consent not to be a single being

The Universal Machine

FRED MOTEN

The Universal Machine

This page intentionally left blank

consent not to be a single being

The Universal Machine

FRED MOTEN

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS DURHAM AND LONDON 2018

Printed in the United States of
America on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Amy Buchanan
Typeset in Miller by Westchester
Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-
Publication Data
Names: Moten, Fred, author.
Title: The universal machine / Fred Moten.
Description: Durham : Duke University
Press, 2018. | Series: Consent not to be a
single being ; [v. 3]
Identifiers: LCCN 2017036792 (print) |
LCCN 2017056619 (ebook)
ISBN 9780822371977 (ebook)
ISBN 9780822370468 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN 9780822370550 (pbk. : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Black race—Philosophy. |
Blacks—Race identity—Philosophy. |
Philosophy, Black. | Racism—Philosophy.
Classification: LCC HT1581 (ebook) |
LCC HT1581 .m6846 2018 (print) |
DDC 305.89601—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn
.loc.gov/2017036792

Cover art: Thornton Dial, *Monument to
the Minds of the Little Negro Steelworkers*,
2001–3. Steel, wood, wire, twine, artificial
flowers, ax blade, glass bottles, animal
bones, cloth, tin cans, paint-can lids, and
enamel; 38 x 76 x 46 inches. © 2018 Estate
of Thornton Dial / Artists Rights Society
(ARS), New York.

CONTENTS

chapter 3

Chromatic Saturation

The Case of Blackness

The cultural and political discourse on black pathology has been so pervasive that it could be said to constitute the background against which all representations of blacks or blackness or (the color) black take place. Its manifestations have changed over the years though it has always been poised between the realms of the pseudosocial scientific, the birth of new sciences, and the normative impulse that is at the heart of—but that strains against—the black radicalism that strains against it. From the origins of the critical philosophy in the assertion of its extrarational foundations in teleological principle; to the advent and solidification of empiricist human biology that moves out of the convergence of phrenology, criminology, and eugenics; to the maturation of (American) sociology in the oscillation between good- and bad-faith attendance to "the negro problem"; to the analysis of and discourse on psychopathology and the deployment of these in both colonial oppression and anticolonial resistance; to the regulatory metaphysics that undergirds interlocking notions of sound and color in aesthetic theory: blackness has been associated with a certain sense of decay, even when that decay is invoked in the name of a certain (fetishization of) vitality.

Black radical discourse has often taken up, and held itself within, the stance of the pathologist. Going back to David Walker, at least, black radicalism is animated by the question, What's wrong with black folk? The extent to which radicalism (here understood as the performance of a general critique of the proper) is a fundamental and enduring force in the black public sphere—so much so that even black "conservatives" are always constrained to begin by defining themselves in relation to it—is all but self-evident. Less self-evident is that normative striving against the grain of the very radicalism from which the desire for the norm is derived. Such striving is directed toward those lived experiences of blackness that are, on the one hand,

aligned with what has been called radical and, on the other hand, aligned not so much with a kind of being-toward-death but with something that has been understood as a deathly or death-driven nonbeing. This strife between normativity and the deconstruction of norms is essential not only to contemporary black academic discourse but also to the discourses of the barbershop, the beauty shop, and the bookstore.

I'll begin with a thought from Frantz Fanon that doesn't come from any of these zones though it's felt in them, strangely, since it posits the being of, and being in, these zones as an ensemble of specific impossibilities:

> As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others. There is of course the moment of "being for others," of which Hegel speaks, but every ontology is made unattainable in a colonized and civilized society. It would seem that this fact has not been given enough attention by those who have discussed the question. In the *Weltanschauung* of a colonized people there is an impurity, a flaw, that outlaws [*interdit*] any ontological explanation. Someone may object that this is the case with every individual, but such an objection merely conceals a basic problem. Ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it upon themselves to remind us that the proposition has a converse. I say that this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man.[1]

This passage, and the ontological (absence of) drama it represents, leads us to a set of fundamental questions. How do we think the possibility and the law of outlawed, impossible things? And if, as Fanon suggests, the black cannot be an Other for another black, if the black can only be an Other for a white, then is there ever anything called black social life? Is the designation of this or that thing as lawless, and the assertion that such lawlessness is a function of an already extant flaw, something more than that trying, even neurotic, oscillation between the exposure and the replication of a regulatory maneuver whose force is held precisely in the assumption that it comes before what it would contain? What's the relation between explanation and resistance? Who bears the responsibility of discovering an ontology of, or of discovering *for* ontology, the ensemble of political, aesthetic, and philosophical derangements

that compose the being that is neither for itself nor for the other? What form of life makes such discovery possible as well as necessary? Would we know it by its flaws, its impurities? What might an impurity in a worldview actually be? Impurity implies a kind of incompleteness, if not absence, of a worldview. Perhaps that incompleteness signals an originarily criminal refusal of the interplay of framing and grasping, taking and keeping—a certain reticence at the ongoing advent of the age of the world picture. Perhaps it is the reticence of the grasped, the enframed, the taken, the kept; or, more precisely, it is the reluctance that disrupts grasping and framing, taking and keeping, as epistemological stance as well as accumulative activity. Perhaps this is the flaw that attends essential, anoriginal impurity—the flaw that accompanies impossible origins and deviant translations.[2]

What's at stake is fugitive movement in and out of the frame, bar, or whatever externally imposed social logic—a movement of escape in and from pursuit, the stealth of the stolen that can be said, since it inheres in every closed circle, to break every enclosure. This fugitive movement is stolen life and its relation to law is reducible neither to simple interdiction nor bare transgression. Part of what can be attained in this zone of unattainability, to which the eminently attainable ones have been relegated, which they occupy but cannot (and refuse to) own, is some sense of the fugitive law of movement that makes black social life ungovernable, that demands a paraontological disruption of the supposed connection between explanation and resistance.[3] This exchange between matters juridical and matters sociological is given in the mixture of phenomenology and psychopathology that drives Fanon's work, his slow approach to an encounter with impossible black social life poised or posed in the break, in a certain intransitive evasion of crossing, in the wary mood or fugitive case that ensues between the fact of blackness and the lived experience of the black and as a slippage enacted by the meaning—or, perhaps too "trans-literally," the (plain[-sung]) sense—of things when subjects are engaged in the representation of objects.

"The Case of Blackness" is a spin on the title of the fifth chapter of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, infamously mistranslated as "the fact of blackness." "The lived experience of the black" is more literal—experience bears a German trace, translates *Erlebnis* rather than *Tatsache*, and thereby places Fanon within a group of postwar Francophone thinkers encountering phenomenology that includes Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Tran Duc Thao.[4] The more literal phrasing indicates Fanon's veering off from an analytic engagement with the world as a set of

facts that are available to the natural scientific attitude, so it's possible to feel the vexation of certain commentators with what might be mistaken for a flirtation with positivism. However, I want to linger in, rather than quickly jump over, the gap between fact and lived experience in order to consider the word *case* as a kind of broken bridge or cut suspension between the two. I'm interested in how the troubled, illicit commerce between fact and lived experience is bound up with that between blackness and the black, a difference that is often concealed, one that plays itself out not by way of the question of accuracy or adequation but rather by way of the shadowed emergence of the ontological difference between being and beings. Attunement to that difference and its modalities must be fine. Perhaps certain recalibrations of Fanon—made possible by insights to which Fanon is both given and blind—will allow us to show the necessity and possibility of another understanding of the ontological difference. In such an understanding, the political phonochoreography of being's words bear a content that cannot be left by the wayside even if it is packaged in the pathologization of blacks and blackness in the discourse of the human and natural sciences and in the corollary emergence of expertise as the defining epistemological register of the modern subject who is in that he knows, regulates, but cannot be black. This might turn out to have much to do with the constitution of that locale in which "ontological explanation" *is* precisely insofar as it is against the law.

One way to investigate the lived experience of the black is to consider what it is to be the dangerous—because one is, because we are (Who? We? Who is this we? Who volunteers for this already given imposition? Who elects this imposed affinity? The one who is homelessly, hopefully, less and more?) the constitutive—supplement. What is it to be an irreducibly disordering, deformational force while at the same time being absolutely indispensable to normative order, normative form? This is not the same as, though it does probably follow from, the troubled realization that one is an object amid other objects, as Fanon would have it. In their introduction to a rich and important collection of articles that announce and enact a new deployment of Fanon in black studies' encounter with visual studies, Jared Sexton and Huey Copeland index Fanon's formulation in order to consider what it is to be "the thing against which all other subjects take their bearing."[5] But something is left unattended in their invocation of Fanon, in their move toward equating objecthood with "the domain of non-existence" or the interstitial space between life and death, something to be understood in its difference from and relation to what Giorgio Agamben calls naked life, something they

call "raw life" that moves—or more precisely cannot move—in its forgetful nonrelation to that quickening, forgetive force that Agamben calls the form of life.[6]

Sexton and Copeland turn to the Fanon of *Black Skin, White Masks*, the phenomenologist of (the lived experience of) blackness, who provides for them the following epigraph:

> I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects.[7]
>
> J'arrivais dans le monde, soucieux de faire lever un sens aux choses, mon âme pleine du désir d'être à l'origine du monde, et voici que je me découvrais objet au milieu d'autres objets.[8]

Fanon writes of entering the world with a melodramatic imagination, as Peter Brooks would have it, one drawn toward the occult installation of the sacred in things and gestures (certain events, as opposed to actions, of muscularity), and in the subterranean field that is, paradoxically, signaled by the very cutaneous darkness of which Fanon speaks. That darkness turns the would-be melodramatic subject not only into an object but also into a sign, the hideous blackamoor at the entrance of the cave, that world underneath the world of light that Fanon will have entered, who guards and masks "our" hidden motives and desires.[9] There's a whole other economy of skins and masks to be addressed here. However, I'll defer that address in order to get at something (absent) in Sexton and Copeland. What I'm after is obscured by the fall from prospective subject to object that Fanon recites: namely, a transition from thing(s) (*choses*) to object (*objet*) that turns out to version a slippage or movement that animates the history of philosophy. What if we bracket the movement from (erstwhile) subject to object in order to investigate more adequately the change from object to thing (a change as strange as that from the possibility of intersubjectivity that attends majority to whatever is relegated to the plane or plain of the minor)? What if the thing whose meaning or value has never been found finds things, founds things? What if the thing will have founded something against the very possibility of foundation and against all anti- or postfoundational impossibilities? What if the thing sustains itself in that absence or eclipse of meaning that withholds from the thing the horrific honorific of "object"? At the same time, what if the value of that absence or excess is given to us only in and by way of a kind

of failure or inadequacy—or, perhaps more precisely, by way of a history of exclusion, serial expulsion, presence's ongoing taking of leave, every time we say goodbye—so that the nonattainment of meaning or ontology, of source or origin, is the only way to approach the thing in its informal (enformed/enforming) (as opposed to formless), material totality? Perhaps this would be cause for black optimism or, at least, some black operations. Perhaps the thing, the black, is tantamount to another fugitive sublimity altogether. Some/thing escapes in or through the object's vestibule; the object vibrates against its frame like a resonator and troubled air gets out. The air of the thing that escapes enframing is what I'm interested in—an often unattended movement that accompanies largely unthought positions and appositions. To operate out of this interest might mispresent itself as a kind of refusal of Fanon.[10] But my reading is, rather, enabled by the way Fanon's texts continually demand that we read them—again or, deeper still, not or against again, but for the first time. I wish to engage a kind of pre-op(tical) optimism in Fanon that is tied to the commerce between the lived experience of the black and the fact of blackness and between the thing and the object—an optimism recoverable, one might say, only by way of mistranslation, that bridged but unbridgeable gap that Heidegger explores as both distance and nearness in his discourse on "The Thing."

Michael Inwood moves quickly in his explication of Heidegger's distinction between *Ding* and *Sache*: "*Ding*, 'thing,' is distinct from *Sache*, 'thing, (subject-)matter, affair.' *Sache*, like the Latin *res*, originally denoted a legal case or a matter of concern, while *Ding* was the 'court' or 'assembly' before which a case was discussed."[11] In Heidegger's essay "*Das Ding*," the speed of things is a bit more deliberate, perhaps so that the distinction between things and human affairs can be maintained against an explicatory velocity that threatens to abolish the distance between, which is also to say the nearness of, the two: "The Old High German word *thing* means a gathering, and specifically a gathering to deliberate on a matter under discussion, a contested matter. In consequence, the Old German words *thing* and *dinc* become the names for an affair or matter of pertinence. They denote anything that in any way bears upon men, concerns them, and that accordingly is a matter for discourse."[12] The descent from Old High German to Old German is held here and matters. Its trajectory is at issue such that we are to remain concerned with the detachment and proximity of "a gathering to deliberate" and "contested matter." It might even be worthwhile to think the gathering *as* contested matter, to linger in the break—the distance and

nearness—between the thing and the case in the interest of the ones who are without interests but who are, nevertheless, a concern precisely because they gather, as they are gathered matter, the internally differentiated materiality of a collective head. The thing of it is the case of blackness.

For Heidegger, the jug is an exemplary thing. The jug is a vessel; it holds something else within it. It is also "self-supporting, or independent." But "does the vessel's self-support alone define the jug as a thing?"

> The potter makes the earthen jug out of earth that he has specially chosen and prepared for it. The jug consists of that earth. By virtue of what the jug consists of, it too can stand on the earth, either immediately or through the mediation of table and bench. What exists by such producing is what stands on in its own, is self-supporting. When we take the jug as a made vessel, then surely we are apprehending it—so it seems—as a thing and never as a mere object.
>
> Or do we even now still take the jug as an object? Indeed. It is, to be sure, no longer considered only an object of a mere act of representation, but in return it is an object which a process of making has set up before and against us. Its self-support seems to mark the jug as a thing. But in truth we are thinking of this self-support in terms of the making process. Self-support is what the making aims at. But even so, the self-support is still thought of in terms of objectness, even though the over-againstness of what has been put forth is no longer grounded in mere representation, in the mere putting it before our minds. But from the objectness of the object, and from the product's self-support, there is no way that leads to the thingness of the thing ("T," 167).

This is to say, importantly I think, that, the "jug remains a vessel whether we represent it in our minds or not" ("T," 167). (Later Heidegger says: "Man can represent, no matter how, only what has previously come to light of its own accord and has shown itself to him in the light it brought with it" ["T," 171].) Its thingliness does not inhere in its having been made or produced or represented. For Heidegger, the thingliness of the thing, the jug, is precisely that which prompts its making. For Plato—and the tradition of representational thinking he codifies, which incorporatively excludes Fanon—everything present is experienced as an object of making where object is understood, in what Heidegger calls its most precise expression, as "what stands forth" (rather than what stands before or opposite or against). In relation to Fanon, Kara Keeling calls on us to think that which stands

forth as project and as problem. Accordingly, I am after a kind of shadow or trace in Fanon—the moment in which phenomenology strains against its own reification and ownership of experience, its own problematic commitment to what emerges from (a certain reductive regulation of) making, in order to get at "a meaning of things." Though decisive and disruptive in ways that remain to be thought, that strain is momentary in Fanon, is momentarily displaced precisely by that "representation of what is present, in the sense of what stands forth and of what stands over against as an object" that never, according to Heidegger, "reaches to the thing *qua* thing" ("T," 168–69).

For Heidegger, the jug's being, as vessel, is momentarily understood as being-in-its emptiness, the empty space that holds, the impalpable void brought forth by the potter as container. "And yet," Heidegger asks, "is the jug really empty?" ("T," 169). He argues that the jug's putative emptiness is a semipoetic misprision, that "the jug is filled with air and with everything that goes to make up the air's mixture" ("T," 169). Perhaps the jug, as thing, is better understood as filled with an always already mixed capacity for content that is not made. This is something other than either poetic emptiness or a strictly scientific fullness that understands the filling of the jug as simple displacement. As Heidegger puts it, "considered scientifically, to fill a jug means to exchange one filling for another." He adds,

> These statements of physics are correct. By means of them, science represents something real, by which it is objectively controlled. But—is this reality the jug? No. Science always encounters only what *its* kind of representation has admitted beforehand as an object possible for science.
>
> . . . Science makes the jug-thing into a nonentity in not permitting things to be the standard for what is real.
>
> Science's knowledge, which is compelling within its own sphere, the sphere of objects, already had annihilated things as things long before the atom bomb exploded. The bomb's explosion is only the grossest of all gross confirmations of the long-since accomplished annihilation of the thing: the confirmation that the thing as a thing remains nil. The thingness of the thing remains concealed, forgotten. The nature of the thing never comes to light, that is, it never gets a hearing. This is the meaning of our talk about the annihilation of the thing ("T," 170).

"The Lived Experience of the Black" bears not only a lament over Fanon's own relegation to the status of object; it also contains a lament that it also

suppresses over the general annihilation of the thing to which transcendental phenomenology contributes insofar as it is concerned with *Sachen*, not *Dinge*, in (what remains untranslatable as) its direction toward the things themselves. Insofar as blackness remains the object of a complex disavowing claim in Fanon, one bound up precisely with his understanding of blackness as an impure product—as a function of a making that is not its own, an intentionality that could never have been its own—it could be said that Fanon moves within an economy of annihilation even though, at the same time, he mourns his own intentional comportment toward a hermeneutics of thingliness. Is blackness brought to light in Fanon's ambivalence? Is blackness given a hearing—or, more precisely, does blackness give itself to a hearing—in his phenomenological description (which is not but nothing other than a representation) of it? Studying the case of blackness is inseparable from the case blackness makes for itself in spite and by way of every interdiction. In any case it will have been as if one has come down with a case of blackness.

Meanwhile, Heidegger remains with the question of the essential nature of the thing that "has never yet been able to appear" ("T," 171). He asks, What does the jug hold and how does it hold? "How does the jug's void hold?" ("T," 171). By taking and keeping what it holds but also, and most fundamentally, in a way that constitutes the unity, the belonging together, of taking and keeping, in the *outpouring* of what is held. "The holding of the vessel occurs in the giving of the outpouring. . . . We call the gathering of the twofold holding into the outpouring, which, as being together, first constitutes the full presence of giving: the poured gift. The jug's jug-character consists in the poured gift of the pouring out. Even the empty jug retains its nature by virtue of the poured gift, even though the empty jug does not admit of a giving out ("T," 172). What is it to speak of this outpouring, to speak of the thing, the vessel, in terms of what it gives, particularly when we take into account the horror of its being made to hold, the horror of its making that it holds or bears? This question is necessary and decisive precisely insofar as it insists upon a rough-hewn accompaniment to Heidegger's talk of gift and consecration. Sometimes what is given is refusal. How does refusal elevate celebration? Heidegger invokes the "gush" as strong outpouring, as sacrificial flow, but perhaps what accentuates the outpouring, what makes it more than "mere filling and decanting," is a withholding that is aligned with refusal, a canted secret ("T," 173). At any rate, in the outpouring that is the essence of the thing/vessel dwells the Heideggerian fourfold of earth, sky, divinity, and mortals that precedes everything that is present or that is represented. The

fourfold, as staying and as appropriation is where thing approaches, if not becomes, event. This gathering, this event of gathering, is, for Heidegger, what is denoted in the Old High German word *thing*. By way of Meister Eckhart, Heidegger asserts that "*Thing* is . . . the cautious and abstemious name for something that is at all." He adds:

> Because the word *thing* as used in Western metaphysics denotes that which is at all and is something in some way or other, the meaning of the name "thing" varies with the interpretation of that which is—of entities. Kant talks about things in the same way as Meister Eckhart and means by this term something that is. But for Kant, that which is becomes the object of a representing that runs its course in the self-consciousness of the human ego. The thing-in-itself means for Kant: the object-in-itself. To Kant, the character of the "in-itself" signifies that the object is an object in itself without reference to the human act of representing it, that is, without the opposing "ob-" by which it is first of all put before the representing act. "Thing-in-itself," thought in a rigorously Kantian way, means an object that is no object for us, because it is supposed to stand, stay put, without a possible before: for the human representational act that encounters it ("T," 176–77).

Meanwhile, in contradistinction to Kant, Heidegger thinks being neither as idea nor as position/objectness (the transcendental character of being posed) but as thing. He might be best understood as speaking out of a clearing, or a flaw, that also constitutes a step back or away from the kind of thinking that produces worldviews or, at least, that particular worldview that accompanies what, for lack of a better turn, might be called intersubjection. Fanon offers, by way of retrospection, a reversal of that step back or away. In briefly narrating the history of his own becoming-object, the trajectory of his own being-positioned in and by representational thinking, Fanon fatefully participates in that thinking and fails to depart from the "sphere of mere attitudes" ("T," 181). At the same time, Fanon and the experience that he both carries and analyzes places the Heideggerian distinction between being (thing) and *Dasein*—the being to whom understandings of being are given; the not, but nothing other than, human being—in a kind of jeopardy that was already implicit, however much it is held within an interplay between being-overlooked and being-overseen.

So I'm interested in how the ones who inhabit the nearness and distance between Dasein and things (which is off to the side of what lies between

subjects and objects), the ones who are attained or accumulated unto death even as they are always escaping the Hegelian positioning of the bondsman, are perhaps best understood as the extraontological, extrapolitical constant—a destructive, healing agent; a stolen, transplanted organ always eliciting rejection; a salve whose soothing lies in the corrosive penetration of the merely topical; an ensemble always operating in excess of that ancient juridical formulation of the thing (*Ding*), to which Kant subscribes, as that to which nothing can be imputed, the impure, degraded, manufactured (in)human who moves only in response to inclination, whose reflexes lose the name of action. At the same time, this dangerous supplement as the fact out of which everything else emerges, is constitutive. This special ontic-ontological fugitivity of and in the slave is what is revealed as the necessarily unaccounted for in Fanon. So that in contradistinction to Fanon's protest, the problem of the inadequacy of any ontology to blackness, to that mode of being for which escape or apposition and not the objectifying encounter with otherness is the prime modality, must be understood in its relation to the inadequacy of calculation to being in general. Moreover, the brutal history of criminalization in public policy, and at the intersection of biological, psychological, and sociological discourse, ought not obscure the already existing ontic-ontological criminality of/as blackness. Rather, blackness needs to be understood as operating at the nexus of the social and the ontological, the historical and the essential. Indeed, as the ontological is, as it were, moving within the corrosive increase that the ontic instantiates, it must be understood that what is now meant by ontological requires special elucidation. What is inadequate to blackness are already given ontologies. The lived experienced of blackness is, among other things, a constant demand for an ontology of disorder, an ontology of dehiscence, a paraontology whose comportment will have been (toward) the ontic or existential field of things and events. That ontology will have had to operate as a general critique of calculation even as it gathers diaspora as an open set—or as an openness disruptive of the very idea of set—of accumulative and unaccumulable differences, differings, departures without origin, leavings that continually defy the natal occasion in general even as they constantly bespeak the previous. This is a Nathaniel Mackey formulation whose full implications will have never been fully explorable.[13] What Fanon's pathontological refusal of blackness leaves unclaimed is an irremediable homelessness common to the colonized, the enslaved, and the enclosed. This is to say that what is claimed in the name of blackness is a disorder that has always been there, that is retrospectively

and retroactively located there, that is embraced by the ones who stay there while living somewhere else. Some folks relish being a problem. Like Amiri Baraka and Nikhil Pal Singh (almost) say, "Black(ness) is a country" (and a sex) (that is not one).[14] Stolen life disorders positive value just as surely as it is not equivalent to social death or absolute dereliction.

So if we cannot simply give an account of things that, in the very fugitivity and impossibility that is the essence of their existence, resist accounting, how do we speak of the lived experience of the black? What limits are placed on such speaking when it comes from the position of the black, but also what constraints are placed on the very concept of lived experience, particularly in its relation to the black—when black social life is interdicted? Note that the interdiction exists not only as a function of what might be broadly understood as policy but also as a function of an epistemological consensus broad enough to include Fanon, on the one hand, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, on the other—encompassing formulations that might be said not only to characterize but also to initiate and continually reinitialize the philosophy of the human sciences. In other words, the notion that there is no black social life is part of a set of variations on a theme that include assertions of the irreducible pathology of black social life as well as the implication that (nonpathological) social life is what emerges by way of the exclusion of the black or, more precisely, of blackness. But what are we to make of the pathological here? What are the implications of a social life that, on the one hand, is not what it is and, on the other hand, is irreducible to what it is used for? This discordant echo of one of Theodor Adorno's most infamous assertions about jazz implies that black social life reconstitutes the music that is its phonographic distillate.[15] That music, which Miles Davis calls "social music," to which Adorno and Fanon gave only severe and partial hearing, is of interdicted black social life operating on frequencies that are disavowed—though they are also amplified—in the interplay of sociopathological and phenomenological description. How can we fathom a social life that tends toward death, that enacts a kind of being-toward-death, and which, because of such tendency and such enactment, maintains a terribly beautiful vitality? Deeper still, what are we to make of the fact of a sociality that emerges when lived experience is distinguished from fact, in the fact of life that is implied in the very phenomenological gesture/analysis within which Fanon asserts black social life as, in all but the most minor ways, impossible? How is it that the off-harmony of life, sociality, and blackness is the condition of possibility of the claim that there is no black social life? Does black life, in its irreducible

and impossible sociality and precisely in what might be understood as its refusal of the status of social life that is refused it, constitute a fundamental danger—an excluded but immanent disruption—to social life? What will it have meant to embrace this matrix of im/possibility, to have spoken of and out of this suspension? What would it mean to dwell on or in minor social life? Fanon imposes this set of questions on us. At the same time, and in a way that is articulated most clearly and famously by W. E. B. Du Bois, this set of questions is the position, which is also to say the problem, of blackness.

