University of Cape Town

Art, Anti-Blackness and the language of protest

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DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: Signed by candidate Date: 10 October 2023

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For my mother

Fearless, spontaneous, loving and funny

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First, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Nomusa Makhubu. Your support, advice, and patience are what helped put this work together. I also want to thank Linda Makgabutlane and Ndikhumbule Ngqinambi for their support. This thesis has been a journey of extremes. At times it became a barefoot walk in the scorching desert sun and sometimes in a frosty winter dew. No matter the weather, I made it a point to always refuse to tip-toe and make sure to march through and through. But this is just me trying to feel special as if I did something amazing when in reality, none of the thoughts and arguments made here would make sense without the blood and sweat of refusal from comrades in various Black movements, academia, and other spheres of knowledge-making and protests who were not about to tip-toe around the most burning issues in the cold climate that is contemporary South Africa and beyond. They've made no secret in the choice between gangrene and amputation. The idea that civil society and the general modern institution can provide the language of mediation against Black suffering has been one of the most contested positions between progressive White people and radical Black people in social movements. So, I am merely a product of such space. My only contribution is to stand with them and continue the project of protest.

Because I write this thesis from a critical and analytical rather than an autobiographical point of view, I owe some of my experiences to artist collectives and Black movements of which I've been part. My person appears more in the background as an observer because I believe there is more meat in others' contributions than my assumed experiences. And I am being intentional here in avoiding individual acknowledgements because I am more interested in the structures we created as a better contributing factor to the overall resistance. And, I would have to try too much to avoid being dishonest by claiming to be subjective while merely contextualising facts. This is something I've always found unhealthy. But this is the nature of ideological battles informed by inevitable personal squabbles that aid in the growth and death of such spaces.

It is to these comrades in arms that I dedicate this work. Not as a pat on the back but as a continuation of our march forward. Many lost a lot in the process, and many got lost. I'm referring to ideological obscurity since our

movements from Blackwash[1] to September National Imbizo[2] were seen as mere book clubs that operated on the periphery and on Facebook. It is never acknowledged that these movements became spaces that drew Black youth back to Biko, Sankara and Fanon, fomenting today's calls for decolonisation. When such calls started becoming a national topic, there seemed to be a disconnect. The sudden inclination of Black youth in politics to become Black conscious was not coincidental, especially since it was evident that older Black parties in parliament had become dormant, providing no space for discussing contemporary Black issues, and there was generally no room for Black radical thought in university curricula. In the same breath, earlier responses to decolonial interventions, in particular Rhodes Must Fall, were not met with comradely enthusiasm. Instead, there was an atmosphere of envy, implying that such interventions were best suited to come from the same movements at the heart of those discussions. I was reminded of the time the SNI visited Marikana immediately after the massacre for an account of what really happened. The popular narrative in all media, globally, was pushing the line that miners charged at the police, leading the state to "defend" itself. The idea of miners being fenced and barbed-wired in, shot and gassed from behind, corralling them to the slaughter as an account from the ground, was a subject of ridicule. Only later, when phone footage was confiscated from the police who documented the events that made up evidence at the Farlam Commission, and documentary materials for the motion picture *Miners Shot Down* emerged, did the narrative revert to what the miners had told my comrades. The two moments obviously do not contextually intersect since the social movements claim authenticity to the struggle, and government institutions legitimacy on the suffering they impart. What I am saying is that such moments easily miss the continuation of theory to practice and how this feeds back into a more radicalising theory. So, I am more interested in creative radical interventions and narratives that intensify how we move forward as a unit, as Black movements.

These interventions do not just apply to Black Consciousness-leaning movements but Black movements in general. We suffer the same struggle but differ in our understanding of this suffering. One can point to a few moments where liberal movements or parties made moves that could

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[1] Blackwash was formed in 2009 in Gauteng. It began as a Black women's movement but later broadened and became a Blacks only Black consciousness movement.

[2] September National Imbizo (SNI) was organised as an annual programme of Blackwash meant to commemorate the birth of Steve Biko. Since Blackwash was a strictly Black Consciousness movement even in its membership, SNI was to be a gathering of Blacks in general to discuss ideas around national issues affecting Black people. Though SNI remained a space governed by Black consciousness, political affiliation did not matter. An ideological dispute ensued with certain members of Blackwash accusing SNI of becoming a liberal platform. This dispute also showed more potential for SNI to grow into something larger, of which it became an independent movement.

have been intensified by radical movements and only dismissed because the demand was not seen as authentic nor antagonistic. It is also to these rebellious structures within those parties and movements that I dedicate this work. And while the university space has shown intense antagonism towards radical Black scholarship, this has not deterred intellectually stimulating materials from coming out of comrades from that space. We know they are in it but not of it. As we have seen with Black Consciousness or any radical Black liberation thought, what has been fascinating to watch is the fear associated with the word Afro-Pessimism and the efforts of euphemism to replace it with refusal or radical hope. The idea of hope and choice within White institutions has been touted since the dawn of colonisation. So, I say to all these comrades, Black Power!!!

Abstract

This thesis interrogates theoretical and ideological frameworks that structure what we've come to know as protest art. With a specific focus on radical Black protest, it became important to investigate how the language of analysis within the humanities continually falls short of articulating creative interventions that emanate from Black social movements. As such, scholarly frameworks that interrogate protest interventions use pedagogical and ideologies that include, as forms of representation, artforms that tend to recognise and acknowledge Black struggles within the current White power structure. These are forms of critique informed by a class, gender and, to a certain extent, race dynamic. This thesis takes on a completely different positionality. Analysing post-1994 Black protests in South Africa, I argue that violent responses to creative Black protest interventions are not the work of misrecognition nor in need of representation within the current framework. Rather, they realise the radical demand for a completely different frame of reference informed by ontology, or the being of the Black person as a void or non-being. This negation of Black personhood then falls outside of available mechanisms of recognition within the scope of universal humanism. It is within this frame of reference of non-being, as it positions Blackness outside of human fold demands and compels me towards Black Studies, particularly Afro-pessimism, as a legitimate form of analysis. Black Studies is made up of different theories, hopeful and hopeless or optimistic and pessimistic, in their demands and analyses; Black consciousness, Radical Black feminism, Black Optimism, Africana Studies, Black Marxism, Afro-pessimism and Pan Africanism to name a few. With a specific focus on different forms of visual materials within the political arena, such as Democratic Alliance campaign posters and videos, *Miner's Shot Down* and *Dear Mandela* documentary films and critical essays, I employ my own critical and textual analysis to investigate how the language of protest both within the Humanities and university as a legitimising state institution of the artistic political arena continually falls short of articulating creative interventions that emanate from Black social movements. So, my aim with this thesis is not to question why they should, but why they cannot be viewed as such from an institutional point of view. Based on theoretical foundation Afro-pessimism as a form of critique and refusal of current and existing methodologies of analysis, in this thesis, I will interrogate the language of protest as a creative intervention in Black protests. It was the creative interventions of Black radical demands and their refusal to recognise such state institutions as the University, the commemorating Museum, and the Labour Unions as

legitimate mediating institutions between White supremacy and Blackness that unmasked anti-Black violence. Instead of focusing on artworks/forms that take a political stance, creative interventions from Black protests will form the basis for my thesis. This reading is made possible by Black radical tools in the quest for a language of analysis.

A Glosary of Acronyms

AbM –	Abahlali baseMjondolo
AB –	Afrikaner Broederbond
AC -	Asian Contagion
AIDS -	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ALM –	All Lives Matter
AMCU -	Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union
ANC –	African National Congress
ANCYL –	African National Congress Youth League
AP –	Afro-pessimism
BA –	Bill for Africa
BBBEE –	Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment
BC –	Black Consciousness
BLA –	Black Liberation Army
BLM –	Black Lives Matter
BM –	Burning Museum
BP –	Black Power
BPC –	Black People’s Convention
BPP –	Black Panther Party
BS –	Black Studies
BSM –	Black Social Movements
CA –	Congress Alliance
CC –	Cape Colony
CHR –	Centre for Humanities Research
CIA –	Central Intelligence Agency
CIC –	Commander in Chief
CEO –	Chief Executive Officer
CC –	Constitutional Court
COINTELPRO –	Counter Intelligence Program
COPE –	Congress of the People
COSATU –	Congress of South African Trade Unions

CPC - Coloured People's Congress

CS – Civil Society

DA – Democratic Alliance

DM – Dear Mandela

DNA - Deoxyribonucleic acid

DP – Dead Prez

EC – Eastern Cape

EFF – Economic Freedom Fighters

FBI – Federal Bureau Investigation

FC – Farlam Commission

FC – Freedom Charter

FMF – Fees Must Fall

FNC – First Nation Collective

FNP – First Nation People

GATT - General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GGA – Glen Grey Act

GGB – Golden Gate Bridge

GST – Glossary of Statistic Terms

GYC – Ghetto Youth Crew

HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus

HSRC – Human Rights Research Council

ICL - Innovations in Constitutional Law

ID – Independent Democrats

IHR – International Human Rights

IMF – International Monetary Fund

ITA - International Trade Agreements

JCCL - Judeo-Christian-Conservative-Libertarian

LASA – Land Act of South Africa

LB – Liberal Party

LE – Land Expropriation

LONMIN – London Mine

LU – Labour Unions

MAE – Medu Art Ensemble

MB – Marley Brothers

MK – Umkhonto weSizwe

MRF – Mandela Rhodes Foundation

MSD – Miners Shot Down

MTC - Mexican Tequila Crisis

NA - Noero Architects

NB – New Brighton

NEC – National Executive Comittee

NFL – National Football League

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

NLA – Native Land Act

NNP – New National Party

NP – National Party

NPP – Nobel Peace Prize

NT – Native Trust

NYT – New York Times

NUM - National Union of Mineworkers

OC – One Congress

OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

OSYR – Operation Show Your Receipt

PA – Pan Africanism

PAC – Pan Africanist Congress

PC – Portraits of Courage

PD – People’s Dialogue

PM – Phoenix Massacre

PRA – Population Registration Act

RA – Red Assembly

RA – Relational Aesthetics

RBF – Radical Black Feminism

RBS – Radical Black Study

RET – Radical Economic Transformation

RL – Red Location

RLM – Red Location Museum

RMF – Rhodes Must Fall

RI – Robben Island

RT – Rhodes Trust

RU – Rhodes University

SA – South Africa

SA – Slum's Act

SAC – South African Constitution

SACOD - South African Congress of Democrats

SACP – South African Communist Party

SADC – Southern African Development Community

SAIC - South African Indian Congress

SAP - Structural Adjustment Programmes

SAPCB – South African Publications Control Board

SASAS – South African Social Attitude Survey

SEA – Socially Engaged Art

SM – Social Movements

SNI – September National Imbizo

SOWETO – South West Township

TRC – Truth and reconciliation Commission

UCT – University of Cape Town

USA – Union of South Africa

UWC – University of Western Cape

VS - Volcker Shock

VVP - Victor Verster Prison

WA – Wolff Architects

WB – World Bank

WC – Washington Consensus

WS – White Supremacy

WTC – World Trade Centre

WW – World War

WVS – World Value Survey

Chapter 1: Introduction

After the enlightenment philosophies responsible for the anti-Black carnage that is Western modernity, both slavery and colonialism, most critical artistic efforts to formulate a language of resistance and justice have failed to articulate the position of Black people as an antagonistic relation to White supremacy, which might explain why emancipatory strategies keep falling short after more than 500 years. Efforts shaped in the language of ethics around class, gender, and race approach the problem of Black absence as an issue of representation than an impossibility to be represented. Instead, liberatory ideologies, including Marxism, liberal feminism, slave/prison abolition, and anti-apartheid/colonial narratives have shifted the narrative that demands a deeper understanding of the antagonisms that structure the world of White supremacy and anti-Blackness to that of hopefulness. It is this narrative of hope that has resulted in today's post-ism of life after slavery, colonisation and apartheid rather than an end to it. What sustains this hope or optimism lies in the structure of contemporary modern institutions that legitimise the world as we know it. From humanitarian and philanthropic initiatives of Western democratic nations, the call for a more humane world tends to override the meaning of demands for justice in a world responsible for anti-Blackness. Such a call demands that we interrogate the meaning of humanity for those whose existence is always in question.

The language of law informed by White fears and desires forms such a world in the make-up of its institutions. What makes possible the real from the imaginary is what differentiates the absence of Blackness from the presence of Whiteness. Since the judicial law, as an instrument of the State and White power, does not recognise the being of the Black[3], in other words the humanity of Black people, it becomes necessary then to question the creative and philosophical make-up of such institutions. Existential enquiries are as much philosophical questions of desire whose creative expression determines what it means to be human. Such questions I argue, ethical questions of human rights are largely generated in the humanities and social sciences as a structure that determines culture or our sense of being. In other words, humanities and social sciences question and generate morals and ethics that later become law.

Based on this theoretical foundation, I will now turn to the language of protest or creative interventions in Black protests. Black demands are framed in the language of ethics such as human rights; decent toilets, housing, jobs, gender equality, freedom of expression and so on, while the

[3]Black: When I talk about the being of the Black, I speak of the humanity of Black people. By Black people I mean a racial group designated not just outside of the superstructure that constitutes White supremacy, but those that do not fit even within what I will call substandard races or non-whites, eg. Indians and Arabs and etc.

language of response by instruments of the State is the reminder of the antagonisms that exist at the level of ontology. By virtue of its inability to be recognised within the frameworks of the legal standards of modern institutions, as a creative expression, Black protest demands representation for recognition and visibility. However, visibility alone does not give us a deeper understanding of Black ontological absence. Instead, hypervisibility becomes the mode for re-enacting and desensitising anti-Black violence. In this thesis, I argue then that visual representation, or the demand for visibility, cannot translate into the Hegel's notion of the 'ethics of recognition' (1999, 174) backed by modern legal law since, as the basic constituent of modernity, anti-Blackness is its thesis. Therefore, my thesis is that Black protest should be antithetical to modes of recognition and rather deepen our understanding of the impossibility for recognition.

1.1 Research Context

Due to a widening gap between the haves and the have nots, Post-1994 South Africa has become globally notorious for its protests. Such a gap results from the failure to implement the promised structural change for the betterment of the Black majority by the ruling party. One's eye simply needs to scan and navigate the broader South African landscape[4], the rural and the urban, to view the vast difference between the poor Black majority in contrast with the wealthy White minority; the rural Black areas and the urban townships compared to White farms and White suburbia.

Most if not all "successful" protest occupations do not signal an end to the protest culture but most likely the beginning. Habitable humane environments that make up a modern community allude to a functioning basic system for basic human needs – housing, water, roads, electricity, schools and so on. Failure to provide such basic human needs leads to "inhumane conditions" in which the struggle to make meaningful the lives

[4] However, the situation is simply not as clear-cut. A growth in what has been termed petty bourgeois Black middle class has been rampant despite the argument that the so-called broader Black middle class is a pay-check away from poverty. In his news24 article 'Measuring South Africa's (black) middle class,' Markus Korhonen argues that South Africa has a vague definition of what it means to be middle class that leads to it being 'somewhere between the rich and the poor' (Korhonen 2018: 05). According to Korhonen (2018), 24,5% of the participants who took part in a World Value Survey who identified as middle class "had 'often' gone without enough food to eat in the past year" – standards not akin to a middle-class lifestyle. It is through these ambiguities that we cannot define nor determine what a South African middle class is. What we cannot deny, though, is that the measuring standards have not prevented the country from always being on the verge of eruption as a political expression, which demands creative strategies.

of the people occupying and making life in these landscapes is a battle zone.

There's something uncanny about how unshaken and unmoved the government becomes when community protests tear apart the same community that demands service delivery. A burnt library, a scorched and cracked tarred road, a looted shop, and the spilling of trash tends to have little to no effect on the broader South African landscape. Besides, for the unaffected elite class, life goes on.

This nonchalant behaviour of the government towards the destruction of Black communities' structures, amenities, and environments points to the history that South Africa is built on. The wars fought between the British and the Boers[5] leading to the formation of the Union of South Africa was a battle of two occupying powers. Policies in place were structured such that they would benefit both the British and the Boers. In this process, the majority of the population (Black people) would be affected only as policed rather than policy makers. This 1910 formation that unified the Cape, Transvaal, Natal, and the Orange River to become the Union of South Africa legislated the relations between Black and White. This did not deter the Black majority from wars of land reclaim. It is between the reclaiming of the commons by way of protest and policymaking against those policed that the landscape is in constant transformation. These clashes over land and policies are creative initiatives where being and nonbeing is determined. They inscribe and describe between those who belong and those who do not. But belonging does not only become a matter of material access to resources; it is an inscription of a body schema that makes and unmakes an ontology. What is taken away from one group, like land and humanity, is legislated to the other. In this thesis, I argue that the post-apartheid period does not unmake these relations. Instead, progressive institutions and ideologies fail to interrogate the antagonism that makes such relations.

This failure is veiled by the narrative of hope. Even before the ascendancy of the African National Congress' democratic government in 1994, the narrative of hope has always been around in overt and explicit forms. It came as hope clothed in the concealing language of dispossession. When the piece of segregation legislation, the Native Land Act of 1913 that relegated Black people to less than 20% of the land was implemented, it came under the concept of separate development. Still today, the notion of authentic home or belonging is largely viewed from the perspective of

[5] Boers: Is an Afrikaans word for early Dutch settlers, the Free Burgers who first arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652.

the tribal homelands divisions. The idea was that Black people need not mix with White people and therefore should have a territory specifically for them while they were made illegal immigrants in the rest of their ancestral country. At the same time, Black people who moved into the urban areas in search for work were moved from areas they occupied "informally" and strategically placed in what later became "formal" townships. Such townships would then be "developed" into small brick houses and as a result positively named Gugulethu (our pride) and Khayelitsha (new home) to name a few. Khayelitsha, located in the Western Cape, is a Xhosa word for 'new home'. It is said to be the 3rd largest township in South Africa after Soweto (Gauteng province) and Mdantsane (Eastern Cape). The settlement was a result of forced removal of Black people from Crossroads (informal settlement) and other surrounding informal settlements to the newly built brick houses by the apartheid government in 1985. It is these seemingly "positive developments" that I want to argue give a false sense of hope. They do not escape the intended consequences of apartheid but legitimate them.

Between the formal and the informal, the past and the present, the fluidity of history as a form of progress and movement in time itself seems stationary – static. The universality of Khayelitsha as the form that breeds and hosts the formless, the particular that results from protest – eNkanini and eNdlovini – itself collapses into one. Nkanini and Ndlovini, located in the Western Cape, are terms generally denoting forcefulness and are informal settlements that form part of Khayelitsha. Nkanini means cheekiness, and Ndlovini means 'stomping in like an elephant'. These form part of many communities around South Africa resulting from protests for land redistribution Post-1994. They are largely formed by renting backyarders and youth seeking independence from home. It is in this collapse that the form and the formless, the formal with the informal occupy the same spatial dimension of abjection. Put differently, the language of hope presented in the form of "formal townships" such as Khayelitsha collapses in the extension of "informal townships" that result from protest communities. As a result, the notion of historical progress, of a movement in time, itself warps. Instead, the new names become a call back to the real, a refusal of the falsehood of hopefulness back to the abjection of Blackness.

The Post-94 dispensation was presented rather as an opportunity to heal, individually and as groups, as Blacks and Whites. It is often argued that we must find our common humanity that gets lost in the process of dehumanisation. Here, the perpetrator is as dehumanised by the violence they inflict and therefore as deserving of regaining his/her humanity. Humanities then become the sanctuary where ethics and morals of these

processes are explored. We see this manifest in several leaders who, at the end of their service as chiefs-in-command, not only administer therapeutic art for themselves, but to those whom their policies have greatly mangled. Upon exiting from his Admiral post at the end of May 1915, in his search for change to remedy his mental overstrain, Winston Churchill found solace in a newly discovered passion for painting (1948: 7). At first his approach was cautious as he tried to negotiate with his subject in tiny strokes using a small brush. He is later inspired by a friend, Lady Hazel Lavery, to approach it more boldly. Despite seeing painting as a new language of expression, what he discovered in principle is how;

> painting a picture is like fighting a battle; and trying to paint a picture is…like trying to fight a battle. It is, if anything more exciting than fighting it successfully. But the principle is the same. It is the same kind of problem as unfolding a long-sustained argument. (Churchill 1948: 9)

In his observation of Lady Lavery's approach to the canvas, he narrates the scene as a duel the canvas was fatally losing as Lady Lavery fiercely stroked and slashed "on the cowering canvas" (Churchill 1948: 9). Between the painter and the Commander-in-Chief, Churchill read both their positions filling the same obligation, where the canvas and the landscape required the same strategic plan and reconnaissance. It was in the ability of the French language to speak of love, war, diplomacy, or cooking that his admiration for its development and achievement was "precise and complete".

Churchill's philosophical proposition that it is never too late to take up painting as a pastime would inspire yet another former Commander-in-Chief whose work would convey his presidency, the family man and the affectionate philanthropist. In his series of portraits "The art of Leadership: A president's Personal Diplomacy," former United States President George Bush talks about his personal intimate relationships with world leaders. The series depicts and reflects his personal feelings which are not divorced from US policies regarding matters concerning geopolitical concerns. Bush's distaste for the former Soviet country and geopolitical rival leader Vladimir Putin is toiled in his depiction with the same contrasting vigour for his friend and political ally, former British Prime minister Tony Blair. While his family paintings are talked about in a less detailed manner, we read a sense of privacy accompanying the work. Instead, intended to give hope, as a kind gesture for injured veterans of the Iraq war under his administration, a 98-portraits series, "Portraits of Courage" – whose catalogue proceeds go to the Bush Centre's vets' programme – was an intimate gesture for those unknown faces, now

portrayed in the short documentary *Evidence of things unseen*[6], in need of recovery both physically and mentally. Here, Bush provides a platform for self-expression that the protagonist (Richard) needed. But this expression does not account for war crimes committed. It becomes an expression for its own sake where this need for the patients' speech demands self-diagnosis. I am interested in art's capacity or incapacity to heal through speech, and how speech functions as a mediating medium in the world structured by White supremacy and anti-Black antagonisms.

1.2. Research Questions

For my thesis, I am developing a twofold question: What is the language of Black radical creative expression that is informed by or informs Black desires for freedom, and what makes such desires impossible to translate into law? Here, I will explore speech and its creative manifestations in its capacities to be coerced and its in/abilities for refusal. I am interested in protests that have manifested in Black communities and how they are positioned and position themselves in their relation to structures of White power while exposing anti-Blackness.

They challenge legalities in relation to Black bodies. What then do we make of the laws that govern the parameters between non-violent, disruptive and violent protest? What do we make of the language of intervention used by Cyril Ramaphosa, current president of South Africa, in his correspondence with Lonmin's chief commercial officer Albert Jamieson before that fateful day of the Marikana massacre[7]? Ramaphosa (2012) declared: "The terrible events that have unfolded cannot be described as a labour dispute. They are plainly dastardly criminal and must be characterised as such … there needs to be concomitant action to address this situation." Does this language not sound like the characterisation of the #RhodesMustFall's demand for the decolonised curriculum as a return to barbarism?

So I take moments of radical protests characterised outside legal parameters as creative moments of refusal rather than inspirations towards radical political art expression.

[6]CreatiVets is an organisation for Post Traumatic Iraqi war veterans that functions as a platform to use the arts as a healing mechanism. Evidence of Things Unseen is a documentary on this organisation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1pyzAUR9Ns

[7] In the North West Province in Marikana: On the 16th August 2012, SAPS (South African Police Service) opened fire on striking Lonmin (London Mine) platinum mineworkers killling 34 and injuring 78.

1.3. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Attempts at shaking and destabilizing established narratives form part of the natural state of the arts. With every concrete framework lies the question of the Other whose narrative resides in the margins. This Other of the arts is generally generated in cultural and political difference, often found in hierarchal elitist frameworks that get called into question. Art, inasmuch as it is framed ambiguously open and non definitive, defines the pinnacle of what becomes creative mastery. Creativity is largely distributed in different forms. There is the technical (creatively crafty) and the thought process (generating dialogue). It is with the fraught notions and language of dialogue that contemporary artists and art collectives push against established artistic frameworks. According to Grant Kester (2005) they move away from objects to “provide context” rather than “provide content”. Kester is interested in community formations, collaborations and dialogue beyond art institutional boundaries. In his introduction *Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue In Socially-Engaged Art,* Kester is interested in artistic interventions where dialogue with said communities becomes part of the artistic process whose goal is solving real social situations as they relate to policy and other socio political issues. For Kester, these networks of communities begin to develop different knowledges and aesthetic experiences. It is this artform he describes according to Homi K. Bhabha as “conversational art” and Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of art as “dialogical”. As a strive to move away from modernist and postmodernist art theory of work developed for an audience, Kester gravitates towards artforms open endedly developed in consultation with the community by developing what he calls “Socially Engaged Art”. Mikkel Bolton Rasmussen (2017, 52) generally describes Socially Engaged Art as socio-political art interventions that form dialogues in conflict-ridden urban spaces outside the art institution.

Socially Engaged Art comes from a long tradition of art historical institutional critique, from conceptual art to Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics. Rasmussen (2017, 62) traces their lineage from the interventionist art of the late 1960’s to the mid-1980’s. Modes of art institutional critique remain by all means securely within the bounds of art institutions; be it galleries, museums, biennales and etc. Socially Engaged Art and relational aesthetics appear in mid-1990’s and early 2000’s as a later vestige of what Rasmussen deems art criticism, institutional attachment and artistic practice based dialogue.

Between the two artistic forms, Socially Engaged Art pushes beyond institutional boundaries by collaborating in dialogue social issues outside

with the effected communities. However, though these collaborative interventions and dialogues crossover towards political activism, and or social work, they remain artistic themed initiatives by artists with or for said communities. Rasmussen views the dialogic approach as empathetic recognition of the other and questions this notion of the artist as collaborator. He argues:

> "There is a problematic privileging of consensus and intersubjectivity here that tends to recoil from more radical or "unreasoned" demands that are less interested in establishing a dialogue or empathy than in making visible processes of exclusion and lines of fracture that do not disappear because the artist (and the critic) have good intentions and wish to mobilise a local community" (Rasmussen 2017, 70)

Now, we begin to move along the line where notions of open dialogue begin to crumble and fall apart. When the unreasoned comes into play, or to be correct refuses reason within certain institutional confines and assumptive logic, then appears an aura of futility. The artist's role as a collaborator and initiator begins to be in question.

Rasmussen argues that amongst the artforms intended to question institutional integrity, be it relational aesthetics, institutional critiques or Socially Engaged Art, none have managed to fully escape recuperation and co-option. But amongst them, he credits Kester's online journal *Field: A Journal of Socially-Engaged Art Criticism*[8] for the survival and relevance of Socially Engaged Art. In spite of Kester's attempts at decentering artistic activism away from traditional art institutions for art based field analysis, Rasmussen remains critical in that this expansion merely shifts geographical diversity of "already existing canon instead of an attempt to dismantle it" (2017, 68). Furthermore, Rasmussen warns of the dangers of replacing revolutionary concepts for "micro-politics" and "micro-utopias" in what he calls "the art of modest proposal" (2017, 71) where the settlement lies in small adjustments rather than fundamental change. It is this expansion of the canon towards an inter-disciplinary or cross-disciplinary artform this thesis resists. As such I propose a counter or an anti-art-discipline study of Black radical protest as creative interventions informed by its own universality.

