transcendent" (Werbner 2018, 278), minor cosmopolitanisms will necessarily call into question the myopic Eurocentrism and empty formalism of the Kantian universalist vision; all the same, they will not entirely abandon that vision but rather aspire to "carry over some of its valuable elements into a new space" (Raghavan 2017, 5). Among these 'valuable elements' of canonical major cosmopolitanism there is certainly the potential to *transcend*, i.e. to "supersede the given, the accepted, the familiar, or the weight of circumstance" (Aboulafia 2010, 3), reaching out to others across spatial and cultural distances in cosmopolitanism's ongoing "dialogue in difference" (Douzinas 2007, 51): Antigone turns out to be a sister not only to an unburied brother but to the indigenous activist too. As this process unhinges "object-ified characteristics of any kind, be they racial, sexual, cultural, physical" (Hallward 2001, 49), minor cosmopolitanisms are not exclusive to specifically marginalized, disenfranchised and victimized groups, locations and contexts that are deemed singular and hence incommensurate with all other positionalities. A minor cosmopolitan standpoint may acknowledge how the insistence on singularity is a corrective of the abstract universalism inherent in major cosmopolitanism; but more importantly it will reject self-entrenchment in the singular as a mere identity politics that runs the risk of fetishizing particularity for its own sake and of severely impeding the creation of a shared and common world. Where the singularity of one's "location is understood in opposition to global relationality", it tends to turn into an "alibi for one's nonpresence in other realities" (Radhakrishnan 2000, 56). This does not mean that minor cosmopolitanisms neglect the particular; rather, they uphold it—but with a persistent and keen attention to the ways in which the particular 'cradles' the global in webs of "relations-with and between particularities" that remain commensurate with each other precisely *as* particularities (Hallward 1998, 428 FN81): interconnected but not subsumed.

In a contracting world, the pressure on minor cosmopolitanisms intensifies everywhere. The current pandemic only intensifies this: the re-enforced territorial, political, cultural and identitarian enclosures of an increasingly anti-cosmopolitan world are surely not the product of the Covid crisis; yet they are thrown into sharp relief in and by that global state of exception, which Giorgio Agamben somewhat extravagantly stylizes the "epidemic":

> What the epidemic clearly shows is that the state of exception, to which governments have long familiarised us, has become the normal condition. Men have become so accustomed to living in a state of permanent crisis that they do not seem to realise that their life has been reduced to a purely biological condition and has lost not only its political dimension but also any human dimension. (Agamben 2020)

In Agamben's scenario, the world is finally unified by a virus that serves as pretext to impose the state of exception on all and sundry and accordingly dehumanize everyone alike: a global cosmopolis without polis under the thumb of the sovereign. Yet what is completely neglected in this outlook is the vital distinction between the major and minor. For if the Covid crisis generalizes the state of exception in the sense of now affecting everyone, then it should never be forgotten that before the crisis, at least some must have been exempt from the exception. Therefore, the state of exception is new (hence truly exceptional in the first place) only for those who earlier have enjoyed the privilege of pre-Covid exemption—an exemption that, like all privileges, must have been owed to an unfair distribution of opportunities and benefits. To be sure, we are not interested at this point in morally denouncing or self-denouncing some "discourse of the beneficiary", that is the self-reflexivity of "the relatively privileged person in the metropolitan center who contemplates her or his unequal relations with persons at the less-prosperous periphery and feels or fears that in some way their fates are linked" (Robbins 2018, 5). We who write this and (most likely) you who are reading this are precisely such beneficiaries who with a bad conscience inhabit

> a system that one finds intolerable but to which one nevertheless continues to belong, from which one continues to derive certain benefits and privileges, from which one may have no possibility of making a clean break—and which one can only denounce to others who also continue to belong to it. (Robbins 2018, 49)

However intolerable one may find the 'system', it is not by an act of pure volition that one secedes from it; nor, however, does the implication in regimes of inequality and domination fully rule out dissidence, unforeseen solidarities, or even acts of resistance. For the implicated subject remains

precisely that: a subject with a certain amount of agency at its disposal, and that agency begins with the capacity to historicize oneself, that is, "to acknowledge and map implication in order to reopen political struggles" and ultimately "transfigure implication and open the self to others" (Rothberg 2019, 201). Neither voluntarism nor determinism will enable such a politics of responsible self-historicization. Following Bruce Robbins, however, a starting point might be the 'feeling' or even 'fear' that 'in some way their fates are linked'—another way of thinking and perhaps also doing cosmopolitanism by way of upholding, on whatever minor scale, what reactionary anti-cosmopolitanism is about to unravel: the webs of multiple interconnections and interdependencies, the "relations-with and between particularities" (Hallward 1998, 428 FN81), through which, perhaps impossibly, the globe may be made a world. Such a minor cosmopolitanism would not simply universalize the state of exception as if it were affecting everybody in the same way but insist on the difference between the minor and the major, between the beneficiary and the marginalized.