Musicologist and pianist Charles Rosen, in his monograph *Arnold Schoenberg*, speaks of the "strong . . . saturation of chromatic space" at the end of Schoenberg's epochal masterpiece, *Erwartung*:

> The last page of *Erwartung* has been so much imitated that it is hard to perceive its originality today, although it still makes an effect that is overpowering. "Oh, are you there," cries the woman about her dead lover, and then adds softly, "I searched," as the low woodwinds begin, triple *pianissimo*, a rising chromatic series of six-note chords. The other instruments enter with similar chords moving up or down the chromatic scale, each group moving at different rates of speed; the fastest speeds come in the last three beats with the dynamics remaining between triple and quadruple *pianissimo*.
>
> This massed chromatic movement at different speeds, both up and down and accelerating, is a saturation of the chromatic space in a few short seconds: and in a movement that gets ever faster, every note in the range of the orchestra is played in a kind of *glissando*. The saturation of musical space is Schoenberg's substitute for the tonic chord of the traditional musical language. The absolute consonance is a state of chromatic plenitude.[16]

Susan McClary might say that the feminine is profligate in this ending—that the woman, in the richness and poverty of her psychological and theatrical nonfullness, exerts a discomfiting force on musical rationality that is manifest in the aggressive taking up of space, a radical expropriation of the musical commons by elements whose exclusion (or, more precisely, whose highly regulated and exclusionary deployment) had been constitutive of a new understanding of musical reason in the age of the critical foundation of reason in general. But perhaps this is, in itself, a far too aggressive rendering of the situation. For, as Rosen argues, Schoenberg doesn't dispense with the concept of musical resolution as much as reconstruct it by way of the overload.

> This concept of the saturation of chromatic space as a fixed point toward which the music moves, as a point of rest and resolution, lies behind not just *Erwartung* alone but much of the music of the period. Its importance for the future of music was fundamental. It can take two forms, strong and weak. The weak form is the more common, and became, indeed, canonical by the 1920s, although it was influential long before then: this is the filling out of chromatic space by playing all twelve notes of the chromatic scale in some individual order determined by the composer but without regard to the register, high or low. The strong form, found in *Erwartung* and in a very few other works, fills out the whole of the space in all the registers, or approaches this total saturation.[17]

For Rosen, the weak form of chromatic saturation acknowledges the tyranny of the octave, while the strong form, whenever it emerges, signals that resistance to such tyranny, that breaking of musical law understood as natural law, that accompanies the irruption of what Rosen might call new musical significance. Even in Schoenberg, as Rosen points out, the weak form of the saturation of chromatic space tends to dominate. However, it is on the last page of *Erwartung* that a certain strength asserts itself over weakness, as if the necessity of ending itself necessitates a reconstruction of musical ends. It is the end as if it had been thrown and Schoenberg throwing ends can feel just as stupendous as when, for a little while, Biggie Smalls was so inclined. This throwing or thrownness of the end, this propulsion of closely regulated elements into what had been enclosed musical space, reveals, indexes, and brings into relief and use a certain politicoethical rhetoric in the music that had been more or less submerged, as it were, since the age of baroque. At stake, here, is what Rosen recognizes as the necessity of (a) metaphor at the moment when the ontological and political question of musical (co)existence arises. He writes, "The metaphor of chromatic 'space' is necessary when one wishes to denote the theoretical coexistence of all possible notes that can be played. Our concept of music today is still that of fixed, determinate points called notes. These points are discontinuous: even a *glissando* or slide from one to the other cannot alter this, as only the end points have a true function of pitch.[18]

For Rosen it really is crucial to remember that for Schoenberg, "the filling out of the chromatic space is clearly a movement toward stability and resolution." As such it is, again, a recalibration rather than a disavowal of musical ends. But this attempt at what might be called a liberation of those musical

ends, a bringing of them into the light of self-governance and self-regulation, precisely in the clarity of its essentially Kantian task—one that flirts with a certain unleashing of the unregulatable in the interest of a more perfect mode of regulation—is touched and troubled from the start by the audiovisual specter of broken containment. To release all the notes of the chromatic scale back into something like a musical free range is not just to denote but also to court, even if in the interest of a certain renewal of the regulative, both the theoretical and practical coexistence of all possible notes that can be played and, moreover, of all the impossible notes that can't be played. This flirtation with a certain inhabitation of and in a newly resaturated musical space in which the copresence of all the notes calls into existence new structures of regulative musical rationality precisely by announcing itself in and as a regime of uncut musical differences is not the kind of encounter that is easily gotten over.

Meanwhile, the language of strong and weak, masculine and feminine, begins to seem inadequate to this old-new sense and scene of chromatic saturation in which regulation and resolution are rendered spectral im/possibilities by the more than theoretical presence of what another pianist and musicologist, Cecil Taylor, might call, but with none of Rosen's reticence, "all the notes."[19] Neither strong nor weak, neither male nor female, let's call this other version of chromatic saturation *black/ness* so that we might consider more fully what it is for a normative musical matrix to be overrun by matrical promiscuity, by profligate madrigal, by accidental, unwritten, black notes. While keeping in mind that blackness is increasingly veiled and ever more securely overseen in the discourses of the (neo)classical age, we'll have to figure out a way to get to what remains buried, or unceremoniously unburied; what is left hidden below but also on and as the surface of certain serially uncited (black) sites; what will have been constantly taken by way of being given as the unwritten that you know you're supposed to read by sight. In the end, perhaps what remains to be read is that eternal, preternatural prenatality, that inveterate acting-out-in-groups, in which all the notes are commonly engaged as something on the order of a lawlessness of musical imagination calling the diatonic and even the chromatic into existence. So that what's at stake is not chromatic saturation so much as something on the other side of it (that theoreticopractical possibility of which Rosen speaks): the law of movement, the law of anoriginarily broken law, that takes up the local habitation and takes on the name of the homeless, nameless ones.

Improvisation, which is the dominant mode of black/ness, articulately moves in that break, that distance and dislocation, that *décalage*, that, as

Louis Althusser teaches us in his contribution to *Reading Capital*, exceeds reading at sight. Hence improvisation can always be seen as the enactment of a certain impatience with, or troubling of, the limits of notation. In collections of sixteenth-century madrigals, for instance—in music that is poised between the sacred and the profane, love and murder, mannerism and the baroque—chromatic saturation and notational fugitivity converge when *note nere* or black notes, signifying increased rhythmic complexity, give the page a blackened or colored (*chromatico)* appearance. What could be spoken of here, by way of a paranoiac history that props up racialization, as the saturation of sheet music by blackness, intimates that theoretical coexistence of all the notes that Rosen indexes. At the same time, the forces of musical regulation, in response to the unsettling vision that theoretical possibility imposes as the blackened, as chromatic saturation, will have pushed underground, between lines, into the marginal zones of the unwritten or the illegible, a range of musical differences that fall and are hidden under the rubrics of musica ficta or accidental notes, sounds given in performance but whose overpopular and overpopulated vulgarity must remain undocumented in spite of its necessity. Note that what is rendered illegible is the reductive force of regulation (which places musical material in the realm of the unwritten or unseen, however much it is heard) as well as the potentiality (whose presence is only in its absence) that calls such regulation into being in the first place—the not but nothing other than present theoretical and practical possibility of all the notes, all the shades, which is to say, all the differences. Implied here is that reading is seeing what is not/there beyond or beneath transparency. The irreducible problem of classical political economy, which Althusser's reading of Marx's reading of it reveals, "is not what it does not see, it is *what it sees*; it is not what it lacks, on the contrary, it is *what it does not lack*; it is not what it misses, on the contrary, it is *what it does not miss*." This problematic of overlooking, and also of a regulative and disciplinary overseeing, of what one sees, is the visual field that blackness inhabits even when blackness irrupts into the discourse of music. As Althusser says, "the oversight no longer concerns the object, but *the sight* itself. The oversight is an oversight that concerns *vision:* non-vision is therefore inside vision, it is a form of vision and hence has a necessary relationship with vision."[20] In turning to this question of vision, and of an understanding of chromatic saturation (insofar as it is bracketed by the thing that comes before and after it) that will have been proper to the visual field, I'll be turning, again, to music.

In the literature of color vision, chromatic saturation refers to the relative amount of hue perceived in a colored stimulus. Black is generally understood as an unsaturated or achromatic color that, on the other hand, increases the apparent saturation or brightness of colors paired or juxtaposed with it. Now we might achieve some accurate sense of the differences between the uses of the terms *chromaticism* and *chromatic saturation* in music and the visual arts and sciences. In music the accent is on difference; in the visual the accent is on purity; in the visual, blackness is an absence or neutrality that brings chromatic saturation or purity into relief by way of contrast/proximity; in music, blackness indicates chromaticity as a potentially unregulated or profligate internal difference, an impurity derived from the mixture of modes (major/minor) or of scales (diatonic/chromatic); it can be situated between an unwritten but aurally performed abundance or improvisational excess derived from textual implication or a kind of visual overload of black marks on the page. At stake, perhaps, is the rediscovery of that other mode of reading that Althusser retrospectively announces. In this reading, which is not at sight, but which implies a certain insight, an impossible foresight that improvisation has often been misunderstood as opposing, blackness is im/properly held to be the monochromatic residence of all the notes, all the colors, all the shades. It is a commonness or common presence in absentia, in and on the run, *in cognito* or in cognegro, as the case may be. Sometimes heard, seldom seen, this heard scene is subject to constant overhearing and oversight. But sometimes, as in the example I'm about to consider, the scene emerges with that flash of black light that accompanies the encounter of the apparently incommensurable.

Now I want to place the problem of blackness, and the question of dwelling on or in minor social life in relation to the work of art, to the question of the artwork's thingliness, its madness, its lateness. This is to say that I'd like to bring the set of questions that is black social life into relief by way of, and by passing through, the notion of chromatic saturation, which is to say that misfire in or of the translation of that notion between the language of music and the language of vision. I'll do so by turning to an audiovisual ensemble composed of Ad Reinhardt and Cecil Taylor, Albert Ammons and Piet Mondrian. Something is unhinged in this set that might recalibrate in multiple ways our sense of the black/white encounter, particularly insofar as we acknowledge certain possibilities that emerge in and from impossible black social life when the city is about to be born and when minor conflict—its outlaw ontology, and its interdicted, criminal life—tends toward death

but, escaping all ends, moves in relation to thrown ends, to a vast, stupendous range of throwing ends. I'll argue that Mondrian was deregulated by the urban underground he'd been dreaming of; that his great, final picture *Victory Boogie Woogie* is all black, is all of what had been absorbed in black, is the explication of a dissonant, chromatic saturation, the inhabitation of a break or border, the disruption embedded in the grid's boundaries. I want to amplify (Ammons, father of the Jug, in Mondrian and) Taylor in Reinhardt, where Taylor is severely threatened with submergence in Reinhardt's intractable misunderstanding of what is done through Reinhardt, by forces Reinhardt can neither understand nor assimilate due to his attempt to encompass what pierces and absorbs him. I'll try to illuminate Taylor's attempt to open things up in exchange with Reinhardt: embodying sound in a discourse of sight, making sound matter like an irruptive thing, enacting the victory of refusing to arrive, saying here we are never having got here, dancing an insistent aftereffect evading each and every fatal occasion, each minor occasion that is not one.

(There are other resonances that I know I won't get to: broken speeches of fugitive ontologues recorded in the texture of a black line; a boundary diffused into epiphenomenal swatches, later to become what seems to be unrecorded but showing up sounding everywhere; black differences, not only the collective heads in Reinhardt's unacknowledged black social thingliness, but also an unstable black cube named Gene Smith, mugging rupped-up proprieties like an other Tony Smith [Saginaw, Michigan] blowing up Michael Fried from way downtown, way outside. [I have gone off privately in public, in Fred Oakley's club, the *Neue Plastik*, just outside of Fordyce, Arkansas, in order to talk to somebody. Gone to curve angles. Bend and drop these notes right where you lost them, to get at what remains—unattainable, unrepresentable—of the thing. My flaw.])

In *Art as Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt*, there is a text called "Black as Symbol and Concept."[21] Barbara Rose, the volume's editor, tells us that it's a transcript of Reinhardt's contribution to a discussion involving Taylor and five other artists based in New York or Toronto, Aldo Tambellini, Michael Snow, Arnold Rockman, Stu Broomer, and Harvey Cowan. I am particularly interested in the encounter between Taylor and Reinhardt that Rose's transcription erases. That encounter is, I think, part of a far larger structure of impossible erasures (of the impossible). This is to say that there seem to be some fundamental incommensurabilities that animate the encounter: one is black and the other white, which means not just different

experiences that differently color their thinking about color but also Reinhardt's palpable inability to take Taylor seriously, a handicap that more often than not still structures interracial intellectual relations; the more important one, at least for my purposes today, has to do with the fact that one is a musician and the other a painter and this means they speak in those different, seemingly incommensurable languages about that for which the term *chromatic saturation* is only a beckoning gesture. Unfortunately, as we'll see, Reinhardt reads blackness at sight, as held merely within the play of absence and presence. He is blind to the articulated combination of absence and presence in black that is in his face, as his work, his own production, as well as in the particular form of Taylor. Mad, in a self-imposed absence of (his own) work, Reinhardt gets read a lecture he must never have forgotten, though, alas, he was only to survive so short a time that it's unclear how or whether it came to affect his work.

On August 16, 1967, with the cooperation of Bell Telephone Company and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, *Arts/Canada* magazine organized this "simultaneous conversation," devoting a full issue to this discourse on "black as a special concept, symbol, paint quality; the social-political implications of the black; black as stasis, negation, nothingness and black as change, impermanence and potentiality."[22] Reinhardt initiates things by saying black is interesting "not as a colour but as a non-colour and as the absence of colour." He adds, "I'd like then to talk about black in art—monochrome, monotone, and the art of painting versus the art of culture" ("B," 3). In the notion of blackness as absolute dereliction, as absence of color and antithetical to admixture, Reinhardt moves on a parallel track to Fanon or, at least, to a certain reading of Fanon. He proceeds by way of a bad or, at least, meaningless example: "Here is a quotation from [Japanese landscape painter Katsushika] Hokusai: 'there is a black which is old and a black which is fresh. Lustrous black and dull black, black in sunlight and black in shadow. For the old black one must use an admixture of blue, for the dull black an admixture of white, for the lustrous black, gum must be added. Black in sunlight must have grey reflections.' I want to read that because that doesn't have any meaning for us." ("B," 3). One wants to consider the relation between what Reinhardt understands to be meaningless—a small treatise on the relation between impurity and internal difference in the case of the color black—and what Fanon understands as rendering ontological explanation criminal. What does the color black do to the theory of color (as the manifestation of absence turned to the excessive, invaginative more-than-fullness of impu-

rity)? What does the black or blackness do to ontological explanation (as fugal, centrifugal, fugitive ontological, and epistemological disruption)? For Reinhardt, the multiplicity of symbolic meanings that have been attached to the color black—sinfulness, evil, femininity, maternity, formlessness, and the "yearning for whiteness in the West that counters and accompanies these meanings"—are and must be detachable from the absence (of difference) that defines and is internal to the color black ("B," 3). This detachment is in the interest of "the negativeness of black" ("B," 3) which interests Reinhardt and which can, again, be understood in relation to something Fanon both desires and desires to appose.

A bit later in the conversation, Taylor intervenes.

> I think for my first statement I would like to say that the experience is two-fold and later, I think you'll see how the two really merge as one experience.
>
> "Whether its bare pale light, whitened eyes inside a lion's belly, cancelled by justice, my wish to be a hued mystic myopic region if you will, least shadow at our discretion, to disappear, or as sovereign, albeit intuitive, sense my charity, to dip and grind, fair-haired, swathed, edged to the bottom each and every second, minute, month: existence riding a cloud of diminutive will, cautioned to waiting eye in step to wild, unceasing energy, growth equaling spirit, the knowing, of black dignity."
>
> Silence may be infinite or a beginning, an end, white noise, purity, classical ballet; the question of black, its inability to reflect yet to absorb, I think these are some of the complexes that we will have to get into ("B," 4).

Taylor's musicopoetic intervention, which quotation marks mark as an intervention within an intervention, is a reinaugural rupture. Taylor interrupts himself and the conversation he joins by raising the question of black dignity in a discourse on black art. He moves differently to Reinhardt, whose opening of the discussion is followed and carried forth in a kind of uninterrupted seriality by other participants in the conversation—Arnold Rockman, Michael Snow, Harvey Cowan, and Stu Broomer before Taylor leaps, or breaks, in. Reinhardt will brook no interruption; this is confirmed in Rose's reproduction of "his" text. In interrupting and/or starting over, Taylor speaks, at the same time, in a kind of counterpoint to or with Reinhardt. Moreover his speaking is, immediately, of an experience of black/blackness

that places his intervention in a Fanonian phenomenological mode. To speak of experience, and later of existence, is to move counter to Reinhardt's overly stringent essentialism. Deeper still, Taylor speaks by way of hue, mysticism, and myopia, all of which show up for Reinhardt as derangements. ("There is something wrong, irresponsible and mindless about colour" he says, "something impossible to control. Control and rationality are part of any morality" ("B," 6). Taylor moves against Reinhardt (in his best Kantian/Greenbergian aestheticoethical mode) in a set of lyric gestures that chart a trajectory to "spirit, the knowing, of black dignity" ("B," 4). In this sense he speaks not only out of but also of the lived experience of the black. This is to say that Taylor moves by way of but also through Fanon, in the wake of an experience, an aesthetic sociality that Fanon never can fully embrace insofar as he never comes really to believe in it, even though it is the object, for Fanon, of an ambivalent political desire as well as a thing (of darkness) he cannot acknowledge as his own. In other words, Taylor speaks of and out of the possibilities embedded in a social life from which Fanon speaks and of which he speaks but primarily as negation and impossibility. This simultaneous conversation becomes, by way of a kind of ghostly transversality, a dialogue between Taylor and Fanon in which Reinhardt serves as the medium.

Other remote participants might later emerge, in addition to the tentative, minimal address to the things Taylor says we'll have to get into. Taylor and Fanon are the underground of this conversation, all down up in wherever black/ness and color hang. It remains for Taylor to make his claim on black aestheticosocial life, on the "spirit, the knowing, of black dignity," more explicit in his next intervention:

> I think Richard Wright wrote a book . . . called *Black Power*. Unfortunately, newspapers must sell, and I think they give a meaning of the moment to something which has long been in existence. The black artists have been in existence. Black—the black way of life—is an integral part of the American experience—the dance, for instance, the slop, Lindy hop, applejack, Watusi. Or the language, the spirit of the black in the language—"hip," "Daddy," "crazy," and "what's happening," "dig." These are manifestations of black energy, of black power, if you will. Politically speaking, I think the most dynamic force in American political life since the mid-1950s has been the black surge for equal representation, equal opportunities and it's becoming an active ingredient in American life" ("B," 6).

It's a kind of Ralph Ellison formulation that might seem more characteristic of Wynton Marsalis than Taylor but for the fact that it waits on a Fanonian understanding of impurity as disruption even as it waits for Fanon to get to the related, nonexcluded, nonexclusive understanding of mixture, of color, as constitutive of blackness and of blackness or black as a constitutive social, political, and aesthetic power. It's a kind of Stokely Carmichael formulation.

Meanwhile, between Taylor's formulation and Reinhardt's next intervention, Rockman offers a kind of regulative mediation that displaces Taylor's invocation of the priority and inevitability of another mixture that black instantiates and is by calling on a certain discourse or structure of (black) feeling. He refers to the poem that erupts out of Taylor's first intervention as "a very moving experience" ("B," 6). He also invokes an earlier point in the discussion when Snow referred to his father's blindness. Blindness, according to Rockman, is an internal blackness that is opposed to the exterior or inessential blackness of which Taylor speaks in his invocation of black life, energy, and power. He adds, in a Fanonian vein, that "the whole negro bit is a creation of the white world" ("B," 7). This moment is important precisely insofar as it mediates between Taylor and Reinhardt, allows Reinhardt to avoid Taylor's intervention, his invocation of the social, even as it places Taylor between Rockman's feelings and Reinhardt's antisocial frigidity, both of which emerge against a black background. Reinhardt follows this apparent escape route, that moves by way of the assumed inessentiality of black life, in his objection to the introduction of blindness as sentimental. For Reinhardt, issues of blindness, space, and sexuality move away from what he calls "the highest possible discussion," which would be on "an aesthetic level" ("B," 7). Taylor's invocation of a necessarily social aesthetic, a black aesthetic and sociality whose essence is a politics of impure or impurifying facticity, is bypassed. Reinhardt is disturbed by Taylor's intervention. Though he never really addresses it, he is clearly unhappy with its power to make the discussion "go off into too many subjects" ("B," 7). Reinhardt adds:

> Well, of course, we have enough mixed media here. I just want to again stress the idea of black as intellectuality and conventionality. There is an expression "the dark of absolute freedom" and an idea of formality. There's something about darkness or blackness that has something to do with something that I don't want to pin down. But it's aesthetic. And it has *not* to do with outer space or the colour of skin or the colour

> of matter. . . . And the exploitation of black as a kind of quality, as a material quality, is really objectionable. Again I'm talking on another level, on an intellectual level. ("B," 7)

One can feel Taylor fuming from an underground to which Reinhardt would have relegated him without mentioning him in his Friedian rejection of mixture-as-theatricality. And yet, Taylor's occupation of this underground, precisely in the richness of its black aesthetic and intellectual content, is inhabited by way of Taylor's refusal and not his being rendered or regulated. Rockman, duly chastened by the dismissal of his sentimentalism, meekly asks Reinhardt to explain his objection to glossy black. Interestingly, Reinhardt dislikes glossy black because it reflects and because it is "unstable" and "surreal" ("B," 7). The reflective quality of the color black—as well as the capacity of the black to reflect—have, of course, been introduced by Taylor. Only now, however, can these issues be addressed by Reinhardt on his own high level. Glossy black disturbs in its reflective quality: "It reflects all the [necessarily social] activity that's going on in a room" ("B," 7). But this is also to say that glossy black's reflection of the irreducibly social is problematic precisely insofar as it disrupts the solipsism of genuine intellectual reflection that painting is supposed to provide. This, in turn, is to say that glossy black denies the individual viewer's absorption into a painting that will have then begun to function also as a mirror but a mirror that serves to detach the viewer from the social and that characterizes that detachment as the very essence of intellectual and aesthetic experience. Reinhardt wants what he refers to as "less [*sic*] distractions and less [*sic*] intrusions tha[n] colour or light or other things might make" ("B," 8). Taylor, having spoken of and from blackness as aesthetic sociality, of and from the eternal, internal, and subterranean alien/nation of black things in their unregulatable chromaticism, must have been fuming.

The discussion moves again along the lines and laws that Reinhardt lays down. Objection to him is held within an old discourse that combines primitivism, futurism, and blackness as the disavowal of physicality. I'm speaking of Tambellini's invocation of the Soviet cosmonaut who, upon experiencing outer space, says, "Before me—blackness, an inky-black sky studded with stars that glowed but did not twinkle; they seemed immobilized." Tambellini continues,

> Here again is a primitive man, a caveman, but he's the caveman of the space era. I see him as the most important man. It's immaterial who he

is; it's even immaterial what his name is. But that's what our children are going to be, that's what the future is going to be, and this is what the extension of man has got to. He's got to get rid of this whole concept of black pictures or of black anything as a physical object. He's got to realize that he is black right now ("B," 12).

Against the grain of Tambellini's enthusiasm for whatever transcends the material, out of his own particular and exclusionary intellectualism, and taking up the question of sentiment or emotion again, Reinhardt responds, "The reason for the involvement of darkness and blackness is, as I've said, an aesthetic-intellectual one, certainly among artists. And it's because of its non-colour. Colour is always trapped in some kind of physical activity or assertiveness of its own; and colour has to do with life. In that sense it may be vulgarity or folk art or something like that. But you'd better make sure what you mean by emotion, that's what I would say" ("B," 12–13). And now the encounter between Taylor and Reinhardt can really begin, interrupted only by a couple of brief but telling interjections by Tambellini (though it should be noted that for Reinhardt the encounter brings into play other ghostly eminences for whom Taylor is a medium: Marcel Duchamp, whose theatrical excess, which Taylor might be said to embody, is an object of Reinhardt's particular antitheatrical prejudice; and Mondrian, whose dramatic politics, which Taylor might be said to embody, Reinhardt mistakes for asceticism).[23]

Taylor: Would you give us a definition?

Reinhardt: Well, Clive Bell made it clear that there was an aesthetic emotion that was *not* any other kind of emotion. And probably you could only define that negatively. Art is always made by craftsmen—it's never a spontaneous expression. Artists always come from artists and art forms come from art forms. At any rate, art is involved in a certain kind of perfection. Expression is an impossible world. If you want to use it I think you have to explain it further.

Taylor: In pursuit of that perfection, once it is attained, what then? What is your reaction to that perfection?

Reinhardt: Well, I suppose there's a general reaction. I suppose in the visual arts good works usually end up in museums where they can be protected.

Taylor: Don't you understand that every culture has its own mores, its way of doing things, and that's why different art forms exist?

People paint differently, people sing differently. What else does it express but my way of living—the way I eat, the way I walk, the way I talk, the way I think, what I have access to?

Reinhardt: Cultures in time begin to represent what artists did. It isn't the other way around.