I argue that creativity is not an external feature but foundational in the universality of Black radical protest and can only be found within Black

[8]Field: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art. Founded by Grant Kester in 2014. https://field-journal.com/

radical movements. With the apartheid past and its laws behind us, the right to protest is entrenched in Section 17 of the Post-1994 South African constitution. Carin Runciman defines three categories of protest; (1) Peaceful; (2) Disruptive; (3) Violent. Peaceful protest defines non-violent marches and rallies usually with the formal go-ahead of the government. Disruptive protests, though there might be an ambiguity bordering on violence, are seen as non-violent but with disruptive behaviour such as blocking roads and unlawfully occupying spaces. Violent protest refers to destruction of properties and injuring others. However, Lizette Lancaster reads an ambiguous tone in the definition of violence as stated in the South African common law, that it is “the unlawful and intentional performance by a number of persons of an act or acts which assumes serious proportions and are intended to disturb public peace and order by violent means, or to infringe the rights of another” (Lancaster 2018). Studies in the hierarchy of South African protests suggest that a large segment of the protesting population leans towards more peaceful protest engagements, but finds violent protests to yield results. A brief statistical evaluation conducted by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) between 1995 and 2017 includes South African Social Attitude Survey (SASAS) conducted in the first three months of 2017 and shows a shift from peaceful towards more violent protest. Not in principle but due to success (N. Bohler-Muller, B. J. Roberts, J. Struwig, S. L. Gordon, T. Radebe, P. Alexander 2017, 84-86).

One thing clear is that the post-1994 South African constitution makes provision for the airing of disgruntlement within a particular threshold. Important emphasis seems to be on non-interference or disruption of the everyday running of the world where the protest takes place. In other words, people can protest, but life must go on. Protests are therefore nationally legislated interventions.

During the time of the #RhodesMustFall protest, we witnessed several interventions that can easily be categorised as artistic in their interrogation. Dean Hutton’s work, the *Golden Dean* performance, attracted a backlash from Black student activists who argued that Dean’s presence intensified the invisibility of Blacks who are already marginalised. Sethembile Msezane’s piece *The Day Rhodes Fell* rose prominently as the chiselled stone was being removed for safety to an undisclosed storage space. In their own contexts, they celebrate and challenge certain representations around politics of power. Both are artists whose genre of political art is celebrated before and after these interventions. They are works that deal ethically with questions of representation. Grant Kester’s (1995, 4) frustration with the current artistic modes of critique is that certain theoretical positions are

subscribed to rather than engaged. In his approach, he is interested in activist artistic intervention that operates outside what he calls the "textual register". Kester is interested in questions outside the standard art historical theory, the more open-ended interactive works rather than pre-programmed artistic interventions.

But if we look closely at the self-regulatory state mechanisms both as human rights and in law, we quickly realise that they are not equipped with the language that deals ethically with Black people. As we have become accustomed to the evictions of the homeless and informal occupants of the commons, Shackville – a protest that took place in 2016 at UCT through setting up of shacks – was demolished. I want to argue that the inability to recognise the protest performance "Shackville" as an artwork or at least creative intervention is because it does not fall within the categories and conventions of the art world. It was not a work made by those deemed artists and therefore it did not possess codes visible to the establishment. So, my aim with this thesis is not to argue for these creative interventions as artworks; on the contrary, I argue for why they cannot and should not be viewed as such from an institutional point of view. I want to argue how these protest interventions in themselves demand that we read them as a language of refusal.

Does this division not speak to the poignant question of language as a structure of socialisation that Žižek asks;

> "What if, however, humans exceeded animals in their capacity for violence precisely because they *speak*? When we perceive something as an act of violence, we measure it by a presupposed standard of what the "normal" non-violent situation is – and the highest form of violence is the imposition of this standard with reference to which some events appear as "violent". This is why language itself, the very medium of non-violence, of mutual recognition, involves unconditional violence. So the fact that *reason* (*ratio*) and *race* have the same root tells us something; language, not primitive egotistic interests, is the first and greatest divider. It is because of language that we and our neighbours (can) "live in different worlds" even when we live in the same street. What this means is that the verbal violence is not a secondary distortion, but the ultimate resort of every specifically human violence." (Žižek 2008, 61)

Language is a regulating mechanism between humans. It is a gap that draws and opens boundaries. As such, it is not autonomous. As a violent mechanism, it is often used as a justification in its own terms like countries and states. Think of the language of human rights. In his

YouTube conversation with D.G Kelly, Fred Moten (2017, 03) argues that states in themselves do not have the legitimacy to exist but are meant to protect the rights of their citizens – in themselves, they have no rights. He further argues against the presupposition that protesting the state of Israel is a form of anti-Semitism, in that by the likes of Donald Trump's support of Israel, "the two are not antithetical to one another but go together". Therefore "resistance to the State of Israel is a resistance to the legitimacy of the nation state". Peaceful protest becomes a playground for social pathologies.

If art's primary function is to make representable symbolic forms for human desires and anxieties, then language and ontology, two ingredient elements meant for such representation and dialogue should possess codes visible as such. In the last paragraph of his concluding text "Theory in Black: Theological Suspension in Philosophy of Culture" Lewis Gordon concludes that "Art... is the construction of human presence" (2010, 210). Blackness, many philosophers, theorists of Black studies and revolutionaries have argued, lacks both, language and ontological integrity in the White world. In other words, Blackness lacks symbolic integrity that gives presence a condition of possibility. Whilst most agree on the lack of ontological integrity, there is an argument for urgency amongst others who read and analyse certain historical moments and events as positive accomplishments in the fight against antiBlackness. The former pessimistically intensifies every positive outcome, and the latter optimistically takes score. In other words, pessimists take the metanarrative to its logical conclusion, whilst optimists see certain historical moments (eg. the ANC coming into power) as conditions of possibility. Steve Biko saw Black consciousness as a positive step towards self realisation. Frantz Fanon saw no possibility for symbolic attainment achievable under White supremacy. Lewis Gordon's notion of the "dark side of theory...as self reflective" (2010, 197) provides a positive internal critique of self. Fred Moten takes certain historical moments as creative improvisations that put agency in the fight for liberation. Frank Wilderson III, Jared Sexton and David Marriott are amongst the few theorists who approach Blackness as a consistent position of enslavement rather than historical moments of upheavals. Saidiya Hartman's work is an allegory of today's Black condition to that of slavery. Hortense Spillers bridges the gap that divides race and gender categories.

As such, "seeing Black", or to "see in Black", as Lewis Gordon (2010, 197) has argued "has the mythopoetics of sin". In this thesis, I argue that taking into consideration notions of language and ontology, art's function and construction as a vehicle for representation and visibility lacks the necessary ingredient to make appear, Blackness. Black radical protest in

all its creative endeavours, can only reveal the impossible makeup of artistic language as its primary mode.

In his chapter “Function and field of speech and language” Lacan (1989, 44) makes the argument that psychoanalysis’s “only medium” is a “patient’s speech”. And that “All speech calls for a reply” (1989, 44). Now, if we begin to assess Black radical protest demands in psychoanalytic terms as a patient in speech, it is important to pay careful attention to the reply of such a speech. For Gordon, “for Black speech to appear requires a relationship to reason that brings its melancholy to the fore” (2010, 210). The same reason according to Fanon that leaves the room when the Black enters. What is left then as a response can only be violence.

Wilderson III (2008, 98) reads “Black presence as a form of absence”, he views it as an “ontological frieze awaiting gaze” not the “living ontology in the field of vision”. As such he designates this absence in all layers of Black life – “*Cartographic, subjective, and political”.* In this thesis, I take into consideration these layers as they apply to post 1994 Black protests and the responses they attract from state institutions. I argue that no matter how creative these moments, art as a designating symbolic order of recognition cannot make appear the being of Blackness.

1.4. Objectives

With this thesis, my intention is to interrogate the language of protest central to critical conversations between Black artists and the broader social activist communities; to look critically at strategies and creative forms that have been crucial in uniting and dividing Black radical voices and efforts while maintaining an antagonism between White power and anti-Blackness that results in the Black condition. So far, this conversation takes place between a two-strand theory of negation that is both optimist and pessimist. I want to demonstrate how, whether these creative struggles take on an optimistic or a pessimistic resolve, they maintain one relation with power – that of death – be it immediate or social. More importantly, to move away from art as representation or arguing for these creative interventions as art practices within the borders of White institutions but to theorise liberation struggles, with all their trials and errors as they apply as creative manifestations of the real antithetical to currently accepted modes of artistic practices.

1.5. Methodology

This thesis is an analysis and an investigation that takes the form of, and is positioned as a protest. I deliberately moved away from art historical material and theory for broader research that encompasses, in general terms, Radical Black Studies as they apply in the theorising and critiquing strategies of Black liberation. While my intention here is to show how under the current circumstances, power relations between White Supremacy and anti-Blackness make ethical relations impossible, this is not a direct study of White power per se but a closer look at how relations between Blacks and other progressive allies who occupy different sections in the world facilitate and enable White power even in its absence. Using both textual and visual material for this analysis, I demonstrate this by looking at progressive ideologies, institutions and social movements and how they are not exempt from this perpetuation of White power but are at the heart of it, from Marxism to civil society, liberal feminism and other liberal Black social movements.

I particularly focus on post-1994 liberation and social protests as a question and an investigation in an attempt to analyse continued Black disgruntlements (protests) as they are responded to with a wide variety of anti-Black violence that has come to characterise the country. In my investigation, I search for the missing link that results to this analysis within the humanities, the university, and other state institutions. I look at the three as interconnected and governed by an ideology that cannot be reconciled with the figure that is the Black person, arguing that it is the politics of inclusivity as enshrined in the country's constitution, non-racism ideology, that make impossible the recognition of Black people. In the main, I argue that non-racialism is tightly connected to the refusal to legislate radical policies that fight the scourge of anti-Black racism with its connections to private property or radical land redistribution purported to infringe on the rights of White minorities. These are minorities with a global reach in global markets that function as an enforcing and policing White authority. As such, it is this refusal to legislate that has to do with the bodies that make such demands. Therefore, Black bodies and their creative endeavours can only be theorised outside already available art critical frameworks presented as historical.

Since history implies a moment in time, linear progression and regression, the reading of the Black condition as a historical trajectory reveals to us a movement as positive moments of both successes and failures. What history does not, or cannot, reveal, are concepts both psychic and ideological. Instead, anti-Black violence becomes mystified in the

quagmire of explosive historical moments. It is the how and why of these moments I want to investigate in my analysis. Approaching the human as an enabling marker means I had to approach my investigation from the position of Black people as they fit or are excluded from concepts of ontology that define the human.

My tools of analysis have been enabled by a range of philosophers. Slovenian Marxist philosopher Slavoj Žižek's work on postmodern architecture and the notion of the space in-between the inside and the outside provides and locates a third dimension that determines and facilitates the relationship between the two spaces. It is within this dimension, the locus of the third space as a parallax gap, where the antagonisms between the inside and the outside collide. In this thesis, this space is where politics, the humanities, and the state ontologise what constitutes the inside of the broader political and libidinal economy, while the outside becomes the void that is an empty space of social struggle. Because the two spaces are irreconcilable and are at loggerheads, the imperative is not a synthesis but to investigate and explain its antinomies. Therefore, it is with the philosophical Black radical scholarly work of Frank Wilderson III's investigation of failures and explanations on Black radical movements that the workings of civil society as the third space of mediating the inside and the outside are demystified; in this instance, between the human and the nonhuman, or White supremacy and anti-Blackness. Žižek and Wilderson III's work on ontology and antagonisms provide us with the closest reading of power in its relation to social struggles. But the two philosophers occupy two irreconcilable zones mediated by this third space, where skin is the marker of difference. Fanon, Du Bois, Spillers, Gordon, Biko and Moten are among the few theorists of the Black radical tradition providing tools of analysis. It is in their work that some of the most important radical pivots are found. But it is in their optimism towards humanism that an intramural reading between Black Optimism and Afro-pessimism takes shape. Marriot, Wilderson III and Sexton are amongst the few pessimists who grapple with the optimist/pessimist conflict. While the dynamics are clear between the two (I'll say camps) schools of thought, they do not constitute an antagonism. They analogize a synthesis.

This relationship is in both theory and practice. With this thesis, I argue for an aesthetic of the real, one rooted in the policy making and in social protest. I argue that two of South Africa's leading political parties, the ruling ANC and the opposition DA are structured by the same relations. In their policies, both prioritize the policing of Blackness in overt and implicit, and direct and indirect violent mechanisms. I trace these violent moments in their responses to Black riots and protests that demand change. I demonstrate how this violence is meted depending on channels the protesters decide to approach. The use of civil institutions such as the courts give false hopes with no radical outcome, while direct confrontation

with Whiteness leads to massacres. With both false hopes and massacres, these readings take shape through an analysis of Black optimism and Afro-pessimism.

1.6. Chapter Structure

This thesis is meant to be read as an unending loop. It begins and ends with two volatile moments that I understand have come to define the post-liberation South Africa – the Marikana and the Phoenix massacres. Chronologically, their historical moments would be told in linear time, but they are jumbled because anti-Black violence is neither a historical category nor a conceptual idea that conforms to moments. It is a constant state of being. Though it begins and ends with such moments, it must be understood that the chapters that pull it together are where we find the struggle to understand the nature that structures the volatility of such violence. That is where the real language of violence is located. Not only in the spectacle, but in the normalisation and the ritualisation of such spectacles. So, the end could be the beginning and the beginning the end.

In the first chapter, I argue how the structure of modernity and its institutions begin to narrow what it means to view certain people within and outside the structure of the humanist project. Ethics that make the artistic humanist practice tend to mystify this objecthood that is Blackness. Since the humanist project must be seen to be all-encompassing and ethical to all, I argue that the inhumane conditions Black people are subjected to then become conceptualised in optimistic language. These are townships and former homelands. But I argue that these have always been met with a certain sense of pessimism seen in protest culture. The occupation of land that becomes informal settlements shapes as a form of refusal of such optimism. This is in the disregard for government and civil society institutions and is made clear by the naming of such squatter camps. Therefore, squatter camps become a form of protest aesthetic outside the realm of conventional art practice as they do not merely demand representation in the artistic space but real change in the lives of ordinary Black people.

The second chapter focuses on the language and structure of South Africa's major political parties, the ANC and DA, and how their formations and ideas of unity lack any vested interest in Black emancipation. With both parties, Black dissenting voices have proven to work against their agenda, or outside their ethics as policing organisations. I look at their recent election campaigns and legislations as moments where anti-Blackness as a crucial aesthetic of appropriation is laid bare. I argue that

not only do they lack any emancipatory possibilities, but that whatever anti-Black violence is meted on Black bodies becomes the rallying card of their political campaigns. It is this violence as a mediating tool from the inside that renders Blackness outside in the world, while the outside is the formation made up of social movements.

Chapters 3 analyses the notion of the human as purported in the concept of International Human Rights and the humanities. Because the Humanities is where notions of ethics are interrogated with the potential of what laws might be in place in the future, I argue that these ethics are galvanised around International Human Rights as a protection mechanism of White fears. Instead of an ethics of justice and liberation, the humanities become a site for moralism and philanthropy. I structure my arguments from analysing Minister Naledi Pandor's inaugural speech at the launch of the University of the Western Cape's (UWC) Centre for Humanities Research (CHR) on her response to some of the RMF student protests' utterances and the lack of sanction of that behaviour by the institution. I argue how the humanities and the global corporations have asserted themselves as spaces of protest. And, in that process have mystified what could be understood as a true liberation ethic.

Chapter 4 briefly traces the history of squatter camps as a form of protest. It is in this chapter that I explore subversive notions of occupation and naming as legitimate creative forms of protest. I deliberately move away from political art and align, as a form of creative exploration, protests that come from social movements. I argue that it is within these spaces that anti-Blackness is de-mystified and exposed. As much as there are concerted efforts to legitimise townships as habitable environments, it is these land-occupying squatter camps that constantly reveal the inhumanity in the everyday life of Black people. It is here where real policies are called into question.

Then the following chapters focus particularly on three protests. Chapter 5 focuses on the Red Location community protest for decent housing and other services that led to the forceful closure of a newly built commemorative museum, The Red Location Museum. Death here becomes an important rallying concept, not only as a metaphor but a real relationship between the protester and the institution. Michelle Smith's critique of The Red Location Museum and its relationship to the community is important here. However, it is the framing of the worker rather than Blackness that I find misses the mark. This relationship runs through Chapter 6 where I juxtapose the Lonmin mine wage protest that led to the killing of 34 Black mineworkers and the arrest of many, with Abahlali baseMjondolo, the shack dwellers' movement and its fight against

the government's implementation of the Slums Act. I argue that while the result of both protests seems victorious (Abahlali baseMjondolo) and tragic (miners shot down), both exhibit forms of anti-Blackness where the end, the death, is either physical or social. These protests align with the student intervention of #RhodesMustFall known as Shackville[9], which took place at the Jameson steps at UCT. It was a performance piece in solidarity with Black students rendered homeless by the institution. At the same time, it became ironic that within the humanities, all these creative interventions, from the poo throwing, the shack installation and the renaming of spaces to the demand for a decolonial curriculum were never viewed and theorised as legit artistic moments whose points of reference were contemporary Black protests in the townships. When an important occasion presented itself, the Minister of Higher Education approached the moment as an opportunity to address its potential threat towards White bodies, as a threat towards human rights. My attempt here is to theorise the position of the movement's interventions and the response of the university not as an isolated, unique event but a moment structured by a relation of White power and anti-Blackness.

This realisation compelled me to make the argument that within the arts, there exists no language to articulate Black suffering without being subsumed by the art market. What exists are channels and ideas where demands for representation are accommodated and the struggle for liberation is sold to the highest bidder. But this is not a critique against protest art since representation in the market is a real struggle on its own.

In this thesis, I took interest in creative protests that come from social movements with demands that were impossible to accommodate not just in the market, but within the universal structure of White power. This is because these demands are not a yearning for representation but a change in the actual structure. They begin to question the ethical existence of representational institutions themselves.

1.7. Conclusion

At the heart of most art protests and movements in contemporary politics are issues of representation often, if not always, evoked by exclusionist

[9] On the 15th February 2016, the student movement of ##RhodesMustFall erected a shack at the Jameson Steps in protest at the University of Cape Town's exclusionary practices around accommodation for poor black students coming from outside the Western Cape. The shack partly blocked the road, disrupting traffic. When the University demanded that the shack be moved 20 metres to where it would still be visible without being disruptive, the demand was rejected by the students, resulting in the University using private security and state police to forcefully demolish the shack. The violent encounter led to the arrest of a number of students.

narratives around class, sexuality, gender, and race. In these struggles for position lie the ambiguities about whether sex, class, gender, or race becomes universal or particular. In this thesis, race is the metanarrative that defines power relations between White power and anti-Blackness. It does not function as an ethnicity that borders on nation, tribe, and region. These dynamics do not exist when the antagonism between these power relations is properly interrogated. Instead, it is intramural conflicts that are shaped by class, sex, gender and nationalist issues. But these dynamics cannot explain the antagonisms that exist between the world and Black people. This language of representation can only obscure rather than explain the position of Blackness in a world mired in anti-Blackness. As such this thesis moves away from the politics of representation and looks at the language that explains the way in which Black people are positioned in relation to all others.

Chapter 2: For its own sake

2.1. Aesthetics of anti-Black coalitions

Whenever the topic of race politics is brought up in a general context, a suggested neutrality is assumed in the words “I’m not into politics”, “my work is not political”, or “we are all humans in the end”, to neutralise, to avoid the negative connotations that come with one taking a concrete radical position. The fluidity and open-mindedness speak to a state that is all-encompassing and accepting. The irony is that even as it frames itself as open, it is a rejection of a concrete position. But the concrete here is seen as an elaborate context; the all-encompassing as pure aesthetic. In this negative context, the concrete becomes a tool for propaganda while the purely aesthetic becomes a “real study”, a breakthrough by virtue of its position, or lack thereof. This all-encompassing aesthetic is endemic in the campaign strategies of political parties. The ANC and the DA speak of their ideological positions as non-racialist. Unlike political parties and movements that make specific claims to race as a consistent ideological position, the ANC and the DA adopted an open-ended politics as an attempt to appeal to a much larger audience and membership. Because locally, the voting constituency is made up of the Black majority. Therefore, by a larger audience here, I mean a global west that drives the markets as it politically monitors developing ideologies and the direction of the country on behalf of Whiteness. I frame non-racialism as an aesthetic here because it is an outlook that drives policies of South Africa’s most prominent political parties.

It is this appeal as opposed to a concrete ideological position that I argue functions as a position for its own sake. A similar case can be made for the doctrine of the literary movement that began in the 19th century, sloganeered *l’art pour l’art*, translated as “art for art’s sake”, whose proponents argued for an art divorced from sociopolitical and moral values and purely judged for its aesthetic qualities. It is not that aesthetic quality has no value. But such argument privileges value as a personal and an individual expression. I argue that the democratic values of all-encompassing non-racialism already negate the idea that racism, as a basis of our national struggle, exists and therefore policy decisions are bound by implementation as a form of redress. Failure of such acknowledgement speaks to a fundamental refusal to frame and make meaning of what has become the post-apartheid as it continually exists within parameters and structures defined by apartheid. This service, I argue, defines the backbone of the ANC’s liberation documents from the 1955 Freedom Charter right up to the 1996 South African democratic Constitution. Just as the doctrine of art for art’s sake puts the aesthetic

appeal of art above all else, the Freedom Charter, as with the South African Constitution, set up non-racialism above everything else. Where unity of all races on its own becomes the overriding thought process, we are confronted with the concept of “Back of the minds of the advocates of ‘art for art’s sake’ is the idea that there is an artistic ‘sensibility’ which can function quite independently of any of the other thought processes.” (A.H. Hannay 1954, 10). The same can be said for the concept of non-racialism where the intuition to unite races against the banner of apartheid divisions and failure to define it beyond the slogan of unity is taken to be “self-evidently a good thing” (Everatt 2009, 01). However, the evidence in the failure to realise non-racialism, as argued by Everatt, lies in the ideological differences that could not be resolved between the African nationalism of the ANCYL and the rest of the Congress Alliance[10], but would continue to coexist under the democratic South Africa. While non-racialism became the overarching unifying ideology of both the Liberal Party and SACP in the alliance, it was structured as multiracial, with separate race-based participation. This alliance was heavily criticised by the likes of Potlako Leballo[11], who opposed White domination in ideological influence of the South African Congress of Democrats[12] (SACOD). This opposition to White influence and hostility towards ANC leadership led to their expulsion from the ANC. Later, ANC conferences were held in the Western Cape and Transvaal in an attempt to resolve the situation, but led to more breakaway branches from Africanist-leaning ideologues. They argued that the Congress Alliance was deviating from the founding policies of the 1912 ANC. And so gave birth to the formation of the Pan Africanist Congress led by the former ANC Youth League leader Robert Sobukwe. SACOD later became a strategy to broaden and form more alliances with White area-based organisations. After the youth branch successfully disbanded itself in favour of a non-racial youth congress, Africans and Indians were included amid calls for a non-racial congress or “One Congress” of which “class” was the added dimension. It was during the 1969 ANC consultative conference that multiracial individual membership was opened.

[10] Congress Alliance: Formed in 1954 as an anti-apartheid political coalition. This was a strategic alliance for mass mobilisation that organised the 1955 Congress of the People in Kliptown and adopted the Freedom Charter. It was organised as a multiracial front that was led by the ANC as a majority party in coalition with the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), the South African Communist Party (SACP), the Coloured People’s Congress, and the Congress of Democrats.

[11] Two years after getting involved in the ANC, Leballo bacame president of the ANC Youth League in 1945. As the leader of the Youth League, he was tasked with the responsibility to carry out the Program Action of 1949 of Afrcan Nationalism that was based on non-coperation, boycots as a struggle for self-determination. The conference was held in Pretoria. The program failed to materialise for reasons Lephallo states were due to infiltration of African Nationalist organisations by pseudo communists. He would later become very instrumental in the founding of the Pan Africanist Congress.

[12] South African Congress of Democrats: A radical left-wing white anti-apartheid organisation founded in the early 50s as part of the ANC’s efforts for a multiracial Congress Alliance. It became a white wing of the Congress Alliance since the ANC membership was not yet opened to whites.

Between race, class and gender, or wage and slavery, as well as White Supremacy and Anti-Blackness, Black scholarship has been in a tug-of-war in what seems to be a battle to name and frame its struggle. Much of it is informed by Marxists' position of global capitalism that sees the class struggle as universal and race as particular. We see this apparent in the intellectual split between Fanon and Sartre. Sartre saw race as a temporality to overcome and not a universal struggle on its own (*Black Orpheus* 1948). As a psychiatrist, Fanon frames much of his theory from the position of the unconscious as opposed to class struggle or market forces (Fanon 1952, 3). A militant who fought both for Algeria and for France during the World War, it was his observation of the treatment of Black soldiers that sparked something beyond just class. Even among comrades, for Fanon, something would become peculiar about the treatment of Black people that went beyond class and economic classifications. The demand for Black combatants risking life and limb for France, only to be demanded out of sight in victory imagery, sparked race as a defining prism. It was in articulating this position as psychic and ontological that Fanon became a prominent figure of Black thought. This articulation of positionality is in line with an online interview by Jared Ball with Frank Wilderson III's recap of a comment that the leader of Mexico's militant liberation movement, Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatista[13], made to the media on why the government hated their movement: "it was their power to explain everything" (The Real News Network 2015, 1:18-1:40). This ability for a radical social movement to articulate its position became threatening for the purpose of social mobilisation and understanding power relations. It is this explanatory power that Wilderson III attributes to Fanon's theoretical contributions to Black thought.

Generally considered a poststructuralist[14], Stuart Hall then derives his formulation from the Althusserian, Gramscian Structural Marxism. For Hall (1996, 324~~–5~~), as much as the definition of the term "articulation" is as complex as it is "variously employed and defined," still, "it remains the site of significant theoretical rupture and intervention". So, it is this complexity that makes it difficult to define either or in the structure of domination. For Hall, despite not being sufficient to explain modes of domination regarding racism, this complexity of economic relations as the basis of articulation provides a sounder departure.

Building from Fanon's theoretical formulation, Wilderson III then further interrogates Gramsci's ideological formulation of Marxism on the Black subject position. Central to Gramsci's thesis is the notion of hegemony as a War-of-Position. For Gramsci, it is here that the revolution is to be fought, by wrestling away through influence, leadership and consent by

[13] Founded in 1983. The Zapatista (known as Zapatistas) is a far-left wing military movement that controls a vast area of territory in the Southern side of Mexico. Its uprising in 1994 had a global influence on many grassroots social movements battling colonisation and racism.

[14] A mode of thought that questions already established discourses as truths, poststructuralism argues that once a discourse is established it becomes part of the establishment. It becomes dominant and or official. It is an argument for an open-ended form of liberties and freedoms.

State organs, or Civil Society. It is these organs that both Fanon and Wilderson III theorise as inherently anti-Black. To interrogate the missing category, what Wilderson III calls the "Position of the Unthought", his text "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Black Society?" makes an interesting theoretical intervention. In this struggle to name and frame a language of protest, there have been many interventions. In the interview between Frank Wilderson III and Saidiya Hartman, Hartman searches for a language against hegemony and against celebrating defeat of the Black subject (Wilderson III, Hartman 2003, 4). In this thesis, I move along the same trajectory.