As long ago as 1940, Walter Benjamin summed up his critical engagement with Carl Schmitt's political theology by suggesting that "[t]he tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' [the German original formulation is *Ausnahmezustand*, i.e., state of exception] in which we live is not the exception but the rule" (Benjamin 2007, 257). It is true that Agamben has discussed this passage at some length, too, but only to dissolve into some general "zone of anomie" (Agamben 2005, 59) that state of exception that for Benjamin is clearly structured by the 'specific relations' of class antagonisms. For Benjamin, it is 'the oppressed' for whom the emergency has always been the rule, and it is therefore their 'tradition' that 'teaches' 'us', if not in general then at the moment of danger. Benjamin thus grasps his own moment of danger, the historical moment of triumphant fascism, as a situation in which hitherto 'exempt' population groups are stripped of their privileges and coerced into a variant of precisely that state of exception that others had to endure all along. It is a genuinely minor cosmopolitan figure of thought that resonates with Kay Sara's undelivered inaugural address where she reiterates what she knows that everybody knows: "now it is our forests burning and our peoples dying but ultimately *we all* will perish together if we don't act immediately" (Sara 2020). This is then a global community at risk. Its members may as of now be differently affected, but in the final instance, nobody will remain exempt from the risk of a 'becoming-ashes of the world'. Here we deliberately modulate Achille Mbembe's notion of the 'becoming-Black of the world' in the course of the neoliberal "tendency to universalize the Black condition" (Mbembe 2017, 4). This is by no means

a complacent liberal humanism of the kind that allows beneficiaries to symbolically identify with the victims of the very same system that ensures their privileges. This is not about us claiming "I am George Floyd" when we have never been the target of systemic racism. What it is about, though, is the acknowledgment, reflection and—importantly—the transfiguration of our implication.

Like Sara and Benjamin, Mbembe maintains that the generalization of risk at the moment of danger needs to be embraced: it is from the insight of being collectively imperilled, even if in different ways, that solidarities and coalitions may be forged. We call these solidarities minor cosmopolitanisms. In this sense, Mbembe nominates, as a precondition for a "collective resurgence of humanity" in the face of a neoliberal extractivism that is rampant on a planetary scale, the practice of "*a thinking in circulation, a thinking of crossings, a world-thinking*" (2017, 179): a thinking that is as reminiscent of its obligation to an unredeemed past as Benjamin's class-conscious historian remains faithful to the "secret agreement between past generations and the present one" (Benjamin 2007, 254). It is in this vein that Mbembe enumerates a series of movements and struggles that are both minor *and* cosmopolitan inasmuch as they combine the grittily local subalternity of the marginalized with a praxis of solidarity that is as world-encompassing as the state of exception that 'our modernity' has inflicted on the planet and its people:

> Like the worker's movements of the nineteenth century and the struggles of women, our modernity has been haunted by the desire for abolition once carried by the slaves. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the dream lived on in the great struggles for decolonization, which from the beginning had a global dimension. Their significance was never only local. It was always universal. Even when anticolonial struggles mobilized local actors, in a circumscribed country or territory, they were always at the origin of solidarities forged on a planetary and transnational scale. It was these struggles that each time allowed for the extension, or rather the universalization, of rights that had previously remained the privilege of a single race. (2017, 172)

This is a long perspective, and very clearly one that does not allow for the cultivation of possessive identity politics. Instead, it emphasises the commonalities and interconnections among and between *particular* subalternized communities. These commonalities are the precondition for solidarities beyond and between distinct locales—locales that are always nested in the planetary which, in turn, is cradled in the specificities of the local. It is important, too, that this long perspective refuses to close in on a coherent and uninterrupted linear narrative. As in Benjamin's discontinuous

scenario, Mbembe's story of the Black Man "could be written only from fragments brought together to give an account of an experience that itself was fragmented, that of a pointillist people struggling to define itself" (28-29) in a minor cosmopolitan form. It is this experience of fragmentation that, once endorsed, provides the starting point for what Michael Rothberg calls "the opening up of the self to others", enabling solidarities across time and space grounded in the existential "incompleteness" of the subjects involved. In this understanding, "to be is to be composite and a patchwork of conviviality seeking impurities" (Nyamnjoh 2017, 70).

The version of *Antigone* that Kay Sara, Milo Rau and their comrades would have produced on an occupied highway in the Amazon rainforest would not have stopped Bolsonaro or the neoliberal assault on our planet and its inhabitants. Moreover, we will never even know in what ways they would have adopted Sophocles' play for the immediate present. We like to imagine, though, that it would have been a minor cosmopolitan act of resistance that would, perhaps, have endorsed for a moment the temporary separation of the Americas and Europe after 500 years of ongoing devastations of the Indies through genocide and ecocide. More than that, the Amazon *Antigone* may have contributed to the concert of minor cosmopolitanism projects that aim to overcome dominant anti-cosmopolitanism by positing newly imagined "active and deliberate relations" (Hallward 2001, 249) through which always already collective subjects emerge in joyful incompleteness to engage in the work, and pleasure, of making the globe a world.

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Anja Saleh
**Soon,
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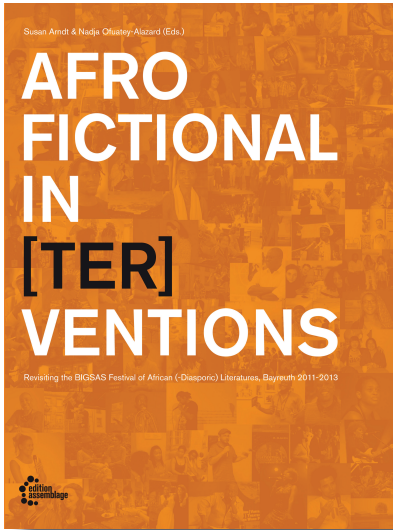
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AFRO FICTIONAL IN [TER] VENTIONS

Revisiting the BIGSAS Festival of African (-Diasporic) Literatures, Bayreuth 2011-2013

edition assemblage

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