Taylor: Don't you understand that what artists do depends on the time they have to do it in, and the time they have to do it in depends upon the amount of economic sustenance which allows them to do it? You have to come down to the reality. Artists just don't work, you know, just like that—the kind of work, the nature of their involvement is not separate from the nature of their existence, and you have to come down to the nature of their existence. For instance, if they decide to go into the realm of fine art, there are certain prerequisites that they must have.

Tambellini: This guy floating in space has more to do with the reality that I'm living in than some idiotic place with walls and pictures in it. This man made one of the most poetic statements I've heard in my life. And furthermore I recognize the act he performs out there; he's destroying every possible square idea I've ever known, every possible notion that man can any longer be up and down. In the tradition of Mondrian you have the floor and the top; the tradition of Egyptian and western man is in the horizontal and the vertical. I don't work with that concept. It is the concept of nature. But he's telling me what's going on there. When the black man breaks out of his tradition, he's telling me what he's feeling, he's telling me what western man has done. He's telling me about segregation, he's telling me directly "see what your museums are, preservation of your own culture," "see what the radio is, the propaganda for your own culture," "see what this newspaper is, the propagation of your own . . ." and this space guy says to me, "see what the universe is up there, something which has no ups and downs," "see what space is, total darkness." He's telling me something I have to deal with. I have to create some kind of images ("B," 13–14).

The distinction between what Tambellini has and doesn't have to deal with, along with Tambellini's off-translation of Taylor's formulations, given in a

manner that is foreshadowed by Rockman's, serves to sanction Reinhardt's dismissal, and provides another context for the relegation of Taylor's appeal. It is, after all, Reinhardt who makes judgments, who speaks with a kind of juridical authority. But Reinhardt is not trying to hear the case Taylor makes for (another understanding of) blackness. Reinhardt continues, in response now to Tambellini (and setting up Taylor's final disruption, an invocation to something like a phenomenological description of the artist's routine):

Reinhardt: This hasn't anything to do with your day-to-day problems.
Taylor: Day-to-day problems? What do you mean by day-to-day problems?
Reinhardt: The artist has a day-to-day routine.
Taylor: What is that routine specifically?
Reinhardt: It is boring, drudging . . .
Taylor: My work gives me pleasure. But the minute I walk outside there is enough that is evil and ugly and full of that which I call drudgery and boredom for me not to want it in my work and around me. Poverty is not a very satisfying thing.

Aldo said it very clearly, western art is involved and has been involved with one perspective, one idea, one representation of one social-racial entity and aesthetic; and I'm saying that I must be aware of that, in what that has meant to black men or to the Indians. I have to be aware of the social dynamics of my society in order to function. I don't only have a responsibility to myself, I have a responsibility to my community.

Reinhardt: As a human being, not as an artist.
Taylor: Now look, you are not the one, you are positively not the one to talk about human beings, since you rule out the human element in your art. That kind of dichotomy is very common in the west, and it has resulted in paranoia.

And so, therefore, I'm involved in making people aware of the black aesthetic. That fine art which you talk about is an exclusive art, and it excludes not according to ability, but according to wealth.

Tambellini: I don't even go to the god damn museums any more. I get the creeps, god damn it, I get depressed for months—it reminds me what the fucking black man must feel when he

walks in the damn upper class of this society. I see the god damn slums in this country. I know how it feels to be black and walking the streets of a white society and as a white man, I feel what this damn ruling class is doing to anybody creative. They are set up there to destroy, because I can not go along with this intellectualization of protecting this particular class, this particular structure.

Reinhardt: There was an achievement in separating Fine Art from other art.

Taylor: The Russian ballet masters took the peasants and made them fine dancers; but the spirit of the ballet comes from the peasant.

Reinhardt: Tambellini suggested that we may abandon the historical approach to art, and get into a kind of simultaneity in which you have all twenty-five thousand years of art and you have to think about it. Quoting an astronaut isn't meaningful.

Tambellini: To me it's essential and meaningful.

Reinhardt: Not you as an artist, but maybe as a human being. It is certainly interesting to me as a human being.

Taylor: It is interesting to me as a musician, because it has to do with space, and space automatically implies time. Like I'm involved with rhythm, and rhythm is like the marginal division of time. Of course Reinhardt visualizes blackness as some kind of technical problem. I visualize it as the quality that shapes my life, in terms of the quality of the acceptance that my work gets or does not get based on the fact that it is from the Afro-American community.

Reinhardt: But your art should be free from the community ("B," 14–16).

As their encounter and their general contribution to the discussion concludes, it becomes clear that Reinhardt operates within a strict antipathy to thingliness—which Reinhardt mistakes, perhaps after Michael Fried, for objecthood—in or as artworks which, in turn, require the freedom (which, for Reinhardt, is associated in its absoluteness with darkness and an idea of formality) of art and the artist from the community, from politicotheatricality, from the city or *polis* as world stage.[24] That antipathy is anticipated in the art criticism of Clement Greenberg and, even more stringently, in that of Greenberg's protégé, Fried, both of whom move within what Yve-Alain Bois,

in an essay on Reinhardt, describes as "a clear demarcation between pictoriality and objecthood."[25] Reinhardt believes intensely in the legitimacy of the demarcations between art/ists and community, pictoriality, and (objecthood-as-)thingliness, but those demarcations are irreparably blurred by his most important work, his celebrated series of black paintings. This blurring is a source of anxiety for Reinhardt, whose allergy to mixture is, as it were, an allergy to thingliness. That intolerance of the blurring of art and life, in the words of Marcel Duchamp and Allen Kaprow, is famously formulated by Fried as a disavowal of theater, which is associated with the thingly in art, with what Bois intimates that Greenberg might have called "the passage of the picture into the realm of things."[26] Painting becomes something like a new kind of sculpture, according to Greenberg, and Bois describes this logic as that which led Frank Stella's black paintings, and presumably Reinhardt's, to look almost like objects. Reinhardt's formulations on black are meant to stave off the slide into thingliness, the complete fall into the world of things. He wants his works to represent (which is to say to present themselves as)—as Mondrian's paintings do, according to Greenberg, and in spite of their over-allness, their sculpturality—"the scene of forms rather than . . . one single, indivisible piece of texture."[27] To insist on the distinction between the canvas as scene and the canvas as thing is to detach oneself from the scene as much as it is also to represent the scene. It is to establish something like a freedom *from the community* in the most highly determined, regulative, *legal* sense of that word, in the sharpest sense of its constituting a field in which the human and the (disorderly) thing are precisely, pathologically, theatrically indistinct. Let's call this community the black community, the community that is defined by a certain history of blackness, a history of privation (as Taylor points out) and plenitude, pain and (as Taylor points out) pleasure. It is from and as a sensual commune, from and as an irruptive advent, at once focused and arrayed against the political aesthetics of enclosed common sense, that Taylor's music emerges.

Interestingly, Mondrian is invoked by both Greenberg and Reinhardt in the interest of, on the one hand, establishing the difference between easel painting's representational essence and minimalist, literalist, thingliness and, on the other hand, maintaining the separation of art and life that Duchamp and his minimalist descendants desired. At the same time, there is a syntactic, compositional "equivalence"—a social life of forms within the painting—that animates Mondrian's work. It is not merely an accident that this social life—of which Mondrian writes a great deal in his extended meditation on

neoplastic art production's relation to the city, to the bar, to jazz—is spoken of in theatrical terms as "the scene of forms" by Greenberg who recognizes (or at least reveals) more clearly than Reinhardt or Fried an *irreducible* theatricality.[28]

That theatricality or social life has a politics, as well, which Taylor constantly recognizes and invokes but to deaf ears. And it's important to note that deafness places the severest limitations on the visual imagination. Reinhardt cannot, or refuses to, hear, if you will, a certain chromatic saturation that inhabits black as that color's internal, social life. The many colors that are absorbed and reflected in the color black, and in and as black social life, on the other hand, flow with an extraordinary theatrical intensity in *Victory Boogie Woogie*. It is as if they were poured out of (the father of) the jug, which is and is more than its "absence"; as if Ammons's rhythms inhabit and animate the painting, thereby challenging formulations regarding either its emptiness or its flatness, vivifying it as a scene in the form of tactile and visual translation and rearticulation of sound. But this is not all. The intensity of Mondrian's last work, as Harry Cooper argues, constitutes something like a critique of neoplasticism's insistence on the dualistic equivalence—which is necessarily a reduction—of differences within the paintings by way of the unleashing of a certain occult instability to which I shall return.[29] Such mixture, in which painting becomes phonotopography, would seem profoundly against the grain of Reinhardt, who claims Mondrian as an ancestor. However, the texture and landscape of black social life, of black social music, are given in *Victory Boogie Woogie*, making visible and audible a difference that exists not so much between Reinhardt's and Mondrian's paintings but between the way they deal with what might be understood as the social chromaticism of the color black and of blackness-in-color in their paintings. Taylor is more attuned, in the end, to what he might call the "sliding quadrants" that demarcate Mondrian's late New York rhythms, rhythms that don't blur so much as restage the encounter between art and life.[30] *Victory Boogie Woogie* is a scene of forms as well as a thing within the black community of things.

This becomes clearer by way of Bois, who concludes his essay "Piet Mondrian, *New York City*" in this way: "When . . . asked . . . why he kept repainting *Victory Boogie Woogie* instead of making several paintings of the different solutions that had been superimposed on this canvas, Mondrian answered, 'I don't want pictures. I just want to find things out.'"[31] Cooper thinks the recollection of this exchange comes through the filter of the post-Pollock mythology of the action painter, as Bois calls it, but no one is more vigilant

regarding that mythology than Bois, who places Reinhardt against it. Cooper himself takes note of Mondrian's increasing obsession with revision, which we might think not only as repetition but also as a kind of pianistic repercussion.[32] If action painter–style expression is understood as a sort of choreographically induced interior voyage, this seems not at all what Mondrian had in mind. The question, of course, concerns finding things out precisely in its relation to obsessional revision, and perhaps Mondrian knew what Taylor knew and Reinhardt did not: that repercussive revision and a certain inventive discovery are fundamental protocols of black socioaesthetic activity. This is a question concerning sound and movement or, more precisely, a kind of audiotheatricality that is the essence of political consciousness.

And Mondrian's paintings are political if Bois is correct when he says that "an 'optical' interpretation of Mondrian, conceived in the assurance of immediate perception, cannot account for his New York paintings."[33] This is to say that the political in Mondrian is initialized as an excess, though not an erasure, of the optical; as an interplay of the sensual and social ensembles in the constant cutting and augmentation of their fullness. Cooper moves us more firmly in the direction of a mediated, more than visual perception and interpretation of Mondrian's work not only by attending carefully to the structural trace of boogie-woogie piano in Mondrian's improvisatory, revisionary compositional practice but by offering a brief history of the color black's career in Mondrian's late phase. He notes, along with Bois, that the black lines that instantiated dualistic equilibrium by "bounding color planes" proliferate and are made glossier, more reflective before Mondrian, in exile and at the unfinished end of a twenty-year project, under the influence of boogie-woogie, "burst[s] the pod of painting and disseminated its elements across a broken border."[34] This is to say not only that the border is crossed, that something moves through it; it is also to say, or at least to imply, that the border is (already) broken, that what it had contained within itself pours out. Any accounting of what the limit contains must also be an accounting of the contents of the limit. This is a matter of touch—of painterly and pianistic feel. Color pours from as well as across the border records and, as it were, reverses, the sound, the social music, that had been poured into the painting. The rhythmic story of left hand, right hand explodes into every note that can and can't be played, in every possible shade and shading of that note. Implicature erupts from the primary and the tonic as if the painting were one of Taylor's cluster bombs, his detonated rainbows, his inside figures played outside. Mondrian all but discovers certain ochres and

blues in his strange, estranged homecoming, in appositional placements of the primary that allow for the secondary, for the minor that had been repressed, to emerge. He could be said to interpret, from the standpoint of a radical social aesthetic, the rhythmic images of his country. He joins Ammons in joining what we will see Fanon come to recognize as "that fluctuating movement which [the] people are just giving shape to, and which, as soon as it has started, will be the signal for everything to be called in question."[35] That country, that broken body, is black. That crossed, broken border is also a broken vessel. Crossing borders and oceans in serial exile, crossing over into the dead zone, involves staging the appositional encounter, which has always already started, of blackness and color for Mondrian. The native returns to places he's never been to get ready for one last trip. We're always crossing this frontier we carry. The smuggler who crosses is the border, its contents pouring out. Invasion out from the outside continues. Black explodes violently, victoriously in Mondrian's last painting, his careful, painstaking ode to proliferation, impurity, and incompleteness. It is the victory of the unfinished, the lonesome fugitive; the victory of finding things out, of questioning; the victorious rhythm of the broken system. Black(ness), which is to say black social life, is an undiscovered country.

Du Bois might say that it is the evident incalculability in human action that infuses *Victory Boogie Woogie*. He might claim, more pointedly, that Mondrian brings to certain fields of attention and inattention the evident incalculability of black life that corresponds to black life's evident rhythms in spite of how those rhythms might seem to lend themselves to the easy arithmetic of so many births and deaths or so many heavy beats to the bar.[36] In fact, it is the evidently incalculable rhythm of the life of things that Mondrian had been finding out in New York City, that he had been after for a long time if his meditations on the relationship between jazz and neoplastic are any indication. In the end, what remains is Mondrian's insistence on his late paintings as a mode of "finding things out," as things bodying forth a self-activated, autoexcessive inquiry into the possibility of a politics of the melodramatic social imagination. In Mondrian's city things making and finding one another out actively disrupt the grids by which activities would be known, organized, and apportioned. Mondrian's late paintings show the true colors with which blackness is infused. The paintings are an open, textured, mobile, animated, content-laden border, a sculptural, audiotheatrical outskirts, whose chromatic saturation indicates that Mondrian's late, exilic, catastrophic work was given over to a case of blackness.

Like the more than mindless, more than visceral events and things whose meaning is unattained even as their political force is ascertained, for Fanon, chromatic saturation has repercussions:

> If we study the repercussions of the awakening of national consciousness in the domains of ceramics and pottery-making, the same observations [regarding the artist's forging of an invitation to participate in organized movement] may be drawn. Jugs, jars, and trays are modified, at first imperceptible, then almost savagely. The colors, of which formerly there were but few and which obeyed the traditional rules of harmony, increase in number and are influenced by the repercussion of the rising revolution. Certain ochres and blues, which seemed forbidden to all eternity in a given cultural area now assert themselves without giving rise to scandal.[37]

Fanon speaks of repercussions that we might take to be the rhythmic accompaniment to this new harmonic disruption of the traditional, of the very idea of the authentic and any simple recourse to it. Yet repercussion implies a repetition, however different and differentiating, of a beat which, when it is understood as resistance in the broadest sense, lies radically and anoriginally before us. Moreover, while the repercussive chromaticism of which Fanon speaks is no simple analogue to the primary rhythms of Mondrian in New York, one cannot help but hear in his paintings a striving for what is underground and anoriginal in the city, for what is held in and escapes the city's limits, the interiority of its black border or bottom, the bottom in which its unwelcome bo(a)rders dwell politically as well as poetically.

Fanon shares Du Bois's Kantian ambivalence toward the tumultuous derangements that emerge from imagination and that are inseparable from the imaginative constitution of reason and reality. The ambiguity is shown in what elsewhere appears as a kind of valorization of the depths that are held and articulated in the surface of actual events, as the call for intellectuals to linger in the necessarily rhythmic and muscular music of the "*lieu de déséquilibre occulte*" (which Farrington translates as "zone of occult instability" and Philcox translates as "zone of hidden fluctuation") wherein "*son âme et que s'illuminent sa perception et sa respiration*" (Farrington: "our lives are transfused with light"/Philcox: "their perception and respiration [is] transfigured."[38] Note, in the choice of translations, a return to one of the problems with which we started, crystallized here in the distinction between our lives and their perception and respiration. The difference between "our" and

"their" does not displace, by way of a politico-intellectual detachment, nearness with absolute distance. Rather, it attends the claim—which is to say that imaginative flight, that descent into the underground—that finding (the) people and things requires. On the other hand it most certainly can be said to recover a gap, a border of black color, that, in the end, Fanon demands we inhabit alongside the ones who have always been escaping the absolute dereliction of the reality to which they have been yoked.

Meanwhile, Reinhardt sees black as a kind of negation even of Mondrianic color, of a certain Mondrianic urban victory. Like all the most profound negations, his is appositional. This is to say that, in the end, the black paintings stand alongside Mondrian's late work and stand as late work in the private and social senses of lateness. Insofar as blackness is understood as the absence and negation of color, of a kind of social color and social music, Reinhardt will have had no music playing or played as he painted or as you behold—neither Ammons's strong, or Taylor's exploded and exploding, left hand. But blackness is not the absence of color. So far is black art also always late work, correspondent to the victory of escape. The blackness of Mondrian's late work is given in Reinhardt's black negation of it, just as Taylor amplifies as well as instantiates a black sociality hidden and almost unreproducible in Reinhardt and his paintings that overwhelms or displaces the antisociality of a black-and-white exchange that never really comes off either as instrumentalist dismissal or objectifying encounter. We could call such instantiation, such violence, the accomplishment of the unfinished, the incomplete, the flawed. It is a victory given in left-out left hands and their excluded handiwork, in impossible recordings on tape, on taped-over re-recordings, on broken flutes and fluted wash stands in which makers wash their right hands and their left-out left hands. It is the unfinished accomplishment of a victory that finished accomplishment takes away. Mondrian's victory is Harriet Jacobs's—it occurs in a cramped, capacious room, a crawlspace defined by interdicted, impossible but existent seeing and overhearing. It's a victory that only comes fully into relief when it is taken by way of the gift of one's freedom. What one desires, instead, is the unfinished victory of things who cannot be bought and sold especially when they are bought and sold. Left hands stroll in the city, fly off the handle like left eyes, burn playhouses down, fly away, crash and burn sometimes, then come out again next year on tape and fade away.

Meanwhile, Reinhardt's dream of a painting freed from the city would return whatever animates what Cooper calls the "riot of blocks" that animate

Victory Boogie Woogie to its cell.[39] Reinhardt might have said, might be one of the inspirations for, what Adorno writes in "Black as an Ideal": "To survive reality at its most extreme and grim, artworks that do not want to sell themselves as consolation must equate themselves with that reality. Radical art today is synonymous with dark art; its primary color is black. Much contemporary art is irrelevant because it takes no note of this and childishly delights in color."[40] For Adorno, "The ideal of blackness with regard to content is one of the deepest impulses of abstraction." Moreover, "there is an impoverishment entailed by the idea of black," according to Adorno, to which "trifling with sound and color effects" is a mere reaction.[41] It is, however, precisely through a consideration of the unstable zone between the lived experience of the black and the fact of blackness, between the color black and what it absorbs and reflects, what it takes in and pours out, that we can begin to see how it is possible to mistake impossibility or impoverishment for absence or eradication. That zone, made available to us by the broken bridge of mistranslation, is where one lives a kind of oscillation between virtual solitude and fantastic multitude (which could be said to be the very theme of Mondrian's late work that Reinhardt takes it upon himself to negate and therefore inadvertently confirms, or of a certain lateness in Fanon's work that a certain earliness in his work seeks to negate but inadvertently confirms). This canted zone or curved span moves between a fact and an experience that, in themselves and in the commerce between them, remain inaccessible to all concepts of and desires for the racial object and unavailable to the protocols of dematerializing representation.

Finding things out, getting at the meaning of things, turns out to mean and to demand an investigation of instability, a courting of tumult, of riot, of derangement, of the constitutive disorder of the polis, its black market, border and bottom, the field of minor internal conflict, of the minor occasion or event through which the essence of an interminable struggle takes form. It means settling down in the uninhabitable, where one is constrained to reinitialize what has been dismissed as the pathontological in the discourse of the militant ontopathologist. It means producing mad works—prematurely, preternaturally late works—that register the thingly encounter; works that are both all black and in which black is conspicuous in its absence, between blackness and chromatic saturation.

Fanon understands, in the attention he pays in his late work to mental disorder and/as anticolonial refusal, that such blackness as Mondrian is infused with and performs shows up in color, that it is more than merely mindless and

irresponsible, as Reinhardt believed. Now the interplay between blackness, color, madness, and late work that I have been trying to consider demands a turn to this important and familiar passage from "On National Culture," *Wretched of the Earth*:

> The colonized intellectual frequently lapses into heated arguments and develops a psychology dominated by an exaggerated sensibility, sensitivity, and susceptibility. This movement of withdrawal, which first of all comes from a petitio principi in his psychological mechanism and physiognomy, above all calls to mind a muscular reflex, a muscular contraction.
>
> The foregoing is sufficient to explain the style of the colonized intellectuals who make up their mind to assert this phase of liberating consciousness. A jagged style, full of imagery, for the image is the drawbridge that lets out the unconscious forces into the surrounding meadows. An energetic style, alive with rhythms bursting with life. A colorful style, too, bronzed, bathed in sunlight and harsh. This style, which Westerners once found jarring, is not, as some would have it, a racial feature, but above all reflects a single-handed combat and reveals how necessary it is for the intellectual to inflict injury on himself, to actually bleed red blood and free himself from that part of his being already contaminated by the germs of decay. A swift, painful combat where inevitably the muscle had to replace the concept.
>
> Although this approach may take him to unusual heights in the sphere of poetry, at an existential level it has often proved a dead end (*W*/P, 157).

Fanon's reading of the staging that launches the colonized intellectual's reflexive grasp at authenticity must itself be read in its relation to his analysis of the particular psychosomatic disorders colonialism fosters and resistance to colonialism demands. This is to say that the muscle's problematic replacement of the concept needs also to be understood as psychosomatic disorder. The problem of the colonized intellectual as the condition of im/possibility of emergent national culture shows up with a certain clarity in Fanon's attention to mental disorders under colonialism even when the limits of psychopathology are exposed. "The increasing occurrence of mental illness and the rampant development of specific pathological conditions are not the only legacy of the colonial war in Algeria. Apart from the pathology of torture, the pathology of the tortured and that of the perpetrator, there is

a pathology of the entire atmosphere in Algeria, a condition that leads the attending physician to say when confronted with a case they cannot understand: "This will all be cleared up once the damned war is over" (*W*/P, 216). Whose case is it? Who's on the case? Are we to consider the pathological fantasy that "this will all be cleared up"; or the decayed orbit of diagnosis that leads from the failure to understand down to that fantasy; or must we be concerned with the one big case of an entire pathological public atmo/sphere? In any case, the cases with which Fanon is concerned here are instances of psychosomatic pathology, "the general body of organic disorders developed in response to a situation of conflict" (*W*/P, 216). In a note, Fanon characterizes the tradition of Soviet psychological theorization of these disorders as "putting the brain back in its place" as "the matrix where precisely the psyche is elaborated." That tradition operates by way of a terminological shift from "psychosomatic" to "cortico-visual" (*W*/P, 216n35). Such disorders are both symptom and cure insofar as they constitute an avoidance of complete breakdown by way of an incomplete outwitting, in Fanon's terms, of the originary conflict.

Fanon continues by turning to a disorder seemingly unique to the Algerian atmosphere:

> g. Systemic contraction, muscular stiffness
> These are male patients who slowly have difficulty making certain movements such as climbing stairs, walking quickly, or running (in two cases it is very sudden). The cause of this difficulty lies in a characteristic rigidity which inevitably suggests an attack on certain areas of the brain (central gray matter). Walking becomes contracted and turns into a shuffle. Passive bending of the lower limbs is practically impossible. No relaxation can be achieved. Immediately rigid and incapable of relaxing of his own free will, the patient seems to be made in one piece. The face is set, but expresses a marked degree of bewilderment.
>
> The patient does not seem to be able to "demobilize his nerves." He is constantly tense, on hold, between life and death. As one of them told us: "You see, I'm as stiff as a corpse" (*W*/P, 218–19).

Fanon offers an anticipatory explication:

> Like any war, the war in Algeria has created its contingent of cortico-visceral illnesses. . . . This particular form of pathology (systemic muscular contraction) already caught our attention before the revolution

> began. But the doctors who described it turned it into a congenital stigma of the "native," an original feature of his nervous system, manifest proof of a predominant extrapyramidal system in the colonized. This contraction, in fact, is quite simply a postural concurrence and evidence in the colonized's muscles of their rigidity, their reticence and refusal in the face of the colonial authorities. (*W*/P, 217)

Perhaps these contractions create a staging area for questions. What's the relation between the body seeming to be all of one piece and the uncountable set of minor internal conflicts that Fanon overlooks in his assertion of the absence of black interiority or black difference? Is jaggedness an effect or an expression of rigidity, reticence, refusal? Is such gestural disorder a disruptive choreography that opens onto the meaning of things? At the same time, would it not be fair to think in terms of a gestural critique (of reason, of judgment)? Muscular contraction is not just a sign of external conflict but an expression of internal conflict as well. Perhaps such gesture, such dance, is the body's resistance to the psyche and to itself the thing's immanent transcendence, the fissured singularity of a political scene?