In her iconic text *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe*, Hortense Spillers speaks of the inability of the Black community to name itself. In her opening paragraph, in reference to the markings of slavery and their continuity post-slavery, she begins with "Let's face it. I am a marked woman, but not everyone knows my name." She goes on to mention these markings; "Peaches" and "Brown Sugar," "Sapphire" and "Earth Mother," "Aunty," "Granny," God's "Holy Fool," a "Miss Ebony First," or "Black woman at the Podium." (Spillers 1987, 65). Such markings she describes, as "a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasure of rhetorical wealth." (Spillers 1987, 65) As predicted by Du Bois's declaration of the 20th century as the century of the "colour line," Spillers regards the names as examples of what she terms "signifying property *plus*." Spillers' argument on Black people's inability to name is not an argument for class dimension but an inability to move from language to structure, to make real what comes from the imaginary. Under the rubric of non-racialism, the African nationalism of the ANC coupled with its land expropriation without compensation can only become representational talking points. They can be voted into but can never be legislated. To act on such a legislation would infringe on the human rights of minorities already protected by the Constitution. But this infringement is not clearly defined. Rather, what seems clear in what is infringed becomes the disturbing of power relations already in place. It is the coming together of different schools of thought that form Black Studies where a coalition that names its struggle begins to take shape.

2.2. Democracy – For its own sake

After 25 years of South Africa's post-apartheid democracy with its representational elections occurring every five years, the political space has become a turf for different voices of parties of all sizes. And recently it was opened up, allowing non-affiliated political candidates to run for local government elections independently. For the local government elections on 1st of November 2021, political parties began their campaign trail contesting for votes in different provinces. One of the many traditions is to line up basic promises that differentiate each party from the others. These

include launches of manifestos and other forms of campaign strategies. Given that the main party, the African National Congress, and the opposition Democratic Alliance have a history of governing their provinces in starkly similar fashion with regard to poor Black people, promises for basic amenities have been replaced by direct banter. In the main, the DA accuses the ANC of corruption while the ANC accuses the DA of racism. These accusations have become the main causes of factionalism for developing policies within the two parties. On numerous occasions, the DA has called for the end of “Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment”, labelling it racist and so promising its voters to scrap it as a policy if voted into power. For the DA, land expropriation infringes on democratic individual rights to private property. The ANC, in its past policy conference voted to amend Section 25a of the Constitution to allow for the expropriation of land without compensation. To note, Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment and Land Expropriation are two of the most contentious policies in the attempt to redress the past. The contested policy positions would lead to various events and squabbles within the parties that resulted in one of South Africa’s volatile riots sparked by the arrest of former president Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma. The arrest was seen as resulting from a factional battle within the ANC.

In the past six years, the DA has experienced numerous resignations of its Black leadership, citing lack of diverse voices. Cracks had been visible for a while, but the disintegration of race relations within the party began to show in 2014 when former parliamentarian Lindiwe Mazibuko left for a supposed one-year study sabbatical to Harvard University. On her return, she opted for a non-profit “Apolitical Academy” meant to develop future public leaders within the SADC region. A complete break rather than the said sabbatical. One can assume that things were so bad that Patricia de Lille, the former DA leader whose insertion into the party was through the dissolution of her political party, the Independent Democrats[15]. She would call for the coming together of the common GOOD as her new political party’s name post her resignation as Western Cape Mayor. General public verdict was that Mmusi Maimane was inevitable. His resignation led to him launching his One SA Movement, a platform for individual candidates, civil society, NGOs, and other smaller parties to unite. And Herman Mashaba (Former Johannesburg Mayor) was the following Black leader who went on to start a new party called People’s Dialogue.

While the ruling ANC first experienced one of its largest splits in the late 50’s that led to the formation of the Pan Africanist Congress. The ousting of its then President Thabo Mbeki saw its largest split led by Mosiuoa Lekota whom with Mbhazima Shilowa formed the Congress of the People (COPE). And in 2012, the ANC suspended and later expelled the president of its youth league Julius Malema accusing him of sewing divisions within the party. The narrative of disrepute towards the party did not stick since

[15] Independent Democrats: The party had its stronghold in the Western Cape as the third largest political party. The stronghold was in the Coloured communities. Part of the arguments surrounding Patricia de Lille joining the DA was to attract that vote. This is because at the time, the ANC had been governing the Western Cape for two terms and lost the province once De Lille joined the DA.

Malema had been the face and voice of land expropriation in its recent history. With the mother body hesitant on the issue of land expropriation, it was this policy dispute that was seen as reason for his expulsion. It is with his co-accused that Malema would rally Black movements and organisations to endorse the now third largest party, the Economic Freedom Fighters whose initial ideology became Marxist/Leninist/Fanonian - though nolonger pronounces its Fanonian leaning. While the language of the Democratic Alliance speaks Whiteness, the African National Congress's refusal to move beyond the talk of its radical land distribution programmes maintains anti-Blackness.

Just the brief analysis of the factional breakaways and expulsions seem to allude to the ANC and the DA as consistent with their banters. Former Black DA leaders tend to take on a similar path post resignation. A simple glance at the name and structure of their newly formed organisations, one can feel the suffocation that led to such resignations – the party represents one voice, a White voice. Within the ANC, except for one breakaway led by Mosiuoa Lekota's COPE, the ANC is plagued by its refusal to radicalise the distribution of land. This is evident in its two main ideological breakaways and expulsion from the late 50's that led to Pan Africanist Congress to the present Economic Freedom Fighters.

Recently, within the ANC's refusal to radicalise can be attributed to the recent images of chaotic wrecking, ransacking, and the burning of malls following former president Jacob Zuma's arrest that had the country's public intellectual community speculating and reaching different conclusions on why and how. Much of the discussions and debates were centred on the fact that poor Black people made most of those images circulating on all public platforms causing the chaos. In part this was seen as Zuma's support base, as well as the poorest of the poor. Food, furniture, building materials, cash from ATMs etc, became the primary focus of things to take home. Within the two sides of the African National Congress factions[16], there were claims of an insurrection from the Zuma camp in support of the former president, and the Thuma Mina camp accused RET of intentionally destabilising the country. This is because the riots began in KwaZulu-Natal, where there were already tensions building days prior in resistance to the intended arrest. During the week of the arrest, supporters had driven from all over to gather outside the home of Jacob Zuma. It was on the day before he handed himself in that Jacob Zuma gave a speech outside his home addressing the gathered crowds

[16] The two factions were between Radical Economic Transformation (RET) led by Jacob Zuma and the 'Thuma Mina' (meaning "send me") led by Cyril Ramaphosa. The RET faction pushed for a more inclusive redistribution of the country's resources while Thuma Mina was viewed as adopting more business-friendly policies that the RET labelled "White Monopoly Capital" (WMC). And globally, the RET faction had been strengthening relations with emerging economies under the banner of (BRICs) Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa and was realigning with the Eastern Bloc. Thuma Mina's business relations aligned more with Western countries – America and Britain to be specific. Because of the ANC's historical relations globally, Thuma Mina was accused of feeding the country back to old colonial masters (Britain) and apartheid supporters (USA) while RET was re-aligning with historical allies of the liberation party.

and asking for peace and calm. At the heart of the allegations[17] against him are accusations of state capture in collusion with the Indian family, the Guptas, who are said to have been at the centre of deciding the fate of ministerial positioning as well as tender corruption during his tenure as president of the country. But the incarceration[18] was because of his contempt of court. A day after his arrest, highway blockages started taking place in the KwaZulu-Natal region and a row of trucks were petrol bombed on the N3 at the Mooi River Plaza. Like a wildfire, the protest started to spread in different provinces with the main focus being shopping malls, some warehouses, and factories. Within the first two days of the riots, Zuma’s supporters demanded[19] that he be released from prison. But as the week progressed with the carnage spreading further to other provinces, Black people who were ransacking malls and factories said their participation was due to hunger and poverty.

As the imagery of the wreckage continued throughout the country, it was made clear that the police force was not able to deal with the extent of the chaos. More so, their lack of visibility meant they were said to have been turning a blind eye to the chaos as it unfolded. There were numerous videos of law enforcers who were found with goods from the wreckage. This led to calls for the deployment of the military being made from mostly the middle- and the upper-class section of the nation. With Ramaphosa as president, these events, coupled with the call evoked flashbacks of state violence and killing of poor Black people under his watch and command shortly before he took office. People started to talk of a second Marikana[20]. But it was not to be. Pockets of community policing and some taxi associations deterred some attempts of the destruction with little to no physical interaction or harm. Some 10 deaths resulted from the stampede at the Ndofaya Mall in Soweto. And the steam was also beginning to die down. The state seemed more invested in gathering intelligence on alleged instigators of the chaos while opposition parties blamed this on factional battles within the ANC.

It was at this moment that snippets of video footage showing Black people being manhandled, beaten, shot and some said to have been burnt were beginning to circulate on different social media platforms. These were traced back to the KwaZulu-Natal region as people started to inquire about what was happening in the mainly Indian community of Phoenix. Rumours

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[17] The upgrading of his homestead had also been a subject of a legal battle that led the court order to pay back the excess of the upgrade.

[18] “Zuma was charged with contempt of court after his refusal to appear before the State Capture Commission, popularly referred to as the Zondo commission.”

[19] SA ex-Prez Zuma’s supporters go on rampage, demand his release : The Tribune India

[20] Marikana, formerly known as Rooikoppies (Red Hills) is a township in Bojanala Platinum District Municipality in the North West province of South Africa. It was in Marikana that in 2012, Lonmin (London Mining) platinum mineworkers protesting for a decent wage were shot and killed in what today is known as the Marikana Massacre.
https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/women-marikana

had it that more than 200 people died during those few days in Phoenix. But official statistics concluded that around 36+ had been murdered, 33 of them being Black and three Indian. This sparked already existing racial tensions between the two communities. There were calls for calm, forgiveness and unity organised by the Phoenix community, and a night vigil with chants and placards with “lights of peace”. Business owners, mostly Indian, maintained that the violence was aimed at self-defence and the protection of their property, while the victims, some of whom managed to escape and witnessed the murders, defined it as racial profiling. They detail stories of people being shot at close range, brutal beatings and being burnt alive while passing through Phoenix coming from working night shifts. Most Black people who were killed were searching for food to stock and petrol to fill since these basics were becoming scarce due to the riot. This moment, which drew different emotions around the country and was characterised as the “Phoenix Massacre” became one of the rallying points for opposition party the DA.

Still Image 1: Democratic Alliance Leader John Steenhuisen is interviewed by SABC News field reporter Mondli Majola on the meaning of his political party campaign poster and his thoughts on Maseko who was one of the many victims of the Phoenix Massacre. (SABC News, 2021)

As preparations for the election were drawing nearer, political parties began campaigning and posters went up in different public spaces. A diptych in the typical portrait format hangs on a lamp post with a simple bold dark blue background. The text on the first poster reads “THE ANC CALLED YOU RACISTS” and continues to the second “THE DA CALLS YOU HEROES”. Historically, the KwaZulu-Natal region has been plagued by racial tensions between the migrant Indian community and the Zulu nation. These relations were systematically enforced by the racial grading of the apartheid government in 1948, with the racial hierarchy being

Whites, Indians, Coloureds, and Blacks. Socially, these hierarchies still form the DNA of South Africa post liberation. This is despite the post-apartheid language of non-racialism. Part of the posters took advantage of the comment made by Minister of Police Bheki Cele[21] on how criminal acts took a racial turn during a briefing of the media providing updates on the investigation. While on a campaign trail in the Eastern Cape, on her visit to the controversial Lesseyton Stadium, one of the DA's long-time leaders, Hellen Zille, is asked to comment on the social media backlash surrounding the Phoenix posters, and she swiftly dismisses Twitter as having no impact on their voters. Pressed to substantiate the meaning of "heroes", according to DA top brass, both John Steenhuisen (leader of the DA) and Dean Macpherson (DA KZN provincial chairperson) justified it as the right to the protection of private property. Whereas DA's Gauteng mayoral candidate Dr Mpho Phalatse evaded the question on the posters, accusing the media of not being in sync with people who are more concerned about service delivery than posters.

In response to the DA, the ANC expressed disgust and called into question the inhumanity of the opposition party. Meanwhile as a response to the unrest, Minister of Police Bheki Cele announced "Operation Show Your Receipt" to recover goods taken during the riots. The police, assisted by the military, were deployed to conduct a random sweep through townships where the riots took place to recover goods that were taken. Through these raids, the police invaded people's homes in different informal settlements, indiscriminately confiscating possessions police randomly suspected to have been taken during the riots. If the owner could not produce a receipt, then it was "loot". Its modus operandi, if it's new and "suspicious", the owner must produce a receipt for it. Nothing was spared; food, clothing, building materials, furniture and anything that did not resemble the rusty, dirty, grittiness of the informal settlement. Neither did absence protect one's property from the raid. While those Black people whose houses were raided needed to produce proof of payment, the raiding boots, batons, and bullets overrode the general protocol for a search warrant. Broadcast on online platforms and TV, the language of communication is "open", "where is the receipt", "take it away". Akin to the legal status of Blackness under the apartheid regime, and in Phoenix, the legality of Blackness and ownership is called into question. In Phoenix, the presence of Black bodies invited violence, while in the townships, Black ownership was called into question. The language of "looting" justified the inhumanity always present in the life of Black people. In the ruse for identification, Black people are always made to think that the documentation of ownership and belonging makes way for a more humane treatment. Whereas, on a normal day at a shopping mall in any of the townships, upon exit one produces a receipt and is patted down for stolen goods as a general practice. And no different in suburban areas with general policing. This language – looting – is a reminder of the logic that continues to justify land dispossession by invoking title deeds. When

[21] http://www.news24.com/witness/news/durban/cele-says-criminal-acts-in-phoenix-took-a-racial-turn-20210803

looting refers to historical land dispossession, a deed is produced or invoked as a proof of purchase. Here, the wars of land dispossession, because of the time and period, are seen as complex turf to navigate the return of the land. Whereas during the riots, despite the general Black business practice of sole trading that provides no proof of payment and purchase, this business practice generated no complexity but a principle. The pretext of corruption takes on a new meaning that justifies anti-Blackness. As such it becomes the application of law pertaining to the current ideological leaning of democracy that anti-Black violence is self-fulfilling.

Raymond Williams traces this language of officiation to the last decade and the first half of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively in his introduction of keywords that develop certain thoughts from common words to institutions as “a thing in itself” (Williams 1958, 13). ‘Democracy’, ‘art’ and ‘culture’ are among these words. They pivot moments that shaped the meaning of our current political history and thought. The talk of democracy, a Greek word for representation or a government of the masses comes into political effect through the French and American revolutions. From signifying a particular human skill to a grouping of imaginative and creative thoughts, Williams describes the artistic shift as a move from a generally skilled human being to a creation of a new word ‘aesthetic’ as a formal description of judgement that grouped the arts as ‘theatre’, ‘sculpture’, ‘literature’, ‘music’, and ‘painting’. From such an institutionalisation, humanity discovers a new kind of thinking being, a genius rather than the craftsman. Around the same period, Williams observes similar developments where the meaning of the word “culture” begins to shift into a different form. A move away from notions of natural growth as a determinant for human development, such changes then came with the institutions of ‘industry’, ‘class’, ‘democracy’, and the close relations with the ‘arts’ so that culture no longer represents a thing – a culture of something – but becomes “a thing in itself” – culture as a thing. These institutional developments from common word to a being for itself speak of a structured relation with the status of Blackness. While changes in the meaning of modern classifications did not present favourable relations within the contemporary world, and were viewed as transgressions, not once did they jeopardise and call into question the meaning of Whiteness. Even during the Middle Ages, with all types of races and ethnicities experiencing social death through slavery, Whiteness did not become constitutive in relation to slavery. Williams reminds us that democracy was viewed with the “hated Jacobinism”, as a form of “mob rule” and democrats (and I must emphasise that – *not Whites*) were seen as “dangerous and subversive mob agitators” (Williams 1958, 14). This is because the modern world becomes an introduction of different ontological relation where Blackness appears, “a priori, that is prior to the contingency of the ‘transgressive act’” (Wilderson III 2010, 18). So, the anti-Black violence that dominates our screens and various social media platforms, regardless of its whereabouts – the DA, ANC, Phoenix Indian community – these are not fleeting experiences of Blackness. Here we are witnessing a condition of

ontology. Modernity then becomes a moment where the word slavery as a general experience in the Master/Slave relation begins to "reconfigure the African Body into Black Flesh" (Wilderson III 2010, 18).

While it was clear from the different news broadcasters at the scenes of the raids that the "recovery" of the goods from the riots had no meaningful purpose to the owners since their return was impossible, what was clear about the launch of "Operation Show Your Receipt" is what it spoke to in the larger scheme in the policy making of the ruling party in relation to land expropriation without compensation. That the dispossession that has come to define Blackness is not just past occurrences in colonial wars, but in the refusal of current and future political structures, democratic or otherwise, to formulate meaningful legislation for redress. The question of the purpose, the constitutionality, and the wording of the expropriation of land without compensation bill has been the main barrier for the amendment. Its discourse has always masked different meanings in the ad hoc committee discussions between the ANC and the EFF, and has been the reason that three years later, the two largest Black parties failed to provide the needed wording back to the national assembly. With both its refusal to radicalise and its unfettered application of the law, there is a kind of unreasoned hostility that places Black people outside the ethical realm of modernity.

2.3. The framing of anti-Blackness in liberal democratic political campaigns

Just two days before the country casts its vote for the local election on 1 November 2021, I wake up to scroll my YouTube feed to a political campaign video of the Democratic Alliance released just a few minutes earlier titled "Imagine a South Africa without the Democratic Alliance – let's not play with fire". It is a short 30-second clip. I press play.

Still Image 2: Democratic Alliance voter campaign video for the 2021 election aimed at the ANC and the EFF. (Democratic Alliance, 2021)

The setting is a simple clear Black background. A slow zoom-in to the buttoned-up-in-a-navy-blue-suit-and-tie portrait of party leader John Steenhuisen. He appears already lit and enlightened. But he emerges from the dark bearing truths. Warnings he himself has seen and could not bear to keep from wondering South Africans. His face and tone are clear as he talks, looking straight at the camera, and addresses his audience;

> "Imagine… A South Africa without the Democratic Alliance.
>
> …and the EFF as the official opposition.
>
> Expropriation without compensation would be law…
>
> …and corruption and chaos would destroy what's left.
>
> Only the DA is big enough to stop the ANC and the EFF.
>
> We have proven that, where we govern, we get things done.
>
> But a vote for a smaller party only weakens the DA.
>
> Let's not play with fire." (Steenhuisen; 2021, 29)

Steenhuisen is clearly not addressing the general masses his party usually appeals to for votes. He is not casually clothed in jeans with the party T-shirt. The constituency is not the landless poor. This looks more serious.

No bad singing and dancing. No smiles. He is issuing a stern warning about an impending threat. We are seeing an almost weather forecast-like cameo at play against a threat of imagination made into law. This is the landless Black majority. They are everywhere in and as a mass of darkness. They make up the decline of the vote at the polls that gave them a chance to be an opposition as a party nationally, and the number 1 spot in the Western Cape. This is the vote that has given the ANC and the EFF their run as the first and third positions in general elections. So, Steenhuisen frames the complicity of the EFF and the ANC in the recent riots as the stuff of nightmares. He has seen the forecast in the changing climate. Up and dressed, now he is here to issue the warning.

But this warning is a call to arms. Stern and firm in his posture and demeanour, this is an audition for the role of Commander-in-Chief. All buttoned up and ready for war, he is addressing the boardroom, farm owner and the military. This campaign video is not an isolated project. Clearly, it follows on from the diptych poster campaign in Phoenix. He has already justified, as “heroism”, the massacre of Black people.

Still Image 3: While attending to the water crisis in Johannesburg, Democratic Alliance Leader John Steenhuisen is interviewed by SABC News field reporter Mondli Majola on the meaning of his political party campaign poster and his thoughts on Maseko who was killed in Phoenix. (SABC News, 2021)

Earlier, while on a campaign trail to protest water shortages and corruption, in an interview with SABC news journalist Samkele Maseko, Steenhuisen is in a sea of Black faces in a blue T-shirt. An immovable force in the face of ethical and moral indictment. As he fires on the failures of the ANC to keep the water running in the province, the name of Mondli Majola is thrown in by Maseko to see if he recognises it. He does not. He cynically asks jokingly if that is Maseko’s friend. In the political arena, a Black friend or comrade is akin to nepotism. Steenhuisen’s joke is not innocent but an attempt at delegitimising whatever may come of

Maseko's inquiry. Mondli is one of the victims of the Phoenix massacre. So Maseko presses on about the ethical stance of the "heroes" poster campaign in Phoenix. Steenhuisen blames it on the incompetence of the police and the ANC as cowards who retreated in the heat of the moment. Passionately and arrogantly, he maintains that the Phoenix community acted heroically and upheld the rule of law. But the faces behind him do not seem in sync with the argument. There are slight random nods, but the gathered crowd is largely blank and unresponsive. They seem tentatively patient and trying to register the back and forth. In their new party T-shirts, caps and *doeks*, they seem strategically placed as props.

In both clips, Blackness and darkness appear as the background. But Blackness appears tamed and out of sync with Steenhuisen and Maseko's back and forth. It is random and non-threatening. Quickly assembled for the camera. There, in all its absence. Darkness, on the other hand, consumes and demands that Steenhuisen be at his best and fully coordinated – Militant. It is a threat that lurks in the crevices that, if not dealt with, democracy and peace will cease to exist. It sucks and consumes, turning all into nothingness. Into itself – the void. Darkness here is Blackness untamed. Both are interchangeable. Blackness is darkness, and darkness is Blackness. Tamed or not. Wherever it appears, the arm of the law must always be already in place. In this instance, the law is anyone and everyone other than Black. Neither the Black-led ANC nor the police force under its rule seem legitimate. But the vigilantism of the Indian community constitutes legitimate policing. It proved its importance in the service of private property. And the ANC could not be outdone as it launched its own "Operation Show Your Receipt". To prove itself a capable ruling party, the ANC cannot be passive. It must prove beyond reasonable doubt that no darkness will consume this country under its rule. In a joint mission between the military and the police force, we are reminded of the darkness that is a constituent of the make-up of Blackness.

Anti-Black violence serves its own purpose. It must exist to normalise the violence of Black suffering. Again, this aesthetic of Black suffering is not experiential but ontological. It is part of the beauty that makes modernity what it is. As DA leader Steenhuisen reminds us in his campaign pitch, it is also futuristic. Walter Benjamin argued in the epilogue of *The Work of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction* that: "Fascism sees its salvation in giving the masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves. The masses have the right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property" (Benjamin 1935, 19). But for Black people, even speech is barred. The performance of rioting as an expression of Black condition could not go unaccounted for. There can be no collective thinking outside social death. So as masses, they cannot begin to think about property relations without invoking others' anxieties. Today's language of climate change speaks to similar anxieties of an impending rising tide. Fears of private properties submerged under water, torched from the blazing rising temperatures, and the storms that destroy indiscriminately. Of whole lands and

countries. Accordingly, as it is with “nature,” Black people are continually seen as having no record of real purpose for land. Once reclaimed, it grows weeds. No industriousness as a modern commodity. No proven economic purpose. So, their enslavement becomes as natural a phenomenon. Because the melting arctic glaciers sustain numerous living species and “stabilise” climate systems, its demise also invokes fears of unknown dangerous genomes that have laid dormant for centuries. A return of underdeveloped and backward species. A fermentation of unknown dangerous diseases both in genomes and ideas. But this climate change phenomenon has not been considered a natural response to that of enslavement by White machinations. Or a natural regenerative mechanism. Instead, it becomes a matter of the waning White ideas and life in general that become threatened and as such, a death to life as we know it.

When the world is called to respond on climate issues, regional, continental, and ideological differences are set aside to agree on treaties against the impending global threat. The 1791 Haitian slave revolution against the French demanded a similar call from the western hemisphere, forcing the newly formed first Black republic to pay reparations to France for property (slaves and land) loss. And the Zimbabwean land revolt would invite a barrage of western economic sanctions. Narrowing it back home, the unity of two rival colonialists, the English and the Dutch forming the Union of South Africa while ethnically dividing the native Black majority. Post-1994, the New South Africa in its nonracialism schema opens new territories for political party cross pollination, a new phase of coalitions. History reminds us that the ANC itself is not immune to anti-Black coalitions, as its recipient and participant. Failure in the idea of a Government of National Unity between the ANC and the NP pushed the waning National Party towards a coalition with the DA. An attempt to neutralise the ANC’s almost outright national government that took hold of the Western Cape. Whatever remnants of the NP in the internal conflict, later rebranded (New) National Party (NNP) in a bid as to appear repentant and non-racialist, broke away from the DA and joined the ANC in a move that sealed its fate. It is this stuff of nightmare, the consummation and submerging in and by Blackness and darkness that demands a mobilisation from Steenhuisen. This consummation, steeped in barbarism, neither escapes the revolting masses who suffer under the liberation movement nor the ruling ANC.

But when the appeal approaches the Black subject, there is an assumed nature of the kindness of Black people, a kindness invoked when the world is in need. This is a kind of moralism and forgiveness, not justice. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission played the institutional role of mediating between this forgiveness of perpetrator by the victim without full consent. Justice becomes a reversal of gains attained under White coloniality and its murderous machinations. It becomes antithetical to the work of post-racialism and national unity. This enforced kind nature seems in line with the balancing act of the natural environment that threatens today’s global life as we know it. With both climate change and Blackness

in irreversible states, the conclusion leans towards control measures to curb and reduce the catastrophe. It is this appeal, to the Black subject, that should be answered with no less than a demand for an impossible form of justice. As it is with all justice pertaining to Black people, a demand that refuses acknowledgements and legitimacy for current forms of institutions.

2.4. Practicing Refusal (A move towards a multiple negations)

Differentiating between forms of violence Black people face demands an understanding of its fewer spectacular moments, and a deep dive into the everyday life in its structural form. This is because Black life, in its normality, is already submerged in a state of violence. The different forms of violence against Black people, that ranged from the Phoenix massacre to the DA posters and the launch of “Operation Show Your Receipt”, is what Frank Wilderson III has termed “Objective vertigo”, what he theorises as “life constituted by, rather than interrupted by disorientation” (Wilderson III 2011, 3). In his essay “The vengeance of vertigo”, Wilderson III explores some of the strategies of refusal employed by the Black Liberation Army[22] during their many trials. They did not refuse to participate, but the participation became a refusal of the legitimacy of the United States to trial them. The inverse was to put the state on trial and elevate the questioning process from moral to ethical. As I demonstrated above on the illegitimacy of the ANC as a governing entity in the eyes of a White party politician, it is important to note that while Black people and their institutions are in positions of political power, it is only until a radical attempt at policy making takes place, till then they do not possess any legitimate power but function as policing mechanisms for Whiteness. “Operation Show Your Receipt” is one of many such mechanisms. It served no purpose in the possible return of the goods taken but functioned as an assurance towards White anxieties in case of a future land riot. The evidence of the ANC’s brutal mechanisms towards its own Black voting constituency becomes intramural. Black on Black rather than antagonistic. For Wilderson III, “structural violence” is not a class dynamic as it does not spare Black scholarly work that gravitates towards embracing Black insurgency. He sees Black radical scholarly work facing the reader while the “Black insurgent faces the police and the courts”

[22]Black Liberation Army was an underground Black millitary movement made up of mostly Black Panther Party members. It became more prominent as Black Panther Party became destabilized by the (FBI) Federal Bureau of Investigations’s Counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO) and therefore was in decline. It was formed as a result of what was viewed as an occupation by foreign oppressive entities in police uniforms brutalising the Black community. As a self-defence formation, it operated between 1970 till 1981. Their programmes went beyond local defence of the community and included prison breaks, bombings, and bank robberies (what they termed as expropriations).

(2011, 5). I want to explore how the language of engagement itself militates as a form of refusal, or protest.