But is this anything other than to say that dance such as this moves in a pathological atmosphere? It is fantastic and its rigor is supposed to be that of the mortis, the socially dead, of a dead or impossible socius. The point, however, is that disorder has a set of double edges in the case (studies) of Fanon. Such disorder is, more generally, both symptom and cure—a symptom of oppression and a staging area for political criminality. And such disorder is deeply problematic if the onto-epistemological field of blackness is posited as impossible or unexplainable; if the social situation of blackness is a void, or a voided fantasy or simply devoid of value; if resistance itself is, finally, at least in this case, a function of the displacement of personality. Fanon seeks to address this complex in the transition from his description of muscular contraction to his understanding of the relation between what has been understood to be a natural propensity to "criminal impulsiveness" and the war of national liberation. Now the relation between the colonized intellectual and his impossible authenticity is to be thought in its relation to that between "the militant" and "his people" whom the militant believes he must drag "up from the pit and out of the cave" (*W*/P, 219). At stake is the transition from romantic identification with the pathological to the detached concern of the psychopathologist who ventures into the dead space of the unexplainable in the interest of a general resuscitation. Fanon is interested in a kind of

rehabilitation and reintegration that the militant psychopathologist is called upon to perform in the interest of procuring "substance, coherence, and homogeneity" and reversing the depersonalization of "the very structure of society" on the collective as well as individual levels (*W*/P, 219). For Fanon, the militant corticovisceral psychopathologist, the people have been reduced "to a collection of individuals who owe their very existence to the presence of the colonizer" (*W*/P, 220). A set of impossible questions ought to ensue from what may well be Fanon's pathological insistence on the pathological: Can resistance come from such a location? Or, perhaps more precisely and more to the point, can there be an escape from that location, can the personhood that defines that location also escape that position? What survives the kind of escape that ought never leave the survivor intact? If and when some thing emerges from such a place, can it be anything other than pathological? But how can the struggle for liberation of the pathological be aligned with the eradication of the pathological? This set of questions will have been symptoms of the psychopathology of the psychopathologist—in them the case of the one who studies cases will have been given in its essence. It is crucial, however, that this set of questions that Fanon ought to have asked are never really posed. Instead, in his text Fanon insistently stages the encounter between anticolonial political criminality and colonially induced psychopathology. In so doing he discovers a certain nearness and a certain distance between explanation and resistance as well.

Fanon is embedded in a discourse that holds the pathological in close proximity to the criminal. At stake, in this particular nearness, is the relation between psychic and legal adjustment. In either case, the case *is* precisely in relation to the norm. But the case of a specifically colonial psychopathology, in its relation to the case of a specifically anticolonial criminality, has no access to the norm. Moreover, if, in either case, there were access to the norm, that access would be refused and such refusal would be folded into the description of criminal, pathological anticolonialism. In such cases, what would be the meaning of adjustment or "reintegration"? What does or should the liberation struggle have to do, in the broadest sense, with the "rehabilitation of man"? The flipside of this question has to do, precisely, with what might be called the liberatory value of ensemblic depersonalization. This is Fanon's question. He achieves it, in the course of his career, by way of an actual engagement with what is, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, dismissed as the "minor internal conflicts" that show up only in contradistinction to authentic intraracial intersubjectivity but which is, in *The Wretched of the Earth*,

taken up with all of the militant psychopathologist's ambivalence, under the rubrics of "cortico-visceral disorder" (muscular contraction) and "criminal impulsiveness" in its irreducible relation to "national liberation."

While Fanon would consider the zealous worker in a colonial regime a quintessentially pathological case, remember that it is in resistance to colonial oppression that the cases of psychopathology with which Fanon is concerned in *The Wretched of the Earth*—in particular, those psychosomatic or corticovisceral disorders—emerge. What's at stake is Fanon's ongoing ambivalence toward the supposedly pathological. At the same time, ambivalence is, itself, the mark of the pathological. Watch Fanon prefiguratively describe and diagnose the pathological ambivalence that he performs:

> The combat waged by a people for their liberation leads them, depending on the circumstances, either to reject or to explode the so-called truths sown in their consciousness by the colonial regime, military occupation, and economic exploitation. And only the armed struggle can effectively exorcise these lies about man that subordinate and literally mutilate the more conscious-minded among us.
>
> How many times in Paris or Aix, in Algiers or Basse-Terre have we seen the colonized vehemently protest the so-called indolence of the black, the Algerian, the Vietnamese. And yet in a colonial regime if a fellah were a zealous worker or a black were to refuse a break from work, they would be quite simply considered pathological cases. The colonized's indolence is a conscious way of sabotaging the colonial machine; on the biological level it is a remarkable system of self-preservation and, if nothing else, is a positive curb on the occupier's stranglehold over the entire country (*W*/P, 220).

Is it fair to say that one detects in this text a certain indolence sown or sewn into it? Perhaps, on the other hand, its flaws are more accurately described as pathological. To be conscious-minded is to be aligned with subordination, even mutilation; the self-consciousness of the colonized is figured as a kind of wound at the same time that it is also aligned with wounding, with armed struggle that is somehow predicated on that which it makes possible, namely the explosion of so-called truths planted or, as it were, woven into the consciousness of the conscious-minded ones. They are the ones who are given the task of repairing (the truth) of man; they are the ones who would heal by way of explosion, excision, or exorcism. This moment of self-conscious self-description is sewn into Fanon's text like a depth charge. However, authentic

upheaval is figured, in the end, not as an eruption of the unconscious in the conscious-minded but as that conscious mode of sabotage carried out every day—in and as what had been relegated, by the conscious-minded, to the status of impossible, pathological sociality—by the ones who are not, or are not yet, conscious. Healing wounds are inflicted, in other words, by the ones who are not conscious of their wounds and whose wounds are not redoubled by such consciousness. Healing wounds are inflicted appositionally, in small, quotidian refusals to act that make them subject to charges of pathological indolence. Often the conscious ones, who have taken it upon themselves to defend the colonized against such charges, levy those charges with the greatest vehemence. If Fanon fails to take great pains to chart the tortured career of rehabilitative injury, it is perhaps a conscious decision to sabotage his own text insofar as it has been sown with those so-called truths that obscure the truth of man.

This black operation that Fanon performs on his own text gives the lie to his own formulations. So that when Fanon claims that "the duty of the colonized subject, who has not yet arrived at a political consciousness or a decision to reject the oppressor, is to have the slightest effort literally dragged out of him," the question that emerges is why one who is supposed yet to have arrived at political consciousness, one who must be dragged up out of the pit, would have such a duty (*W*/P, 220). This in turn raises the more fundamental issue, embedded in this very assertion of duty, of the impossibility of such nonarrival; this is to say that the failure to arrive at a political consciousness is a general pathology suffered by the ones who take their political consciousness with them on whatever fugitive, aleatory journey they are making. They will have already arrived; they will have already been there. They will have carried something with them before whatever violent manufacture, whatever constitutive shattering is supposed to have called them into being. While noncooperation is figured by Fanon as a kind of staging area for or a preliminary version of a more authentic "objectifying encounter" with colonial oppression (a kind of counterrepresentational response to power's interpellative call), his own formulations regarding that response point to the requirement of a kind of thingly quickening that makes opposition possible while appositionally displacing it. Noncooperation is a duty that must be carried out by the ones who exist in the nearness and distance between political consciousness and absolute pathology. But this duty, imposed by an erstwhile subject who clearly is supposed to know, overlooks (or, perhaps more precisely, looks away from) that vast range of nonreactive disruptions of rule

that are, in early and late Fanon, both indexed and disqualified. Such disruptions, often manifest as minor internal conflicts (within the closed circle, say, of Algerian criminality, in which the colonized "tend to use each other as a screen") or muscular contractions, however much they are captured, enveloped, imitated, or traded, remain inassimilable (*W*/P, 231). These disruptions trouble the rehabilitation of the human even as they are evidence of the capacity to enact such rehabilitation. Moreover, it is at this point, in passages that culminate with the apposition of what Fanon refers to as "the reality of the 'towelhead'" with "the reality of the 'nigger,'" that the fact, the case, and the lived experience of blackness—which might be understood, here, as the troubling of and the capacity for the rehabilitation of the human—converge as a duty to appose the oppressor, to refrain from a certain performance of the labor of the negative, to avoid his economy of objectification and standing against, to run away from the snares of recognition (*W*/P, 220). This refusal is a black thing, is that which Fanon carries with(in) himself, and in how he carries himself, from Martinique to France to Algeria. He is an anticolonial smuggler whose wares are constituted by and as the dislocation of black social life that he carries, almost unaware. In Fanon, blackness is transversality between things, escaping (by way of) distant, spooky actions; it is translational effect and affect, transmission between cases, and could be understood, in terms Brent Hayes Edwards establishes, as diasporic practice.[42] This is what he carries with him, as the imagining thing that he cannot quite imagine and cannot quite control, in his pathologizing description of it that it—that he—defies. A fugitive cant moves through Fanon, erupting out of regulatory disavowal. His claim on this criminality was interdicted. But perhaps only the dead can strive for the quickening power that animates what has been relegated to the pathological. Perhaps the dead are alive and escaping. Perhaps ontology is best understood as the imagination of this escape as a kind of social gathering; as undercommon plainsong and dance; as the fugitive, centrifugal word; as the word's autointerruptive, autoilluminative shade/s. Seen in this light, black(ness) is, in the dispossessive richness of its colors, beautiful.

I must emphasize that what's at stake here is not some puritanically monochromatic denunciation of an irreducible humanism in Fanon. Nor is one after some simple disavowal of the law as if the criminality at stake here had some stake in such a reaction. Rather, what one wants to amplify is a certain Fanonian elaboration of the law of motion that Adorno will come to speak of in Fanon's wake. Fanon writes, "Here we find the old law stating that

anything alive cannot afford to remain still while the nation is set in motion, while man both demands and claims his infinite humanity" (*W*/P, 221). A few years later, in different contexts, Adorno will write,

> The inner consistency through which artworks participate in truth always involves their untruth; in its most unguarded manifestations art has always revolted against this, and today this revolt has become art's own law of movement [*Bewegungsgesetz*].[43]

and

> Artworks' paradoxical nature, stasis, negates itself. The movement of artworks must be at a standstill and thereby become visible. Their immanent processual character—the legal process that they undertake against the merely existing world that is external to them—is objective prior to their alliance with any party.[44]

In the border between *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, the body that questions is a truth that bears untruth. It is a heavy burden to be made to stand as the racial-sexual embodiment of the imagination in its lawless freedom, and the knowledge it produces exclusively, particularly when such standing is a function of having one's wings clipped by the understanding.[45] However, the burden of such exemplarity, the burden of being the problem or the case, is disavowed at a far greater cost. So that what is important about Fanon is his own minor internal conflict, the viciously constrained movement between these burdens. On the one hand, the one who does not engage in a certain criminal disruption of colonial rule is pathological, unnatural; on the other hand, one wants to resist a certain understanding of Algerians as "born idlers, born liars, born thieves, and born criminals" (*W*/P, 221). Insofar as Fanon seems to think that the colonized subject is, as it were, born into a kind of preconscious duty to resist, that the absence of the capacity to perform or to recognize this duty is a kind of birth defect that retards the development of political consciousness, Fanon is caught between a rock and a crawlspace. Against the grain of a colonial psychological discourse that essentially claims "that the North African in a certain way is deprived of a cortex" and therefore relegated to a "vegetative" and purely "instinctual" life, a life of involuntary muscular contractions, Fanon must somehow still find a way to claim, or to hold in reserve, those very contractions insofar as they are a mobilization against colonial stasis (*W*/P, 225). Against the grain of racist notions of "the criminal impulsiveness

of the North African" as "the transcription of a certain configuration of the nervous system into his pattern of behavior" or as "a neurologically comprehensible reaction, written into the nature of things, of the thing which is biologically organized," Fanon must valorize the assertion of a kind of political criminality written into the nature of things while also severely clipping the wings of an imaginative tendency to naturalize and pathologize the behavior of the colonized (*W*/P, 228). Insofar as crime marks the Algerian condition within which "each prevents his neighbor from seeing the national enemy" and thereby arriving at a political consciousness, Fanon must move within an almost general refusal to look at the way the colonized look at themselves, a denial or pathologization or policing of the very sociality that such looking implies (*W*/P, 231). Here Fanon seems to move within an unarticulated Kantian distinction between criminality as the teleological principle of anticolonial resistance and crime as the unbound, uncountable set of illusory facts that obscure, or defer the advent of, postcolonial reason. This distinction is an ontological distinction; it, too, raises the question concerning the irreducible trace of beings that being bears.[46]

This is all to say that Fanon had very little time to glance at or glance off the immense and immensely beautiful poetry of (race) war, the rich music of a certain underground social aid, a certain cheap and dangerous socialism, that composes the viciously criminalized and richly differentiated interiority of black cooperation that will, in turn, have constituted the very ground of externally directed noncooperation. It turns out, then, that the pathological is (the) black, which has been figured both as the absence of color and as the excessively, criminally, pathologically colorful (which implies that black's relation to color is a rich, active interinanimation of reflection and absorption); as the corticovisceral muscular contraction or the simultaneously voluntary and impulsive hiccupped "jazz lament" that, in spite of Fanon's formulations, must be understood in relation to the acceptable jaggedness, legitimate muscularity, and husky theoretical lyricism of the bop and postbop interventions that are supposed to have replaced it (*W*/P, 176). Because finally, the question isn't whether or not the disorderly behavior of the anticolonialist is pathological or natural, whether or not he is born to that behavior, whether or not the performance of this or that variation on such behavior is "authentic"; the question, rather, concerns what the vast range of black authenticities and black pathologies does. Or, put another way, what is the efficacy of that range of natural born disorders that have been relegated to what is theorized as the void of blackness or black social life but which might

be more properly understood as the fugitive being of "infinite humanity," or as that which Marx calls wealth?

> Now, wealth is on one side a thing, realized in things, material products, which a human being confronts as subject; on the other side, as value, wealth is merely command over alien labour not with the aim of ruling, but with the aim of private consumption, etc. It appears in all forms in the shape of a thing, be it an object or be it a relation mediated through the object, which is external and accidental to the individual. Thus the old view, in which the human being appears as the aim of production, regardless of his limited national, religious, political character, seems to be very lofty when contrasted to the modern world, where production appears as the aim of mankind and wealth as the aim of production. In fact, however, when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces, etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature? The absolute working-out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, which makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a *predetermined* yardstick? Where he does not reproduce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality? Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming?[47]

While Fanon is justifiably wary of anything that is presented as if it were written into the nature of things and of the thing, this notion of wealth as the finite being of a kind of infinite humanity, especially when that in/finitude is understood (improperly, against Marx's grain) as constituting a critique of any human mastery whatever, must be welcomed. Marx's invocation of the thing leads us past his own limitations such that it becomes necessary and possible to consider the thing's relation to human capacity independent of the limitations of bourgeois form.

Like the (colonial) states of emergency that are its effects, like the enclosures that are its epiphenomena; like the civil war that was black reconstruction's aftershock, like the proletariat's anticipation of abolition; it turns out that the war of "national liberation" has always been going on, anoriginally, as it were. Fanon writes of "a lot of things [that] can be committed for a few

pounds of semolina," saying, "You need to use your imagination to understand these things" (*W*/P, 231). This is to say that there is a counterpoint in Fanon, fugitive to Fanon's own self-regulative powers, that refuses his refusal to imagine those imagining things whose political commitment makes them subject to being committed, those biologically organized things who really have to use their imaginations to keep on keeping on, those things whose constant escape of their own rehabilitation as men seems to be written into their nature. In such contrapuntal fields or fugue states, one finds (it possible to extend) their stealing, their stealing away, their lives that remain, fugitively, even when the case of blackness is dismissed.

Preoccupied Breathing

These notes on Fanon resume with a disagreement with Fanon that is enabled by Fanon. Contrary to his formulations, the white man did not create the black man and the black man did not create blackness.[48] These negative axioms are indispensable for investigating the etiology of revolution's transformative power, which must itself come from, which is to say through, somewhere, which may turn out to be nowhere reimagined, a rhythmic feel or field where creature and creator are generatively undone in/by preservation. If revolution is and has a condition of possibility that need not and must not itself be originary, then revolution and preservation are inseparable. So let me proceed by beginning, again, with a question: How do we resist the ridiculously overwhelming armature of the settler, through which his weakness is serially revealed? This weakness must be articulated in as well as seen through preservative, revolutionary resistance to the settler's reaction. Malcolm X's most aggressive and vicious pronouncement to the members of his Harlem mosque is "You're dealing with a silly man!" And Hannah Arendt is prescient when she ruefully speaks of "the impotence of power" in her *On Violence*, a text that otherwise, and unfortunately, illuminates and exemplifies that interplay of silliness and weakness that emerges in response to black radicalism.[49] To reread *Les damnés de la terre* against the grain of Arendt's nonreading of it is to consider that we don't and can't either know or fight the murderous brutality of the settler's weakness with our own; rather, we think and struggle from and with our potency.[50] But this means that not only must we recalibrate our sense of, our senses with regard to, what it is to think and fight, and what both of these activities have to do with what it is to be violent; we also have to resound that strength in rigorous attendance upon

the lived experience *and the facticity* of the black, the colonized, the Antillean, the Algerian, the Afro-American, the damned. This facticity is given in the thing and force that is called blackness. This is what Fanon was always preparing himself to do. Such resonance would also begin to emerge in a question: Is there a sense, the beginning of an analysis, of an open set of forms of life or modes of aspiration, a kind of preoccupied breathing, that is given not in the interplay of the precolonial and the postcolonial but rather in the ongoing force of the anticolonial, when one abides in and with the everyday life and experimental practices of those to whom Gilles Deleuze refers as "the exhausted"?[51]

I'd like to begin by working in the space between Frank Wilderson's call to "attend to our wretchedness" and Miguel Mellino's exhortation to retranslate and retransmit the (no)thingly materiality of the damned.[52] A conceptualization of that materiality that can approach its richness is something Fanon constantly produces but less frequently discovers. And yet his work is part of the great tradition that makes such discovery possible if we continue to read him by way of the militant protocols that he and others have established. What if damnation is (also) a mode of voluntarity, the common social fashioning of the poor (in spirit), the interplay of mutual aid and mutual indebtedness? The damned, the dispossessed, are, in this sense, not "created" by the ones who claim and attempt to establish their own cultural and economic superiority; rather, they are, as E. P. Thompson says of the English working class, present at their own making.[53] The damned are also the black, which is to say that what they have or claim in common, in their dispossession, is something called blackness. If this is so, the idea of the inevitable disappearance of the black around which "*Sur la culture nationale*" is organized, and the placement of black culture within the systemic opposition of possibility and impossibility, require further thought.[54] While, as Fanon asserts, there is an imposition onto the figure of the black that would signify the confluence of racial identity and racial inferiority, there is also, in a way that is prior to the regulative force of that imposition and calls it into question, a resource working through the epidermalization of a fantasmatic inferiority as the anti-epidermalization of the radical alternative, to which the peoples who are called black have a kind of (under)privileged relation in and as the very history of that imposition. One might speak, then, of the blackening of the common, which would imply neither that any and every person who is called black claims or defends the sociopoetic force of that fantasy nor that persons who are not called black are disqualified from making such claims and enacting such defense.

This force shows up only insofar as we develop a kind of paraontological comportment toward it. This is the thing that interdicts ontological explanation. Psychopathologically informed phenomenological analysis of the black's lived experience comes into its own only in relation to a paraontological approach to the facticity of blackness. Mistranslation in *Peau noir, masques blancs* has, in this case, a kind of illuminative value, alerting us to a certain irruption at the end of *Les damnés de la terre* where anticolonial struggle—the common assertion of the dispossessed—is the field in which what is relegated to the status of mental disorder turns out to be interarticulate with the program of "total disorder" for which Fanon calls.[55] This suggests that the forms of anticolonial struggle are already in place as a radical force of undercommon autonomization in ecstatic choreography and minor internecine struggle. So it is necessary to consider, along with Fanon, how program and informality, organization and spontaneity, go together. In the end, the total disorder of revolutionary confrontation is better imagined not as derivative shocks enclosed by an already given regulatory order, but as the obscurity of a disorder out of which order emerges. Colonial power does not initiate; it responds. In appositional, anticipatory counterpoint to the disappearance of the black that colonial power turns out to have rendered both possible and impossible through revolutionary consciousness and action, something emerges, in doubly redoubled aspect, mistaken first as the splitting then as loss, seen only in relation to the illusion of the single and the full. That choired voluntarity, affirmative refusal given in and as remote compact and dispersed interiority, exhausts the proper and, in so doing, brings revolution online as disruptive, invaginative preservation of the paraontological totality. This is what it is to take up and take on the black mask, to engage in the retroactively named and interdicted black act, to applaud (on) the uncountable beat of the black fact, to enter and extend the hard social life of black facticity.

Perhaps I can further elaborate this by reciting some directives I hear in two long passages from work Fanon collected in *L'an V de la Révolution Algerienne*. If that work can be considered as anticipatory to *Les damnés de la terre,* then I hope that what I can record here contributes to a more devoted, because heretical, reading of and in and with *les damnés*.

> As for the Algerian woman, she is "inaccessible, ambivalent, with a masochistic component." Specific behaviors are described which illustrate these different characteristics. The truth is that the study of an occupied people, militarily subject to an implacable domination, re-

quires documentation and checking difficult to combine. It is not the soil that is occupied. It is not the ports or the airdromes. French colonialism has settled itself in the very center of the Algerian individual and has undertaken a sustained work of cleanup, of expulsion of self, of rationally pursued mutilation.

There is not occupation of territory, on the one hand, and independence of persons on the other. It is the country as a whole, its history, its daily pulsation that are contested, disfigured, in the hope of a final destruction. Under these conditions, the individual's breathing is an observed, an occupied breathing. It is a combat breathing.

From this point on, the real values of the occupied quickly tend to acquire a clandestine form of existence. In the present of the occupier, the occupied learns to dissemble, to resort to trickery. To the scandal of military occupation, he opposes a scandal of contact. Every contact between the occupied and the occupier is a falsehood.[56]

It is now time for reason to make itself heard. If the French Government now hopes to revive the conditions that existed before 1954 or even 1958, it is well that it should know that this is now impossible. If on the other hand, it is willing to take account of the changes that have occurred in the consciousness of Algerian man in the last five years, if it is willing to lend an ear to the insistent and fraternal voices that give impetus to the Revolution and that are to be heard in the struggle of a people who spare neither their blood nor their suffering for the triumph of freedom, then we say that everything is still possible.

The crushing of the Algerian Revolution, its isolation, its asphyxiation, its death through exhaustion—these are mad dreams.

The Revolution in depth, the true one, precisely because it changes man and renews society, has reached an advanced stage. This oxygen which creates and shapes a new humanity—this, too, is the Algerian Revolution.[57]

1. Consider this problematic of oxygen, which seems to have been in the conceptual air that Fanon and Althusser share, as bound up not only with a certain alchemy of social revolution but also with the structure of scientific revolution insofar as what is given in its invocation is the question of the concept of the object, the distinction between the production and the discovery of the object. Althusser (after Friedrich Engels) regards the concept of oxygen as the accidental effect of a deliberate and occult experimental protocol.[58] Such

an effect is, in turn, known by way of *its* effect: oxygen comes into relief by way of fire, explosion, a destructiveness whose creative substance must be discovered, conceptualized, after the fact, as something more than repressed aggressivity toward whatever happens to have been burned. Obviously, the burning of the colonizer, the overturning of his order, will have never been understood as mere accident. However, it will also never have been understood merely as an effect of the colonizer. As a matter of fact, it will simply never have been understood. After the collision of every particle, the essential question will remain. One necessarily preliminary form of it might be: What's the relation between production and discovery on the one hand and im/possibility and exhaustion on the other?

2. Consider that the massive field of information that we call anticolonial struggle is best understood as a range of sociopoetic preoccupation in which the interplay of imaginative study and self-defense begins in excess of the Manicheism—in particular the stark opposition of old and new, the same and change—that Fanon describes and inscribes. What Bertolt Brecht says of refugees (that they "are the keenest dialecticians"; that they "are refugees as a result of changes and their sole object of study is change") is true of the damned more generally.[59] What if the last becoming first is nothing other than the wedge that exists within, while calling forth the systemic relation of, the possible and the impossible, which we both surround and continually escape? Manicheism's (thread)bare life/slow death, otherwise known as the postcolonial, is now often and rightly figured as another, which is to say an extended, colonial imposition. This is already theorized in Fanon, in and against and under his own breath. It brings occupied breathing into relief as enabling respiratory disability. When, moreover, without valorization, Fanon invokes labored breath, clandestine form, trickery, and the scandal of contact, his primary focus on the encounter between the occupier and the occupied more than merely threatens to eclipse contact within and between the preoccupied, in which these modes of interactivity might be more precisely understood as ways of worldmaking. The question of how to get at the "deeper, outside thing" of this other contact, this other breathing, that is preoccupied with change, and which must be understood not simply as the antagonism between colonizer and colonized but as the general antagonism of and in the undercommon, is crucial and difficult, located as it is up where the relation between observing and being observed is connected to the discernment, transformation, and encoding of values. Here's where cryptanalysis and cryptography sort of go together, where study opens out

into what surrounds the limits, the colonial enclosure, of the possible and the impossible, particularly when that enclosure is misunderstood to have itself held the fantasmatic infinity that Fanon calls "the circle of the dance."

3. Consider that the circle is unlimited and unbounded, too. That it is the surround, that it surrounds the interplay of politics and war, the possible and the impossible, that marks the horizon of Fanon's thought. Let's call this prior resistance of the exhibit, this anexemplary force of the dis/possessed, who have been inspirited and inhabited, a sociopoetics of exhabitation. At stake is observation of and in, preoccupation with form's emergence in and from, the informal. Speaking almost always of what it is to be in the presence of the occupier, Fanon can only give us glimpses—as a matter of epistemological course, as an effect of a necessary obscurity that he is both sworn and therefore constrained to uphold—of what surrounds that presence, in and as the open, in and as the secret. When observation is given in and by the accompaniment of a claim that is both disruptive and exhaustive, one claims observation as studious *materiel*, the weapon of theory, its glancing blow. Real values, which are serially given in the revaluation of all value, come into and out to play in a low-down plane of regard. This ordinary plain is more than just that. Welcome to the shit that is not what it is in the universal drama between the clandestine existence of real values and the performativity of every contact.

4. Consider Fanon's calculus of the im/possible in relation to Deleuze's analytic of "The Exhausted": "Being exhausted is much more than being tired. 'It's not just tiredness, I'm not just tired, in spite of the climb.' The tired person no longer has any subjective possibility at his disposal; he therefore cannot realize the slightest (objective) possibility. But the latter remains, because one can never realize the whole of the possible; in fact, one even creates the possible to the extent that one realizes it. The tired person has merely exhausted the realization, whereas the exhausted person exhausts the whole of the possible. The tired person can no longer realize, but the exhausted person can no longer possibilize."[60] Deleuzean exhaustion is inseparable from the massive discourse of muscularity, the muscular tension of the native, that all but structures Fanon's texts and organizes his thoughts on violence and his sense of the relation between what Huey P. Newton calls revolutionary suicide and what Fanon denigrates under the rubrics of myth, magic, dance, and emotional sensitivity.[61] Both are involved with Albert Camus's invocation of exhaustion, which goes back to Pindar, whom he invokes in the famous epigraph to *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "O my soul, do not aspire

to immortal life, but exhaust the limits of the possible."[62] Deleuze addresses this tension between aspiration and exhaustion with regard to Samuel Beckett's late work which emphatically stages the interplay of drama and dance, a choreography of surrepetitious order, and against the backdrop of the theme and the fact of exhaustion in Deleuze's late work and life, in which the problem of suicide is raised and materially addressed. Exhaustion is a condition that expresses, once again by repudiation, the necessity and necessary relation of preservation and revolution. Deleuze is interested in the exhaustion of possibility, not its compromise. Or, after the fact of the realization that possibility is necessarily compromised, that it moves wholly within the zero-sum calculus of political reversal that Fanon puts forward, and is surrounded by the incalculable that Fanon holds in reserve, the exhausted situate themselves elsewhere. It's not enough to question one's comfort or discomfort with inequality, one's love or hatred of domination; instead, one must question one's comfort or discomfort with life itself when life is held to be the occupied territory of necessarily interdicted personality, of the citizen/subject mired in colonial abstraction and political enclosure. Making visible the reciprocal nonexistence of the white man and the black man, dwelling in and on the im/possibility of proper self-possession, shies away from the general theory or the general question of endurance and from the general ecology and economy of things, as Mellino suggests. There is work that submits itself to the im/possible and then there is work that exhausts it. This is what Deleuze says about Beckett. It could also be said of John Coltrane, Fanon's contemporary, whom I invoke precisely because of his own insistence on his lack of the anger that accompanies thwarted subjectivity but whose work at every instance bears the trace of violent transubstantiation in complex personhood.[63] Such work, in Deleuze's terms, is "pervaded by exhaustive series, that is, exhausting series."[64] He adds, "The combinatorial [which I would oppose to the political] is the art or science of exhausting the possible through inclusive disjunctions. But only an exhausted person can exhaust the possible, because he has renounced all need, preference, goal, or signification. Only the exhausted person is sufficiently disinterested, sufficiently scrupulous."[65] Fanon speaks of and for the exhausted; Trane plays that field of difference, therein exhausting the instrument, thereby becoming the instrument, a meditative medium, a conduit, a means to the long history of exhaustion's still extant capacity to catapult us into and as the old-new thing: that whole extended combination of exhausted feet and rested souls that moves within the zone of the relegated, where the informal and the

maternal converge, and which, for Fanon, will have always been waiting for the revolutionary unveiling that it will have always been carrying out.

5. Consider the relation between preoccupation (which is also to say, in a double sense, what lies before our present state of occupation, our imposed and pseudovoluntary labors, our own flirtations with and surrenders to, as well as our having been brutalized by, settling and settlement, all of which can be considered being-occupied) and revolution by way of the relations between prehistory and historicity, the informal (not the formless) and form. I do so as a dissident from within the dissident protocols of black studies, glancingly by way of the music that is called jazz, because there is a certain question of jazz as prehistory that is Fanonian, inaugurated by a formulation in "*Sur la culture nationale*" regarding the jazz howl of the misfortunate negro that will have been upheld by whites (as well as various models of what are supposed to be their black intellectual creations) as an expression of inert authenticity.[66] Everything depends on how one accounts for the sociopoetics of the howl (*jazz-cri*) (perhaps Allen Ginsberg's fetishistic attempt at such an account is not only what Fanon seeks to critique but also what remains for us actually to read, by way of an analytic of thingly exhaustion, of being beat, of the beat, of beating one's chest in the wake of the exhaustion of the instrument, as Trane is reported once to have done, Trane, servant of the exhaustive series, who might be said to have been constantly playing both Fanon's critique and the critique of Fanon). In the meantime, a bunch of stuff that is cognate with the howl's irreducible relation to a certain sociality, a certain hard-ass labor—scream, sweat, strain—is also put in suspension, awaiting a more or less permanent kind of space-time separation. This might be seen as occurring, if it can or should occur, by way of machines, supposedly new methodological operations and, most immediately, by way of a terminological shift.

6. Consider a kind of social buzz or hum as electric historicity. This would require regrounding, as Guyanese revolutionary intellectual Walter Rodney might now have said, in ways that disrupt Fanon's understanding of and adherence to the "phases of development" of the colonized intellectual.[67] "Because," as Rodney explains, "that is black power, that is one of the elements, a sitting down together to reason, to 'ground' as the Brothers say. We have to 'ground together.'"[68] In a gully, in a dungle, in the jungle, on an oil drum, this grounding or undergrounding is the historicity of form, the lumpen residue and experimental exercise of black social life that, most famously and influentially, Orlando Patterson means to dismiss under the

rubric of the informal and which Fanon relegates to a zone of impotence, the etiolated field of minor internal struggle, even as he requires us to consider the relation between total disorder and mental disorder or to imagine the revolutionary and preservative force of a certain dance of the veil. The question of how jazz could have im/possibly happened accompanies Rodney's question concerning how a functioning proletariat emerges so soon, without having been roused, in Guyana, after the emancipation of slavery. The only answer—which Rodney develops by way of C. L. R. James, his predecessor in pan-African and Caribbean social and intellectual insurgency—is that they were already there in the subsoil, underground, in exhaustion, as elemental aspiration and projectivity, as ongoing, improper approach, something already given in a necessarily open internal structure that is only insofar as it takes the outside in. All this has to do with how fugitivity surrounds enclosure, how anticolonialism surrounds the settlement, which is manned with subjects whose aggression is the magnified reflection of their weakness and im/possibility. The first responsibility is to see the settler's incapacity as clearly as his brutality, to realize that there is no *poesis* of the settler. Paradoxically, fruitfully, thankfully, it is Fanon's poetics of the settler, his account of what he understands to be colonialism's sociogenic power, that moves us to the threshold of knowing not only the impotence of that power but our own *prior* sociopoetic resistance to it. Fighting from there is a new experiment in nonbeginning and an endless assertion of means against ends, a violence of absolute overturning in which no one ever takes either the first breath or the last.

Mysticism in the Flesh

Black study refreshes lines of rigorously antidisciplinary invention, effecting intellectual renewal against academic sterility. When wardens of established disciplines and advocates of interdisciplinary reform fight to secure depleted sovereignty in and over the same depleted real estate—whose value increases as its desertification progresses; whose value is set by the new masters of another form of what Thomas Jefferson called silent profit—and when note of this false alternative is taken by those who offer nothing but a critique of the very idea of a true one, the degenerative, which is to say deconstructive, condition that is black study, expressing its own general, generative economy, keeps on pushing over the edge of refusal, driven by a visionary impetus their work requires and allows us to try to see and hear and feel, out of love for

the undercommon project, out of love for the immanence and effervescence of its own unowned differences, out of love for black people, out of love for blackness.

I have thought long and hard, in the wake of the remarkable work of Frank B. Wilderson III and Jared Sexton, in a kind of echo of Bob Marley's question, about whether blackness could be loved; there seems to be a growing consensus that analytic precision does not allow for such romance but I remain devoted to the impression that analytic precision is, in fact, a function of such romance. And this, perhaps, is where the tension comes, where it is and will remain, not in spite of the love but in it, embedded in its difficulty and violence, not in the impossibility of its performance or declaration but out of the evasion of, the evasion that is, its open natality. More precisely, if Afropessimism is the study of this impossibility, the thinking I have to offer moves not in that impossibility's transcendence but rather in its exhaustion. Moreover, I want to consider exhaustion as a mode or form or way of life, which is to say sociality, thereby marking a relation whose implications constitute, in my view, a fundamental theoretical reason not to believe, as it were, in social death. Like Curtis Mayfield, however, I do plan to stay a believer. This is to say, again like Mayfield, that I plan to stay a black motherfucker.

Over the course of this essay, we'll have occasion to consider what that means, by way of a discussion of my preference for the terms *life* and *optimism* over *death* and *pessimism* and in light of Wilderson's and Sexton's brilliant insistence not only on the preferential option for blackness but also on the requirement of the most painstaking and painful attention to our damnation, a term I prefer to *wretchedness*, after the example of Miguel Mellino, not simply because it is a more literal translation of Fanon (though often, with regard to Fanon, I prefer the particular kinds of precision that follow from what some might dismiss as mistranslation) but also because wretchedness emerges from a standpoint that is not only not ours, that is not only one we cannot have and ought not want, but that is, in general, held within the logic of im/possibility that delineates the administered world of the subject/citizen.[69] But this is to say, from the outset, not that I will advocate the construction of a necessarily fictive standpoint of our own but that I will seek out not just the absence but the refusal of standpoint, to actually explore and to inhabit and to think what Bryan Wagner calls "existence without standing" from no standpoint because this is what it would truly mean to stay in the hold of the ship (when the hold is thought with properly critical, and improperly celebratory, clarity).[70] What would it be,

deeper still, what is it, to think from no standpoint; to think outside the desire for a standpoint? What emerges in the desire that constitutes a certain proximity to that thought is not (just) that blackness is ontologically prior to the logistic and regulative power that is supposed to have brought it into existence but that blackness is prior to ontology; or, in a slight variation on what Nahum Dimitri Chandler might say, blackness is the anoriginal displacement of ontology, that it is ontology's anti- and antefoundation, ontology's underground, the irreparable disturbance of ontology's time and space. This is to say that what I do assert, not against, I think, but certainly in apposition to Afro-pessimism, as it is, at least at one point, distilled in Sexton's work, is not what he calls one of that project's most polemical dimensions, "namely, that black life is not social, or rather that black life is lived in social death."[71] What I assert is this: that black life—which is as surely to say *life* as black thought is to say *thought*—is irreducibly social; that, moreover, black life is lived in *political* death or that it is lived, if you will, in the burial ground of the subject by those who, insofar as they are not subjects, are also not, in the interminable (as opposed to the last) analysis, "death-bound," as Abdul JanMohamed would say.[72] In this, however, I also agree with Sexton insofar as I am inclined to call this burial ground "the (administered) world" and to conceive of it and the desire for it as pathological. At stake, now, will be what the difference is between the pathological and the pathogenic, a difference that will have been instantiated by what we might think of as the view, as well as the point of view, of the pathologist. Against the grain of the enervating effects of the analytic assumption of black sociality as pathological—which need not be derived from the idea that black life is lived in and as a set of complex, errant proximities to the sovereign's crypt—I believe that blackness, in its necessarily pathogenic, irreducibly aesthetic sociality, bears the potential to end this funereal reign with an animative breath.

The question concerning the point of view, or standpoint, of the pathologist is crucial, but so is the question of what it is that the pathologist examines. What, precisely, is the morbid body upon which Fanon, the pathologist, trains his eye? What is the object of his "complete lysis?"[73] And if it is more proper, because more literal, to speak of a lysis of universe, rather than body, how do we think the relation between transcendental frame and the body, or nobody, that occupies, or is banished from, its confines and powers of orientation? What I offer here as a clarification of Sexton's understanding of my relation to Afro-pessimism emerges from my sense of a kind of terminological dehiscence in Patterson's work that emerges in what I take to be his deep but un-

acknowledged affinity with and indebtedness to the work of Hannah Arendt, namely, with a distinction crucial to her work between the social and the political. The "secular excommunication" that describes slavery for Patterson is more precisely understood as the radical exclusion from a political order, which is tantamount, in Arendt's formulation, to something on the order of a radical relegation *to* the social.[74] The problem with slavery, for Patterson, is that it is political death, not social death; the problem is that slavery confers the paradoxically stateless status of the merely, barely living; it delineates the inhuman as unaccommodated *bios*. At stake is the transvaluation or, better yet, the invaluation or antivaluation, the extraction from the sciences of value (and from the very possibility of that necessarily fictional, but materially brutal, standpoint that Wagner calls "being a party to exchange").[75] Such extraction will, in turn, be the very mark and inscription (rather than absence or eradication) of the sociality of a life, given in common, instantiated in exchange. What I am trying to get to, by way of this terminological slide in Patterson, is the consideration of a radical disjunction between sociality and the state-sanctioned, state-sponsored terror of power-laden intersubjectivity, which is, or would be, the structural foundation of Patterson's epiphenomenology of spirit. To have honor, which is, of necessity, to be a *man* of honor, for Patterson, is to become a combatant in transcendental subjectivity's perpetual civil war. To refuse the induction that Patterson desires is to enact or perform the recognition of the constitution of civil society as civil butchery. It is, moreover, to consider, by way of Sexton, that the unspoken violence of political friendship constitutes a capacity for alignment and coalition that is constituted and continually enhanced by the unspeakable violence that is done to what and whom the political excludes. This is to say that, yes, I am in total agreement with the Afro-pessimistic understanding of blackness as exterior to civil society and, moreover, as unmappable within the cosmological grid of the transcendental subject. However, I understand civil society and the coordinates of the transcendental aesthetic—cognate as they are with the brutal indistinctness in which failed and successful states and citizens, sovereigns and subjects, mix it up—to be the fundamentally and essentially antisocial nursery for a necessarily necropolitical imitation of life. So that if Afro-pessimists were to say that social death is not the condition of black life but is, rather, the political field that would surround it, then that's a formulation with which I would agree. Social death is not imposed upon blackness by or from the standpoint or positionality of the political; rather, it is the field of the political, from which blackness is relegated to the

supposedly undifferentiated mass or blob of the social, which is, in any case, where and what blackness chooses to stay.

This question of the location and position of social death is, as Sexton has shown far more rigorously than I could ever hope to do, crucial. It raises again that massive problematic of inside and outside that animates thought since before its beginning as the endless end to which thought always seeks to return. Such mappability of the space-time or state of social death would, in turn, help us better understand the positionalities that could be said, figuratively, to inhabit it. This mass is understood to be undifferentiated precisely because from the imaginary perspective of the political subject—who is also the transcendental subject of knowledge, grasp, ownership, and self-possession—difference can only be manifest as the discrete individuality that holds or occupies a standpoint. From that standpoint, from the artificial, officially assumed position, blackness is nothing, that is, the relative nothingness of the impossible, pathological subject and his fellows. I believe it is from that standpoint that Afro-pessimism identifies and articulates the imperative to embrace that nothingness which is, of necessity, relative. It is from this standpoint, which Wilderson defines precisely by his inability to occupy it, that he, in a painfully and painstakingly lyrical tour de force of autobiographico-analytic writing, declares himself to be nothing and proclaims his decision, which in any case he cannot make, to remain as nothing, in genealogical and sociological isolation even from every other nothing.

> Now, all that remains are unspoken scraps scattered on the floor like Lisa's grievance. I am nothing, Naima, and you are nothing: the unspeakable answer to your question within your question. This is why I could not—would not—answer your question that night. Would I ever be with a Black woman again? It was earnest, not accusatory—I know. And nothing terrifies me more than such a question asked in earnest. It is a question that goes to the heart of desire, to the heart of our *black capacity to desire.* But if we take out the nouns that you used (nouns of habit that get us through the day), your question to me would sound like this: Would nothing ever be with nothing again?[76]

When one reads the severity and intensity of Wilderson's words—his assertion of his own nothingness and the implications of that nothingness for his reader—one is all but overwhelmed by the need for a kind of affirmative negation of his formulation. It's not that one wants to say no, Profes-

sor Wilderson, you are, or I am, somebody; rather, one wants to assert the presence of something between the subjectivity that is refused and that one refuses and nothing, whatever that is. But it is the beauty—the fantastic, celebratory force of Wilderson's and Sexton's work, which study has allowed me to begin more closely to approach—of Afro-pessimism that allows and compels one to move past that contradictory impulse to affirm in the interest of negation and to begin to consider *what nothing is*, not from its own standpoint or from any standpoint but from the absoluteness of its generative dispersion of a general antagonism that blackness holds and protects in and as critical celebration and degenerative and regenerative preservation. That's the mobility of place, the fugitive field of unowning, in and from which we ask, paraontologically, by way of but also against and underneath the ontological terms at our disposal: What is nothingness? What is thingliness? What is blackness? What's the relationship between blackness, thingliness, nothingness, and the (de/re)generative operations of what Deleuze might call *a life* in common? Where do we go, by what means do we begin, to study blackness? Can there be an aesthetic sociology or a social poetics of nothingness? Can we perform an anatomy of the thing or produce a theory of the universal machine? Our aim, even in the face of the brutally imposed difficulties of black life, is cause for celebration. This is not because celebration is supposed to make us feel good or make us feel better, though there would be nothing wrong with that. It is, rather, because the cause for celebration turns out to be the condition of possibility of black thought, which animates the black operations that will produce the absolute overturning, the absolute turning of this motherfucker out. Celebration is the essence of black thought, the animation of black operations, which are, in the first instance, our undercommon, underground, submarine sociality.

In the end, though *life* and *optimism* are the terms under which I speak, I agree with Sexton—by way of the slightest, most immeasurable reversal of emphasis—that Afro-pessimism and black optimism are not but nothing other than one another. I will continue to prefer the black optimism of his work just as, I am sure, he will continue to prefer the Afro-pessimism of mine. We will have been interarticulate, I believe, in the field where annihilative seeing, generative sounding, and rigorous touching and feeling require an improvisation of and on friendship, a sociality of friendship that will have been, at once, both intramural and evangelical. I'll try to approach that field, its expansive concentration, by way of Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell's extended meditation on nothingness; by way of Fanon's and Peter Linebaugh's

accounts of language in and as vehicularity; by way of Michel Foucault's meditations on the ship of fools and Deleuze's consideration of the boat as interior of the exterior when they are both thoroughly solicited by the uncharted voices that we carry; by way, even, of Lysis and Socrates; but also, and in the first instance, by way of Hawk and Newk, just friends, trading fours. Perhaps I'm simply deluding myself, but such celebratory performance of thought, in thought, is as much about the insurgency of immanence as it is about what Wagner calls the "consolation of transcendence."[77] But, as I said earlier, I plan to stay a believer in blackness, even as thingliness, even as (absolute) nothingness, even as imprisonment in passage on the most open road of all, even as—to use and abuse a terribly beautiful phrase of Wilderson's—fantasy in the hold.[78]

Where we were, not—withstanding, wasn't there . . .

Where we
were was the hold of a ship we were
caught
in. Soaked wood kept us afloat. . . . It
wasn't limbo we were in albeit we
limbo'd our way there. Where we
were was what we meant by "mu."[79]

There are flights of fantasy in the hold of the ship: the ordinary fugue and fugitive run of the language lab, black phonographies' brutally experimental venue. Paraontological totality is still in the making. Present and unmade in presence, blackness is an instrument in the making. *Quasi una fantasia* in its paralegal swerve, its mad-worked braid, the imagination produces nothing but exsense in the hold. Do you remember the days of slavery? Nathaniel Mackey rightly says, "The world was ever after, / elsewhere. / . . . no / way where we were / was there."[80] Do you remember where we are? No way where we are is here. Where we were, where we are, is what we meant by *mu*, which Wilderson rightly calls the void of our subjectivity, which we extend, in consent beyond all voluntarity, in our avoidance of subjectivity.[81] And so it is that we remain in the hold, in the break, as if entering again and again the broken world, to trace the visionary company and join it. This antiphonal island, where we are marooned in search of marronage, where we linger in stateless emergency, is our mobile, constant study, our lysed cell

and held dislocation, our blown standpoint and lyred chapel. We study our seaborne variance, sent by its prehistory into arrivance without arrival, as a poetics of lore, of abnormal articulation, where the relation between joint and flesh is the pleated distance of a musical moment that is emphatically, palpably imperceptible and therefore exhausts description. Having defied degradation, the moment becomes a theory of the moment, of the feeling of a presence that is ungraspable in the way that it touches. Such musical moments—of advent, of nativity in all its terrible beauty, of the alienation that is always already born in and as *parousia*, of the disruption in duration of the very idea of the moment—are rigorous performances of the theory of the social life of the shipped, given in the terror of enjoyment and its endlessly redoubled folds. If you take up the hopelessly imprecise tools of standard navigation, the deathly reckoning of difference engines, maritime clocks, and tables of damned assurance, you might stumble on such a moment about two and a half minutes into another Cherry and Blackwell's duet called "Mutron."[82] You'll know the moment by how it requires you to think the relation between fantasy and nothingness: what is mistaken for silence is, all of a sudden, transubstantial.

It's terrible to have come from nothing but the sea, which is nowhere, navigable only in its constant autodislocation. The absence of solidity seems to demand some other ceremony of hailing that will have been carried out on some more exalted frequency. This is exacerbated by the venal refusal of a general acknowledgment of the crime, which is, in any case, impossible, raising the question of whether the only way adequately to account for the horror of slavery and the brutality of the slaver, the only way to be (in Sexton's words) a witness rather than a spectator, is to begin by positing the absolute degradation of the enslaved. This is not a trick question; it's not merely rhetorical. If the slave is, in the end and in essence, nothing, what remains is the necessity of an investigation of that nothingness. What is the nothingness, which is to say the blackness, of the slave that it is not reducible to what they did, though what they did is irreducible in it? This is a question concerning the undercommon inheritance of earth and air, which is given in and as submarine fantasy in the hold. Those who are called into being by the desire for another call relinquish the fantastic when they make, or even when they bear, the choice to leave the hold behind. In resistance to such departure we linger in the brutal interplay of advent and enclosure. Marcus Rediker offers us a scene of that interplay:

They resumed paddling and soon began to sing. After a while she could hear, at first faintly, then with increasing clarity, other sounds—the waves slapping the hull of the big ship, its timbers creaking. Then came muffled screaming in a strange language.

The ship grew larger and more terrifying with every vigorous stroke of the paddles. The smells grew stronger and the sounds louder—crying and wailing from one quarter and low, plaintive singing from another; the anarchic noise of children given an underbeat by hands drumming on wood; the odd comprehensible word or two wafting through: someone asking for *menney*, water, another laying a curse, appealing to *myabeca*, spirits. As the canoemen maneuvered their vessel up alongside, she saw dark faces, framed by small holes in the side of the ship above the waterline, staring intently. Above her, dozens of black women and children and a few red-faced men peered over the rail. They had seen the attempted escape on the sandbar. The men had cutlasses and barked orders in harsh, raspy voices. She had arrived at the slave ship.[83]

Her name is Hortense. Her name is NourbeSe. Her name is B. The black chant she hears is old and new to her. She is unmoored. She is ungendered. Her mother is lost. Exhausted, exhaustive maternity is her pedagogical imperative.

What's required is some attempt to think the relation between fantasy and nothingness: emptiness, dispossession in the hold; an intimacy given most emphatically, and erotically, in a moment of something that, for lack of a better word, we call "silence," a suboceanic feeling of preterition—borne by a common particle in the double expanse—that makes vessels run over or overturn. The temporal coordinates 2'29" and 2'30" mark the not-in-betweenness and mobile location of the span, so we can consider that what is mistaken for silence can also be given in and as nothingness in its full transubstantiality, but also the compression and dispersion, the condensation and displacement, of caged duration, the marking more emphatically of its beginning and end, and, especially, the concentrated air of its propulsion that shows up as waiting, *Erwartung*, embarrassment in our expectation, Blackwell's antic, anticipatory pulse. This moment of nothingness. "Unhoused vacuity," paroikic, metoikic, vernacular, the rich materiality of the hold's, the jug's, emptiness, its contents having fled in their remaining, fled as the remainder, the danger, the supplement, votive and unelect.[84]

Blackwell offers what is held in mu as the impossible-to-understand black thing, the Cherry thing as a seriality of openings, a vestibular chain, a kind of spillway, as Hortense Spillers might say.

I am concerned with the mu in "Mutron"—by way of an approach through Rediker that describes his attempt to describe what might be called a birth into death, or an entrance into bare life or raw life, but which I will insist, not despite but precisely because of its being the blood-stain'd gate through which the radically nonanalagous enters, is the impure immanence of the undercommons' (an)originary refrain—because the task of continually instigating this flown, recursive imagining demands the inhabitation of an architecture and its acoustic, an inhabitation given as if in an approach from outside. What is required—and this is recited with such terrible beauty in the work of Wilderson and Sexton, in echo of Lewis Gordon—is not only *to reside* in an unlivability, an exhaustion that is always already given as foreshadowing afterlife, as a life in some absolutely proximate and unbridgeable distance from the living death of subjection, but also *to discover and to enter* it. Mackey, in the fantastic sear and burned, spurred overhearing of his preface to *Splay Anthem*, outlining the provenance and relationship between the book's serial halves ("Each was given its impetus by a piece of recorded music from which it takes its title, the Dogon 'Song of the Andoumboulou' in one case, Don Cherry's *'Mu' First Part* and *'Mu' Second Part* in the other"), speaks of mu in relation to a circling or spiraling or ringing, this roundness or rondo linking beginning and end; the wailing that accompanies entrance into and expulsion from sociality; that makes you wonder if music, which is not only music, is mobilized in the service of an eccentricity, a centrifugal force, whose intimation Mackey also approaches, that marks sociality's ecstatic existence beyond beginning and end, ends and means.[85] Forgive this long series of long quotations from that preface, to passages of which I remain imprisoned insofar as the range of phonemic, historical, and parageographic resonance in mu get me to the elsewhere and elsewhen that I already inhabit but which I have to keep learning to desire. Actually, if you forgive me, there will be no need to thank me.