What then is this refusal? It is the refusal of the world as we know it, a complete restructuring of its coordinates. The screams for Rhodes to fall and the demand for a decolonised curriculum were not questions of morality within the institution, but questions of ethical existence of the institution as we know it. Refusal is what Saidiya Hartman calls a “mode of Black thought and practice” (Weheliye, Campt, Hartman 2018, 47:25-50:22[23]). This mode is not the creation of but intensifies the language violence pertaining to Black people. Such demands are supposed regression of thought, of the rewriting of ideas Hortense Spillers believes to be the “proximity denied between ideas and Black life” and that it “has to do with the shadow that falls over the word as it approaches some supposed dread subject/object, imagined inhabiting a territory of power and danger” (Spillers 2013: 7). Here, the language, the demand is for a different dimension, a different world and therefore a different being. Žižek asserts that intolerance has less to do with the immediate experience of the intolerable, but it has to do with the image or figure as it circulates as the backdrop of our cultures. He succinctly elaborates that…

> “The same principle applies to every political protest: when workers protest their exploitation, they do not protest a simple reality, but an experience of their real predicament made meaningful through language. Reality in itself, in its stupid being-there, is never intolerable: it is language, its symbolisation, which makes it such. So precisely when we are dealing with the scene of a furious crowd, attacking buildings and cars, lynching people, etc, we should never forget the placards they are carrying and the words which sustain and justify their acts” (Žižek 2008, 67).

In the DA’s political campaign posters, what we read as justified is the anti-Black violence that took place in Phoenix. As a campaign, so long as the violence is directed at the Black subject, the Indian community is promised immunity and protection. These posters accord to the vigilantism a post-war warrior status just short of medals of honour. Given the vote to govern, not much is left to imagination as to what the DA would do in such a situation. But this unity is neither ideological nor principled. There is no riding into the sunset between the White-led party and an Indian community. This is not the English/Afrikaner Union of South Africa form of coalition. Indians are not White, nor can they fit the symbolic fold. They are needed as numbers and in numbers at the polls. Seen as ground soldiers merely on the frontlines. Rallied, not for their own gain but against Black people. These posters serve a dual purpose of honouring post the event, and as recruitment pamphlets. The Phoenix

[23] See video lecture – Refusal and Radical Hope: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXQqyzTP1zU

community can now join a party where their anxieties and Afrophobia will be honoured and allowed a platform that serves a higher purpose. On the above extract, Žižek reminds us that political protest placards are where we find the language that speaks the pain and grievances of the oppressed. The riots might have been sparked by what was seen as an injustice against former President Jacob Zuma’s arrest, but they moved beyond that trajectory to the underlying social scourge and the pain of Black suffering. Protest placards do not merely make demands and hold the governing party to its promises, they make demands, are vulgar and informal. As an aesthetic form, they lack the formality of political posters that are displayed in public spaces such as on streetlights and walls. Tightly gripped in the hands that form a Black power fist, protest placards are one with the moment. They do not market an upcoming event and are usually spontaneous and makeshift, made of cardboard created just before, and during, the protest. They deal with the now, but in themselves address underlying social issues.

As I study these moments attempting to make sense of the environments, I often have to pay heed that the language of protest does not distort away from its intended goal. In that I do not play politics that seeks to make palatable, radical protest to established institutions. As the language becomes more refined and the protest reaches a point of acceptability, as it is with Spillers’ caution against “Black Studies” suddenly becoming a “curricular object”, it is pertinent to try as much as I can to stay the course no matter the cost. What I mean by staying the cause is pushing the language in familiar terms to Žižek’s reading of Hegel, that “when we think, we think in language against language, so therefore our articulations come in the form of ‘torturing language.’” This means avoiding what Fred Moten sees as “Black Studies” doing more for the university than the broader Black Community. This was also Spillers’ initial disappointment of the 70s shift in Black Studies. She says;

> “I believe that the transformation was unforgettable – between street protest and the podium, the interface was porous and the door a swinging one, while the discourse, from one locus to the other, spoke the same rhetorical accents and timbres … a paradox … of a schizoid (ambiguous) form; that is, a politically defined activism that not only ‘remembers’ itself as such, but ‘remembers’ itself as such through the filter of the historical, now compelled to meditate on its reasons.” (Spillers 2003, 3).

Since the art of political campaigning exhibited by both the ruling and opposition parties take the tone where anti-Blackness functions as a rallying motif of violence, they enclose any dialogic possibilities between Black people and other groups. Now, the language of protest moves beyond that of morality of the political structure, to its ethical existence. The language becomes inward, not of a spiritual type. It becomes a study of self as a group. Moten suggests that it is important for “Black Studies”

to start to look out for itself now. Not suggesting a retreat from the university, and not from politics, but to intensify the language – what Heidegger calls the “house of being”. This takes us back to Spillers’ formulation that “Black culture is critical culture”. But I am not moving towards a critical culture that sustains current structures of white supremacy and dwells on the programmatic, but a metacritique that builds for its own sake.

Chapter 3: The Art that keeps on giving

"To be contemporary is to answer the call that
the era throws at us by its darkness"
Giorgio Agamben[24]

When I was still an active member of a Black consciousness social movement, one of the many conversations concerning the future growth of the movement had to do with participation in parliamentary party politics. The central question was, how would we participate in bourgeois politics as a social movement without falling into the neo-liberal trappings that have subsumed many liberation movements? The driving motor was that we would use politics to end politics. Obviously, this did not mean that there would be no more politics, but that because the framing and meaning of what politics are today is self-generating, our duty as a movement would be to deepen this analysis and expose the parliamentary politics that have absorbed even the more radical parties and movements. So, what did we mean by ending politics then? It meant that we use politics not as an end in itself but as a means to an end. Meaning that the language and grammar that shapes politics was the core in the structure of participation. One of the ways in which the language of radical politics gets watered down is when the question of ethics is substituted by that of moral demands. It is this moral appeal from the perpetrators of humanitarian conditions to the humanistic rather than the application of law that allows philanthropy to trump justice.

Art's healing properties, such as the branch or genre called art therapy[25] tends to have a synonymous affinity with the plights of the oppressed. It has been relegated to the realm of the open expression to uplift the spirit. As an institution, art therapy is said to have formalised in the 20th century. As such, it generated many definitions that can be generalised into two categories: first, *Art as Therapy,* a much more inward-looking creative expression intended to tap into inherent healing powers. This form of therapy embraces the process of art making as therapeutic. It is

[24] In an interview with Juliette Cerf, philosopher Agamben shares his views on the contemporary condition. (accessed 09/03/2021) https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/blogs/news/1612-thought-is-the-courage-of-hopelessness-an-interview-with-philosopher-giorgio-agamben

[25] Art Therapy: Using treatment based on artistic production, this forms part of humanistic psychiatry. By tapping into the human mind, it is intended to diagnose and cure the emotional world of human beings. As a profession, according to Farokhi, it developed in Britain and the USA during the post-war centuries (Farokhi 2011, 02).

this process of making art that delivers the generative effects of “spontaneity”, “imagination” and “authenticity” as a path towards “emotional reparation” and “recovery” (Farokhi 2011, 02). Second, *Art Psychotherapy* involves both the patient and the psychiatrist. It uses art as a symbolic form of “communicating issues”, “emotions” and “conflicts” (Farokhi 2011, 02). The creative result of the visual language is meant to enhance the patient-to-therapist exchange, to “achieve insight”; “resolve conflicts”, “solve problems”, towards a “positive change”, “growth”, and “healing” (Farokhi 2011, 02). Therefore, art therapy becomes a vehicle for exploring personal healing artistically. It was the art education and psychoanalytic tradition of the 1930s that developed the language and literature recognised for professional training courses of the field.

I argue that art therapy is the closest artform where legitimacy is neither purely aesthetic nor pure theory, but clinical. It is an open expression where the creator of the work faces a legitimate need to heal, and therefore art production becomes a form of recovery. Hayley Berman’s non-governmental organisation, Lefika La Phodiso[26], is the first art therapy organisation that was started to address adverse psychological effects of apartheid in townships. But such an open expression tends to pander to the emotional side of things and as such, tends to function as a policing mechanism against would-be “ill-meaning” harmful ideas. It demands both an ethic and moral not afforded to the oppressed. In this realm of creativity and activism, the war of words tends to be the first site of exchange with power. Negotiations, demands, threats and or just a complete break in communication where each side speaks to and against.

Clinical therapeutic arts and charity organisations are not simple projects of goodwill of those in positions of power. I argue that it is these well-meaning intentions that divert radical demands for justice into moral obligations. Instead of alleviating and eliminating the problem, it gets prolonged. The altruism and moral gestures of those in power, in this instance, Whiteness, mystifies the suffering that manifests itself in anti-Blackness. Whiteness becomes the “ethic” that demands and upholds morality standards from the oppressed and suffering Black people. They are forced into a moralistic form of optimism. Any radical form of resistance becomes ungrateful pessimism.

[26] A seSotho term meaning “the rock of healing/ of holding”. Previously named Art Therapy Centre, this is a non-governmental organisation that was established in 1993.

3.1. A striving for a new humanity?

Resistance is not a simple struggle for freedom, it is a multilayered guard against manipulation for co-option. It is a push for and against concrete ideas. This is participation as refusal. Neither a contradiction nor a paradox, but rather a search for language as a tool of analysis. We are forced towards an analysis of power that is as broad in its narrowing down towards the intended antagonism – White supremacy and anti-Blackness. What facilitates this relationship and how? The relationship between creatives and power makes for an interesting analysis in how, as in Naledi Pandor's inaugural speech at the launch of the University of the Western Cape's (UWC) flagship on critical thought, the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR) in October 2015, that gave a view on the role of humanities as a striving towards a certain utopia – of art as a practice of human rights.

At the height of the 2015 Rhodes and FeesMustFall student protests, in a Facebook post, the incumbent Wits SRC President Mcebo Dlamini described a general characteristic in White people as Hitler-like and made a statement in admiration of Adolf Hitler's organisational abilities (Naidoo 2015). This obviously did not sit well with the then-Minister of Higher Education Naledi Pandor who, in her inaugural address at the CHR launch seized the opportunity to iron out several issues, as I sat in the audience listening, she identified as the stumbling block of higher education, specifically, the lack of government support towards Humanities. She begins with a critique of the humanities' reputation as a problem of academics rather than that of politicians, and that its restoration depends completely on academics. And acknowledges this historical occasion of the CHR launch as proof of this restored credibility. With time and maturity, these flagships are expected to grow into centres of excellence. But the minister is conflicted by the title of "African Humanities" in that it suggests a limitation by conceptual design. She is rather unsettled by the intention of critical thought in the Humanities in Africa. This limitless expansion and interdisciplinary direction of the humanities opens itself up to new sociopolitical concerns with the likelihood to approach demands towards establishing new policy frameworks. Such humanities encompass a range of disciplines from the clinical sciences to philosophy. Her critique of the hierarchical arrangement of languages and other disciplines above the arts assigns the work of creative imagination within the same realm. If not higher. Because it is the work of imagination that allows for different world views and approaches. She is hopeful and encouraging that this work of imagination will reinscribe new ways of imagining the curriculum. It is this lack of imagination in the current humanities curriculum she

attributes to the reputational fracture that plagues institutional teaching in what she characterises as a lack of empathy that has resulted in what she deems a "celebration" of Hitler by a student as a regression of human rights.

I argue that minister Pandor's empathy moves unidirectionally. While it is true that the current university curriculum, as it is with the university policy, lacks empathy for past atrocities, it is precisely the support and defence from White people against the removal of Rhodes as a symbolic figure of atrocities committed against Blacks that triggered Dlamini's utterances. Not only did universities all over South Africa carry on displaying these symbolic figures under the rule of the ANC, but the demand for their removal triggered a defence that saw these demands as regressive. Minister Pandor's encouragement of the work of imagination is already at play in the student protest. But it is not what can be anticipated as imagination. It is not the all-inclusive non-racial imagination that makes for a great liberated South Africa.

Hitler's atrocities against Jewish people became a universal standard of what a violation of human rights is. While apartheid is recognised as a crime against humanity, the figure of Rhodes is praised more for his contributions to the structuring of contemporary South Africa than vilified for his atrocities. Therefore, I argue that as much as the work of imagination is encouraged by the minister, it cannot be Black in radical thought. This imagination cannot challenge, as its fundamental objective, current White power. The work of imagination must be that of post – how to live within the atrocities as values of White power. This is the work of adjusting to the world rather than challenging its anti-Blackness. While I concur with her argument on the wording of the new humanities as limiting in scope, I argue that the ideological investment in the expansion from "African Humanities" to the "Humanities in Africa" take for granted notions of Blackness. I suspect that the minister's reading of African Humanities reeks of pre-existing precolonial standards and notions, while Humanities in Africa, suggests participation and insertion of Africa within Western universals.

Minister Pandor insinuates that ministerial support for humanities is largely dependent on the structure of its moral character. I argue that this character is already built into the current value system. This further suggests how earlier pronouncements by would-be justice of the first democratic Constitutional Court Albie Sachs in his text "Preparing Ourselves for Freedom" (Sachs 1991, 187) arguing that "We should ban ourselves from saying that culture is a weapon of struggle" and alluding to the slogan as "an impoverishment of our art" (1991, 187), gives us a

glimpse of the current structure of both representation and legislation. Both Albie Sachs and Naledi Pandor's arguments on the humanities' organisational potential are triggered by radical moments of the rise and the resurfacing of Black Consciousness and African Nationalism. It must be noted that the apartheid government's call to ban Black radically inspired art itself comes just at a time of the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of liberation movements such as the ANC, PAC and the SACP. Albie Sachs' cautionary statements take place at the height of negotiation towards a democratic South Africa. Such transitional moments, the policing of radical Black art alert us of the building blocks to the types of democratic institutions to anticipate post 1994. The idea here seems to move from the premise that the health of our democratic institutions is dependent, not on dismantling White supremacy, but on policing any traces of such intensification.

I suggest a thorough reading of Mcebo Dlamini's statements. I argue that both statements, on the behaviour of Whiteness exhibiting traits of Nazism and the admiration of his organisational proficiency are not out of character in relation to the resistance exhibited by the institutions and individuals to remove colonial monuments. Central to any movement is its organisational acuity – the art of mobilisation. An organisation is not an end in itself, but one is able to extract elements towards different ideological ends. However, if we are to revert to the basic human rights aspects of the promised liberation by the ruling party, in this regard, "Free Education", we are met not just with the remnants of the past but that the student protest and the response to it laid bare the foundations of Anti-Blackness.

In *Language, Violence, and Non-violence*, Žižek critiques the means by which the language of violence and non-violence takes shape. In his departure from Walter Benjamin's question and conclusion on whether non-violence for conflict resolution is possible, Žižek argues that it resides precisely at the point where non-violence makes accessible human agreement as a sphere of "understanding language". For Žižek, such a conclusion on the function of language presupposes its "symbolic order as that of the medium of reconciliation and mediation, of peaceful coexistence, as opposed to the violent medium of immediate and raw confrontation" (Žižek 2008, 60). From this departure then language takes on a different form. The language of the law, its demands for behaviours implicitly legitimise and justify authority. Already, as the law sets the conditions that consolidate power relations between White-supremacy and Anti-Blackness, it sets the parameters in the language of response. Meaning that state institutions determine what laws are suitable for ethical and unethical behaviour even as it relates to protest.

3.2. Framing the struggle

Consistency in whether this system of oppression is said to be beginning or ending is tied by the policing of Black thought. Apartheid, according to JM Coetzee, "flowered out of desire and the hatred of desire" (1991, 2). Despite being excluded in future debates, we still see this consistency in the works of one leading figure of the Afrikaner Broederbond: Geoffrey Cronjé. His influence and proposition aided in setting up the censor arm of the government, the South African Publications Control Board of which his suggested policy directions on ethnic relations in the years 1945-48 became the backbone and principle of the apartheid government. It is in the intersection that ties literature and law that the struggle into what Mark Sanders has characterised as madness of the law – a law of banishment not just at the level of ideas but an enactment of a legislation on what was viewed as a "Bantu problematic", a "sanitary engineering" problem of a "physical presence" whose solution was a "draining away" (1991, 4). Black Consciousness here becomes that reminder of the ANC's "desire and the hatred of desire"; of post coloniality rather than anti-colonial. If apartheid was premised on the ideas of Black presence as a sanitary problem to be engineered away, it must then be argued that the post-apartheid South Africa serves as its metonymy as explained by JM Coetzee (1991, 26) that:

> "…as we examine the sanitation syndrome closely, it is not a metaphor we find at work but metonymy. In a first sequence of metonymic displacements, we see the germ of infection suspected of being harboured by the Black carrier being displaced on to his breath, his sputum, his mucus, and then on to the Black *as Black* who houses that breath, that spittle, that mucus. From being a carrier who is Black, the suspect becomes the Black who is a carrier; from being a vehicle of infection, Blackness itself becomes the infection, therefore subject to public health measures like isolation/segregation … In the next step, the germ of infection is rapidly displaced, in a kind of fluid motion whose model is the circulation of the blood, throughout the Black body. The Black body becomes the generator of Black essence (as we speak of "essence of rose")" (Coetzee 1991, 26).

Even while the crude isolationist/segregationist mechanisms of apartheid seem to no longer exist or be legislated in the democratic South African law and constitution, they have not been eradicated as ideological foundations in the democratic transition. Hidden under notions of non-

racialism and multiracialism, anti-Black ideologies linger. They are undead. And instead, it is the combative efforts where Black radical demands dig deeper than surface politics of non-racialism and threaten anti-Black ideological foundations that the State with all its mechanisms reverts to a system restore. Here, under a Black government, the democratic State built on the same foundations reacts in the same fashion. Coetzee (1991, 26) continues…

> "Though *Black blood* is the name conveniently applied to this essence, it is understood in the first place that Black blood stands for Black semen (a kind of semen possessed by both sexes) but in the second place that this "standing-for" is not stable, is not an equivalence, a metaphor: the circulation of "Black blood" through the Black body is nothing more or less than the circulating power of metonymy itself, one site unendingly displaced onto another. Thus *the Black body is the place of metonymy*; and if this seems a slippery concept, a concept hard to grasp, hard to get a hold on, hard to pin down, that is because the place of metonymy is a non-place, because Its essential "place" is the place where it has just been or is just about to be" (Coetzee 1991, 26).

Coetzee gives us a concise theoretical formulation of the diagnosis and application of remedying what apartheid saw in Black people, what it saw as Blackness to legislate its anti-Black policies. He moves from the problem of the Black body being diseased to the Black body as a disease for which there can be no cure but perpetual isolation. Here, Blackness does not possess any redeemable qualities that make being in the world possible. Any sign of it is to be made to disappear. But as with most permanent ailments, once confined and neutralised, it must be under constant surveillance because it does not belong – it cannot belong.

Post-Apartheid then becomes a state of living with the disease. As a metonymic state where Black existence is life post its death, it is this life lived as death that makes it impossible to speak of a time prior and to desire a life lived in a world since both require an imagined past and future outside the White world. Such an impossibility results from an inbuilt antagonism between Black radical thought and the White world. This is where the slippery concept to think anti-colonial/racist than post-colonial/racism within the confines of post-apartheid institutions demands the suppression of any traces of Black radical thought. Black radical thought becomes that semen, the poisonous blood that flows within post-apartheid institutions, whose results to date have demanded the fall of Rhodes and a decolonised curriculum.

Fully aware of the power relations, Albie Sachs' call to ban the weaponisation of Black culture, and Naledi Pandor's reprimand of the

Black student’s utterances are calls and reminders of the function of a post-apartheid ethical institution. We are reminded of the ideas that jeopardise the smooth running of the post-apartheid state. It is in this state of being in the post that radical Black thought is frowned upon; that there can be no precise demand for redress without considering ideas that already hold together current structures, and that contemporary struggles are no longer shaped by antagonism but a perpetual open dialogue.

Unlike the supposed closed system of the apartheid government where laws and legislations drew strict social parameters, JM Coetzee translates the idea of post-apartheid as a space always open to suggestions. Where every problem in need of solving receives its own legislation. It is this accumulation in the perpetual openness that nothing gets narrowed down enough to be solvable. So, the legislation merely becomes accumulative unto itself. And it is not that the legislation has any meaningful weight besides the suggestion in need of attendance. But the attendance accumulates further suggestion that perpetually loses all meaning.

3.3. Human rights, philanthropy and art healing...

It is the demand for human rights in the language of protest that conceals structural power while rejuvenating the souls of those who served it faithfully. If these moments of post-atrocities mean anything in the language of justice imposed by the logic of human rights, they merely set up institutions where the language of peaceful coexistence is said to take charge as a means to an end: Where the peaceful coexistence seeks to legitimise power relations already in place. As the “ideology of the new world order after 1989” (Douzinas 2007, 12), according to Douzinas, [human rights] became the language that “distorts both difference and otherness” (Douzinas 2007, 8) emptying justice of any emancipatory attributes. As such, it is the ambiguity in what Douzinas calls “semiotic and semantic openness” (2007, 8) where its scope in the field of references is far reaching with no concrete theory nor empirical description. Hayley Berman’s art therapy NGO, Lefika La Phodiso, begins as an establishment to deal with adverse symptoms and effects of apartheid violence in South Africa. While these effects are yet to be solved or even dealt with concretely, there is a shift in the organisation’s goals towards HIV/AIDS, crime, and poverty. Without any legal recourse, therapy

obscures and mystifies effects of apartheid. This ambiguity is to be found in categories less defined but no less legally protected depending on the subject at hand. We are talking about liberty, equality, dignity, tolerance, and freedoms which are said to be moral claims that are derivatives of legal law.

Morals as desires, suggests Douzinas, should be read rather as prescriptive (ought to be) than descriptive (are). Because the prescriptive is a subject of jurisprudence, it cannot be enforced until it is made descriptive as legal law. As Douzinas elaborates that "rights" do not exist as "legal entitlements" but appear as "moral demands". Unlike legal law, which is unique to a specific legal system, human rights result from the United Nations' first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and therefore encompass a moral demand from all nations. This jurisprudent power of universal demand (exclusive to powerful nations) can enforce universally a moral right that nullifies legal laws of nations deemed to be in breach of basic human rights as we saw demonstrated in the Nuremberg trials against Eichmann's arguments that he was acting within the legal bounds of the Nazi state law. However, applied to the other outside the bounds of human fold, Douzinas argues that the ideologies of domination and oppression in the guise of human rights as defensive tools become a re-emergence of empire.

It is in the use of rights as means to define humanity that Douzinas traces the meaning of human of human rights as it derives from "humanism and humanitarianism", and rights, both as a tool and their role in nullifying any ideological inclination that attempts to think and act outside or against White power and capitalism. Douzinas correctly argues and demonstrates how both the use of human rights and humanitarianism first need to be understood from the notion of humanism as a Western thought drawn from concepts of the human and humanities. He first draws the notion of humanity from the word *humanitas*, which was translated from the Greek *paideia* (word for culture and education). It is this culmination of the meeting of two Western civilizations (Greek and Roman) whose competing ideologies would lead the Roman empire to forge its superiority onto the world. The 18th century would further cement the concept of "man" (humanity) as a historical subject of classical and Christian metaphysics whose meaning today lies firmly expressed in the postmodern humanist battle between universalists and relativists. For universalists, everywhere, man/humanity is encompassed by a single moral truth while relativists believe in the context that binds each moral truth. As such, this truth, universalist or relativist, is constituted in the symbolic order of language and law, of language as law, and law as language but is never stable. This is because for Douzinas;

> “The ‘human’ of rights or the ‘humanity’ of humanitarianism can be called a ‘floating signifier’. As a signifier, it is just a word, a discursive element, neither automatically nor necessarily linked to any particular signified or meaning. On the contrary, the word ‘human’ is empty of all meaning and can be attached to an infinite number of signifieds. As a result, it cannot be fully and finally pinned down to any particular conception because it transcends and over-determines them all.” (Douzinas 2007, 55)

He attributes this to the fact that at the level of semiotics, rights are made up of “legal and linguistic signs, words and images, symbols and fantasies” independent of but can be attributed to any entity open to being analogised, meaning that its capability to be put into language opens it to an ability to attain rights. As institutional and subjective entities, Douzinas attributes the success of rights in ontology, in that “rights contribute to the creation of human identity” (Douzinas 2007, 7) where they function as individual desires to assume public power. However, such desires, put to test under the logic of anti-Blackness, dismally fail to translate rights into concrete legality. Because of their symbolic and political status, they fail to translate Blackness into a subjecthood. But Douzinas’s formulation of the “human” and “rights” as “floating signifiers” is not a denial of what he calls an “empirical person who enjoys the ‘rights of men’” as being White heterosexual male, but that it extends to other signifieds outside the grammar of Blackness.

This is why the Belgian King Leopold II’s atrocities in the Congo are seldom mentioned in the same light as those of Adolf Hitler. They did not yield treaties that translate to legal rights and laws against anti-Blackness. Instead, they are a subject of commemoration at the museum of African art that Leopold founded and funded as well as his International African Association. His legacies leave no doubt in context, as a civilising missionary, the precursors of the beginnings of modern philanthropy and humanitarianism. Leopold’s legacy still haunts the Congo today – the enslavement and mutilation of the Black body for resources. Just as well as the coup that led to the killing of prime minister Lumumba, with the support of Belgium and the Central Intelligence Agency to install Mobutu Sese Seko to reign over Congo (which he renamed Zaire). In search of recognition and international legitimacy, Mobutu’s $10-million spectacle in the form of a boxing bout “Rumble in The Jungle” between George Foreman and Muhammad Ali, coupled with an all-star music concert from the USA, Congo and South Africa reeks of contemporary humanitarian and philanthropic events we witness under the banner of human rights interventions. The language of art and sport as a symbolism of unity

resurfaces. The figure of Ali, in all his social stature cannot convert his protests into any legal demands for justice.

But philanthropy does not only apply to the figure of the dominated or suffering Other as theorised by Douzinas on the needs and desires of Western subjectivity. Winston Churchill also found solace in what he called the “Muse of painting” that was charitable to his wellbeing as he could not contribute but be a spectator of the war after leaving his Admiralty in May 1915. His essay “Painting as Pastime” (Churchill, 1932) would later inspire another former Chief in Command of an allied force of the British, George Bush Jr. Post his destructive legacy in the Middle East through the invasion of Iraq, the healing mechanism for the military veterans who suffered from all sorts of war-related illnesses – post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and so on – the arts became the sanctuary for both the initiators of war as well as its combatant survivors. CreatiVets[27] as a therapy for some of the combatants, and using his foundation, George Bush Jr would work on a series of portraits of the injured veterans to raise funds for their “cause”. Both Churchill’s denied participation in the war and Bush’s post-war effects on his troops evoke a narcissistic mirror image that renders them victims in need of interventions. To humanise themselves, they render these interventions in the form of charity as a right to heal their suffering souls. Churchill’s inability to participate in the war as well as Bush’s post-war presidency make them the unfortunates in need of their own charitable artistic endeavours. So, when minister Pandor demands that the humanities exemplify a moral character of human rights, she does not take into consideration the anti-Blackness of such an ethics and its power relation.

A major factor in the call for free education was the protest demanding that Rhodes Fall. But Rhodes occupies a different position in the recent history of the African National Congress. His colonial ambitions that resulted in policy structure for land dispossession, to his naming a country – Rhodesia – eponymously would later lead to his “(for)giving” gestures to collaborate with the most renowned name of the oldest liberation movement in Africa long after his death. Now the Mandela Rhodes Foundation is one of the most celebrated funders of many young leadership scholarships among the many who asked for the fall of Rhodes.

[27] ”According to the organisation’s website CreatiVets’ goal is to offer opportunities for relief and healing for the men and women who have sacrificed so much for our country. Our purpose is to use various forms of art, including songwriting, visual arts, music, and creative writing, to help disabled veterans cope with service-related trauma (ie, post-traumatic stress, or PTS) by fostering self-expression in a way that allows them to transform their stories of trauma and struggle into an art form that can inspire and motivate continued healing. Through compassion, we are helping veterans live again.” https://creativets.org/about/

It was founded in 2003 through a proposition by Professor Jakes Gerwel, a trustee of the Nelson Mandela Foundation and Chancellor of Rhodes University who in 2002 approached Dr John Rowett, the CEO of the Rhodes Trust. After the envisioned union, according to the Mandela Rhodes home page, the Rhodes Trust would later propose the symbolic act to partner as a gesture of "reconciliation and reparations"[28].

Here is a moment in which the past shapes the future. The name Rhodes codifies precursors to the 1913 Native Land Act[29] and Apartheid in the form of the Glen Grey Act[30] as its founding document. Along with his charitable acts, Rhodes began by occupying the position that is today central to many of what Žižek would call "cultural capitalists". His brief explanation, "in the morning he grabs the money ... and in the afternoon, he gives half of the money back to charities" (Žižek 2011, 1:32-1:40). Beyond the grave, Rhodes has surpassed what Žižek calls the "old type" and is well within today's notables who have managed to synthesise the "grabbing and giving", not by way of accumulation itself but in symbolic display of colonialist (grabber) and freedom fighter (give half away) as clearly stated in the website's blurb's: "Our Story; Nelson Mandela and the Rhodes Trust" that "The eternally provocative name of The Mandela Rhodes Foundation is a call for beneficiaries of colonialism to participate in and contribute to the repairing the damage of colonial times and building a more just society". Today's infusion, or the commercial approach to bringing the two dimensions between "taking and giving", what Žižek describes as "anti-consumerist consumerist duty" is best illustrated in his Starbucks and logic of chocolate laxative analogy[31] where two seemingly opposed dimensions perform one and the same gesture. For Žižek, the selling tagline for Starbucks is that your consumerism is not just buying into a commercial product but buying into an ethic that redeems your consumerism such as fair trade and improved coffee growing practices.

[28] Find the origin story on the website: https://www.mandelarhodes.org/about/story/

[29] The Act became law on 19 June 1913, limiting African land ownership to 7 percent and later 13 percent through the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act of South Africa. The Act restricted black people from buying or occupying land except as employees of a white master. It opened the door for white ownership of 87 percent of land, leaving black people to scramble for what was left. https://www.gov.za/1913-natives-land-act-centenary

[30] Glen Grey Act (1894) – As minister of the Cape Colony, Cecil John Rhodes assigned an area for exclusively "African development", this was called "a Bill for Africa". On the contrary, it served to enforce alienation of Black people to the margins of the country. And in return unify the Dutch and British against quarrelling over such policies. The policy was proposed in a speech delivered in parliament. You can find the speech in the link: https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/glen-grey-act-native-issue-cecil-john-rhodes-july-30-1894-cape-house-parliament

[31] The function of humanitarian interventions (charitable interventions from the rich) today is to create a false sense of urgency. The wealthy create solutions in the form of charity to avert the same humanitarian disasters that made them wealthy. They become saviours of the situation they created.

So, what makes such a union of two seemingly naturally opposing figures if, on their own accord, they could have gone on their own paths. Precisely this; the concept of reconciliation. And Fanon would have been spot on in reminding us of how Whiteness reaches out to its Black other for human sustenance whenever it becomes too mechanised. Mandela is the embodiment of the post-1994 ethic of reconciliation. What is being reconciled in this union is both the past and its present, as the past as its presence. And what then do we make of the promising young leaders who have seen fit to endorse the Fallist movement while under the "care" of the fund? Best and Hartman open their co-authored text on the limits of redress and abolishing in "Fugitive Justice" that "By 1787, it was already too late. It was not too late to imagine an end to slavery, but it was too late to imagine the repair of its injury." (2005, 1). The Mandela Rhodes Foundation is premised on two principles – reconciliation and reparations. So here the students must have thought; By 2015, it was already too late. It was not too late to imagine the end (in the "formal" sense) of apartheid, but it was too late to imagine its repair. Clearly, the application for and acceptance of the fund was not itself an acknowledgement of the repair of injuries of colonisation and anti-Blackness. What is clear from the call for Rhodes to Fall resonates with Hartman and Best's reading of Ottobah Cugoano on the evils of slavery and how, while the extent of destruction of that system could not be imaginably reparable, and therefore "any legal remedy inevitably narrow and necessarily inadequate," still, a "just commutation" is not opposed to remedy "unjust", though not at the expense of "exhausting claims for "justice"" (2005, 2).

The Mandela Rhodes Foundation "call for beneficiaries of colonialism to participate in and contribute to repairing the damage of colonial times and building a more just society" assumes a framework of restoration and making right, wrongs of colonialism. But can this framework be attended to within the limited scope of law? If so, we have to ask what was the damage and how can it be repaired within the framework? And importantly, what is "just" within the framework of this law? And or what is the constituent make-up of the coloniser and the colonised under the law? In a "democracy" structured on an oral moralist tradition that underlies as its primary, a strange sense of memory loss coupled with an inability to grieve – the propounded notions of "forgive and forget" – renders claim for any legal justification of crimes under colonialism null and void. It is this moralist position that polices calls for justice and renders those who are still disgruntled not in line with the new democratic principles and still hungover on the past. This clearly pre-emptive strike via the supposed "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" foreclosed the gap for any formula that could make the state account for previous crimes. Administratively, it

could have claimed no continuity with its apartheid predecessor though administrators of past policies and crimes continue to receive government perks. New laws of the old. Here, then, as Best and Hartman remind us that because it is “primarily defined by virtue of its negative relations to law”, we are unable to move in any language of a legal scope as “Black noise is always already barred from court” (2005, 10).

3.4. Conclusion

Remedies then become charitable interventions from those beneficiaries called upon to make contributions. By virtue of their individualised and called-upon proposition, such interventions do not, and cannot account for the structure of colonisation as a system of White oppression. So, as it cannot account for its anti-Blackness in what it opens in the form of paternalism that can, at will, exclude victims of colonialism or threaten withdrawal at the slightest dissatisfaction. Traces of such paternalism are laid bare in Naledi Pandor’s inaugural address. One does not sense an obligation to deliver a Humanities that forms part of our intellectual commons for future social justice policies, but there is a constant reminder of how such demands for justice have the potential of trampling on rights of those considered humans.

The intersection, or reduction of Humanities to a form of Humanitarianism renders it palliative. Instead, Douzinas (2010, 53) has called for a “Humanities of resistance”; of a new Humanities committed to an unflinching truth as a form of unconditional resistance. As a pedagogy of justice, then the Humanities would take on the position opposed to domination and oppression by ideologies and nations instead of a Humanities that divides and disciplines, dominates and oppresses. However, as part of the structure that oppressed, that forms an organ of the state, the Humanities currently do not form part of the call for liberation and on the contrary form part of the structure that calls to order.

It is this call to order that Moten believes forces Black students underground; what he calls the undercommons, “always at war, always hiding” (Moten and Harney; 2013, 37). Always already criminalised, the only relationship with the university becomes that. As such, he asserts that;

> “To the university I’ll steal, and there I’ll steal,” to borrow from Pistol at the end of Henry V, as he would surely borrow from us. This is the only possible relationship to the American university today. This may be true of universities

> everywhere. It may be true of the university in general. But certainly, this much is true in the United States: it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of – this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university" (Moten/Harney; 2013, 33).

To only function at the level of free expression is inadequate. The Humanities as we know them cannot cater for the desires of Black radical expression. Black desires do not convert to anything meaningful. They do not move from jurisprudence to legal law. If by some miracle, we find a just policy that tenders towards Black desires to law, policing international community of human rights always harbours above. It is art for its own sake. More so, it must be argued that the failure to take into consideration fundamental changes in the form of demands for a decolonial curriculum speaks not just of the student movement's inability to form a language that moves the institution within but can only be theorised as a pushback in a language that participates as a refusal of the given institutional parameters. When the institution conceded and removed the sitting figure of Rhodes, it was due to the fact that the language of protest, its creative endeavours stopped the normal running of the university.

Chapter 4: To Name and Reclaim as Negation

In his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon speaks of a process which begins with naming as a form of liberation, and reawakening. For Fanon, decoloniality then becomes an establishment of a process that "sets out to change the order of the world" (Fanon 1961, 2). Fanon understood that the decolonial rearrangement of the world is a violent phenomenon that demanded not just certain concessions but complete change. He understood that to name is to frame the battle. The anti-colonial battles of Amaqaba versus the quest for assimilation by Amagqobhoka were the defined split between an antagonistic and conflict-based framework. This begins the symbolic and aesthetic that starts with naming. Amaqaba as backward and Amagqobhoka as progressive. While these two groups were largely defined by way of spiritual beliefs, Amaqaba (unconverted African traditional practitioners) and Amagqoboka (Christian converts), this was due to the framework that colonised by way of missionary work and brutal military. Amaqaba (those who smear) or Abantu ababomvu (the red people) known and defined according to the red-earth clay decorations smeared on their faces, challenged the imposed colonial framework. Amagqobhoka, (hollowed out or broken in) took on the imposed Western modernist view. As a result, Amaqaba were projected as backward and uneducated while Amagqoboka were seen as modern and educated. Converting also meant that Amagqobhoka would be forced to take on a Christian name. It is this naming that is the identifying marker of the skin: The red ochre as both backward and a sign of colonial resistance for Amaqaba, and the lacerations on the slaves that signified both captivity and rebellion. While on the other hand, Amagqobhoka and house slaves signified both progressive and docile. Under the yoke of slavery and coloniality all are subjects to the power that can appropriate and reappropriate, what Spillers has called the "right to name and 'name' it" (Spillers 1987, 69) afforded by the captive and invading party.

My thesis is not an attempt to rehabilitate precolonial customs as legitimate anti-colonial frameworks. My attempt here is to draw from Amaqaba's radical anti-colonial protest as an antagonism whose reading today parallels a philosophy [Afro-pessimism]. Even Lewis Gordon and Hortense Spillers, whose theoretical work contributed immensely to its formulation, view the theory with disdain, as anti-theory. Theory here is viewed from a position of research ethics while anti-theory, or "theory of crisis" (Wilderson III 2003, 1), an ethical dilemma in the face of the Black subject. Between state liberalism and corporate activism comes the

highest form of ethics in the categories of race, class, and gender. This comes by way of social institutions that make up civil society. It is in the application of the logic of such discourses of categories that art theories, despite the assumed narratives of open-endedness, conform to the logic of the "progressive" ethical discourse.

I argue that the radical theory of Afro-pessimism, as well as the protest actions of the land-occupying shack dwellers, their disregard and rejection of modern institutions as legitimate and ethical, are a passing of a baton from the antagonistic displays of Amaqaba. The poetic arguments and philosophies of Afro-pessimism, coupled with the transformation of landscapes, these apocalyptic scenes of informal settlements I call protest landscapes, do not speak of hope but critique the foundations on which hope is institutionalised.

In a time when the proliferation of hope takes centre stage, the election of the ANC in the "Post-1994 South African dispensation", and the 2008 US election that led to the Obama Presidency became hopeful transitional moments in race relations. Both are moments that call into question the modern issue of Black freedoms. In both instances, "hope" became the positive rallying term and every mass gathering against social injustice seemed to bring forth the aura of an impending eruption where we are led to believe that these chronological historical moments reflect a sequence of progressions in time. We are led to believe that these are signs of positive change charged and propped up from the bottom by the wretched themselves. They become signs of hope. Even among some of the most radical critical thinkers, hope here implies an optimistic future; a positive outlook on what is yet to come. Those who demand an intensification of the call, sceptics whose demands show no positive resolve – pessimists – are chastised.

4.1. Protest genre and the predicament of co-option

As artistic expressions focused on the conceptual ideas, the Conceptual art of the 70s that made way for Contemporary art forms such as Postmodernism, Street art (Graffiti), Performance art, Digital art etc, brought some of the socially engaged political expressions previously lingering in the peripheries into the mainstream. In South Africa, one of the many developments in artistic expression came from artists coming from the townships in different generations ranging from Gerard Sekoto, Durant Sihlali and Esther Mahlangu to Willie Bester and Vusi Khumalo.

Something is to be said about how, while the Conceptual and Contemporary practice moves beyond traditional forms and open artistic expression, these artists pieced together discarded materials to put together forms that express their surrounding political environments. Vusi Khumalo’s dull and colourful scrap metal township landscapes are intimate pieces that do not draw us into the lives of the subjects.

Still Image 4: Vusi Khumalo, Together (Triptych (2021). MIXED MEDIA ON BOARD 244 x 366cm (93 x 144in) WAC 24705

Still Image 5: Esther Mahlangu (b. 1935), *BMW Art Car 12*, 1991. © Esther Mahlangu. Photo © BMW Group Archives.

They give us a glimpse only from the outside. These works are neither secretive nor invasive. Looking at them, one does not feel sad or joyful. This is because these are not images of pity and poverty, but the injustice of the everyday, and of land dispossession is laid bare. So, it is this attempt at piecing together remnants of what might be, home in the form of a shack, and community in the form of an informal settlement that makes for a new theory of the commons. Due to the lack of affordable materials, these township scenes both in real life and as artistic creation expressed the reality of the Black socioeconomic status. In an article by Siya Masuku, Sihlali's explorations of affordable and found materials such as "printmaking, papermaking and collage as well as metalwork" (Masuku, 2018) came from witnessing the end of his peers' careers. Bester and Khumalo's found objects and mixed media work today form part of the larger community of contemporary art. But this inclusion has not purely been out of respect for its merit. Sihlali's socioeconomic renderings were a commercially viable option forced by commercial galleries. Because in most cases, these artworks are not created in protest of economic exploitation but to address the economic status of its creators, so part of their commercialisation essentially becomes the desired outcome. But even the few instances where legitimate protest takes place, it is difficult,

if not impossible to escape the grip of the market; or rather, monetising creative forms of protest.

Both local and globally, most of the contemporary dissenting views leave a lot to be desired. It is not surprising that some of the most prominent subversive voices in the field of sport, politics, media and the arts have in some form or fashion, a multinational corporate brand attached to them. Nike makes for one of the most elite of such brands. In 2016, the wave of killings of Black Americans by the police sparked national outrage which saw National Football League (NFL) player Colin Kaepernick kneel in protest against the American national anthem. Soon followed the backlash where the President of the country, Donald Trump, addressed the situation without naming names but asking the crowd if they would not like seeing the NFL owners saying, "*get that son of a bitch out of the field, he's out, he's fired*" (MSNBC, 2017). Under the slogan "believe in something even if it means sacrificing everything", right after, Nike released an uplifting commercial of different athletes who have overcome adversity, narrated by Colin Kaepernick[32]. For Nike, this move would bring a small backlash from those who pay allegiance to the American flag but cement the brand in the minds of those protesters who felt neglected both by corporate and government institutions. At the height of this fiasco, a prominent artist friend and a member of our artist collective Gugulective commented on committing to a monthly purchase of a pair that whole year in approval. This marketing campaign, ingenious in its moral subversion of the corporation and the market as the saviour tenders itself as the space of radical protest. Where in the past, corporations funded progressive political causes as part of their social corporate endeavours, at this rate, the bleak future of corporate accountability seems to rely on funding corporations as speaking entities for the wretched.

If we are to take the framework with which corporate activism then operates, it is evident that the base structure remains fully intact. In this

[32] While the Nike stock briefly fell by 3.2%, sales went up 25%. The history of Nike activism began in 1988 with the launch of their now famed slogan 'just do it' in a commercial that addressed ageism featuring a running octogenarian Walt Stack. It diverted from the usual sportswear aesthetic of the perfect body accompanied by fancy design or engineering of the product. The aesthetic is accessible to the ordinary. Nothing fancy but an elderly man running on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco waving at passing motorists. Proof that corporate activism was effective, Nike revenue went from $877Million in 1987 to $1.2Billion the following year. While Nike activism paid off, the brand would pay out some of the most lucrative endorsements that made sports figures such as the golfer sensation Tiger Woods and Basketballer extraordinaire Michael Jordan some of the highest paid athletes in the world. They became the face of success. Nike's corporate activism did not extend to the factory workers who made the product whilst living in squalor. Instead, Indonesia's disregard for human rights laid the perfect foundation for sweatshops guarded and run by ruthless local mafia. Its corporate activism appeals to emotions and gives hope while negating the core structural relation that makes Nike the corporate giant it is today.

instance, the activist, despite the effort and sincerity to the cause, genuine attempts to combat social ills continue to supplement the thesis of the corporate framework.

4.2. Towards social movements

Frederic Jameson (1971, 18-19) critiques the intramural discourse of political economy that takes its own internal historical changes as gospel. He argues against the ideology of the perception of change as inherently good despite the limits of its historical views. This then presents the missed opportunity of this incomplete historical order as building blocks in the modification of what makes our society.

Jameson's observations move against the positivist, or optimism of progressive politics. Instead, there is a demand for "…breaking out of the artificial confinement of smaller and more abstract units of study like the sentences and evolving in the direction of pragmatics and text grammars, which try to reincorporate the real contexts and compositions of the participants back into purely verbal phenomena, which are, taken alone, a mere hypostasis of language as such" (Jameson 1971, 19). Here, it is not the arrangement of the structure but the structure itself that is called into question against the narrative at play that seems hell-bent on minor changes whose demands make legitimate the current modernist framework.

Still Image 6: Zanele Muholi, ID Crisis (2003) courtesy of the artist and Stevenson, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Yancey Richardson, New York.

Still Image 7: Nicholas Hlobo, Thoba, utsale umnxeba, (2008), performance sculpture (rubber inner tube, ribbon, impepho mat)

Still Image 8: Mary Sibande, Rudder Soul: Monument of Aspiration, (2011), Life size Mannequin, Rubber, Leather, Painted wood, Steel, Cotton fabric, fiberglass and resin

We live in an era where freedom of speech, in relation to gender, race, class, and sexual politics is no longer frowned upon as commercially viable artistic expression; instead, to a larger degree, it is seen as political articulation, a language through which to negotiate the political milieu. The success of many Black artists today highlights this; for example, Zanele Muholi's photographs documenting invisibility and violence perpetrated against the Black lesbian community, Nicholas Hlobo's work

on Black masculinity, Mary Sibande's work on the domestic class of Black women, just to name a few. There is no denying that the acceptance of such narratives pays allegiance to gains made throughout different eras of pushing against the grain and breaking boundaries. Besides individual successes, the coming together of artists to form a unified and collective language of expressions has seen positive strides.

To mention a few both pre/post-apartheid: The more than 50-member collective made up of South African exiles and other activists' self-proclaimed "cultural worker" Medu Art Ensemble[33], the photography collective of 50 members during its run from 1981 till 1991 Afrapix[34], the Black consciousness interventions of Gugulective[35], the Black women interventions of IQhiya[36], the questioning of museum studies and practices of the Burning Museum[37] and so on, have fashioned the discourse on art and collectivism. They are proof of destabilisation of certain discourses both narrow and conservative. We no longer have to debate certain merits that frame and constitute Ernest Mancoba's work as modernist abstractions, Esther Mahlangu's patterns as craft[38], and Jackson Hlungwani's conceptual sculptural works as traditional, and the list goes on. While these great successes stand as legitimate political projects, not without their own challenges and problems, today, they are forms of artistic expressions whose language of disruption is fully accepted as artistic discourse. While some may have radicalised the artistic discourse, they remain marketable artistic expressions initiated by artists themselves. The formalisation of such discourses gives political form to the landscapes of our imaginations.

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[33] Medu (SePedi word meaning Roots) Art Ensemble was formed in the late 70s by exiled cultural workers living in Gaborone, Botswana. Formed by Molefe Pheto of Mhloti Theatre with Thami Mnyele, the collective grew to more than50 members.

[34] Afrapix was a collective of anti-apartheid photographers established in 1981. The collective was formed at the height of the growth in community, labour, women organisations, and grassroots activism. This was the same time that saw the emergence of progressive/alternative media networks against censorship.

[35] Formed in 2006 and informed by the ideology of Black Consciousness of the 70s, Gugulective converted a shebeen in a township as its curatorial home. This became a space for artistic dialogue on the questions of blackness.

[36] IQhiya (A Xhosa word for doek/headwrap) was a collective of young women who met white studying at UCT and formed a collective. Their practice ranges from performance art to video, photography, sculpture, etc.

[37] Burning Museum interrogates personal historical connections with the space that spans from the colonial encounter to the recent forms of gentrification.

[38] The question of what makes the difference between art and craft is usually loaded with race, gender, and ethnicity politics. In the past, these were works assumed to be produced either for the purposes of ritual or pure design outside Western institutions. To qualify as art, work had to be assumed to be intellectual or at least be within the Western traditional categories of visual arts.

4.3. Creative Pessimism as Protest Landscapes

No longer obscured, there is no doubt that the political questions in our artistic discourse are a confirmation that artistic practice does not exist in a vacuum. They reflect social strands, a constant reminder that despite the fact of such formations as that of the townships as crimes against humanity, there was a convention that signalled progress and hope in its formality. The creation of townships[39] is rooted in racially motivated apartheid history of land displacement, but the task of philosophy or analytic theory is to account for the ideas behind the formation of such spaces as places of belonging. History then not only obscures and mystifies events to a particular moment in time, but it is also a reduction of specific moments that belong to a broader ideological apparatus. Only when we get to the point where the idea of the township is nothing but an actual representation of anti-Blackness, do the antagonisms begin to appear. It is not enough to point out the subjective violent historical making of the township as a particular space but to reveal the conceptual make-up that already contains it as its constitutive whole. The main feature of the township is its irreconcilable antagonism with the modern world. These violent historical moments of its making merely tie the two antagonisms together. But it is this violence that must be masked as beauty and belonging. History lacks the radicalism to consider its own shortcomings with regard to its particular moments. The concept is history changing history. The formalisation of the townships is a historical moment, with the name conceding to this historical change. Apartheid "formal townships" such as Khayelitsha, Gugulethu, Nyanga, Soweto – and the list goes on – have names connoting hope. Names of townships built during the apartheid era signalled a new beginning (Khayelitsha), pride (Gugulethu), a sense of direction (South West Townships) and so on. The Population Registration Act No 30 of 1950 which assigned different racial groupings to geographical locations resulted in spatial apartheid planning to marginalise Blacks while at the same time giving them a false sense of progress.

The fall of the National Party and the progress of the ANC government to repel oppressive legislations did not always translate as intended on the ground. Township conditions remained similar to those under the

[39] Township – In South Africa this word is historically synonymous with poor Black and non-white people's habitational environment. Often underdeveloped, these are areas that were designated for Black and non-white people by the apartheid government as reserves for cheap labour near whites-only areas. Post 1994, they became the standard government project of social services and housing redress in poor Black areas.

apartheid government. The allocation of residential space for house extensions did not amount to land distribution. Certain improvements such as some thriving businesses (largely meat and alcohol) took shape, but so did certain deteriorations in the quality of housing, and land redistribution stalled.

It is from this false hope that post-apartheid informal townships Enkanini, Endlovini, Kosovo, Marikana, Toilet City, Ujuliwe and Poes Valley took the form of what I want to call protest communities as emergent of creative pessimism to enforce land reclaims. Protest communities should be viewed as those pop-up makeshift dwellings that in their en-masse construction do not signify any positive claims of hope in the dawn of democracy. In their demands, they constantly remind us that there is a perpetual zone where life is lived inside out, exposed to the radiating elements of anti-Blackness. Where skin is no protective shield but absorbs. As they push on, they are a reminder that progress itself might be fully dependent on the denial of the existence of such bodies. Their naming becomes an articulation of the state of being cheeky (Enkanini), forcefulness (Endlovini), war zones (Kosovo), massacre (Marikana), lawlessness (Ujuliwe) and overall abjectness (Toilet City). It is in these forms of protest and land occupation or reclaims that we have become witness to an erection of "informal" settlements that reflect the condition of Blackness. The act of forceful occupation and the cynicism in the naming gives us a reading contrary to that of the mainstream of hope and democratic progress. These creative formations begin to change the landscape in abstract forms, unmappable and as rejection of the false narratives of progress. These sites, what I call "protest landscapes" are elaborate extensions to already cluttered "formal" townships where the nature of the supposed progress is called into question. This pessimism stretches far back as some of the informal settlements remain so since before the dawn of the post-apartheid administration. While some have been in "existence" for a long time, they've maintained the culture of refusal of the narratives of hope, as we see with the Red Location township. Their refusal of the narratives of commemoration in the midst of abjection has seen a halt to the museum – The Red Location Museum – that traces its history. Such acts of refusal remind us of the history that never is. Of the now of history. That we are yet to speak in historical terms. But the beginnings go further back.

It was with the organisational acumen of James Mpanza and Schreiner Baduza in the early 1940s that we began to witness a development of a protest landscape, an aesthetic today known here in South Africa as informal settlements or squatter camps. In most cases, what has been officially termed "informal settlements" (a term that legitimises the

condition of squalor) is what we've come to know, in the real sense of what they are, as "squatter camps" (a term more fitting for what should be a temporary inhumane condition). The OECD Glossary of Statistic Terms defines informal settlements as 1. "Areas where groups of housing units have been constructed on land that the occupants have no legal claim to, or occupy illegally". 2. "Unplanned settlements and areas where housing is not in compliance with current planning and building regulation (unauthorised housing)". And the Oxford Languages dictionary defines "squatter camps" with a synonym, "shackland". Whereas, in the same Oxford Language dictionary, "settler" is defined as "a person who moves with a group of others to live in a new country or area", emphasised with "the early European settlers in America were often fleeing religious persecution". At no point has it ever been that a condition of inhumanity has been seen as synonymous with the being of a certain group of people – Black people. According to AW Stadler (1979, 94), Mpanza's party took on a religious and militant tone. Such militancy bares itself in the posture and naming of its political organisation '*Sofasonke'*, an explicit expletive denoting their "stance in death as a unit" that would resonate with future protest landscapes in other parts of the country. However, Stadler attributes this development and organising to the economic depression sparked by the Second World War. There is no doubt that while the timing might suggest so, there is a clear mismatch in the relationship that makes up the power relations of the county's social relations – land and race. That the mining sector as well as the conditions in rural agriculture become the rallying point of contention, plays to the short-sightedness or unwillingness to view the power relations from the point of view of the first encounter that led to the raptures of AmaQaba.

The recent past has made us witness to some interesting developments, with municipalities beginning to take note and assist in the development of informal settlement communities. So, we thought. The Red Location[40] is a small township in New Brighton in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape. Resulting from what has been appropriated as the "Boer concentration camps," the Red Location was established in 1903. Throughout history, the place has gained notoriety as the site of struggle. It is where the first defiance campaign arrests took place. And it is where the first Umkhonto weSizwe (military wing of the ANC) branch was established. Since its inception, historical battles have been fought here against the apartheid state and have continued post-1994. This is because, today, long after the demise of the Apartheid state, Red Location, like many other townships across the

[40] The Red Location is in New Brighton, Gqeberha. It is in one of the oldest townships in South Africa. This place was a Boer concentration camp that was removed in 1900 and replaced with a Black informal settlement. The museum was opened in 2006 as a tribute to the struggle against apartheid.

country, remains squalid. As an acknowledgement of such historical background, building a commemorative museum of struggle heroes seemed a legitimate project to honour a place that has contributed so much to the struggle. However, it would not be so for the residents of Red Location.