> Multi-instrumentalist Don Cherry, best known as a trumpeter, includes voice among the instruments used on the "*Mu*" albums and resorts to a sort of dove-coo baby talk on one piece, "Teo-Teo-Can," emitting sounds that might accompany the tickling of a baby's chin if not be made by the baby itself. It recalls Amiri Baraka's comment on hearing

a John Coltrane solo that consisted of playing the head of "Confirmation" again and again, twenty times or so: "like watching a grown man learning to speak." In both cases, as with the Dogon trumpet burst and as it's put in "Song of the Andoumboulou: 58," one is "back / at / some beginning," some extremity taking one back to animating constraint. The antelope-horn trumpet's blast and bleat, Cherry's ludic warble and Trane's recursive quandary are variations on music as gnostic announcement, ancient rhyme, that of end and beginning, gnostic accent or note that cuts both ways.

But not only music. "Mu" (in quotes to underscore its whatsaidness) is also lingual and imaginal effect and affect, myth and mouth in the Greek form *muthos* that Jane Harrison, as Charles Olson was fond of noting, calls "a re-utterance or pre-utterance, . . . a focus of emotion," surmising the first *muthos* to have been "simply the interjectional utterance *mu*." "Mu" is also lingual and erotic allure, mouth and muse, mouth not only noun but verb and muse likewise, lingual and imaginal process, prod and process. It promises verbal and romantic enhancement, graduation to an altered state, momentary thrall translated into myth. Proffered from time immemorial, poetry's perennial boon, it thrives on quixotic persistence, the increment or enablement language affords, promise and impossibility rolled into one (Anuncia/Nunca). "Mu" carries a theme of utopic reverie, a theme of lost ground and elegiac allure recalling the Atlantis-like continent Mu, thought by some during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century to have existed long ago in the Pacific. The places named in the song of the Andoumboulou, set foot on by the deceased while alive but lost or taken away by death, could be called "Mu." Any longingly imagined, mourned or remembered place, time, state, or condition can be called "Mu." . . .

Serial form lends itself to andoumboulouous liminality, the draft unassured extension knows itself to be. Provisional, ongoing, the serial poem moves forward and backward both, repeatedly "back / at / some beginning," repeatedly circling or cycling back, doing so with such adamance as to call forward and back into question and suggest an eccentric step to the side—as though, driven to distraction by short-circuiting options, it can only be itself beside itself. So it is that "*Mu*" is also *Song of the Andoumboulou*, and *Song of the Andoumboulou* also "*Mu*." H.D.'s crazed geese, circling above the spot that was once Atlantis or the Hesperides or the Islands of the Blest, come to

mind, as do John Coltrane's wheeling, spiraling runs as if around or in pursuit of some lost or last note, lost or last amenity: a tangential, verging movement out (outlantish). The ring shout comes to mind, as do the rings of Saturn, the planet adopted by Sun Ra, one of whose albums, *Atlantis*, opens with a piece called "Mu."[86]

Now I want us to try to think about the relation between Mackey's and Wilderson's dialectics of held fantasy. Wilderson's register is more explicitly philosophical, so our registers might have to shift as well. Entrance into the philosophy of the subject is also perilous, but it seems as if our belatedness makes such peril necessary if the goal is to approach the ship and its hold. Wilderson says:

> To put it bluntly, the imaginative labor of cinema, political action, and cultural studies are all afflicted with the same theoretical aphasia. They are speechless in the face of gratuitous violence.
>
> This theoretical aphasia is symptomatic of a debilitated ensemble of questions regarding political ontology. At its heart are two registers of imaginative labor. The first register is that of description, the rhetorical labor aimed at explaining the way relations of power are named, categorized, and explored. The second register can be characterized as prescription, the rhetorical labor predicated on the notion that everyone can be emancipated through some form of discursive, or symbolic, intervention.
>
> But emancipation through some form of discursive or symbolic intervention is wanting in the face of a subject position that is not a subject position—what Marx calls "a speaking implement" or what Ronald Judy calls "an interdiction against subjectivity." In other words, the Black has sentient capacity but no relational capacity. As an accumulated and fungible object, rather than an exploited and alienated subject, the Black is openly vulnerable to the whims of the world and so is his or her cultural "production." What does it mean—what are the stakes—when the world can whimsically transpose one's cultural gestures, the stuff of symbolic intervention, onto another worldly good, a commodity of style?[87]

He continues:

> The Afro-pessimists are theorists of Black positionality who share Fanon's insistence that, though Blacks are . . . sentient beings, the

> structure of the entire world's semantic field . . . is sutured by anti-Black solidarity. . . . Afro-pessimism explores the meaning of Blackness not—in the first instance—as a variously and unconsciously interpellated identity or as a conscious social actor, but as a structural position of noncommunicability in the face of all other positions; this meaning is noncommunicable because, again, as a position, Blackness is predicated on modalities of accumulation and fungibility, not exploitation and alienation.[88]

A certain kind of sociological desire is announced in this utterance, in echo not only of Fanon, not only of Patterson, but of an anticipatory counterutterance in Du Bois as well. What is our methodological comportment in the face of the question concerning the strange meaning of being black when the ontological attitude is already under a kind of interdiction with regard to such being? A sociology of relations that would somehow account for the radically nonrelational—but this only insofar as relationality is understood to be an expression of power, structured by the givenness of a transcendental subjectivity that the black cannot have but by which the black can be had; a structural position that he or she cannot take but by which he or she can be taken. The givenness and substantiveness of transcendental subjectivity is assured by a relative nothingness. In a relationality that can only be manifest as a general absence of relations, by way of a theoretically established noncommunicability that is, itself, somehow given for thought by way of some kind of spooky action at a distance (How else would we know this noncommunicability? How else would it show up as the nonrelationality that structures all relationality?).

Within this framework blackness and antiblackness remain in brutally antisocial structural support of one another like the stanchions of an absent bridge of lost desire over which flows the commerce and under which flows the current, the logistics and energy of exclusion and incorporation, that characterizes the political world. Though it might seem paradoxical, the bridge between blackness and antiblackness *is* "the unbridgeable gap between Black being and Human life."[89] What remains is the necessity of an attempt to index black existence by way of what Chandler would call paraontological, rather than politico-ontological, means.[90] The relative nothingness of black life, which shows up for political ontology as a relation of nonrelation or counterrelation precisely in the impossibility of political intersubjectivity, can be said both to obscure and to indicate the social

animation of the bridge's underside, where the im/possibilities of political intersubjectivity are exhausted. Political ontology backs away from the experimental declivity that Fanon and Du Bois were at least able to blaze, each in his own way forging a sociological path that would move against the limiting force, held in the ontological traces, of positivism, on the one hand, and phenomenology, on the other, as each would serve as the foundation of a theory of relations posing the nothingness of blackness in its (negative) relation to the substance of subjectivity-as-nonblackness (enacted in antiblackness). On the one hand, blackness and ontology are unavailable for one another; on the other hand, blackness must free itself from ontological expectation, must refuse subjection to ontology's sanction against the very idea of black subjectivity. This imperative is not something up ahead, to which blackness aspires; it is the labor, which must not be mistaken for Sisyphean, that blackness serially commits. The paraontological distinction between blackness and blacks allows us no longer to be enthralled by the notion that blackness is a property that belongs to blacks (thereby placing certain formulations regarding non/relationality and non/communicability on a different footing and under a certain pressure) but also because ultimately it allows us to detach blackness from the question of (the meaning of) being. The infinitesimal difference between pessimism and optimism lies not in the belief or disbelief in descriptions of power relations or emancipatory projects; the difference is given in the space between an assertion of the relative nothingness of blackness and black people in the face, literally, of substantive (antiblack) subjectivity and an inhabitation of appositionality, its internal social relations, which remain unstructured by the protocols of subjectivity insofar as mu—which has been variously translated from the Japanese translation of the Chinese *wu* as no, not, nought, nonbeing, emptiness, nothingness, nothing, no thing, but which also bears the semantic trace of dance, therefore of measure given in walking/falling, that sustenance of asymmetry, difference's appositional mobility—also signifies an absolute nothingness whose antirelative and antithetical philosophical content is approached by way of Nishida Kitarō's enactment of the affinities between structures and affects of mysticism that undergird and trouble metaphysics in the "East" and the "West." Indeed, the content that is approached is approach, itself, and for the absolute beginner, who is at once pilgrim and penitent, mu signals that which is most emphatically and lyrically marked and indicated in Wilderson's and Mackey's gestures toward "fantasy in the hold," the radical unsettlement that is where and what we are. Unsettlement is the

displacement of sovereignty by initiation, so that what's at stake—here, in displacement—is a certain black incapacity to desire sovereignty and ontological relationality whether they are recast in the terms and forms of a Levinasian ethics or an Arendtian politics, a Fanonian resistance or a Pattersonian test of honor.

Unenabled by or in this incapacity, Nishida's philosophy folds sovereignty in the delay that has always given it significance, putting it on hold, but not in the hold, where to be on hold is to have been committed to a kind of staging, a gathering of and for the self in which negation is supposed to foster true emergence in "a self-determination of that concrete place of the contradictory identity of objectivity and subjectivity."[91] What I term, here, a *delay* is understood by Nishida as "the moment [that] can be said to be eternal . . . [wherein] consciously active individuals, encounter the absolute as its inverse polarity, its mirror opposite, at each and every step of our lives."[92] It is in echoing a traditional Buddhist teaching, which asserts the *nonself* even against what are considered foolish declarations of the *nonexistence of self*, that Nishida restages a standard ontotheological skit in which sovereignty—whether in the form of the consciously active individual or in that individual's abstract and equivalent dispersion in the nation, "the mirror image of the Pure Land in this world"—takes and holds the space-time, the paradoxically transcendental ground, of the everyday unreality of "the real world," where the sovereign's endless show carries a brutally material imposition.[93] What remains to be seen is what (the thinking and the study of) blackness can bring to bear on the relation between the un/real world and its other(s). What if blackness is the refusal to defer to, given in the withdrawal from the eternal delay of, sovereignty? What if Nishida's preparatory vestibule for a general and infinite self-determination is pierced, rather than structurally supported, by (the very intimation of) the no-place to which it is opposed in his own work? When Nishida argues that "the human, consciously active volitional world makes its appearance from the standpoint of the paradoxical logic of the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* literature," which offers us the phrase "Having No Place wherein it abides, this Mind arises," he means to assert the legitimacy of an idea or image of the whole that takes "the form of the contradictory identity of the consciously active self and the world, of the volitional individual and the absolute."[94] What if (the thinking and the study of) blackness is an inhabitation of the hold that disrupts the whole in which the absolute, or absolute nothingness, is structured by its relation to its relative Other? What if the nothing that is in question here moves through to the

other side of negation, in "the real presence" of blackness, in and as another idea of nothingness altogether that is given in and as and to things?

Both against the grain and by way of Fanon's negation of the condition of relative nothingness, which is instantiated in what he takes to be the white man's manufacture of the black, black study is attunement of and toward blackness as the place where something akin to the absolute nothingness that Nishida elaborates and a radical immanence of things that is not disavowed so much as it is unimagined in that same elaboration converge. This is to say that what remains unimagined by Nishida—not simply radical thingliness but its convergence with nothingness—is nevertheless made open to us by and in his thinking. Nishida helps prepare us to consider, even in the nationalist divagation of his own engagement with the heart of a teaching that has no center, that blackness is the place that has no place. "Having no place where it abides, this Mind [of the Little Negro Steelworker] arises."[95] Things are in, but they do not have, a world, a place, but it is precisely both the specificity of having neither world nor place and the generality of not having that we explore at the nexus of openness and confinement, internment and flight. Having no place wherein they abide, in the radically dispossessive no-place of the hold, in "Mutron," Cherry and Blackwell touch intimacy from the walls. In that break, the architectonic intent of the hold as sovereign expression and recuperation breaks down. Feel the complete lysis of this morbid body/universe. Touch is not where subjectivity and objectivity come together in some kind of self-determining dialectical reality; beyond that, in the hold, in the *basho* (the place of nothingness, that underground, undercommon recess), is the social life of black things, which passeth (the) understanding. In the hold, blackness and imagination, in and as consent not to be a single being, are (more and less than) one.

We are prepared for this generative incapacity by Wilderson's work, where what distinguishes the sovereign, the settler, and even the savage from the slave is precisely that they share "a capacity for time and space coherence. At every scale—the soul, the body, the group, the land, and the universe—they can both practice cartography, and although at every scale their maps are radically incompatible, their respective 'mapness' is never in question. This capacity for cartographic coherence is the thing itself, that which secures subjectivity for both the Settler and the 'Savage' and articulates them to one another in a network of connections, transfers, and displacements."[96] Absent the "cartographic coherence [that] is the thing itself," we must become interested in things, in a certain relationship between thingliness and nothingness

and blackness that plays itself out—outside and against the grain of the very idea of self-determination—in the unmapped and unmappable immanence of undercommon sociality. This is fantasy in the hold, and Wilderson's access to it is in the knowledge that he can have nothing and in the specific incapacity of a certain desire that this knowledge indexes. It remains for us to structure an accurate sense of what nothing is and what it constitutes in the exhaustion of home, intersubjectivity, and what Sexton calls "ontological reach."[97] The truth of the formulation that the black cannot *be* among or in relation to his or her own is given in terminological failure. What's at stake is how to improvise the declension from what is perceived as a failure to be together to the unmappable zone of paraontological consent. The promise of another world, or of the end of this one, is given in the general critique of world. In the meantime, what remains to be inhabited is nothing itself in its fullness, which is, in the absence of intersubjective relationality, high fantastical or, more precisely, given in the fugal, contrapuntal intrication that we can now call, by way of Mackey and Wilderson, fantasy in the hold, where the interplay of blackness and nothingness is given in an ongoing drama of force and entry.

In a tradition of Buddhist teaching that goes back to the opening of *The Gateless Gate*, a thirteenth-century gathering of *koans* (case studies that take the form of stories, dialogues, or questions meant to induce in the initiate dual intensities of doubt and concentration), that drama emerges as a deconstructive and deconstructed question, as exemplified in conventional presentations and interpretation of "Jōshū's Dog." The koan reads: "A monk asked [Zen master] Jōshū in all earnestness, 'Does a dog have Buddha nature or not?' Jōshū said, 'Mu!'"[98] Even when we take into account Steven Heine's warnings regarding the legitimacy of traditional attributions and interpretations of the Mu Koan—which require us to consider both that it was not Jōshū who responded to the question or that Jōshū's response was the opposite of mu and that, therefore, the negative way that response is understood to open ought now to be closed—we are left with an ontotheological possibility that blackness may well exhaust.[99] There is an appositional response, which this phantom query cannot properly be said to have called, that persists in and as an echoepistemology of passage, a sociotheology of the *aneschaton,* the instrumental interruption of telos by the universal (drum) machine, Blackwell's prompt out to the study of the last things, the study carried out by the things that are last, by the least of these, whose movement constitutes a critique of the general and necessary relation between politics

and death, a critique of the critique of judgment, a deconstruction of the opposition of heaven and hell. Cherry brings the noise of the end of the world in the invention of the earth. Though eschatology is understood to be a department, as it were, of theology, it has been both displaced by an administrative desire for the teleological and appropriated by a retributive desire for a kind of finality of and in sentencing, each in its commitment to sovereignty and the already existing structures that depend on the very idea. But it's not that I want to enclose things in the dialectical movement between beginning and end. Invention and passage denote an already existing alternative for which we are not constrained to wait. We are already down here on and under the ground, the water, as worked, unwrought nothingness working fleshly releasement in a privation of feasting, a fragility of healing. Mu is a practice of mysticism in the flesh; "Mutron," the ritual Blackwell and Cherry perform, is their concentration meditation. It indexes the specific and material history of the drowned and burned, the shipped and held, as the condition for the release not just of the prevailing worldview but of the very idea of worldview, of transcendental standpoint and Pure Land. Cherry and Blackwell are initiates, who in turn initiate us, in what it is to abide in the social materiality of no place, of Having No Place, as a place for study. This shows up as a radical displacement of binary logic, moving through negation, because the way of the hold is no *via negativa*. Rather, the hold is distressed circuitry, an impedance or impediment of current, a placement of the self's or the settler's or the sovereign's dyadic currency in kenotic abandon. "Mutron" is a way out of no way given in and as the exhaustion of what it is to abide, where the first and the last are neither first nor last.

To remain in the hold is to remain in that set of practices of living together where antikinetic theorizing is both bracketed and mobilized by performative contemplation, as in the monastic sociality of Minton's, where the hermetic absence of and from home is given in and as a playhouse, a funnyhouse, a madhouse. The club, our subcenobitic thing, our block chapel, is a hard row of constant improvisational contact, a dispossessive intimacy of rubbing, whose mystic rehearsal is against the rules or, more precisely, is apposed to rule, and is, therefore, a concrete social logic often (mis)understood as nothing but foolishness, which is, on the other hand, exactly and absolutely what it is. Foucault's meditations point precisely in this direction:

> The ship of fools was heavily loaded with meaning, and clearly carried a great social force. . . . The madman on his crazy boat sets sail

> for the other world, and it is from the other world that he comes when he disembarks. This enforced navigation is both rigorous division and absolute Passage, serving to underline in real and imaginary terms the *liminal* situation of the mad in medieval society. It was a highly symbolic role, made clear by the mental geography involved, where the madman was *confined at the gates of the cities*. His exclusion was his confinement, and if he had no *prison* other than the *threshold* itself he was still detained at this place of passage. . . .
>
> A prisoner in the midst of the ultimate freedom, . . . he is the Passenger *par excellence*, the prisoner of the passage. It is not known where he will land, and when he lands, he knows not whence he came. His truth and his home are the barren wasteland between two lands that can never be his own. . . . The link between water and madness is deeply rooted in the dream of the Western man.[100]

Deleuze has seized on this dimension of Foucault's thought to probe how for him "the inside [functions] as an operation of the outside." Indeed, he notes, "in all his work Foucault seems haunted by this theme of an inside which is merely the fold of the outside, as if the ship were a folding of the sea. . . . Thought has no other being than this madman himself. As Blanchot says of Foucault: 'He encloses the outside, that is, constitutes it in an interiority of expectation or exception.'"[101] Deleuze continues:

> Forces always come from the outside, from an outside that is farther away than any form of exteriority. So there are not only particular features taken up by the relations between forces, but particular features of resistance that are apt to modify and overturn these relations and to change the unstable diagram. . . . [This is] "where one can live and in fact where Life exists *par excellence*." . . . [This is] *life within the folds*. This is the central chamber, which one need no longer fear is empty since one fills it with oneself. Here one becomes a master of one's speed and, relatively speaking, a master of one's molecules and particular features, in this zone of subjectivation: the boat as interior of the exterior.[102]

Passage, which is to say this passage, which is to say the passage between these passages of Foucault and Deleuze, the passage between these and those of Wilderson and Mackey, is given in the hold that Cherry and Blackwell deconstructively reconstruct just so you'll know that the music and its performance was never about transcendence unless transcendence is understood

as immanence's fugitive impurity. How would you recognize the antiphonal accompaniment to gratuitous violence—the sound that can be heard as if in response to that violence, the sound that must be heard as that to which such violence responds? Wilderson asks the question again so that it can be unasked; so that we can hear Cherry and Blackwell unask it in and as intimacy in dislocation. Unasking takes the form of a caesura, an arrhythmia of the iron system, that Blackwell presses into the interruptive, already interrupted New Orleans continuum of his roll whose distended rearticulation stretches out so you can go down in it enough to think about what it means to be somewhere you're only supposed to be going through, to be contained in the atopic atemporality that propels you, as the immanence of the transcendental hallway of our endless preparation, our experimental trial, given as our ongoing study of how to speak, the terrible beauty of our imprisonment in the passage, our life in the folds. Blackwell asks a question that Cherry anticipates, but by which Cherry is driven and to which Cherry responds in the bent, appositional reflection that unasks it. This drama is revived in Wilderson's questioning; the question is a seizure that moves us to unask it. That unasking is mu not because the question's terms and assumptions are incorrect; not because the implied opposition of nothing and something—where nothingness is too simply understood to veil (as if it were some epidermal livery) (some higher) being and is therefore relative as opposed to absolute—doesn't signify; but because nothing (this paraontological interplay of blackness and nothingness, this aesthetic sociality) remains to be explored; because we don't know what we mean by it even when we recite or record its multiphonic swerve; because blackness is not a category for ontology or for phenomenological analysis. Wilderson's question—"Would nothing ever be with nothing again?"—precisely in its irreducible necessity, cannot be answered but can only be unasked in the lyricism of that ill logic that black monks incessantly, thelonially, perform, as difference without opposition, in "a black hole," as Jay Wright, "germ and terminal, expansive/in its nothingness."[103]

What would it be for this drama to be understood in its own terms, from its own standpoint, on its own ground? This is not simply a question of perspective awaiting its unasking, since what we speak of is this radical being beside itself of blackness, its appositionality. The standpoint, the home territory, *chez lui*—Charles Lam Markmann's insightful mistranslation of Fanon, *among his own*, illuminates something that Richard Philcox obscures by way of correction—signifies a relationality that displaces the already displaced impossibility of home and the modes of relationality that home is supposed

to afford.[104] Can this sharing of a life in homelessness, this interplay of the refusal of what has been refused and consent, this undercommon appositionality, be a place from which to know, a place out of which emerges neither self-consciousness nor knowledge of the other but an improvisation that proceeds from somewhere on the other side of an unasked question? But not simply to be among one's own; rather, also, to live among one's own in dispossession, to live among the ones who cannot own, the ones who have nothing and who, in having nothing, have everything. To live, in other words, within the general commonness and openness of *a life* in Deleuze's sense (hence the necessity of a philosophy of life; hence the necessity but also the rigor of a disbelief in social death, where social death is precisely understood as the imposition of the subject's necessity rather than the refusal of the subject's possibility, which, in any case, the imposition founds and enforces). At stake is the curve, the suppleness and subtlety, not only of contemplation on social life but of contemplative social life; at stake is the force of an extraphenomenological poetics of social life. And so we arrive, again and again, at a profound impulse in Fanon that—as Chandler indicates in his reading, which is the initial reading, of Du Bois—constitutes Du Bois's horizon and which appears in the various forms of that question whose necessity is so fundamental that it must be unasked—the question of the meaning of (black) being, the question of the meaning of (black) things. We study in the sound of an unasked question. Our study is the sound of an unasked question. We study the sound of an unasked question. In the absence of the amenity (some pleasantness or pleasantry of welcome or material comfort), what is borne in the emptiness or nothingness of the amenity (of which love or soul is born, in exhaustion, as a society of friends), what are the other elements of mu? Chant and koan and moan and *Sprechgesang*, and babble and gobbledygook, *le petit nègre*, the little nigger, pidgin, baby talk, bird talk, Bird's talk, bard talk, bar talk, our locomotive bar walk and black chant, our pallet cries and shipped whispers, our black notes and black cant, the tenor's irruptive habitation of the vehicle, the monastic preparation of a more than three-dimensional transcript, an imaginal manuscript we touch upon the walls and one another, so we can enter into the hold we're in, where there is no way we were or are.

Let's try to come at the central, centrifugal chamber of the open/ing again, this time by way of Linebaugh and Fanon.

> "The most magnificent drama of the last thousand years of human history" was not enacted with its strophes and prosody ready-made. It

created a new speech. A combination of, first, nautical English; second, the "sabir" of the Mediterranean; third, the hermetic-like cant talk of the "underworld"; and fourth, West African grammatical construction, produced the "pidgin English" that became in the tumultuous years of the slave trade the language of the African coast.

Linguists describe pidgin as a "go-between" language, the product of a "multiple-language situation," characterized by "radical simplification." "Il est meme né pour permettre une communication josque-là impossible," Calvet has written. . . . Where people had to understand each other, pidgin English was the lingua franca of the sea and the frontier. Inasmuch as all who came to the New World did so after months at sea, pidgin or its maritime and popular cognates became the medium of transmission for expressing the new social realities. . . . Pidgin became an instrument, like the drum or the fiddle, of communication among the oppressed: scorned and not easily understood by polite society.[105]

In the interest of a radical restaging of what Linebaugh calls, after Du Bois, this "magnificent drama," Fanon initiates a complex critical disavowal of the "new speech" it produces, beginning—but not paradoxically—with an assertion of language's irreducibly dramatic character. "We attach," Fanon writes, "a fundamental importance to the phenomenon of language and consequently consider the study of language essential for providing us with one element in understanding the black man's dimension of being-for-others, it being understood that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other" (*BSWM*, 1). In a philosophical register cognate with that of Nishida, Fanon posits an "[existence] absolutely for the other," in speech, that is given in and as "absolutely nothing."

Our only hope of getting out of the situation is to pose the problem correctly, for all these findings and all this research have a single aim: to get man to admit he is nothing, absolutely nothing—and get him to eradicate this narcissism whereby he thinks he is different from the other "animals."