In 2003, the Red Location community protested the building of the R22-million museum (The Red Location Museum).[41] Regardless, the Gqeberha municipality proceeded with the project despite disgruntlements. They had a minimum demand that certain basic social services be met, and when that failed, the community made use of their allocated bucket system ”sanitation” by dumping human waste at the door of the newly built structure. More protests followed, forcing the Red Location Museum to close its doors in October 2013. In the process, the protesting community renamed the museum “A house for dead people”. Some of the aesthetic designs both inside and outside reference the redness of the rusted corrugated iron sheet used in the building of the concentration camp. Both the area and the museum derive the name from this aesthetic. The interior design includes reconstructed memory boxes with exhibitions meant to resemble the inside of the shack, and outside is a sculptural installation shack that welcomes visitors to the museum. In their representation, while both were meant to commemorate the past and the present, the Red Location Museum’s intended goal as a commemorative space was divisive to the plight of the community. This is expressed in its renaming as a protest alluding to the condition of those of whom it was meant to be in service. Bit by bit, the community began assisting in its own erosion. Michelle Smith (2016, 160) reads the moment as the logical conclusion to its intended decomposition.

There is an interesting correlation with the commemorative aesthetic in the architectural work of the Red Location Museum that towers like a tombstone over the Red Location community and that of the Jameson Hall towering over the protest of the ##RhodesMustFall’s shack intervention. In 2016 the RMF movement staged a sit-in by occupying the housing office in support of Black students for whom the University of Cape Town claimed to be unable to provide accommodation. The intention was to disrupt and give attention to the housing situation of these Black students, making it difficult for the staff to continue their duties. To add emphasis to the protest, this was followed by the erection of a shack between two residence halls in Residence Road. They named this intervention *Shackville*. When this *Shackville* student protest intervention

[41] The museum is located in New Brighton Township in Gqeberha. It was built as a tribute to the struggle against apartheid and was officially opened to the public on 10 November 2006

took place at the Jameson Steps, none of the usual critical academic engagements around the meaning nor its naming followed. Rather, the display seemed more an inconvenience hampering the smooth running of the university. They were ordered to move the shack 20 metres so as not to disrupt traffic. The protesting students refused. The result was a violent demolition of the intervention by law enforcement in collaboration with campus security and private security. The order came from the university. What do we make of the absence of language needed to theorise *Shackville* as a creative intervention, as a contemporary idea? The minute the protesting students disrupted the everyday functioning of the university, refused an order to move and make the space functional, this moment cemented the antagonism. This refusal comes from an impossibility for language of officiation to accept radical demands as legitimate thoughts that generate real change. It is this criminalisation of thought and action that becomes the result when the protesting bodies of both ##RhodesMustFall and Red Location township carry with them a language that does not signify meaning. A language that cannot name. A non-language. Both protesters occupy the domain of the unthought. This is a language in the trenches, both in the echelons of the university theorised as Afro-pessimism, and as *protest communities* born out of and sustained by the structure of violence.

4.4. The pessimism of thought in Afro-pessimism

In his text “Afro-pessimism an Unclear Word” Sexton observes what he says is a “distancing” and “disavowal” from its position so much that even some of the theorists whose contributions sustain its intellectual backdrop, and that the supposed counter arguments are made without putting forward any real sustained reading nor attempts at a proper dialogue. With the results being some “grand pronouncements” that render the whole “movement of thought” as a “lowest common denominator” “indicted by proxy, and tried *in absentia* as caricature.” (Sexton 2016, 2). This dismissive attitude towards Afro-pessimism is attributed to the accusation that it essentialises negative failures as inherently Black, with no offer of any possibilities for a positive outcome. A brief instance of a positive outcome would be achieving a level of Black humanity. Its critique of shortcomings of the radical left politics – feminism, Marxism, and Black radical movements – is dismissed as lacking urgency, and seen as denial of historical moments of struggle rather than a critique of their failures. It is also seen as an exaggeration of the Black

condition fixated on Black/White encounter and a perpetuation of normative categories of gender that privilege patriarchal standards.

In his section "Thoughts on Afropessimism" in the collaborative essay "Afropessimism," Lewis Gordon correctly reads Afro-pessimism's critical question as addressing the "viability of posed strategies of Black liberations" (Gordon 2017, 02) and later accuses it of "suffering from failure to understand failure" (Gordon 2017, 05). He attributes political resignation as its main strategy which he deems as "failure at failing" (Gordon 2017, 06). As a set for today's political achievements, Gordon traces some of the political efforts of both enslaved and colonised Black ancestors whose revolts, resistance, escapes and destabilisations in an environment designed to "eliminate any hope of success" (Gordon 2017, 4) led to some of todays' positive achievements, such as the election of Barack Obama. Gordon rejects both pessimism and optimism and instead opts for what he calls "political commitment" (Gordon 2017, 4). He reads both positions as "connected to nihilism" (Gordon 2017, 4). He sees Afro-pessimism as a decline in "values in periods of social decay" (Gordon 2017, 4). For Cornel West, nihilism is the "lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness, and (most importantly) lovelessness" (West 1993, 22). What is undeniable in what Cornel calls "frightening result" is the distance the affected feel towards the world. However, to clump pessimism with or as nihilism is to completely miss the mark. Fred Moten's frustration with Afro-pessimism is less a dismissive indictment than a feeling of depressive mode of thinking. An optimist, his focus on Black cultural improvisation is proof of Black capability/agency to frustrate current modes of Power; how it constantly escapes the policing power.

Gordon's nihilists, both pessimist and optimist, designate political responsibility to either divine intervention (optimists), or to the negative declaration that nothing will change (pessimists). They resign to the condition. For West, nihilism breeds a numbing detachment, a self-destructive life without meaning, hope, or love that breeds a cold-hearted, mean-spirited outlook on the world. In other words, it breeds rebels without a cause. Hence his preference for political commitment. To act. Joshua Foa Dienstag (2006, 4) argues against the entanglement of pessimism with nihilism, in that the concepts are separate fundamentally – pessimism was a post-enlightenment concept while nihilism, fatalism and scepticism existed prior. At the heart of this disentanglement is the linear notion of time. However, designating them purely on the different periods of both linear and circular time does not completely address some of the crucial indictments levelled against pessimism. At least it does place the theories of Blackness as a modern phenomenon – a critique of

modernity. But for Lewis Gordon to accuse its main proponent of lack of political commitment is to miss Wilderson III opening critique of "Biko and Black Presence" that;

> "When I first arrived in South Africa in 1989, I was a Marxist. Towards the end of 1996, two and a half years after Nelson Mandela came to power, I left not knowing what I was. This is not to say that I, like so many repentant Marxists had come around to what policy wonks and highly placed notables within the African National Congress (ANC) National Executive Committee (NEC) called for them, a so called "mixed economy"; a phrase that explained less than nothing but was catchy and saturated with common sense, thus making it unassailable. No I had not been converted to the "ethics" of the "free" market, but I was convinced the rubric of exploitation and alienation (or a grammar of suffering predicated on the intensification of work and the extraction of surplus value) was not up to the task of (a) describing the structure of antagonism, (b) delineating a proper revolutionary subject, or (c) elaboration a trajectory of institutional iconoclasm comprehensive enough to start 'the only thing in the world to start; the end of the world. By God!'" (Wilderson III 2008, 95-96)

Commitment no doubt. Though a principled one over a political one. Here is a moment when political commitment, due to its insufficiency to explain the position of Black suffering, demands that a different theoretical trajectory comes into being. People like Wilderson III and many others whose work subscribe to Afro-pessimism are to be found in all spheres of principled commitments. Both theoretical and otherwise. In a short video for the programme *Big Think*[42], Slavoj Žižek cautions against being drawn into the mantra of political participation without thinking. He is explicit about taking time out purely for thinking. He evokes Marx's declaration of philosophers as interpreters of the world in the time for making change. In a slight twist, Žižek's invocation to how we could apply it now is by going back to the drawing board to think again about reinterpreting how to change the world. By now, race, class and gender struggles exist with both failures and political gains. Optimists then read political gains as forms of progress while pessimists dwell on the failure, not to abandon the project of emancipation but intensify it to a logical conclusion. Pessimists question the mode of questioning.

The illusion of openness, of democratic values and the ever-expanding narrative of accommodation of the arts as an accumulation of knowledges that moves away from traditions to inter-, multi-, and transdisciplines, would have us think that if we dig deep enough then every answer we are searching for is within reach. But this search for answers is not what Afro-pessimism looks to discover. Because the parameters that exist as

[42] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgR6uaVqWsQ&t=310s

formulas for radical change and liberation have as the underlying structure the recipe for anti-Blackness. Instead, the search for new questions is not a continuation on the path of the ever-expanding narrative but the investigation of already existing dominant forms of enquiry. So, this closes such an enquiry as a means of tying together primary contradictions. Once the antagonisms are ironed out, what lies exposed is the impossibility for Black liberation that is embedded in the absence of a language of Black suffering. It is the frustration with the absence of the language of Black suffering that Spillers addresses in her introductory essay "Peter's Pans: Eating in the Diaspora". Spillers informs us of her intentions in penning her iconic essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe". She says, "I wanted to imagine primary questions, which the historian has already exhausted, but also to try to posit an 'interiority' in what has been treated as an 'outside' and to assign an 'outside' to an 'interiority…'" (Spillers 2003, 19)

Unlike the biblical conclusion of the victorious David over the gigantic and well-armoured Goliath, where David's strength is willed by the invisible hand of God, for pessimists, faith is not willed by a conclusive positive outcome. Nor is it willed by the hope for salvation. Hopelessness is itself the driving force. Pessimists act because they must. Shackville does not signal an optimism of an achievable outcome. The name itself is not hopeful. Its reference point is the dire condition of homelessness. This is not the faithlessness picture that leads to resignation painted by Gordon. It is, rather, what Žižek calls "Radical Atheist Ethic". But such faith demands a different kind of participation.

Jared Sexton closely aligns Afro-pessimism with the word *resignification*. For Sexton, this is an "attempt at formulating an account of suffering" and "establishing the rules of its grammar" (Sexton 2016, 4). Here, what Gordon has loosely described as resignation from political commitment does not translate to nihilism. The intellectual work intensifies the reading of forms of anti-Blackness. Sexton and Saidiya Hartman demand that we think again about the position of the ex-slave, while Spillers and Wilderson III force us to think about the grammar of accumulation and fungibility. In a hostile academic environment, Spillers says she laboured for a quarter of a century for a name and strategy that did not conform to the mainstream language of discourse dictated by race and gender studies. In her realisation, ideas denied were those that cast a "shadow that falls over the Word as it approaches some supposed dread subject/object, imagined to inhabit territory of power and danger" (Spillers 2003 xii-xiii). She proclaims that it is this "nameless phenomenon that eludes the grasp" (Spillers 2003 xiii), in this instance Shackville both as an idea and the word, as well as Afro-pessimism as a word and a mode of thinking. This is because for both Wilderson III and Sexton, the ex-slave has not

transcended linear time in any way positively. Rather, most political gains fall through the cracks of the excesses of power. They become rallying mechanisms that reinstitute anti-Blackness. Political gains are not denied. They are pondered upon and intensified since, as inverse, some of their proximity to power renders them false solutions. It is in the false solutions that pessimism is not all doom and gloom. While Giorgio Agamben himself has denounced being a pessimist, he still draws on “extreme despair” as the only way in which real courage can exist. He speaks of Simone Weil as someone who detested the warming up to “hollow hopes”. Extreme despair here is the only moment optimism can be found. It is at such moments, of hopelessness, when the conclusion does not promise any form of salvation, that courage is really tested.

Still Image 9: Wolff Architects, Noero Architects, The Red Location Museum, (2006), New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

While the student protest shack intervention was a demonstration against homelessness, the Red Location Museum shack sculptural display at the entrance was contested by its former resident, the 36-year-old Themba Adams, who was shocked upon finding his home a museum display (2014). It was among the four “historical cottages” deemed heritage. Convicted in 2008, Themba Adams’s return to his house of birth is barred

as it is now a museum exhibit; he is rendered homeless by an institution meant to represent, acknowledge, and commemorate Black political heroes and struggles. The irony of such a positive initiative and its true impact on the lives of those meant to benefit and be humanised is the true essence of what Afro-pessimism renders anti-Black, not only in minor executions but in its design.

Chapter 5: The Antinomies of Red

Simon Gush's "Red" (2014), a collaborative installation with James Cairns, is an assemblage of the red Mercedes-Benz gifted to Nelson Mandela by striking factory workers that plays a central role in interrogating the meaning and moment of South Africa's post-apartheid transition. The concept 'Red' became the subject of interrogation on different artistic platforms, its itinerary under the workshop "Red Assembly", from Johannesburg via Cape Town, Gqeberha and Grahamstown to East London. This chapter will be an attempt at a potential critique of what constitutes the gap between the inside and the outside. What I mean about this gap, is the language that ties together the divisions in structuring White supremacy and an anti-Black world. MC Escher's lithograph "Relativity" of two figures walking the same stairs – but responding to two completely different laws of physics, as one moves upwards and the other downwards – gives us a glimpse of what an antinomy in its visual form looks like. These are two figures that will never meet.

5.1. Redness of progressive communism vs Redness of Blackness

Still Image 10: Simon Gush, (2014)

The "Red Assembly" workshop, spearheaded by Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, Gary Minkley, John Mowitt and Leslie Witz, was conceptualised around Gush's installation "Red" and the political discourse it generated.

In this dialogue, the "Red Assembly" workshop in publication form stretches between two academic periodicals, *Parallax* in England and *Kronos* here in South Africa (2015, 128). The workshop brought together theoretical questions covering triadic subjectivities along race, gender and class. The significance of these periodicals is highlighted by Pohlandt-McCormick, Minkley, Mowitt and Witz as important *"…in the deployment of global 'a global system' of print capitalism as the frame within which two journals might be situated in relation to the same event, but from two unevenly distributed places within that system"* (2015, 128). Simon Gush's "Red" is tasked with questions of assemblage, though not necessarily to its original form, but as reimagined restoration. This is reimagined within the context of the workers' strike at the Mercedes plant.

Gush's "Red" is in solidarity and common purpose with Paolo Veronese's work (Venice), "Wedding at Cana". This dates back as far as 1950, with Vittorio Cini's attempt at restoring and returning "Wedding at Cana" to Venice after its seizure by Napoleon as spoils of war back in 1797. This solidarity and or common purpose is to be found in the Red Location Museum. The memory box in the museum is "thematically" linked to the outside, where there is a shack installation. The outside shack installation has been forcefully repurposed from its former owner Themba Adams, who at the time of its conversion had been incarcerated. According to the museum's acting assistant director and curator Chris du Preez, the choice of the shack installations was to protect the community from outside onlookers in search of "an authentic experience". In other words, the aesthetic was meant to be the dividing and or protective wall/barrier between the outsider and the insider. Reading the projects around "Red", we find a common denominator – almost all of them assume the concepts of restoration, returning, preservation, conservation, reinstallation of what was, could be and or could have been. However, it may be that the intended outcome surrounding the "Red" installation in all its representations and manifestations was not founded on these concepts.

In her essay "Interment: Re-framing the Death of the Red Location Museum Building", Michelle Smith frames the encounter between Gush's "Red" and the Red Location Museum as a way to "rethink the materiality of the photograph, the commemoration of the struggle against apartheid, and the ways in which death marks the sights and sites of public history" (Smith 2016, 155). While '*Red*" ties together the South African post-apartheid narrative, it nonetheless stretches far and beyond, both in time and space. Located in New Brighton, Gqeberha, the Red Location Museum enters the dialogue as a commemorative space. By problematising the commemorative dialogue presented by the museum's relationship with

the Red Location community, Michelle Smith reveals the critique of what could constitute the “antinomies of Red” that make the inside and the outside.

Smith critiques the rendering of the inside/outside aesthetic in the Red Location Museum as an erasure of the “actual living conditions of the people outside” (Smith 2016, 169). She argues that this form of aestheticisation is itself a form of commercialisation that leads to the community both becoming “invisible and hyper visible”, and that;

> “What functions as a divide between the inside and the outside, the concrete walls of the museum which are meant to be impermeable are in fact exposed as implicitly porous. The walls – barriers between the community, and the museum and its objects, between past struggles and its present, between the living and the dead – were always already decomposing.”
> (Michelle Smith 2016; 169)

Smith’s attempts do take a leap that makes a much more elaborative critique of the Red Location Museum’s aesthetic. Pohlandt-McCormick, Minkley, Mowitt and Witz also caution against the glorification of what is presented by Gush’s “Red” and “Red Assembly” as a claim of a finite synthesis. Instead, they point to how this work should lead to a more “distinct, crisp” problematic reading in that “the shadow line falls between what has been thought of and what cannot yet be thought of” (2016, 129). Smith does take on a more sympathetic position towards the Red Location community protests against the vilification coming from the media, the museum and the city councillor. Her project translates the relationship between the museum and the community as inevitably framed by death – from the renaming as “House for Dead People”, the concrete slabs that hang outside banners resembling tombstones, to its photographic series exhibition that opens and closes with open graves. It is in this space between the inside and outside we find the pervading parallels that run past, along, through and against each other, the trajectory structuring our anticipated result constantly borrowing as its foundation from within the current power structure.

While Smith’s intellectual labour strains against the underlying themes of restoration, returning, preservation, conservation, re-installation and instead reminds us of the inevitable death stir between the Red Location Museum and the Red Location community/New Brighton, we begin to get a glimpse of what could have been a possible gap between the inside and the outside beyond that which plays into the power structure. It becomes ironic that the protest is read through a photographic exhibit titled “You are my witness”, in which power becomes a witness that sets its own

parameters. Of course, it would be fair to caution against burdening the post-1994 commemorative institutions with crimes of the Nationalist Party. However, as a state apparatus in a death stir with the community over unresolved apartheid crimes, to bear its own witnessing is derisive.

“Wedding in Cana”, “Kronos”, “Parallax” as critical interventions in solidarity with “Red”, “Red Assembly”, and Red Location Museum have not demonstrated the parallax view of the inside and outside of “Red” that speaks to the antagonistic death stir between the community and the museum. Despite attempts at drawing parallels across time and space, from the past to the present as well as across borders and different institutions, they have been from the inside out. What I mean by parallax in this context is what Žižek alludes to as an apparent shift in an object’s “position against its background” providing anew, not just perspectives but the “real” shift in the material existence of the building. This, Žižek argues, does not provide a “dialectic synthesis of opposites” but a certain “deadlock of oppositions and an attempt to resolve such an antagonism” (Žižek 2010, 244/5).

For Pohlandt-McCormick, Minkley, Mowitt and Witz, the return of “Red” and “Red Assembly” to the Eastern Cape is seen as providing an opportunity to revisit the concept of the “staging of colonial rule”. As an initial territory for frontier war, it is surprising that the resistance wars of Amaqaba get no mention. The “Red” and “Red Assembly’s” conceptual intention of bringing together “time/history”, “work” and “artwork” seems resonant with the Red Location Museum’s photographic exhibition. What is brought together in the exhibition is community participation in the form of choosing struggle heroes to be displayed on a rotational basis. This is coupled with the historic events of both the New Brighton protest and the 1985 Langa Massacre. Inside the museum, these events function, according to Smith, as legitimising museum representatives. For Smith, the Red Location Museum takes on the role of affirming the death of those it claims to represent. The aim here is not a search for institutional acknowledgement for struggle credentials but a sustained critique with a potential to open up a new space for imaginations – the gap between the inside and the outside – the parallax gap. On the side of the protest, this can only come from a certain embrace of vilification instead of institutional acknowledgement. Shackville student protest and the Red Location community protest as it is with the old anticolonial movement of Amaqaba embrace a certain form of vilification that aims at working against colonial institutional progress.

If Smith’s attempts at being a critic from the outside seem to fall short, it is because her musings are a reading against the background informed by the redness of the worker formation. As a symbolic colour of the worker’s struggle, *red* is a general symbol of left-wing politics from

Marxism to trade unionism, socialism to communism. It was first adopted as the colour of the French Revolution due to its use in the Paris Commune, and later adopted by the socialists during their revolutionary wave of 1848, followed by the Russian Bolsheviks' revolutionary party, and today forms the base of most States that subscribe to the ideology, such as China, Vietnam, Venezuela etc.

In Smith's notion of what she calls the "mortification complex'", the assemblage of the red 500SE as a culmination of a protracted workers' strike, and the factory-like design of the Red Location Museum become a site where the oppressed figure is presented under the rubric of the worker. Such a framing, according to Smith, allows the artwork to "seep beyond the confines of the events with which it explicitly grapples" (Smith 2016, 42). This reading reveals the urgency in the work as a subject of history and institutional preservation, while the Black factory worker and the Red Location community protester are spoken about through the use of institutionalised artworks. Both the red 500SE and the Red Location Museum are afforded an ontological status as implements protected by laws that do not further extend to the Black factory protester and the Red Location protester.

5.2. The void of Black ontology

It makes sense that contemporary mainstream Black social movements such as Abahlali baseMjondolo and Black Lives Matter have become an uphill human rights struggle on a collision course with property law and or the much-contested section 25 of the South African Constitution. This collision prevents the synaptic connection that affords bodies the most basic ontological status. Michael Che's comedy special takes a dig at it when he asks:

> "We can't agree on anything anymore. As a country we just can't agree. We just fight about everything. We can't even agree on 'Black Lives Matter'. That's a controversial statement. *Black Lives Matter.* Not matters more than you, just matters – *matters*. Matters. Just matters. That's where we're starting the negotiations. Matters. We can't agree on that shit! What the fuck is less than matters? Black lives exist, can we say that? Is that controversial? We always ask for the lowest common denominator. We ask for the lowest rights. Gays were fighting for equal rights… Black people are fighting for civil, not even equal. Just

> Civil. Can we get civil? I'll take civil rights. Just be civil. We want civil can we get civil! Can we get civil? Turn the fucking hose off." (Michael Che, 2020)

In this demand for recognition, for civility, for a chance at a level of symbolic value within the current state of being, Che is well aware of the use of language-of-refusal used to deny such recognition. And that it is not a point-blank "No" but rather a semantic shift inscribed with the subversive "All Lives Matter". So, while "All Lives Matter" shifts the observational position against Black recognition, the conflicting positions do not provide us with the necessary antagonism that structures the world. What is civil when, as Fanon (1952, 83) points out, to begin with, Black metaphysics, in the form of customs, were in fact in conflict with the West's civilising mission? It is in this desire to be seen that Black politics become a form of articulation and an identity recognisable to the world – Smith's reading of the worker. It is a desire that does not threaten the existence of oppressive institutions, but is instead facilitated by them. At worst, we see the semantic shift that is "All Lives Matter", and at best, the language of facilitation affords Blacks the rearticulation of their own oppression in its most nonthreatening form – "Don't shoot" (with its symbolic gesturing of the hands in the air). However, in "Black Lives Matter", we do get a glimpse of assimilative desires that characterised the politics of Amagqoboka: the adoption of Western religion and Christian names as a sign of civility and progress. In his attempt at a subversive rejoinder protesting this semantic shift, Che is quick to remind us of how the concept of ontology in its manifestation as history, memory, space and time is not afforded to Black people. He asks;

> "Why do Black people always have to get over shit so quickly? Slavery – Oh that was 400 years ago. Segregation – Oh you guys got history month out of it come on we gave you February. Police shooting – That was two weeks, come on you're still, *still*? 911 – Oh never forget. That's why this September I'm getting a T-shirt that says all buildings matter." (Che 2020)

What is denied to Blacks is quickly afforded to the subject of architecture; history, memory, space and time qualifies it under the protection of the law. Fanon's (1952, 82) discovery of the absence of Black ontology, the objecthood of Blackness was precise on the function of civil society, how its notions of progress are an extension of the colonial state. In a world structured by White supremacy and anti-Blackness, civil society is the mediation at the cusp of what Rizvana Bradley (2018) calls a "Tear in the

World". In this desire to be seen, for intimacy in the world of civility, to touch and be touched by the world, to matter, Spillers reminds us that those bodies-turned-flesh who do not have access to juridical protocols of due process "cannot ward off another's touch" (Spillers 2018). As Fanon puts it "The Black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the White man" (Fanon 1952, 83).

In the White world, Blackness is defined by its hypervisibility that opens it up to violence. In 2013, images of a school teacher, Andries Tatane, who was killed during a housing protest, were circulated in the media. The seven police officers involved were all acquitted. It is this visibility that has seen the circulation of Blacks being shot for no reason. For Fanon, while other's actions and culture solicit their regressions which can at times go unnoticed, Blacks simply need to be there. If this desire to be seen is in a sense a desire for "freedom", it is of importance then that we assess conditions of such im/possibility. It is important then that this proposition be from the position of the world with which such a desire is made. Reading through JM Coetzee's *White Writing; On the Culture of White Letters in South Africa*, Wilderson III takes us through the discursive integrity of early 16th to 18th-century European ethnographic scholarship and its articulation of the encounter with the Khoisan and AmaXhosa. The methodologies of investigation were structured along two categories; "Historical axis, codes distributed along the axis of temporality and events" as well as "Anthropological axis, an axis of cultural codes" (Wilderson III 2003, 11). While the agricultural acumen of AmaXhosa registered the bare minimum in the scale of articulation, the lifestyle of the Khoisan provided the discourse with no "recognisable" social norms.

> "…customs, religion, medicine, dietary patterns, culinary habits, sexual mores, means of agriculture, and most significantly, without character – without character because, according to the literature, they did not work. Even when press-ganged against the whip, by the bible, by the spectre of starvation, they showed no valuation of industry." (Wilderson III 2003, 11)

For a second, if we meditate on the above closing sentence, we are made clearly aware of the intentions of the investigator. The "civility" exhibited by AmaXhosa compared to the absence of anthropological data of the Khoisan was not to propel them towards any form of social status. Instead, these would become the initial categories of colonisation between "extermination" and "enslavement". The argument then is that because the Koi and the San had no distinguishable cultural norms to tame, and because of their lack of value for industrious work, they were

open to extermination. But the Xhosa cultural codes were not evidence of civility; instead this opened them to dispossession and enslaving conditions. Today's irony is how, in attempts to dismiss claims from Blacks as the calls for land to be returned intensify, the language or retort as it attempts to distort protest for land has miraculously put a spotlight on the Khoisan as a project themed "First Nation People" by The First Nation's Collective, supported by the right-wing group Afriforum. This "First Nation" claim is based on a form of obscured ethnicity that the group designated as coloured is, as a matter of "history", Khoisan. Conveniently, Blackness becomes a unifying marker for colonisation while ethnicity becomes a dividing one.

Despite the obvious structural social arrangements, there is a tendency to reduce anti-Black racism and or White supremacy to a "state of mind". Not a matter of fact but a sort of self-inflicted paranoia not rooted in any concrete materiality; a concept to be easily dismissed with a positive channelling of one's energy. Quantum field theorist Karen Barad's work on the alternative radical political possibilities opened by the field of quantum physics puts a point on the importance of concepts. For Barad, quantum physics gives us the physical theory on the structure of the physical world by way of measurements – a calculation of the ontology of the world. We learn this through her use of Niels Bohr's notion of concepts; that they "are specific material arrangements" (Barad 2016). Unlike Werner Heisenberg's idea that objects become interrupted in the process of conceptualisation, Bohr argued that measurement determines the nature of objects. If we begin to think of the Khoisan's absence of character as well as the bare minimum of articulation afforded to AmaXhosa according to JM Coetzee categories under White supremacy, the statuses of both the Khoisan and AmaXhosa contribute to the materialisation of the White world. The positions they occupy, whether for extermination or enslavement as specific material arrangements constitute an intramural positionality itself "entangled" within White supremacy, a void called Blackness. For Barad, the ontology of the void is;

> "Nothingness. The void. An absence of matter. The blank page. Utter silence. No thing, no thought, no awareness. Complete ontological insensibility. Shall we utter some words about nothingness? What is there to say? … How can anything be said about nothing without violating its very nature, perhaps even its conditions of possibility? Isn't any utterance about nothingness always already a performative breach of that which one means to address? Have we not already said too much simply in pronouncing its name? … Classically speaking,

> the void is that which is devoid of matter, that which literally doesn't matter." (Barad 2018)

Any attempt to demand Black visibility (the call for Black Lives (to) Matter) is to miss this point. If anything, the World Trade Centre's Twin Towers[43] buildings under attack on the 9th September were ontologised as institutional beings at the centre of capital. Today, capitalism is portrayed as synonymous with democracy – the notion of free trade; how else do you make visible and justify (a threat to modernity itself) the invasion and occupation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan? The destruction of the Twin Towers would lead to a devastation of the Middle East, a new era and an international policy "against terror". This is a period M Matsaganis and G Payne (2005, 384) have characterised as the manufacturing of the culture of fear. While the Arab supposedly poses a threat to the modern way of life in the form of Western capitalism, an invasion in the name of "free trade" and a "war against terrorism" becomes the disciplinary measure. On the other hand, fear takes on a different form in the face of the Black subject. If, as Fanon irons out the constituents of negrophobia, "the negro, because of his body, impedes the closing of the postural schema of the White man – at the point – naturally, at which the Black man makes his entry into the phenomenal world of the White man' (Fanon 1952, 124), then how is the White world meant to respond to the call for Black life to matter when the sight of the Black body resembles a threat to humanity itself? How is it that *that which literally doesn't matter* fits into the scheme of the world?

Wilderson III recaps a lecture in which Jared Sexton was teaching class, of which the students were bored by his constant psychoanalytics, he had to remind his students of the seriousness of the fact that White fears turn into legislation. Because proximity to power affords beings an ontological status. Fanon is clear about the status of the colonised and its "impunity" and "flawed ontological explanatory" that "ontology, once it is finally admitted as living existence by the wayside – does not permit us to understand the being of the Black man." (Fanon 1952, 82-83). So, what do we make of such material arrangements that constitute the relationship between Blackness and Whiteness, the void/nothingness and matter? The two do not interact but exist as intra-action. The Oxford Dictionary describes "interaction" in physics as "a particular way in which matter, fields, and atomic and subatomic particles affect each other, through gravitation or electromagnetism." "Intra-action" is a term introduced by Barad to denote the "dynamism of forces" (2007, 141) that, in all their differences or antagonistic nature, do not, and cannot

[43] Built in 1968 and opened on 4 April 1973, The World Trade Centre was a financial district in Manhattan that was destroyed when commercial airliners flew straight into the Twin Towers buildings on 11 September 2001 in an act of terrorism.

exist independent of each other. In interaction, there is a mediating factor be it gravitation or electromagnetism, while in "intra-action," there exists no such separation. This relationship also speaks to the antagonisms that structure intra-action of Whiteness and anti-Blackness where the two are assumed to be mediated and interact by way of violence of gender, race, and class. Barad also goes against the classical physics definition of matter as that which is inert mass and occupies space. For Barad, this foundation is built on reductionism and fundamentalism undone by quantum field theory. She argues rather for matter as an open potentiality in that;

> "Matter in its essence is a massive overlay of perversities and infinities… According to quantum field theory, perversity and monstrosity bely at the core of being or rather thread through it. All touching entails an infinite alterity, so that touching the other is touching all others, including the self, and touching the self entails touching the stranger within. Even the smallest bits of matter are an infallible multitude. Each individual always already includes all possible interactions with itself through all possible virtual others including those in itself that are non-contemporaneous with itself. That is, every finite being is always already threaded through an infinite alterity diffracted to being in time. Indeterminacy is an undoing of identity that unsettles the very foundation of non-being." (Barad 2018)

Then, if matter is living existence at its perverse and infinite, is its potentiality not itself its own matter of fact? As it does and undoes itself and the world around it in its touch, it seems, its elasticity in its infinite alterity can only be its own doing. As we witness, matter moves in and out of itself at will, determines its own matter of fact as it refuses its determinism. Itself is never touched, cannot be touched as it is what only matters. Law unto itself. It does not abide nor obey. It is law at its lawlessness. At will, it can only expand towards and against that which doesn't matter, and against itself. This touch then can only be a violation of that which cannot be violated, that which cannot be spoken off, that which doesn't matter.

Maybe the void cannot be spoken of as a matter of fact in all its ethical possibilities. As they stand, both matter and the void are irreconcilable. As Biko suggested that "One does not need to plan for or actively encourage real integration. Once the various groups within a given community have asserted themselves to the point that mutual respect has to be shown then you have the true ingredients for a true meaningful integration" (Biko 1978, 21).

Barad's touch of the stranger within is not a universal category. It applies to Biko's communities that have reached a point of meaningful integration. Such was the formation of the Union of South Africa, the mutual consolidation between two settler nations who had been at war with each other – the English and Boers through the treaty of Vereeniging. And so, the failure of the Schreiner mission[44] by JT Jabavu (African delegation) and Abdurahman (Coloured delegation) to convince the British parliament against the South African Act would be cemented through the Native Land Act of 1913. It is important then that as quantum theory opens up radical political possibilities, we investigate concretely its physics as Barad has explained in its common fundamentals of touch in the context of electro interaction from a physicist point of view that it involves no touching. For Barad, "no contact is involved… but what you are actually sensing is the electromagnetic repulsion between the electrons of the atoms that make up of your fingers and those that make up the mug". It is these negatively charged particles that repel one another.

What we then read in Barad's assertions is that the world of quantum physics is made up of that which matters (matter), as well as that which doesn't matter (void) which is fundamentally structured by an inability to touch. However, in her attempt at a progressive unification of a potential infinity, at an embrace between matter and void, one still reads matter as that only potentiality to touch and alter both itself and the other. It moves through space and time which is itself the void or is occupied by that which doesn't matter. As a given law unto itself, it carries the potential to violate which is itself no violation. So, if property law is the ontological determination, it makes sense that the being of the Black Body is already a violation of its value. But this value is a value unto itself in the world of subjects and laws. It is important then to move along the lines, as Felicia Denaud thinks through the concerted effort of property law during protests in that;

> "Arson is the conceptual meeting point. The criminalisation of fire and the sanctification of property. A lot of the images that came out of Minneapolis without a raging fire, and right behind them were the critiques of destroying one's community, the story of violent and non-violent unrest. And even plead from Atlanta amongst the Black elite to protect the city that has given so much. What this managerial response does is trivialise fire as pedagogy and fire as a Black

[44] The Schreiner Mission was a delegation of Black and Coloured leaders organised by the liberal William Philip Schreiner in 1909 to London at the British parliament to forward a plea deal as an act to unify the four provinces to the Union of South Africa was being tabled as a concept of discussion between the English and the Afrikaneerss.

> critique of property itself. This moment is both a refusal of routine terror, a stepping out of fear, and in its own way has launched, like fires before it, a calling into question the ethics of property as a category. This is more than putting people over property. It's about how property informs what is and is not personhood."
> (Felicia Denaud 2020)

So, Smith's reading is not out of context. As a product of the "Red Assembly" workshop, it answers to the call of "time and work" as its required historical reading. However, if we are to press more at the framework that informs the codes of such a reading, in what forms the initial staging of colonial rule, it is found wanting. Though she does point to the tomb-like resemblance of the museum, alluding to its conceptual and structural make-up as seemingly built as a burial site for activists. But she does not reveal to us what Frank Wilderson III, in his critique of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, has characterises as a "decisive antagonism"; Smith does not "precipitate a crisis in the institution's assumptive logic" (Wilderson III 2003, 225). Phrased differently, the critique of the Red Location Museum exhibition's "mortifying complex" is not in itself a critique of the idea of the museum as a member of the civil society in general as it pertains to the Red Location Community and or Black community. The museum becomes an entity with its own relations rather than a zone where power between White supremacy and anti-Blackness is mediated. What we are given both in conceptual and structural make-up is framed within the exhibited photographic work, how it labours the national struggle narrative.

What I find peculiar in such a framing is the lack of structural depth; how the colonial codes that structure such positions are not made primary. The coming together, and or the dialogue in the form of the "Red Assembly" workshop that brought together the two academic periodicals *Kronos* and *Parallax,* with all its solidarities for this common purpose, seemed to miss some of the most fundamental moments that shaped the logic of today's museum. One such moment was the National and International, Trade and Colonial Exhibitions organised between 1900 and 1910 by the Museums Association as its ideological method of promoting British class unity by means of educational ambitions. As we have already seen with the Red Location Museum's conception, Annie E Coombes points out how the curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, who also served as the President of the Anthropological Institute in 1904, conceptualised what he called the "museum of national culture". Such a museum would depict and preserve local history in the form of arts, industries, customs and beliefs. This would be later realised in the form of what Coombes (1988, 65) calls "folk Museum". But it took an interesting

form in that the same language used on colonised people as a way to validate expansionist ambitions by anthropologists – the promotion of the resilient rural “folk” culture – was now applied to the British Isles; first in juvenile education and later as a unifying mechanism of the rural and the middle classes.

Remnants of this are not evidently clear in the Red Location Museum, but implicit. One has to read through the history of the museum’s aesthetic appropriation to link the relationship to the nationalist Afrikaner past. What is undeniable in its explicit depiction of the current surrounding community. Coombes credits this form of curatorship to the discipline of academic anthropology’s survival tactic. She argues that anthropological knowledge became an essential training for colonial civil servants as a way to subjugate colonies. And that the multicultural project of National and International, trade and Colonial Exhibitions was not meant to function as an anti-racist educational project but instead, to further cement racial hierarchies between the Western “primitiveness” and its colonial counterpart.

Here, the redness that ties together the “Red Assembly”, Gush’s “Red”, and the Red Location Museum move along the common concept of restoration, returning, preservation, conservation, reinstallation. What ties the “Shackville” student protest and the Red Location community protest to the anti-colonial movement of Amaqaba is a certain vilification of backwardness, of pushing against oppressive “institutional progress”.

Chapter 6: The beginning of the end of the beginning…

The many facets with which we begin and end our political strategies, our ideological leanings in struggles and protest culture, are largely defined by a certain locality and or performativity. Our protests for decent housing, for minimum wages, a reduction or non-increment in university fees are some of the few palatable protests in the wake of our democracy. They yearn for access, visibility and recognition within the modes of production, economic and intellectual. These performative demands, as valid as they are, only scratch the surface and pose no crisis to the logic of the structure of White supremacy. There are certain moments in the sphere of Black protest when the demands, unintentional or even inevitably either threaten or affirm the structure of White supremacy. Such moments present themselves either as refusal or in line with acceptable modes of Black protest. As such, the art of narration, of bringing forth the main ideological underpinnings that convert these objects of subjection to subjects of cinematic appropriation, makes the failure of elevating the programmatic to the paradigmatic the order of the day. They begin as continuations unable to shake off the structure that melds it all together. As such, the ending is but a continuation that carries the DNA.

This is no more apparent than in the two documentary films at the heart of South Africa's post-liberation struggle for decent shelter and wages – *Dear Mandela* and *Miners Shot Down.* In both, the emphasis is on resolving the impending crisis of which the internal workings of the police or the law form the centrepiece. With *Dear Mandela* it is the Slums legislation; in *Miners Shot Down* it is the police force. In this chapter, I will examine the terms of engagement employed by the state as well as the response of the protesters. It is from these responses that my analyses, using the work of Afro-pessimism and Black optimism, will try to bring forth the push and pull of radical Black studies.

6.1. *Dear Mandela* and *Miners Shot Down*

In Dara Kell and Christopher Nizza's 2011 documentary film *Dear Mandela*, we open the scene with an aura of vertigo after the fact. The state machinery is in full armour with Black police armed to the teeth as a helicopter hovers in the partly cloudy sky. There is burnt-out Black

rubble in what seems like a post-protest scene. People start running as we hear gunshots. Neither the viewer nor the subjects of the violence know why it has been inflicted on these Black bodies on the screen as one woman frustratedly laments "*Sizothini thina because amaphoyisa afike asidubula, angasibuzi ukuthi yini inkinga yethu?*" (What are we supposed to do when the police just arrived and shot at us, taking no interest in our problems?)

In *Miners Shot Down*, Mgcineni "Mambush" Noki (the now iconic figure of the Lonmin mine protest) explains in an almost identical manner a similar situation where NUM and the police had killed their comrades unprovoked. One victim shows rubber bullet wounds all over his body as one of the main protagonists – Mnikelo Ndabankulu, chairperson of Abahlali baseMjondolo – is heard asking for an ambulance for the victims over the phone. The following sequence is the "local government official" (Bab'u Hlanga) listening to the angry residents' grievances and frustrations with the situation, followed by the ambulance that has arrived, and national media coverage of the various housing protests in different parts of the country. This scene closes with Ndabankulu's, sombre lament as the camera pans around his small shack with Mandela's portrait on the wall;

> "I would like to meet Dr Nelson Mandela and ask him about how does he feel about these unstable conditions that we are living under after he stayed about 27 years in Robben Island for the better life for all. He's like Jesus Christ himself. I do not like the fact that what he has been jailed for has never been achieved." (*Dear Mandela* 2012, 2:05-2:36)

The end of the judgement against the Slums Act piece of legislation in favour of Abahlali baseMjondolo sees what is actually the real end of the documentary film; jubilations as one of the protagonists, community leader S'bu Zikode and the human rights lawyer Stuart Wilson are tossed into the air by the ecstatic shack dwellers. Mirroring the opening scene, this time in a resolve, the following montage begins with Stuart Wilson and then S'bu Zikode explaining to the now calm audience what makes Abahlali baseMjondolo the outcome of the judgement and the importance of the Constitution. This is further emphasised by Ndabankulu in his affirmation that the judgement was "just". There is a sense of rebuilding that is protected by the law and the Constitution. Then self-development through education. And a passionate self-assured interview with Mnikelo Ndabankulu on how he wants to be remembered posthumously. This time, we see the inverse of the bird's-eye view of the calming oceanic White waves.

I am interested in tying the beginning and the end of this narrative that claims law as the language of possibility; that, with proper access and precise application, victory is inevitable.

Dear Mandela suggests a beginning and an end, not of an era but of a particular language of sociopolitical configuration. The release of Nelson Mandela from Robben Island and later Victor Verster Prison have become synonymous with what today makes for South Africa's post-1994 liberation. Insinuated in De Klerk's 1990 media address that broke the news, this release, coupled with the unbanning of liberation movements and political activists, meant that a drafting of a new constitution and legalisation of protest was to take place. Presented as a collaboration, or the famed "negotiated settlement" between the two, this yin-yang Nobel Peace Prize figure of Mandela/De Klerk here became the global image of a "peaceful" transition between the end of apartheid and the beginning of our freedoms. It is therefore in the liberation constitution that we see the emphasis on the language of law as a structuring phenomenon of the documentary film *Dear Mandela.*

6.2. The End

In her essay "The End of Ideology, The Ideology of the End", Alenka Zupančič explores what she calls the "fantasy of the end" as that which encompasses our contemporary mode of thinking. She argues that the "fantasy of the end" narrative as proposed by Francis Fukuyama in his book *The End of History and the Last Man* achieves the total opposite of what it claims. In its attempt at the totalisation of capitalism after the failures of communism as an all-encompassing ending, Zupančič argues that instead, it marks the "impossibility to end" or "the impossibility for capitalism as we know it to end" (A Zupančič 2020, 01).

In statements released in 2021 made by De Klerk, that the fall of the Berlin Wall allowed for the negotiations to take place since the threat of communism was no more. Apartheid obviously had become a less viable model of governance. But this social "integration" did not pose issues either to capitalism or White Power. Instead, we see it pronounced in Steve Biko's caution in an interview with a European journalist in 1977, who asked him if the Black People's Convention was a move towards socialism. Of course, his response was a confident "yes" and the distribution of the country's resources was the stance. Biko would caution that "If we have a mere change of face of those in governing positions what is likely to happen is that Black people will continue to be poor, and

you will see a few Blacks filtering through into the so-called bourgeoisie. Our society will be run as if of Yesterday" (Biko 1978, 142).

In the chapter "*Democracy Born In Chains"* in her acclaimed book *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein visits South Africa in 2005 in search of understanding "what happened in the transition" (Klein 2007, 199). At the centre of her argument is how what she calls the "two parallel tracks" of the negotiations (political and economic) left the ruling party with political power while Apartheid-era rulers maintained economic power in all spheres. It was in these negotiations that the De Klerk government pulled a wool over the ANC liberation fighters' eyes. While the ANC was fighting to control parliament, the National Party came with a twofold strategy (Klein 2007, 200) by arguing for the Washington Consensus as merely administrative and technical but the only way of running an economy, then arguing for new policy tools that would give control to economists (International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), National Party and "impartial experts" of International Trade Agreements, Innovations in Constitutional Law and Structural Adjustment Programmes). So, while the liberation movement grabbed parliament, the National Party clutched onto the economy. This meant that whatever promises of the incoming constitution, the Freedom Charter's governance by the people was monitored closely by global institutions that control the markets.

The ANC's inability to meet their enshrined promises to the masses was because they had attempted to appease Western markets. The post-liberation concessions made by ANC leaders against the demands compiled in Kliptown and adopted on 26 June 1955, known as the Freedom Charter, dismally failed to alleviate poor Black communities. If looked at from this view, one finds no irony in the failure of the tripartite alliance of the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party, and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, despite being voted into power by the Black majority since 1994 till its recent split. This unification of the tripartite alliance under such circumstances should then be read from Zupančič's view that:

> "The end of the Cold War, that is, the end of the so-called 'really existing Socialism' as an actually existing *outside* of the capitalist order, and hence marking its boundaries – there emerged an 'open totality' in which the outside (the remaining non-democratic/non-capitalistic regimes) was on its way to the inside. It was 'speculatively' already included in the inside, and this inside is now all there is (and all that there can ever be). In other words … "the end of history" means that we have reached a point where we are living in

> times that cannot end, at least not as a result of any intrinsic reasons or contradictions.” (A Zupančič 2020, 1)

If the end is infinite, then we see this veiled in many faces that are cloaked in a manner of independence and infinite possibilities, or as we have come to learn of it in the language that is Post 1994 – opportunities. Under the apartheid regime, the 13% land allocation deemed “Homelands” was presented by the apartheid government as an opportunity it called separate development, where each of the Black South African nationalities were to attain some form of autonomy, as a certain form of self-rule. While certain Black leaders, such as Mangosuthu “Gatsha” Buthelezi in KwaZulu-Natal, Lucas Mangope of Bophuthatswana, Kaiser Daliwonga Matanzima in Transkei, Thandatha Jongilizwe Mabandla of Ciskei, Patrick Ramaano Mphephu of Venda, Hudson William Edison Ntsanwisi of Gazankulu, Jonannes Mkolishi Dlamini of KaNgwane, Simon SoMkhahlekwa Skosana of KwaNdebele, Cedric Makepeace Namedi of Lebowa and Wessels Mota of QwaQwa, eagerly accepted the Bantu Authorities Act for the supposed “free territory” intended to split the unified voice of the oppressed Black majority into their different nationalities, this was vehemently opposed by Black movements such as the African National Congress, Pan Africanist Congress and the Black People’s convention. The split between the two camps, between those who saw an opportunity within, who Biko would later characterise as “non-Blacks” (Blacks who were seen to be colluding and or worked on the side of the White oppressive system against the oppressed Blacks), and those who worked towards its demise became contentious. One can continue to convincingly argue, as has been done in widely available literature, that the liberation by the tripartite alliance led by the African National Congress today occupies a similar position to that of the “homelands”, just at a global scale: how this opening up of the vote to the masses and an end to formal apartheid did not translate to an end to anti-Blackness and capitalism. But I am interested in the arguments taking place within the contemporary radical left and what lessons have been learnt, both strategic and political, from the left: its manoeuvres and failures.

De Klerk’s utterances on the fall of the Berlin Wall as an enabling mechanism of our liberation speaks to Zupančič’s “’open totality’ in which the outside… is *in* (my emphasis) the inside”. For Žižek, if there is one thing to be learnt in the logic of alienation in the era of the 20th century it is that the repetitions of its failure result in a constant surprise. He reads this repetition in the communist revolutionary attempts of the Chinese revolution to the October revolution of the Bolsheviks. For Žižek, Marx was not driven by hate for capitalism, instead, he was inspired by

the dynamic order of perpetual crisis. And therefore, also believed in its final stage as an upcoming demise to which Lenin would later allude as an imperialism as its last stage, and later Mao. Despite of all these professed endings, it is in this dynamic order that the more it rots, the better it does. (Žižek 2014).

Terry Eagleton (2010) takes us further back and reminds us that it was the likes of Hegel who had "prematurely announced" the end of history, which resulted in its repetition when the likes of Marx, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche responded to it. In her study of the Global South and the Eastern-bloc shifts during the periods of their democratic transitions, Naomi Klein observes what she would call "disaster capitalism", where the old-school Western sponsored military dictatorships became an outdated form of rule and instead began to be replaced by stringent economic policies that led to extreme poverty. She observes how fragile new democracies were plunged from crisis to crisis which saw the Volcker Shock, followed by the Mexican Tequila Crisis in 1994, then the Asian Contagion in 1997, the Russian collapse and soon after, Brazil. Once these shocks succeeded in stripping the power of these nations, they would be followed by cataclysmic wars, tsunamis, terrorist attacks etc. And here, "disaster capitalism was taking shape". (Klein 2007, 168)

This has come to characterise the global South, whose economies have suffered because they are unable to contain such disasters. Abahlali baseMjondolo is one of the many Black social movements that are a true reflection of the failures of South Africa's democratic transition. They are the beneficiaries of the right to protest laws of our democracy as well as victims of its democratic structural adjustments, of which privatisation and the protection of private property function against land distribution as enshrined in the Freedom Charter. It is here that we find not only that the abstract and symbolic do not, but fundamentally cannot, translate into the concrete. Cyril Ramaphosa substantiates this in the *Miners's Shot Down* interview on how the South African democratic system "allows workers to express themselves" in protest form, which might result in the "withdrawal of workers' labour" and how this expression should not be alarming. As such, he denounces what he claims are "violent protest behavioural patterns" that need to be dealt with. If the African National Congress-run government was to implement its own majority voted policy resolution for land redistribution, there is no doubt that this would set off alarms in international market forces. Such implementations would be tantamount to deal breakers of those agreements made with the institutions such as the IMF on reform "of which will lead to currency crashes, aid cuts, and capital flight" (Klein 2007, 203). There is already a litany of evidence of speculative markets' fragility. Klein notes that the release of Nelson Mandela immediately collapsed the South African stock

market and sent the local currency crashing by a whopping 10%, with further talks of nationalisation plunging the Gold Index by 5%. Klein says:

> "Not only did the volatile market not like the idea of a liberated Mandela, but just a few misplaced words from him or his fellow ANC leaders would lead to an earth-shaking stampede by what a *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman has aptly termed "the electronic herd." The stampede that greeted Mandela's release was just the start of what became a call-and-response between the ANC leadership and the financial markets – a shock dialogue that trained the party in the new rules of the game." (Klein 2007, 213)

I say then, if there is one thing to be learnt from post-liberation South Africa it is that the markets do not operate outside the sphere of anti-Blackness.

In an interview for the *Mail & Guardian*, Zamansele Nsele[45] ponders about Wilderson III's experience that shaped what would become Afro-pessimism. It was in retrospect back in the United States that he remembered a conversation with Kamogelo (his ex-wife), who had argued that the devaluing of the Rand was due to the fact that it was now under a Black government. As a staunch Marxist then, Wilderson III had rebutted the argument, using Marxist analysis. His association with scholars steeped in Black radical thought became his realisation that as much as it was important to acknowledge that Blacks suffer from Capitalism, anti-Blackness was the fundamental "grammar of suffering" (Wilderson III 2010, 5).

When one of the Lonmin Mine strike leaders, Mzoxolo Magidiwana, relays how he came to be a rock driller, he speaks of an economic hierarchy and repetition steeped in generations structured by a relationship of position between White power and anti-Blackness. If, as both Naomi Klein and Slavoj Žižek argue, capitalism "thrives through crisis", it should be clear then as to how this crisis maintains and regurgitates what Nelson Mandela clearly noticed during the negotiations – that "what the national party was trying to do was to maintain White Supremacy with our consent" (Klein 2007, 199). As the hip-hop duo Dead Prez would have it, "capitalism is born on the back of Blacks" (Dead Prez, Ghetto Youth Crew, The Marley Brothers; 2000), and Wilderson's reminds us how it is completely omitted in both Gramscian and Marxist theories and schools of thought that "capital was kick-started by the rape of the African continent" (Wilderson 2003, 5). It becomes clear that consent between

[45] https://mg.co.za/article/2020-06-24-frank-b-wilderson-afropessimism-memoir-structural-violence/

Black and Whites here does not initiate a crisis in authority but rather conceals it. So, while capitalism is the marker through which the market crisis thrives, what it does not define is the crisis of the human fold. It conceals it in the class dynamic rather than reveals it in ontological relations. The killings[46] that took place in 2012 at the Koppie in Marikana when those platinum miners demanded a R12,500 minimum wage is one such event. The constant invocation of the laws as justifying narrative in both the case of Abahlali baseMjondolo and the Lonmin Miners' Protest in Marikana play out different scenarios with the same result. With Abahlali baseMjondolo, the court and the constitution become the medium through which the battle plays itself out, while the commons, the Koppie becomes a site of the Marikana miners' rebellion.

So, while the battle with the Lonmin Mine in Marikana seems to be waged as a workers' strike, none of the traditional channels of organised labour dispute are seen to possess any mediating merit. As the *Miners Shot Down* documentary narrator narrates behind the visual background of the crowd of mineworkers marching over a bridge to the offices of the mine mentioned earlier in the documentary, that "a crowd of rock drillers meet, a march to the Lonmin management offices, they believe the official majority union, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is in the pockets of mine management and so they've decided to take matters into their own hands" (*Miners Shot Down*; 6:30-42). It is important to note that the competing Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU – a breakaway union of COSATU) neither led nor initiated, but joined in, the march. As such, the protesters demand to meet directly with the bosses. Such performative strategies open space for these demands and refusal to carry the seed with the potential to override the demand for wage and escalate it to the actual clash against White supremacy. While the goal of the strike might be an increase in wages, the demand to see the bosses without the unions as mediators introduces an antagonism.

This is an introduction to the failure of the body politic as Fanon theorised in his seminal work *Black Skin White Mask,* that failure as the inability of Black ontological resistance in the presence of Whiteness. This failure is not the failure to act but an impossibility of structural recognition in the face of Blackness. In other words, the protesting Black mineworkers lack ontological integrity. They do not possess the recognisable body schema to make any demands. Only at the level of coercion. This time by a police force both by means of disarmament and the inevitable violence. Here to disarm is to violate. However, it is presented as an avoidance of violence.

[46] In 2012 34 mineworkers were killed by the South African police, with others injured and arrested, following a strike for a higher wage.

It is violence that sustains everyday structural violence, what Žižek would call objective violence. It is in the machinery‘s coercive machinations that Black production, both intellectual and economic and as it is consciously and or subconsciously artistic, becomes sadomasochistic. If anything, it is through the acts of refusal, engaging by way of negation that makes visible the essence of this impossibility. How then does a language of a non-human, a person devoid of speech, with no accepted capacity to reason, engage in an act of refusal?