This is nothing more nor less than the *capitulation of man*.

All in all, I grasp my narcissism with both hands and I reject the vileness of those who want to turn man into a machine. If the debate cannot be opened up on a philosophical level—i.e., the fundamental demands of human reality—I agree to place it on a psychological

level: in other words, the "misfires," just as we talk about an engine misfiring.[106]

But what if the situation we ought to hope to get out of is "that concrete place of the contradictory identity of objectivity and subjectivity" of which both Nishida and Fanon speak? What if the emergence of man is best understood as the obsessive restaging not of the magnificent drama that Linebaugh indexes but of an epiphenomenal burlesque in which self-determination is enacted with murderous indirection? In a way that is, again, similar to that of Nishida, Fanon's gesture toward nothingness prepares our approach to these questions. It can be said, then, that Fanon moves to distinguish the language of farce from the language of tragedy; it remains for us both to learn from and to augment his analysis, which continues by way of (the) man's casual and uninformed commentary on the social situation of the new speech.

> It is said that the black man likes to palaver, and whenever I pronounce the word "palaver" I see a group of boisterous children raucously and blandly calling out to the world: children at play insofar as play can be seen as an initiation to life. The black man likes to palaver, and it is only a short step to a new theory that the black man is just a child. Psychoanalysts have a field day, and the word "orality" is soon pronounced. . . . [In this] we are interested in the black man confronted by the French language. We would like to understand why the Antillean is so fond of speaking good French.[107]

When Fanon proceeds to isolate the new speech from its disavowal it is because it is the disavowal in which he is interested. This is to say that the new speech doesn't yet show up for Fanon as an object of analysis; more precisely, the new speech doesn't show up as speech. After all, "To speak means being able to use a certain syntax and possessing the morphology of such and such a language but it means above all assuming a culture and bearing the weight of a civilization" (*BSWM*, 1–2). And what's at stake, in the very newness of pidgin, is precisely its improvisatory refusal, rather than use, of "a certain syntax" so that the given is given over to its poetic alternative; its construction, rather than assumption, of a culture; its burial under the weight of civilization and the unlikely, paradoxically animative, exhaustion of such inter(n)ment. But while it can be said of Fanon that in this point in his text he neglects the new speech he offers a profound understanding of (the provenance of) a certain desire for the standard.

> Monsieur Achille, a teacher at the Lycée du Parc in Lyon, cited a personal experience during his lecture. . . . As a Roman Catholic, he took part in a pilgrimage. Seeing a black face among his flock, the priest asked him: "Why have you left big savanna and why you come with us?" Achille answered most politely. . . . Everyone laughed at the exchange. . . . But if we stop to reflect, we realize that the priest's usage of pidgin calls for several remarks.
>
> 1. . . . A white man talking to a person of color behaves exactly like a grown-up with a kid, simpering, murmuring, fussing, and coddling. . . . Speaking to black people in this way is an attempt to reach down to them, to make them feel at ease, to make oneself understood and reassure them. . . .
>
> 2. To speak gobbledygook to a black man is insulting, for it means he is the gook. . . .
>
> If the person who speaks to a man of color or an Arab in pidgin does not see that there is a flaw or a defect in his behavior, then he has never paused to reflect.[108]

The violence of insincere and unflattering imitation that materializes such absence of reflection is vividly portrayed in Fanon's text. However, infantilization of the ones who utter the speech that, according to Fanon, cannot be spoken, does not mean that the new speech is merely infantile. The implication, here, that the new speech is also old is not a function of anything that it retains other than an essential and irreducible vehicularity. Fanon's concern with the pathological desire to speak good French, seen in its relation to the normal desire to be spoken to in good faith, understands the speaker's being absolutely for the Other to imply reciprocity within the shared possession of a language. Speech in bad faith moves in the wake of not listening, of neither acknowledging nor recognizing the speaker's capacity to be for or with the one to whom he or she speaks. Such being for can be spoken of in terms of contemporaneity—implying not only joint ownership of a language but also a shared spatiotemporal frame, transcendental aesthetic, body schema, or home—but might be better elaborated in terms of the differentiation of any given spatiotemporal frame, the shared and social construction of an immanent aesthetic, within the constantly shifting schemata of a fleshly historicity in which language moves to connect a vast, differential range of unmoored unowning.

(This is why it's important to note that this tragic [or tragi-comic] homelessness of the new speech is something Fanon approaches in his analysis

of an exhaustion of return in Aimé Césaire's poetry—return is exhausted in descent, plunge, fall; a propulsive transport through the crush and density of an absolute singularity, in the interest of avoiding "this absurd drama that others have staged around me" [*BSWM*, 174]. What Fanon celebrates in Césaire, however, are instances of language whose emphasis on rising he sees implicitly to assert the necessity of a departure from undercommon linguistic sociality that traverses the distance between pidgin and poetry. "*Cesaire went down.* He agreed to see what was happening at the very bottom, and now he can come back up. He is ripe for the dawn. But he does not leave the black man down below. He carries him on his shoulders and lifts him up to the skies" [*BSWM*, 172]. Return, which had been reconfigured as descent, is now surrogate to an elevation in and of language that enacts the rediscovery of the meaning of the poet's identity.[109] But there is profound ambivalence in Fanon with regard to the mechanisms of uplift that he reads in Césaire. *Lysis* is meant to stave off the interplay—which lyric often induces—of narcissism and alienation that produces, and is grotesquely reproduced in, the black man. Fanon alerts us to a breaking brokenness in Césaire's work that moves against the grain of the lyrical, upwardly mobile self-determination that carries it. This is the ordinance and disorder that the new speech affords. Paralyric sociality has no place in the sun. The night holds fantasy, not identity. The new speech, which animates Césaire's poetry as well as Fanon's invocation of Césaire in the interest of disavowing the new speech, is where we discover, again and again, the various and unrecoverable natality that we share. Fanon recognizes that what can't be recovered becomes [sur]real in not being itself. This corrosive insistence on and in the new is where lyric and lysis converge in mutual submergence, but Fanon is constrained to avow the disavowal that is encrypted in the desire to speak good French. Later, I will return to the fallen poetics of return, its high and dissident fidelity; now it remains necessary to concentrate on Fanon's analytic of speech in bad faith, which begins with his concern with the white usage of pidgin, its effects on "privileged" blacks interpellated by such speech, and, then, the ensuing commitment of those blacks to "speaking good French.")

Fanon takes great care to emphasize not just that the fact that there are whites who don't talk down to blacks is irrelevant for the study of the effects produced by whites who do but that the purpose of his study of the Negro and language is to "eliminate a number of realities" that occur as a function of pathological behavior indexed to an inhuman psychology. He's interested, finally, in how pathological white behavior breeds or fabricates a kind of

pathological black behavior. Fanon is interested in acknowledging, isolating, studying, and eradicating what Frederick Douglass calls our "plantation peculiarities."[110] Moreover, while this process may be initiated by way of a psychological or psychoanalytic discourse predicated on the notion of the inferiority complex, a discourse that might also be discussed as a kind of misfire, in language that anticipates that of J. L. Austin—an infelicitous speech act, one that fails, ultimately, to achieve an intention—ultimately, Fanon appeals to a different metaphorics, a different language, the language of the biochemistry and alchemy of nothingness, a language of and on the experiment's double edge. What if we conceive of the sold, old-souled child who utters the new speech as having been submitted to the most brutal forms of violent investigation: placed on a kind of endless trial, given over to an interminable testing, the brutality of the biological market in which the self-possession of a body is interdicted by fleshly dispossession, marking that condition where to be grasped/held/owned is also to be studied? But what if we simultaneously conceive of the child as a scientist, one engaged in experiments, and in a metaexperimental undertaking of and in research predicated on the embrace of precisely that dispossessive fleshliness that corresponds to the *fullest possible understanding* of what Fanon refers to as "absolutely nothing"—a nothingness without reserve, independent of the desire to show up in and for the conventional optics wherein somebody is delineated and identified? Then palaver would best be understood as the language of the playground if the playground is more accurately understood as a laboratory. This means considering "palaver" or "gobbledygook" not as degraded forms of the standard but rather as modes of linguistic experimentation, modes of linguistic theory given in experimental linguistic practice that have at least two possible effects: the calling into existence of a kind of carceral standard that will have been fabricated in the instance of a whole range of administrative, normative, and regulatory modes and desires and the equally problematic calling forth of certain acts of tone-deaf imitation, equal parts condescension and brutality, the production of a sound meant to accompany an image/livery of subordination in the interest of self-determination's dumbshow.

What's at stake here is the priority of anoriginally insubordinate, jurisgenerative, as opposed to juridically systemic, linguistic experimentation. Speaking "gobbledygook" to a black man is insulting if it takes pidgin for gobbledygook, if such a sclerotic understanding, and the imprecision that follows from it, imagines pidgin to be something other than a language of study. Fanon bristles at the casualness of such a form of speech, the easy

way in which the informal is understood to be the occasion for a kind of brutal informality on the part of the one who arrogantly deigns to understand it. The absence of any intention to give offense is no defense, in his estimation, for the absence of any intention not to give offense. One takes no care to avoid the incidental or accidental suffering of the thing. And this is, finally, evidence of a flaw, a moral defect; such lack of concern is rightly understood to be pathological. But what must be clearly understood is that it is not pidgin or *le petit nègre* that instantiates imprisonment at an uncivilized and primitive level: it is, rather, the inaccurate, imprecise, and, for all intents and purposes, absent reflection—wholly outside of any protocol of study, wholly outside of the experimental social, aesthetic, and intellectual modalities that determine the making of the language in the first place—of pidgin that constitutes this particular prison house of language. This means that we must then discuss the no less carceral effects that attend the disavowal of pidgin that often attends the righteous refusal of its less than vulgar imitation. Some might say that such imitation is merely an extension of pidgin's experimental force, but I would argue that it is more precisely understood as always in service, always enacting the exaltation, of the standard. In this instance imitation is the sincerest form of brutality. What remains is to consider what it is for Fanon to have felt himself lapsing.

> When I meet a German or a Russian speaking bad French I try to indicate through gestures the information he is asking for, but in doing so I am careful not to forget that he has a language of his own, a country, and that perhaps he is a lawyer or an engineer back home. Whatever the case, he is a foreigner with different standards.
>
> There is nothing comparable when it comes to the black man. He has no culture, no civilization, and no "long historical past." . . .
>
> Whether he likes it or not, the black man has to wear the livery the white man has fabricated for him.[111]

Fanon elaborates:

> The fact is that the European has a set idea of the black man, and there is nothing more exasperating than to hear: "How long have you lived in France? You speak such good French."
>
> It could be argued that this is due to the fact that a lot of black people speak pidgin. But that would be too easy. . . .

> After everything that has . . . been said, it is easy to understand why the first reaction of the black man is to say *no* to those who endeavor to define him. It is understandable that the black man's first action is a *reaction*, and since he is assessed with regard to his degree of assimilation, it is understandable too why the returning Antillean speaks only French: because he is striving to underscore the rift that has occurred. He embodies a new type of man whom he imposes on his colleagues and family. His old mother no longer understands when he speaks of her pj's, her ramshackle dump, and her lousy joint. All that embellished with the proper accent.[112]

What's problematic in Fanon is the belief in the priority of the standard except for the special case of the black for whom there is no standard, where standard, in its priority, corresponds to *patria* and patrimony. This will reemerge in Patterson's discourse as the assertion of the absence of a heritage (wherein a past is detached from or deprived of long historical duration) and natal alienation. At stake, in a way that must be understood with more precision than the phrase "black civilization" and whatever its impossibility might signify, is the relation, or in Wilderson's more precise formulation, the antagonism between blackness and civilization. The famously mistranslated title of Foucault's opus *L'histoire de la folie a l'âge classique* has a kind of relevance here in part because the ongoing and irrepressible event of the nonstandard, the antestandard, given now in the language of the standard as madness, as social psychosis, has blackness, also, for another name. We might consider, here, the structural relation between name and livery, designation and uniform, precisely in order to think about what historical task their interinanimative imposition, which takes the form of a sumptuary law, confers upon the ones who have been so burdened. At stake is the givenness of the given's constant disruption, which is prior to its naming; the gift of a project whose conferral is prior to its venal imposition. This is a massive, immeasurable problematic of responsibility.

Meanwhile, the phonics of pidgin is an epiphenomenon, not only in that it is an effect of, but also in that it indicates, fabrication. Moreover, it entraps what it indicates. In this view, it's not just that pidgin is prison language but that being made to speak it imprisons. Imprisonment in pidgin, the imprisonment that is enacted in being made to speak pidgin, is, itself, an epiphenomenon of epidermalization, nothing more than its verbal accompaniment. Implicit here, again, is the assumed priority of the standard.

One is made to speak pidgin in response to an imposition, in response to speech uttered in bad faith. The standard rises as a kind of background that pidgin fails pitiably and pitifully to represent. That failed representation is then burlesqued and parodied by the white whose utterance—whether in condescension or in a more direct kind of cruelty—is meant to do nothing other than impose the subordination and incarceration that is instantiated in the black man–as–good nigger's speech.

In outlining a certain problematic of return, the problem of why upon his return to the Antilles the privileged one desires to speak good French, describes one who sees himself as moving within a condition in which suspicion of the black student's erudite and standard speech is confined only to the periphery of the university where "an army of fools" resides (*BSWM*, 18). But the point isn't that life in the university undermines any such faith in the wisdom of its inhabitants; the point is that a set of assumptions about class now edges into clarity. That the capacity for standard speech, whether of another tongue or of one's own, is aligned with the achievement of a certain interconnection of class status and educational accomplishment. One who recognizes that alignment, upon meeting the German who speaks bad French, politely assumes that he is an engineer or a lawyer, that he has a language, that he has standards, that he has a home. The black man is the living embodiment and visualization of the absence of the standard, however, and no such assumption can be made about him. But this lived experience of the nonstandard, of the standard's absence, does not mean that one is unable either to see or to revere the standard and its idealized locale. The army (as opposed to the ship) of fools that surrounds and protects the inner sanctum of the metropole, the holy of holies, need neither know nor embody the standard that it protects. It is, in fact, nearest and clearest to the one who recognizes it as the site of "equal footing," where the weak assertion of one's capacity for feeling and reason is replaced by emphatically proper linguistic performance (*BSWM*, 19).

Again, Fanon is concerned with the narcissism of the new returnee, the social climber, as he or she links up with Arendt's own stringent analysis of the parvenu. That narcissism disallows a rigorous and requisite full inhabitation of the zone of nonbeing, an "extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge" (*BSWM*, xii). This incline, or declivity, or ramp, bespeaks, again, the bio(al)chemical laboratory in which the black is made. What remains in question is whether or not he or she is present at his or her own making. How do we speak of that presence, of a real transubstantial presence, in the same

breath with which we describe sterility and aridity? What if we choose—while also choosing not to assume the barrenness of—the paraontic field? This incline, where experimentation in the interest of securing the normal requires the production and imposition of the pathological, where investigation in the interest of freedom demands incarceration, is, or ought to be, a site of study. To speak of pidgin, then, as the language of nothingness or of nonbeing, the language whose shadow delineates the territory of the inexistent, is not to utter a decree that legitimizes skipping the question concerning the constitution of that language or paralanguage and moving straight to its reduction to the subordination it is supposed to indicate. Four questions emerge: What is pidgin? Who makes it? What pressure does it place on the very idea of the standard? Isn't such pressure, in fact, the making of the standard? These questions open us onto another understanding of the experiment, which Fanon takes up both literally and figuratively: "We have just used the word 'narcissism.' We believe, in fact, that only a psychoanalytic interpretation of the black problem can reveal the affective disorders responsible for this network of complexes. We are aiming for a complete lysis of this morbid universe" (*BSWM*, xiv).

In a paragraph that begins by asserting the necessity of psychoanalytic interpretation for revealing the black man's affective disorders/anomalies, we note this movement between consciousness and the unconscious, cut and augmented by commitment to the trajectory of self-consciousness, wherein "an individual must endeavor to assume the universalism inherent in the human condition" (*BSWM*, xiv). Edmund Husserl, G. W. F. Hegel, and Sigmund Freud are present—but in a kind of Sartrean light, or frame—beginning with that fateful, fatal interplay between the miraculously self-positing individual and the uncut givenness of the standard. But analysis is then cut by something, a natural process if not attitude: corrosion, compromise of the cell's integrity. "*Nous travaillons à une lyse totale de cet univers morbide.*"[113] "We are aiming for a complete lysis of this morbid universe" (*BSWM*, xiv). "I shall attempt a complete lysis of this morbid body."[114] The two translations, one in its literalness, the other in its avoidance of the literal in the interest of greater idiomatic precision, allow us to linger in and consider the relation between the universe and the body, between the transcendental aesthetic and the body that it makes possible and that makes it possible. It is as if both are, in their morbidity, to be submitted to a radical breakdown.

The language of biochemistry permeates Fanon's text, as it should. It's all bound up with the language of friendship, the massive corollary problematic

of like and unlike, rending the distinction between friend and enemy that Plato gets to in "Lysis." *Lysis* indicates separation and the breaking down of walls; refutation as well as redemption. The pursuit of the meaning of friendship moves by way of bondage: "By the road which skirts the outside of the wall," thinking on or over the edge of the city, there is "a palaestra that has lately been erected."[115] We made a space, we formed a pit, here, here, "there where," in the very place of resistance (says Jacques Derrida).[116] There's all this lunatic noise Hippothales is constantly emitting; Lysis is his means and his end, which is interminable. *Lysis* defies *ana*, according to Derrida. Madness is the condition within which the question of friendship arises. Madness will have been the method—a resistance without meaning, lysis without origin or end—no friend, neither first nor last. Is "Lysis" the invisible bridge between *Politics of Friendship* and *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*? Between *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*? The body that questions, because it is a body that is in question, is an experiment. This de/generative materiality, this unending differentiation, bears Hippothales's self-referential moan. Socrates autotunes it but always in the interest of this interplay of questioning and unasking that is his sociodramatic method. The matter for thought, here, is the matter of thought, which is to say the madness of thought, fantasy in the hold, as Wilderson almost has it, the witch's flight, as Deleuze and Guattari offer it for Kara Keeling's rigorous rematerialization.[117]

> For myself, I was rejoicing, with all a hunter's delight, at just grasping the prey I had been so long in chase of, when presently there came into my mind, from what quarter I cannot tell, the strangest sort of suspicion.[118]

> Can we possibly help, then, being weary of going on in this manner, and is it not necessary that we advance at once to a beginning which will not again refer us to friend upon friend, but arrive at that to which we are in the first instance friends, and for the sake of which we say we are friends to all the rest?[119]

Trane says that he plays multiple lines in the same head, plays the same head multiple times, because he doesn't know the one path to the essential. Trane's questioning and unasking, his experimental method—is it Socrates's method, too? Trane's fantasy. He dreamed his treasure. Maybe he knew there was no single way. Maybe he didn't want there to be one way. He didn't want

it to be one way; there were the other ways. Trane's mysticism, the polyvalent collectivity of his constant worrying of beginning, instantiates the problem of ana-lysis, of improvisation as self-ana-lysis.[120] Derrida speaks of this nonpresence, which is insofar as it is copresence, the real presence, interdicted and interpenetrative, of archetropic return and philolytic nonarrival, where means and end, object and aim, converge, Tao-like, in their mutual incompleteness within a social field, as ensemblic consent, where the first is displaced by the last, by what is supposed to have been relegated to the presupposed, already posited emptiness of a vessel filled with nothing. A jug or a cup of earthenware or Lorenzo, their otherworldly interventions, the otherworldly intervention of servants and bearers, their thought of the outside, their disruption of closure, their suspension of pursuit is dismissed, in common, as already (de)valued commonness's underside, which is animated by that whose form it takes: "mere idle talk put together after the fashion of a lengthy poem."[121] Phenomenology's variously public and private debts to the transcendental subject and to transcendental intersubjectivity are often manifest as impatience with idle talk, idle chatter, even when such chatter is understood to be the subhuman insignificance of those who are relegated to the fullest possible employment, which evokes not only the wordlessness of the work song but also the expropriated linguistic underlabor, expropriated within the general project of exclusionary, self-possessive subjectivation, that is given in the form of an implied response to the bad faith speech of antiblackness. This is to say—and I think this is what Fanon is most pissed off about, and righteously so—that the doctor's impertinent questions to his black patients already imply an answer that would be given in the gestures that accompany mute, impossible positionality. And so Fanon performs, in thought, such questioning's appositional unasking. This is the character of his complete lysis. It is complete, but, as Wallace Stevens would say, in an unexplained completion. This is the interminable as opposed to the last analysis, the interminable analysis of the last, the anaeschatalogical sounding of the unfathomable alternative. We still have to discover, we have to keep discovering, what that sounding sounds like, in the ongoing refusal of a standpoint, of a jurisdiction, for such hearing, in the ongoing critique of the critique of a certain notion of judgment. The absence and refusal of the standpoint is given in the sound of that sounding, which Fanon leads us to but to which he didn't always listen. Here's where the problematic of lyric disturbs and augments lysis. Here's where whatever it is that the pathologist means to examine, in its own degenerative and regenerative differentiation,

moves in disruption of the pathologist's standpoint. This is to say that the tools and protocols and methods of the pathologist, however much they have made possible an approach, cannot, shall we say, manage entrance into the zone of nonbeing. From outside that zone, from the ruins of a standpoint, from one of the numberless husks of an inhabitable possibility, lysis morphs into autopsy so that nonbeing's generativity—as it is manifest in noise, chatter, gobbledygook, pidgin's social refusal of imposed and impossible intersubjectivity—is taken for sterility, its flow taken for aridity. But we will note the beauty and insistence of Fanon's animating claim, his animated *clameur*. He writes, "There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge. In most cases, the black man cannot take advantage of this descent into a veritable hell" (*BSWM*, xii).

Naked declivity? Gradient centrifugation, as Mackey would have it. The zone of nonbeing is experimental, is a kind of experiment, this double edge of the experiment, this theater of like and unlike in which friendship's sociality overflows its political regulation. Destination down and out, whence springs the difference that earthly beauty brings. *Lysis*, *lyse*, *lycée*—Socrates and Lysis, Césaire and Fanon, somewhere between the lyceum and the academy, a recitation of unrequited love.

> Society, unlike biochemical processes, does not escape human influence. Man is what brings society into being. The prognosis is in the hands of those who are prepared to shake the worm-eaten foundations of the edifice.[122]

> It is considered appropriate to preface a work on psychology with a methodology. We shall break with tradition. We leave methods to the botanists and mathematicians. There is a point where methods are resorbed.[123]

To absorb again, to dissolve and assimilate. "That is where we would like to position ourselves" (*BSWM*, xvi). This appeal to resorption, another biochemical term/process that is free of human influence. Fanon deploys biochemical metaphors for the ana/lysis of sociogenic products by way of sociogenic means. And here's the crux, making explicit what would emerge from this overlay of social and biochemical processes, sociopsychoanalytic and experimental practices. Is the laboratory, the encounter, the experimental zone of nonbeing, the paraontic or anontic zone? The otherwise-than-

being-ness of the experiment, which turns out to be ante-ethical as well if ethics is even, as Emmanuel Levinas understands it, neither illness nor death. This internal sociality of the experiment, a sociality and sociology of the anontic, a social biopoetics of and in the experiment, is given in the ongoing disturbance of language that is language's anoriginal condition. The experiment is poetic; pidgin is a poetics.

Consider the constraint of black poetry—of fantasy in the hole or whole or hold or over the side. If it's a constraint, how is it a constraint? It is, first of all, a conceptual field, as Spillers would allow. A field in which, more precisely, the concept of the object is a kind of imperative at the level of both study and performance, in zones where neither the presumption nor the disavowal of self—each in its own obsessive self-regard—are the limits of poetic possibility, which is, itself, animated by both lyric and lysis, continually driven toward new fields of exhaustion. We have to continually work—where aridity is only insofar as it is inseparable from hyperhydration; where thirst and submergence converge; in the hold on the open sea—through this interplay of the establishment and the breakdown of the cell if we are ever to attend the birth of an insurgency that Fanon prophesies and enacts. The splitting of the cell is inseparable from the splitting of the ego that could be said to impose narcissism while also constituting narcissism's closure. There is a hydroptique phono-optics of the general balm and it's the general bomb!

It is as if Fanon is providing commentary on the unpublished notebook of his own return, precisely in order to tell slant the experimental slant. This powerful sociolinguistic self-analysis is a kind of jumping-off point, but what I want to do is slow down and linger, for a little while, over the question of the little Negro, which is a monument to the mind of the little Negro dockworkers and fieldworkers, and work shirkers, and so on. The black man's relegation to pidgin understood as prison, as imprisonment in passage, or as naked, experimental incline, or both, begs the question of the relationship between blackness and the black man, the paraontological distinction that is everywhere implicit in Fanon's text, precisely at or as the point in which self-analysis becomes possible, that space Sexton talks about in which we discern the distinction between vantage and view. But in neither Fanon nor Sexton nor Wilderson, even in texts that we are constrained to call autobiographical, and, moreover, nowhere in the cramped and capacious nowhere from which the vast ante- and anti-autobiographical field from and within which black thought and black literature plots its escape and fantasizes its flight, can the brutally unauthorized author be said simply to be talking about him- or herself.