6.3. The Language of Refusal

How the language of refusal is approached is a contested territory between optimism and pessimism within Black studies. These contestations are not in themselves contradictory nor antagonistic. However, I want to argue that while they may be two sides of the same coin, they do occupy different positions in the struggle for Black liberation. There is a pull between whether the focus should be on the possibilities that Blacks as people have managed to overcome and create beautifully, or emphasise the structural impossibilities in spite of that creativity. For Fred Moten, “colour + beauty = Blackness” (Moten 2007, 1). Fred Moten’s formulation of “Black operation” or better known as “Black Optimism” salvages creative improvisations as ownership, that objects of a certain dispossession that in themselves become moments of flight. These moments of flight are made of and make contemporary Black culture, which is a labour and affirmation of Black social life. As such, for Moten, these moments of flight resist disciplinary instruments of capture (White institutions) and therefore cannot be reduced to property. It is from this form of resistance, what Moten views as the “normative”, that is a work of creative Black imagination he accuses Fanon of lacking. Of course, Moten is not oblivious to the workings and machinations that make the world anti-Black. He is not oblivious to the fact that Black life, which is regarded as “stolen life” relates to law as we know it in ways that are not dependent on “simple interdictions not bare transgressions” (Moten 2008, 4) This is Fanon’s initial notion of being “determined from without”, of being a “slave not of an ‘idea’ that others have of … but of *Black* (my emphasis) appearance” (Fanon 1952, 87). However, Moten strains against the idea that such relations to the world as we know it render this stolen life socially dead. As such, he argues that a break exists between the mistranslated title of the chapter “The Fact of Blackness” in Fanon’s *Black Skin White Mask* and the more literal translation “The Lived Experience of the Black” of which, using Heidegger

and Marx, he makes a "Case for Blackness". For Moten, this "case" is him lingering in the space between "fact" and "lived experience", "Black" and "Blackness" and how this difference often plays out in "ontological difference between being and beings" (Moten 2008, 4). As such, he calls for a different reading of Fanon that reads from subject to object. Or maybe from object to a thing as a foundation to philosophy as more adequate for finding what he finds absent in Jared Sexton and Huey Copeland's reanimation of Fanon as a philosophical reintroduction of Afro-pessimism.

It is his call for a rereading of Fanon that David Marriott reads as a clear misreading. Not just a misreading but something akin to blasphemy – putting Fanon under trial adjudicated by Heidegger. Marriott argues that how Fanon positions Blackness can only be read pessimistically. And pessimism here is not a mere affirmation of social death, "but if, when confronting that death, another order can present itself whose relation to law and ontology 'is reducible neither to simple interdiction nor bare transgressions'" (Marriott 2016, 2). Then Marriott complicates Moten's demand to reread Fanon "as if for the first time" in that Moten's Black Optimism itself seems to be a derivative of Heidegger. In *The Idea of Black Culture*, Hortense Spillers makes a similar slippage in her attempt at what she calls (using Latin American Alberto Moreiras)" the exhaustion of difference". She makes the move away from Afrocentrism's critical stance (as an embrace of difference and centralisation of African civilisation and thought) against Eurocentrism towards an embrace of what she reads as a common encounter with the extreme between Du Bois's despair of "Black life and development" with the "forced to learn, in flight" (Spillers 2006, 9) of the persecuted Frankfurt School thinkers led by Marcuse. The irony here is that Afrocentrism directly flirts with the Du Boisian school of thought, to which no link but a forced common encounter with the Frankfurt School is made. As it is with Moten's reading of Fanon anew, in this instance, it seems both believe in the "aim…to 'return' and know the place for the first time" (Spillers 2006, 6), which Marriott finds naïve in its assertion by Moten. "The Idea of Black Culture" deviates from her early important contributing essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" to which aspects of Afro-pessimism owe some of its pivotal arguments – race vs gender, body and flesh. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" centres Du Bois's prophecy on the *colour line* being the greatest problem of the 20th Century, while the "Idea of Black Culture" believes that Du Bois's entire 20th-Century work may be recovered via Marcuse's work on "*Humanitas* – mode of thought, imagination, expression essentially non-operational, and transcendent, transcending the established universe of behaviour not towards a realm of ghosts and

illusions but towards historical possibilities" (Spillers 2006, 11). Here lies the risk clearly illustrated in Fanon's disjoinder to Sartre's applause of Negritude as a legible anticolonial method but no more than a "minor term in the dialectic". It becomes clear then that Whiteness as visibility comes with a structure of appropriation, not the language of articulation.

The common denominator that binds the demand for the call to "read anew" and to "'return' and know a place for the first time" does not provide us with a new reading of Fanon and Du Bois, but instead, a reading against such a demand. Such a reading towards a humanist discourse is but a cry for coherence that conceals the inarticulable language of terror that subsumes Black social life. It is this coherence in the notion that there already exists such a language (Whitely instituted) against which Afro-pessimism strains. In the conversation "The Position of the Unthought" between Saidiya Hartman and Frank Wilderson III, it is made clear that her allegorical work, the *Scenes of Subjection* is not a celebration of the type of "Afrocentrism that could be captured by multiculturalism discourse" (Hartman/Wilderson III 2003, 3). In the same breath, Wilderson III gives us an intramural critique of Biko and Black Consciousness concerning negritude – a critique he says aims to evaluate whether notions of African empowerment derived from Negritude can in fact provide temporarily a sustained and concrete enabling Black liberation. This critique is a reading of Biko and Fanon's reception and limits of Negritude as both a tool for meaning and how Biko found it foundational in his quest for Black identity as a "reconstituting of Black subjectivity" (Wilderson III 2008, 109), whereas, while Fanon orientated towards it, he found the notion of a Black identity suspect, with the potential to affirm certain racist stereotypes such as ruling by intuition. Wilderson III reminds us that it is this "presence of the Negro besides Whites" that Fanon was once reminded by a friend "is in a way an insurance policy to humanness" (Fanon 1952, 98). It is to this subjectivation of slave narratives that Hartman poses the question "Who does that narrative enable?" (Wilderson III/Hartman 2003, 3).

Still Image 11: Striking Lonmin mine workers negotiating a passage way with the police before they were massacared (Miners Shot Down, 2014)

The dialogue between the protesting miners and the police is testament to Moten's failure of Black improvisation as ownership of a certain dispossession – as moments of flight – in what seems like a well-choreographed moment between Lonmin mine security and the police. When a group of miners moving from the Koppie to the K-3 mine to engage some of their colleagues who were yet to down tools are met by a group of Black police, they decide to engage. The dialogue begins "cordially" with General Mpembe (Deputy Commissioner of Northwest Province) addressing miners. The dialogue begins ngesiZulu but switches to isiFanakalo – a miner's dialect;

> "Gen Mpemba – Now we are here to ask you… We are not here to arrest you. But we have a problem. Our problem is that you are carrying weapons. They are illegal. So if you want me to let you go, I ask each one of you to hand over your weapons.
>
> Miners – No.
>
> Gen Mpemba – Listen here. Listen.
>
> Mgcineni "Mambush" Noki (Leader 1) – I'm going to speak fanakalo. All we ask from you is to go to where we're gathered. So please make way for us to leave. That is all we ask. We are not fighting. We just want to go to the Koppie. Even on Saturday when we were going back to our place of gathering, mine security and NUM people came and shot at

> us. They killed two of our people, as a result, we have to carry these. We are not fighting anyone.
>
> Mineworker (Leader 2) – Yes Elder. My Elder, you are genuine police. We work for Lonmin and are trying to fix our financial situation. We work underground. We are not fighting with anyone. We are trying to solve something.
>
> Andries Ntsenyeho (Leader 3) – The pain that I'm feeling… When I look at you, I only see faces similar to mine. This pains me. When I get killed by another brother like me. A person of my kind.
>
> Mineworker (Leader 2) – We are asking that you don't take these now but escort us to the mountain and take the weapons there. You'll have to come with us because we're not fighting. We're not fighting.
>
> Gen Mpemba – Where are you going to give them to us?
>
> Miners – Where we're gathered.
>
> Gen Mpemba – Where, at the mountain?
>
> Miners – Yes all of them.
>
> Mgcineni "Mambush" Noki – Where we're gathering at the mountain. (Miners Shot Down 2014)

At this moment, General Mpemba takes a call that could be assumed to be from a superior who must have inquired about the situation. Shivers must have run down the spine of whoever must have been on the other side at the thought of Black policemen meant to enact terror, but miners seemed to have found a language through. Pressure must have mounted on the General to escalate the situation by virtue of his tone after what was no doubt a greatly managed negotiation by the miners. The escalation goes;

> Gen Mpemba – Hey. All I want are the spears. I want the spears (to mean all the weapons). That's all. Everything. And if you don't hand them over, I won't let you through. I'm counting. I'm counting.

It is this break in communication that sends the miners marching in song "*No matter how you strengthen your balls you're nothing*". The miners see through the veil of the badge and the blue uniform. They have a clear view of where power lies. Definitely not with General Mpemba. With all "his" men, "he leads" and can call to arms at will, armoured vehicles, and endless live ammunition, General Mpemba does not extend his arm to the companion call of comradeship. He cannot. He does not run the machine but interfaces it. In song, they are clear; No matter how brash

you are in language, they hear echoes of an empty vessel. They move on. Better yet, the marchers march on, remaining clear on their target.

Mgcineni "Mambush" Noki's immediate announcement to switch and address General Mpemba and his police force in isiFanakalo makes for an interesting radical turn. As much as its origins are a matter of dispute, IsiFanakalo is today known as a language of communication for mineworkers. However, it is understood to have been a language of communication in various contexts from Europeans meeting Nguni speakers of largely Zulu and Xhosa dialects, and, it became an Indian method of communication between the English and AmaZulu. Research and assumptions point to its origins in 1860 and some disputes go even further, as far as in 1800. The language itself did not originate in the mines but as a Southern African regional pidgin dialect that goes by various derogations – Isilolo ("the lo-lo language" due to the prevalence of *lo* as a definitive article), Basic Bantu, Mine Kaffir, Kitchen Kaffir, Kitchen Zulu, Isikula (language of "coolies"), as well as Isilungubhoyi (a language used by Europeans to servant "boys" – a diminutive word for servants) (Hurst 2018, 2). A language of the wretched under colonialist terrorist machinations. The mines certified it as a language structured for subordination. As a result, it was said to have been codified and "formalised" by mine companies "using the Roman script" (Hurst 2018, 5) but never became official. It is there but does not exist. It wallows in the zone of non-beings. Wilderson III draws a fitting description of how this lingering form of inexistence fits in the broader category of Absence of Presence as he finds in Lewis Gordon's suggestive maps that "The worlds of the Black and White become worlds separated by Absence leading to 'fate' on the one hand and Presence leading to 'freedom' on the other". He simplifies it as the world of 'when' and the world of 'whether'. He reads the cartographical Presence in the libidinal economy that structures the Black "homeland" as a replication of the "constituent deficiencies of the Black "bodies" or "subjects" where "Black bodies are domiciled" – a "nowhere of no one" that suffers a double inscription of "an Absence of national Presence drawn on the Absence of continental Presence; A Black "nation" on a Black continent; Nowhere to the power of two". (Wilderson III 2008, 99).

Unlike Afrikaans, that became officiated in 1925 and the development of which in South Africa took a similar route to isiFanakalo, influenced by the Khoisan Dutch, Malay, Portuguese, Germans and Indonesians – but whose official claim lies not with the Absence of Colouredness but with the segment of a White minority with Dutch roots – it holds the symbolic status as White Presence whose cartographical Presence Orania and Eureka is the world of 'when', a yes to the power of two. It is not ironic

that the miners have a more informed grasp on the intimacies of language. As a people yanked out of their communities through anti-Black terrors, their introduction to new territories makes them expert multilinguists. It is in language that they are able to meditate and "escape" their terror in song and poetry as Moten would like to have it, which form of optimism risks wallowing in such meditations and escapes – his notion of fugitivity.

What has been provided as historical meanings for the word siFanakalo remains an instrument of instruction between bosses and workers despite its contemporary use as a tool to organise and sort disputes among workers. Hurst points to Zambian and Zimbabwean versions of its meaning, "Chilapalapa/Isilapalapa" with its directive *"lapa"* to mean "here, there, in, on, at, out" (Hurst 2018, 2), as it is with South Africa's isiFanakalo to mean "'looks like this'; Fana (looks like) – ka (of) – lo (this)". Marikana miners are philosophers of language. What we should take from the meanings that the miners provide should be in the application as Žižek would have it that… "the principle is immediately the logic of its application" in that "the meaning of a word is its use" and so the "notion of a rule is that a rule is its application". For Žižek, failure to apply a rule correctly is failure to understand the rule itself. This is because the meaning of "a phrase applies and relates to the user's lifeworld". (Žižek 2006, 163)

IsiFanakalo then can only be read as an identifier. The miners identified themselves in the same likeness of those standing across from them; first as Blacks and then as honest working Black men. Then made it clear they were only there to solve their own working dispute. This realisation and approach turns the historical version that remains and maintains that the language is a form of directives from bosses on its head. They saw Black people sent to kill other Black people. The switch to isiFanakalo becomes an immediate identifier of those in the same likeness – Fana (looks like) kalo (just like this one). Anything historical, its poetic complexities simple in their approach stretch as far as the great Muhamad Ali's "Me. We". The workers can be read as Afro-pessimists in their approach to intramural conflicts and how at no point do they revert to any of the available institutions for cohesion as Marriott reminds us that certain readings of Fanon see it "necessary to be able to locate Blackness in terms of what negates it, or, more precisely, to be able to attach predicates to make it recognisable" (Marriott 2016, 8) as we find with the case of AbahlalibaseMjondolo with its centralisation of the South African Constitution.

With all the optimism that runs throughout the documentary, one cannot ignore what seems to be unending painful repetitions of the life of these shack dwellers. We witness it through the failed language of officiation in the form of correct channels and processes that runs throughout the dialogue during Abahlali baseMjondolo protests. From the initial

conversation with the government official Bab'uHlanga, one can count eight times where every gathering is a three-headed monster of repetitions, from submission of the same housing grievance, preaching and teaching the same constitutional right at every turn, and the generational consistency that devastates both the personal and the collective. It is right after the Constitutional court hearing of the Slums Act that we are first introduced to the movement's attorney Stuart Wilson by its president S'bu Zikode in a meeting organised by Abahlali baseMjondolo, where he is warmly welcomed with ululations. The scene is short. But tied with the earlier scene at the Constitution court with the audiences' brief meeting with senior counsel of Abahlali Wim Trengove, it becomes clear that this is what drives the narrative forward. The breakthrough manifests itself in the language of the law. Our protagonists consistently organise by preaching the word of the Constitution that fails them to the masses while the priesthood of the judicial fraternity tames the dragons in what seems like a single slash. The Absence of Presence here is played down by the president S'bu Zikode during his address of the protests when he claims:

> "The president will not eradicate the shacks by 2014. Those were political statements made so that we would vote. People, I have someone here from Parliament. We are giving this memorandum of demand to him and he accepts it on behalf of the President of the nation. We have written every time, every letter*, but no one seems to understand*" (*Dear Mandela*; 40:40 – 41:20)

Someone from the crowd interjects and shouts:

> "They understand, they just ignore us" (*Dear Mandela;* 41;20 – 41:21)

Now, the constitutional argument as explained by Stuart Wilson is that the Slums Act becomes dangerous upon its application. Again, as important as it is to move against immediate evictions, we must question the trade-off of this constitutional victory – what do Abahlali baseMjondolo give up for the victory, and what does the state gain in giving in to the loss? For Abahlali baseMjondolo, the fundamental fight for the land inscribed in the Constitution is no longer in conversation, and while the Constitution has consistently failed them at crucial moments of evictions, this victory cements it as the go-to arm of the state – Law. But how is this law of the land to be accessed? By an appointment of Presence, as Marriott explains it, "another order (that) presents itself whose relation to law and ontology 'is reducible neither to simple interdiction nor bare transgressions'" (Marriott 2016, 2). It makes the demand more palatable. Even if the actual demand was not to be met; say for instance the R12,500 salary demanded by mineworkers, the act of bypassing mediating institutions opens up a radical negation of such an order. This order – Whiteness – is the same that is suddenly called upon to analogise Fanon and DuBois.

The miners' demand to meet up with the bosses is radical. It is the "position of the unthought" that precipitates a crisis in the White institution and opens up an antagonism between the miners and the forever absent bosses in the documentary. The rejection of the workers' unions as an organising principle scandalises the articulation that is the worker discourse. On the contrary, the victory of Abahlali baseMjondolo is allowed because it does not deny White existence (through the call for the land) but affirms it. It can only be through the call for the land that draws closer the antagonism that is White power and its anti-Blackness.

In the *Dear Mandela* documentary, the only moment of negation that reminds us of the call for land comes by way of refusing to ballot. It is not infused in the everyday struggle. The Slums Act is the framing narrative that adjusts the movement's protest to the level of the law. To say the least, it no longer becomes a fight for land nor the low demand that is further listed "decent housing". As if the big bad wolf came riding in Red's hood, Abahlali held on to their shacks for dear life. Abahlali baseMjondolo then becomes an affirmation of the conditions rather than a call for its end. In other words, it is through the Slums Act that the call for land becomes swerved and reduced. Here, the choice is between extermination (Lonmin miners) or the camps (Abahlali baseMjondolo). But S'bu Zikode points out that "I've lived here in Kennedy Road for the last 13 years. And I am proud that there is life despite the poverty that one sees. I really love to be here and I really love to see things changing, people being transformed. I really want to see everyone have their own homes that are decent as opposed to shacks." (*Dear Mandela*; 2012). He goes on that; "The Slums Act is a very life-threatening legislation. As long as there is human life in the shacks such legislation has no place" (*Dear Mandela*; 2012).
It is important here to note that Afro-pessimism is not a denial of life in the camps. People live and can have thriving careers, can love and marry, have fun and laugh. But this is not life recognised as living in the world as we know it. Neither can it gain recognition nor can it be instituted as such, but it is life in illegible bodies – bodies not of this world. But it is Sexton who puts a finer point to it:

> "Black life is not lived in the world that the world lives in, but is lived underground, in outer space. This is agreed. That is to say, what Moten asserts against afro-pessimism, is, in fact, one of the most polemical dimensions of afro-pessimism as a project: namely, that Black life is not social, or rather that Black life is *lived* in social *death*. Double emphasis on *lived* and on *death*." (Sexton 2011, 28-29)

This is not a cusp that moves from a form of death towards a life but an embodiment of both life in death; a zombie apocalypse post slavery and colonisation – and 'post' being the operative word of the life-after. Bodies Biko once alluded to as needing a soul, and Black Consciousness being ready to remedy. But it is this position that Wilderson III calls into

question as a denial of “accumulation and fungibility” rather than “alienation and exploitation”. A position Wilderson III understands is forced by its conditions of state terror, where “the power of understanding (analysis) is sometimes incompatible with the need to empower (struggle)” (Wilderson III 2008, 104). The performances of empowerment then demand a form of analogy which, when it meets with the being of the Black, does not escape the “position of the unthought”. This positionality demands that we pry into the affairs that sustain power relations. Here, Sexton elaborates Wilderson’s III’s “performance meets ontology”;

> “Of course, when Wilderson writes that “performance meets ontology,” he is saying quite a bit more than that. Although he is attempting to think the two registers together – the performative and the ontological – he is indicating not so much that ontology is not performative, but rather more so that performativity does not, in fact, have disruptive power at the level or in the way that it has been theorized to date. More radically still, he is suggesting this theorization remains insufficiently elaborated.” (Sexton 2011, 33-34)

Refusal is not itself complete disengagement. It is not complete nothingness, but a refusal of the frame of reference that does not account to those it objects, and that which is not, cannot be, said or represented in the world of subjects. That which lacks signification. Trapped in the tutelage of inhumanity, it lingers like a ghost made and sustained by violence. Such sustained violence does not simply end at the “post” but continues to live a life in its after-effect. It is this life-after that must not be affirmed – what Mandela suspected was a lure to consenting to White supremacy even though he would live to affirm it. For Saidiya Hartman, “refusal is a mode of thought and practice that registers the ontological wounds of Black being in the world” (Hartman; 48:20).

Only as refusal that a radical ending can be correctly theorised, a refusal to accept the coordinates of the given scope of our ending. And that the end of apartheid would also not be the end to anti-Blackness. The language of the Freedom Charter and the Constitution assumes the end to have already taken place. An assumptive logic that refuses its devastating reality that is constantly brought back by lack of independence from the clutches of the “global markets”. By a stroke of a vote every half a decade this end that has already taken place is perpetually promised. As Zupančič reminds us that “the narrative of the end continues to live in the form of the refusal to acknowledge the social

devastation and contradictions produced by the social order epitomised by this very ideology" (Zupančič 2020, 2). In the interview in *Miners Shot Down* that cements the current state of our perpetual ending, the current president of the country, a shareholder and non-executive Director of Lonmin who was appointed deputy president two years after his directive to end the strike, whose refusal of the mine protest as waged but characterised it as a "criminal act" also reminds us that:

> "Black people who get into White owned companies through the Black Economic Empowerment process, then get into a system; 1. Which is very reluctant to change. And 2. Which they don't own completely, and which they don't control. So, at best what they do, or what *WE* do, is to be advocates." (*Miners Shot Down*; 47:48-48:18)

This moment in the documentary synthesised the past, present, and future repetitions – the horror of the miners mowed down in 2012 with images of the Sharpeville Massacre that took place in 1960. This juxtaposition is crucial. It reminds us of a continuous struggle not based on wage but on the lack of ontological integrity – of bodies legislated as in "criminal act".

Laid out in both the Northern and Southern hemisphere, and pre- and post-apartheid and slavery, the universality and the continuity in anti-Blackness is well articulated by Wilderson III:

> "The synchronic homologies between the status of the slave and the status of Black subjectivity, are manifested diachronically as historical continuity. In other words, there are important continuities between the ethical dilemmas raised when the slave stood before the bar in the 19th century and the Black insurgents stood before the bar in the 1970s…The historical continuity of the Dred Scott case and the BLA trials isn't a continuity of performance but a continuity of position." (Wilderson III 2011, 15)

So, the status of the bodies in Sharpeville of 1960 travels beyond historical time to Black bodies in Marikana 2012 as it evades gender dynamics evoked in the killing of Black men. It is no secret that women were barred from protesting at the mountain for fear of the violent activities that were beginning to take place. In an act of subverting what was characterised as sexist or patriarchal behaviours associated with miners and mine work underground was to try to ramp up the 10% quota for women work that was drafted in the 2002 mining Charter. Since then, numerous reports on these neglected sexual abuses have been made public and how the company was doing its best to combat them. Ilham Rawoot writes in an article published on 24 Jan 2014 that numerous

reports of sexual assault, if reported at all, had been ignored. The rape and murder of 27-year-old Pinky Mosiane that took place in 2012 only gained attention when the suspect was arrested in November 2013. According to Rawoot, this was the first sexual assault case on a mine to receive substantial attention. As much as the cases are said to be taking place underground, where there are only two toilets and it's all darkness, most of the article seems to point at those in positions of power demanding sexual favours, even from the actual complainants. Citing policies and processes available in the company, what is conveniently neglected by the company is the placing of an all-men human resources department said to be friends with the accused. However, if we read the conditions of the mines in view of miners as "captive bodies," no different than in prison and township conditions, then we begin to see what Spillers observed in "ethnicity" (and I apply this to gender as she does later in the essay) that:

> "…as a signifier that has no movement in the field of signification, *gender* perceived as mythical time enables a writer to perform a variety of conceptual moves all at once. Under its hegemony, the human body becomes a defenceless target for rape and veneration, and the body, in its material and abstract phase, a resource for metaphor." (Spillers 1987, 205)

Anti-Blackness reveals itself as a placeholder for White fantasies. Whenever the targets of these fantasies, Black people, reach a point of antagonism with its machinations, it is always ready with a hat full of tricks. We see class, race, gender as categories that are paraded against the exhausted antagonism. Whenever they succeed, the circle begins again. The anti-Black Blackness.

Conclusion

Protest art today is a fully integrated genre of contemporary arts. Whether it is work intended to question the status of the contemporary itself as it pertains to race, gender or class, it often highlights issues of visibility and invisibility. Works of art, even as they protest, are often legitimised by institutions, who in return achieve the status of progressive openness. As a language of intervention, protest artists seek to make legitimate what has been institutionally excluded. They labour to make what is excluded or rendered outside in the inside.

In this thesis, my intention was to search for creative interventions that take place outside the arts. Specifically in Black social movements. I was interested in creative interventions which themselves did not come from artists, whether collective or individual. My interest was not in artistic practices that highlight the work of radical movements as legitimate art in need of recognition. Instead, I was looking for creative interventions whose language of demands made it impossible to integrate into the arts. A language whose integration would shift or become an existential crisis in the humanities. So, the language of demand was primary. I hope I came close to such intentions. And the intention here is not a matter of a positive end goal, but whether what is being articulated in the demand itself exposes the unachievable.

It was important then to look at the demands in relation to the status of those who made such demands. Black social movements and their demands for basic humane standards, housing, decent wages, decolonised curriculum and so on expose the antagonism between White supremacy and anti-Blackness. This is despite the propounded idea of state institutions or civil society's availability as mediating spaces towards the humane. The intention was to show how these mediating mechanisms in themselves function as anti-Black institutions. It was the creative interventions of Black radical demands and their refusal to recognise such institutions that unmasked anti-Black violence. But it was the creative interventions of Black radical scholars that gave me the tools of analysis.

Because this thesis was not intended to legitimise these radical creative demands within White institutions but to demonstrate that impossibility, this meant that as interventions that belong on the outside, this thesis

then would invest in strengthening a critique of the movements' intramural relations.

Intramural critique does not escape the ruling ANC. In the White eyes, only in so far as it functions as a policing and punishing mechanism of Black protesters, the ANC is seen as capable and becomes illegitimate in its seeming complicity with any Black disgruntlements. Two major moments became evident: The Marikana and the Phoenix Massacres. The murder of the protesting mineworkers at the koppie did not rally any of the prominent civil society institutions meant to uphold the moral ethical standards of our post-94 liberated South Africa, nor did the main opposition party. Instead, we were subjected to a narrative of State and the police being forced into the position of self-defence. This is despite the presence of major news network as witnesses to the atrocity. Neither did the slew of evidence presented at the Farlam Commission, put in place to investigate what took place during those few days, lead to any arrests. However, the ANC and what was seen as police complicity in the riots post Zuma's arrest would see a full-blown campaign chastising the ANC for not doing anything while congratulating the Phoenix Indian community on "defending" its private property.

These two instances, the Marikana and the Phoenix massacres mark an overt antagonism that still exists post the 1994 South African democratic transition. In this thesis, then I argue that representation as an artform and in government and its institutions has not yielded any results that eliminate anti-Blackness, nor can it do so. This is because the fundamental basis of non-racialism speaks to the same fundamentals of Art-for-art-sake that presented art as all inclusive with no specific axe to grind. As such, non-racialism becomes saving grace for the preservation of already existing power relations.

It became necessary then to look elsewhere for creative interventions that would fundamentally put into question the ethical structure of interaction between Black people and the rest of the world. While the moments of protest bring to the fore machinations that that reveal anti-Blackness. The absense of ethical language of representation then reveals the impossibility to be represented in anyways meaningfully. This is because representation can only speak to the post of apartheid, slavery, and colonization, and not the anti coloniality that constitute the antagonisms that make anti-Blackness and Whiteness.

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