He or she's talking about *the* self, precisely in the service of a complete lysis of that morbid body and/in its morbid universe. Fanon says, "We are aiming at nothing less than to liberate the black man from himself," which is to say the self that he cannot have and cannot be, but against which he is posed as the occupant of no position (*BSWM*, xii). Is this liberation complete in Fanon? Can self-analysis, which is the name Cecil Taylor gives to improvisation, liberate us from the self, or does it only further secure our incarceration? Again, this is a question that emerges not only in relation to Fanon but also in relation to Olaudah Equiano and Mary Prince, Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, Du Bois and Anna Julia Cooper, Wilderson and Saidiya Hartman, permeating through and in an autobiographical trace that continues to animate the black radical tradition. On the other hand, the new black music is this: find the self, then kill it, as M. NourbeSe Philip's work instantiates. But, to echo Ralph Ellison again and again, so few people really listen to this music. It is, moreover, seldom that even the ones who make this music listen to it, hence the ongoing challenge, the ongoing construction of the intramural.

I'm not sure that Fanon really listens or that, more generally, he really senses the symposium he prepares for us. This preparation could be said to take the form of a sacrifice in which he takes on the unpleasant task of rigorously describing what's so hateful in the way antiblackness mishears what it overhears. Faulty recordings can't help but trigger violent disavowal. The distance between "I don't sound like that" and "I'm not like that" is infinitesimal in its immeasurable vastness. Does black speech, does the little Negro, assume a culture or bear a civilization? If not, then how could it be speech? What does it mean to consider that black speech is the sound of natal alienation, the sound of being without a heritage, without a patrimony? It means, first of all, that all these terms must be revalued, precisely from the already exhausted perspective of the ones who are both (de)valued and invaluable. When Fanon speaks of "local cultural originality," who or what is speaking? (*BSWM*, 2). Who speaks the possession of a language, of a culture, of (a) civilization? Who speaks the necessity of a heritage such that its absence is understood as relative nothingness? Fanon moves by way of a model of the subject that is evacuated even as he writes. This is a James Snead formulation in a sense; a Gordon formulation in another. Derrida speaks, too, out of Algeria, of a problematic of accent, correspondent in its way to the Martinican swallowing of *r*'s of which Fanon speaks. The dispossessive force of black speech confirms, in one sense, and obliterates, in another, the "monolingualism of the Other."[124] My language is not mine, also, because its undercommonness cuts me and mine. The trouble

is that Fanon leaps from an analysis of the social situation of pidgin in France, its force as a verbal adjunct, to a visual imposition, without investigating the social situation of the making of pidgin and without raising the question of its structure, its syntax, its logic. It is simply assumed to be both subsequent and subordinate to the standard in its givenness. Is it possible for the new returnee actually to think about pidgin? Another way to put it is that Fanon prepares us for Glissant in his lysis of the morbid body, which begins with an attention to language that is then carried through in his investigation of the structure of epidermalization, of which the supposed imposition of pidgin and the imposition of the desire for French, in their interinanimation, form a kind of verbal supplement and servant.

> "Dirty nigger!" or simply "Look! A Negro!"
>
> I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects.
>
> Locked in this suffocating reification, I appealed to the Other so that his liberating gaze . . . would give me back the lightness of being I thought I had lost. . . . Nothing doing. I explode. Here are the fragments put together by another me. . . .
>
> We were given the occasion to confront the white gaze. An unusual weight descended on us. The real world robbed us of our share. In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one's body is solely negating. . . .
>
> "Look! A Negro!" . . .
>
> "Look! A Negro!" . . .
>
> "Look! A Negro! . . .
>
> "*Maman,* look, a Negro; I'm scared!" Scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be scared of me. I wanted to kill myself laughing, but laughter had become out of the question.[125]

Fanon investigates what it is to be eager to grasp, to uncover, while having been robbed of the capacity to have a share. No past, no future, nonexistent, "my originality had been snatched from me" (*BSWM*, 108). The failed natality of the fabricated explodes so that the mechanism (the instrument, the toy) can, at the very least, piece itself together. This is the itinerary of Fanon's black deconstruction, which ends in an image of inquisitive reassembly, *as if* the futurial project of blackness that he forecloses was always meant to live on only in and through him. The reification he decries suffocates in the absence of other

aspirations. This attends the bodily schema's collapse into an epidermal-racial schema. In the aftermath of this interplay of implosion and explosion, Fanon's lesson takes the form of a postmortem reconstruction. This is forensic phenomenology: autopsy, eyewitness, unflinching determination of the cause of our sociality, which is taken for our death, given in or initiated by a metaphorics of biochemistry and supplemented by figures of text and textile. The pigmentation alluded to at the beginning will now be applied to newly woven cloth so that livery can be made in the service of a strict visual determination. Fanon sees it all so clearly, now, and the irony, of course, is that the eyes he sees with are not his. One sees only from the Other's perspective, with the other's instruments, that which is of the Other's fabrication. How do we account for this forced borrowing of normative sense, normative senses, and the forms they take? Moreover, what remains silent in this ocular field? Does Fanon step out of the brutal structural adjustment this regime of credit enforces? The forensic knowledge that underwrites this postmortem is an imposition/gift conferred on "the occasion to confront the white gaze." What if consciousness of double consciousness is an effect of paraontological considerations? What if this auspicious Du Boisian beginning is thrown off-track in Fanon, but precisely in the service of its placement in and on multiple tracks? Here, I think, is how the distinction between sociology and sociogeny turns toward a sociopoetic cognizance of the real presence of the people in and at their making, where that retrospective ascription of absence that Fanon's inhabitation of the problematic of damnation, which is activated in his return to his native land, is given in and to a lyrical, analytic poetics of the process of revolutionary transubstantiation that begins with the experience of the nonnative's nonreturn to the village and to the consensual exsense of its social speech, where and by way of which we study what it is to live in what is called dispossession. This is a problematic that shows up in relation to mu, to nothingness, as well as in relation to the question of being, its unasking, (and the unmasking of the one who frames it).

John Donne says, "If I an ordinary nothing were, / As shadow, a light, and body must be here. // But I am none; nor will my sun renew."[126] In the absence of what is taken for light, in the absence of the thought, the scheme, that is called a body, how do we describe extraordinary, or absolute, nothing? Is this certain uncertainty, an inability to distinguish oneself from one's things that implies, more precisely and more urgently, that disruption of the distinction between self and thing that makes possession possible? The body schema manifests itself as (a breakdown in) the relay between (knowledge

of) the necessity of grasping and the capacity to grasp where necessity and capacity each denote, in turn, a relay between knowing and acting. No ontological reach, no epistemological grasp. Meanwhile, it is precisely this implicit knowledge (of the difference between self and thing) that enfleshes questions. Linebaugh speaks of this nonsense, the extrasensorial assertion, which must have emerged in the ship's hold, which was a language lab, a zone of experimental, audiovisual intonation but also—and it is Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley who approaches this almost complete unapproachability—a scene, an erotic vestibule, a prison house of violent pleasure, where flesh is rendered in the absolute exposure of a terrible open secret.[127] Linebaugh's critics, some in their best old-fashioned Marxist ways, anticipatory of Patterson's dismissive relegation of lore in the interest of data, say no, nothing could ever come of such formal deprivation (other than the poverty of the informal, which they have neither the capacity nor the desire to think in its incalculable rhythm). To which I would answer yes. Only nothing. Only that less and more than subjective and subjected sociality. Fantasy in the hold. And this is to say, basically, at the level of Sexton's real intellectual and social aims, if not at the level of the specific critical objects of our work, I am totally with him in locating my optimism in appositional proximity to his pessimism even if I would tend not to talk about the inside/outside relationality of social death and social life while speaking in terms of apposition and permeation rather than in terms of opposition and surrounding. Perhaps this difference turns out to bear and make some greater difference if it is accompanied by another kind of attunement to some other, broader notions of enjoyment and abandonment; perhaps the difference can be made clearer by way of the brilliance of Sexton's interpellation of Gordon's brilliance.

> And yet, this is precisely what Gordon argues is the value and insight of Fanon: he [Fanon] fully accepts the definition of himself as pathological as it is imposed by a world that knows *itself* through that imposition, rather than remaining in a reactive stance that insists on the . . . heterogeneity [or difference] between a self and an imago originating in culture. Though it may appear counterintuitive, or rather because it is counterintuitive, this . . . affirmation [of the pathological] is active; it is a willing or willingness, in other words, to pay whatever social costs accrue to being black, to inhabiting blackness, to living a black social life under the shadow of social death. This is not an accommodation to the dictates of the antiblack world. The affirmation

> of blackness, which is to say an affirmation of pathological being, is a refusal to distance oneself from blackness in a valorization of minor differences that bring one closer to health, to life, or to sociality.[128]

A complete, which is to say a lyric, lysis of our living flesh and earthly sociality, which is often taken for a morbid body or a morbid universe, requires us to recognize that blackness is not reducible to its social costs; it is also manifest in a set of benefits and responsibilities. And if I said that the serially epigraphic positing of our wretchedness doesn't come close to getting at how bad it has been and how bad it is, thereby extending, rather than foreclosing, the overseeing and overlooking of slavery and its afterlife, I would do so by indexing not only the imposition of cost but the interdiction of benefit. Paying implies capacities to have and to relinquish that are irreducible to expropriation. Choosing to be black implies paying the cost; it is a kind of ethical gesture to claim this dispossession, this nothingness, this radical poverty-in-spirit. This is what Afro-pessimism performs, in and as theory—an affirmative gesture toward nothingness, an affirmation of negation and its destructive force. It implies and demands a negative political ontology that is manifest as a kind of affirmative nihilism.

Nevertheless, my first impulse in reading Wilderson's long, Trane-like recitation in *Incognegro* of his exchange with his friend and colleague Naima was to ask, in a kind of Quinean rebuttal, why are we something rather than nothing? But the real task, and I follow in the footsteps of Sexton in taking it up, is to think about the relation between something and nothing or, if you'd rather, life and death. Is life surrounded by death, or does each move in and as the constant permeation of the other? But this is not even precise enough. The question is, Where would one go or how would one go about studying nothing's real presence, the thingly presence, the facticity, of the nothing that is? What stance, what attitude, what comportment? If pessimism allows us to discern that we are nothing, then optimism is the condition of possibility of the study of nothing as well as what derives from that study. We are the ones who engage in and derive from that study: blackness as black study as black radicalism. In the end, precisely as the end of an analysis, the payment of a set of social costs will have coalesced into the inability properly to assess the nothingness that one claims. Blackness is more than exacted cost. Nothing is not absence. Blackness is more and less than one in nothing. This informal, informing, insolvent insovereignty is the real presence of the nothing we come from, and bear, and make.

Consider the relation between nothingness and exhaustion as Deleuze describes it (by way of Samuel Beckett): the real presence, the presence of the thing in exhaustion, its differential ecology, its "echo-muse-ecology," to quote Stephen Feld, its clamor, its *clameur*, its claim, its demand, its plaint, its complaint, its working and layering and folding, as in Jacques Coursil's an(a)themic inclination, which also trumpets a movement from the subject of politics to the subject of life.[129] To be subject to life might be understood as a kind of being enthralled by generativity. What the biopolitical continuum (the trajectory of sovereignty's illegitimate, speculative dissemination) attempts to regulate, suppress, and consume is the social poetics, the aesthetic sociality of this generativity. The care of the self, which can be figured as a kind of dissident member of the set of the self's various technologies, is part of the history of sovereignty as surely as the biopolitical deconstruction of sovereignty is an extension of that history. Another way to put it might be that biopolitics is already given in the figure of the political animal; that the move from natural history to biology is a held trajectory; that the regulation of generativity is already given in the idea of a natural kind. Teleological principle, which is meant to disrupt and disable the catology that accompanies biopolitics, reestablishes its ground and impetus, which is sovereignty. This asserts something that has to be worked through: the relationship between teleological principle and sovereignty, which will be established not by way of recourse to God as sovereign creator but by way of an appeal to transcendental subjectivity as a kind of manager (of anoriginal creativity or generativity). What's interesting and implicit here, what Kant is always working toward and through, is the political subject as a natural kind, the political subject as the subject of natural history, natural history as a field that is presided over by the political animal. The mobile hold and block chapel of pidgin, the little Negro's church and logos and gathering, this gathering in and against the word, alongside and through the word and the world as hold, manger, wilderness, tomb, upper room, and cell: there is fantasy in all of these, which makes you wonder what happens when you put your fantasy on hold, when what is seen and sung of being-unheld is, at once, not held on to and not passed on.

Insofar as I am concerned, by way of a certain example to which Sexton appeals in order to explain (away) the difference that lies between us, with what surrounds, with what the nature is of surrounding and enclosure, I am also, of necessity, concerned with the relation between the inside and the outside, the intramural and the world. The difference that is not one is, for

Sexton, a matter of "ontological reach." Perhaps he thinks of that difference as set-theoretic, a matter of calculating over infinities with the understanding that the infinity of social death is larger, as it were, than that of social life; that the world is bigger than the other (than) world, the underworld, the outer world of the inside song, the radical extension and exteriority that animates the enclosed, imprisoned inner world of the ones, shall we say, who are not poor in world but who are, to be more precise, poor-in-the-world. Black people are poor in the world. We are deprived in, and somehow both more and less than deprived of, the world. The question is how to attend to that poverty, that damnation, that wretchedness. I invoke Martin Heidegger's formulation regarding the animal, that it is poor in world, up against the buried contour of his question concerning the way that technology tends toward the displacement of world with a world-picture, in order to make the distinction between the animal's status and our own, which some might call even more distressing. What is it to be poor in the world? What is this worldly poverty, and what is its relation to the otherworldliness that we desire and enact, precisely insofar as it is present to us and present in us? Sexton characterizes this worldly poverty as attenuated ontological reach, knowing that to say this is tricky and requires care. What if poverty in this world is manifest in a kind of poetic access to what it is of the other world that remains unheard, unnoted, unrecognized in this one? Whether you call those resources tremendous life or social life in social death or fatal life or raw life, it remains to consider precisely what it is that the ones who have nothing have. What is this nothing that they have or to which they have access? What comes from it? And how does having it operate in relation to poverty?

At the same time, for Sexton, recognition of this attenuation (which marks the fact that the tone world is, as it were, surrounded by the deaf world) is already understood to indicate possession, as it were, of ontological reach. Maybe there's another implicit distinction between ontic extension and ontological grasp. But who but the transcendental subject can have that grasp or attain the position and perspective that corresponds to it? Husserl, at the end of his career, when his own attainment of it is radically called into question, speaks of this exalted hand-eye coordination as the phenomenological attitude; a few years earlier, when his career was much nearer to its fullest height and he could claim to be master of all he surveyed—modestly, on the outer edges of his work, under the breath of his work in a way that demands a more general attunement to the phenomenological whisper—Husserl spoke of it in these terms: "I can see spread out before me the endlessly open plains

of true philosophy, the 'promised land,' though its thorough cultivation will come after me."[130] Marianne Sawicki is especially helpful here because she so precisely teases out the implications of his imagery: "By means of this spatial, geographical metaphor of crossing over into the 'new land,' Husserl conveys something of the adventure and pioneer courage that should accompany phenomenological work. This science is related to 'a new field of experience, exclusively its own, the field of "transcendental subjectivity,"' and it offers 'a method of access to the transcendental-phenomenological sphere.' Husserl is the 'first explorer' of this marvelous place."[131]

We should be no less forthright in recognizing that such positionality is the desire that Fanon admits, if only perhaps to disavow, when he conducts his philosophical investigations of the lived experience of the black. Two questions arise: Does he disavow it? Or is it, in its necessity, the very essence of what Wilderson calls "our black capacity to desire"? Certain things about the first few paragraphs of Fanon's phenomenological analysis seem clearer to me now than when I was composing "The Case of Blackness."[132] The desire to attain transcendental subjectivity's self-regard is emphatic even if it is there primarily to mark an interdiction, an antagonism, a declivity, a fall into the deadly experiment that will have been productive of "a genuine new departure," the end of the world and the start of the general dispossession that will have been understood as cost and benefit (*BSWM*, xii). But that desire returns, as something like the residual self-image of the phenomenologist that he wants to but cannot be, to enunciate the (political) ontology he says is outlawed, in what he would characterize as the abnormal language of the demand, called, as he is, to be a witness in a court in which he has no standing, thereby requiring us to reconsider, by way of and beyond a certain Boalian turn, what it is to be a specta(c)tor. Earlier, I assert that Fanon is saying that there is no and can be no black social life. What if he's saying that is all there can be? The antephenomenology of spirit that constitutes *Black Skin, White Masks* prepares our approach to sociological or, more precisely, sociopoetic grounding, as Du Bois, say, or later Walter Rodney would have it, by way of the description of the impossibility of *political* life, which is, nevertheless, at this moment and for much of his career, Fanon's chief concern. The social life of the black, or of the colonized, is, to be sure, given to us in or through Fanon, often in his case studies, sometimes in verse, or in his narrative of the career of the revolutionary cadre. It is as if Fanon is there to remind us that the lunatic, the (revolutionary) lover, and the poet are of imagination all compact. They occupy and are preoccupied with a zone of the alternative, the

zone of nonbeing (antic disposition's tendency to cut and displace organic position) that asks and requires us to consider whether it is possible to differentiate a place in the sun, a promised land, a home—or merely a place and time—in this world, from the position of the settler. Is it possible to desire the something-other-than-transcendental subjectivity that is called nothing? What if blackness is the name that has been given to the social field and social life of an illicit alternative capacity to desire? Basically, that is precisely what I think blackness is. I want it to be my constant study. I listen for it everywhere. Or, at least, I try to. If I read Sexton correctly, after trying to get underneath the generous severity of his lesson, he objects, rightly and legitimately, to the fact that in the texts he cites I have not sufficiently looked for blackness in the Afro-pessimistic texts toward which I have sometimes gestured. In the gestures I have made here I hope I have shown what it is that I have been so happy to find, that projection or relay or amplification carried out by the paraontological imagination that animates and agitates Afro-pessimism's antiregulatory force.

Black optimism and Afro-pessimism are asymptotic. Which one is the curve and which one is the line? Which is the kernel and which is the shell? Which one is rational, which one is mystical? It doesn't matter. Let's just say that their nonmeeting is part of an ongoing manic depressive episode called black radicalism/black social life. Is it just a minor internal conflict, this intimate nonmeeting, this impossibility of touching in mutual radiation and permeation? Can pessimists and optimists be friends? I hope so. Maybe that's what friendship is, this bipolarity, which is to say, more precisely, the commitment to it. To say that we are friends is to say that we want to be friends. I want to try to talk about the nature and importance of the friendship I want, that I would like us to have, that we are about to have, that in the deepest sense we already more than have, which is grounded in and enabled by that commitment even as it is continually rethought and replayed by way of our differences from one another, which is held within and holds together our commonness. The difference has to do with the proper calibration of this bipolarity. Sexton is right to suggest that the far too simple opposition between pessimism and optimism is off, and that I was off in forwarding it, or off in forwarding an imprecision that made it seem as if I were, having been seduced by a certain heuristic and its sound, thereby perhaps inadvertently seducing others into mistaking an alternating current for a direct one. The bipolarity in question is, at every instance, way too complicated for that, and I really want you to hear what we've been working on, this under-riff we've

been trying to play, to study, to improvise, to compose in the hyperreal time of our thinking and that thinking's desire. There is an ethics of the cut, of contestation, that I have tried to honor and illuminate because it instantiates and articulates another way of living in the world, a black way of living together in the other world we are constantly making in and out of this world, in the alternative planetarity that the intramural, internally differentiated presence—the (sur)real presence—of blackness serially brings online as persistent aeration, the incessant turning over of the ground beneath our feet that is the indispensable preparation for the radical overturning of the ground that we are under.

The Subprime and the Beautiful

In his review of Fredric Jameson's *Valences of the Dialectic*, Benjamin Kunkel writes:

> It's tempting to propose a period . . . stretching from about 1983 (when Thatcher, having won a war, and Reagan, having survived a recession, consolidated their popularity) to 2008 (when the neoliberal programme launched by Reagan and Thatcher was set back by the worst economic crisis since the Depression). During this period of neoliberal ascendancy—an era of deregulation, financialization, industrial decline, demoralization of the working class, the collapse of Communism and so on—it often seemed easier to spot the contradictions of Marxism than the more famous contradictions of capitalism.[133]

The year that marks the beginning of the period Kunkel proposes—which is characterized by "the peculiar condition of an economic theory that had turned out to flourish above all as a mode of cultural analysis, a mass movement that had become the province of an academic 'elite,' and an intellectual tradition that had arrived at some sort of culmination right at the point of apparent extinction"—is also the year of the publication of Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, a book that could be said to have announced the impasse Kunkel describes precisely in its fugitive refusal of it.[134] If the culmination of the Marxian intellectual tradition coincides with the moment in which Jameson begins magisterially to gather and direct all of its resources toward the description and theorization of what most clear-eyed folks agree is the deflated, defeated spirit of the present age, Robinson's project has been to alert us to the radical resources

that lie before that tradition, where "before" indicates both what precedes and what awaits, animating our times with fierce urgency.

One of the fundamental contradictions of capitalism is that it establishes conditions for its own critique (which anticipates a collapse whose increasing imminence increasingly seems to take the form of endless deferral); that those very conditions seem to render that critique incomplete insofar as it will have always failed to consider capitalism's racial determination is, in turn, a contradiction fundamental to Marxism. While *Black Marxism* emphatically exposes these contradictions, it is not reducible to such exposure. Rather, in elucidating an already given investigation of the specificities of Marxism's founding, antifoundational embarrassment, which bears the massive internal threat of critique becoming an end in itself while operating in the service of the renovation, rather than the overturning, of already existing social and intellectual structures, Robinson understands the Marxian tradition as part of the ongoing history of racial capitalism. This is not dismissal; indeed it echoes the deepest and richest sounds of Marx's own blackness. It does, however, sanction the question in which I am interested today: What made Robinson's critique—and, more importantly, that which, in Robinson's work (and in Marx's), exceeds critique—possible? The answer, or at least the possibility for a more precise rendering of the question, is also to be found in *Black Marxism*, where critique is interrupted by its own eruptive condition of possibility roughly at the book's rich, dense, but simultaneously open and capacious center, a chapter called "The Nature of the Black Radical Tradition."

Robinson's critical discovery of racial capitalism depends on and extends the preservation of what he calls "the ontological totality." In describing this integrated totality's character, Robinson notes how preservation impossibly proceeds within the confines of "a metaphysical system that had never allowed for property in either the physical, philosophical, temporal, legal, social or psychic senses." Its motive force is "the renunciation of actual being for historical being," out of which emerges a "revolutionary consciousness" that is structured by but underived from "the social formations of capitalist slavery, or the relations of production of colonialism."[135] It is not just that absolutist formulations of a kind of being-fabricated are here understood themselves to be fabrications; it is also that renunciation will have ultimately become intelligible only as a general disruption of ownership and of the proper when the ontological totality that black people claim and preserve is understood to be given only in this more general giving. The emergence and

preservation of blackness, as the ontological totality, the revolutionary consciousness that black people hold and pass, is possible only by way of the renunciation of actual being *and* the ongoing conferral of historical being—the gift of historicity as claimed, performed, dispossession. Blackness, which is to say black radicalism, is not the property of black people. All that we have (and are) is what we hold in our outstretched hands. This open collective being is blackness—(racial) difference mobilized against the racist determination it calls into existence in every moment of the ongoing endangerment of "actual being," of subjects who are supposed to know and own. It makes a claim on us even as it is that upon which we all can make a claim, precisely because it—and its origins—are not originary. That claim, which is not just one among others because it is also just one+more among others, however much it is made under the most extreme modes of duress, in an enabling exhaustion that is, in Stanley Cavell's word, *unowned*, takes the form, in Glissant's word, of *consent*.[136] Consent not to be a single being, which is the anoriginal, anoriginary constitution of blackness as radical force—as historical, paraontological totality—is for Robinson the existential and logical necessity that turns the history of racial capitalism, which is also to say the Marxist tradition, inside out. What cannot be understood within, or as a function of, the deprivation that is the context of its genesis can only be understood as the ongoing present of a common refusal. This old-new kind of transcendental aesthetic, off and out in its immanence as the scientific productivity such immanence projects, is the unowned, differential, and differentiated thing itself that we hold out to one another, in the bottom, under our skin, for the general kin, at the rendezvous of victory.

To say that we have something (only insofar as we relinquish it) is to say that we come from somewhere (only insofar as we leave that place behind). Genesis is dispersion; somewhere is everywhere and nowhere as the radical dislocation we enact, where we stay and keep on going, before the beginning, before every beginning and all belonging, in undercommon variance, in arrivance and propulsion, in the flexed load of an evangelical bridge, passed on this surrepetitious vamp, *here*. Where? There, in our hyperspacious presencing. If you need some, come on, get some. We come from nothing, which is something misunderstood. It's not that blackness is not statelessness; it's just that statelessness is an open set of social lives whose ani*mater*ialized exhaustion remains as irreducible chance. Statelessness is our terribly beautiful open secret, the unnatural habitat and *habitus* of analytic engines with synthetic capacities. Preservation is conditional branching, undone computation (tuned,

forked, tongued), improvisation and what it forges, digital speculation beyond the analogical or representational or calculative reserve. Critique—for example, the deciphering of the fundamental discursive structures that (de)form Western civilization—is part of its repertoire but it must always be kept in mind that cryptanalytic assertion has a cryptographic condition of possibility.

Robinson's movement within and elucidation of the open secret has been a kind of open secret all its own. For a long time before its republication in 2000, *Black Marxism* circulated underground, as a recurrent seismic event on the edge or over the edge of the university, for those who valorized being on or over that edge even if they had been relegated to it. There at least we could get together and talk about the bomb that had gone off in our heads. Otherwise we carry around its out, dispersive *potenza* as contraband, buried under the goods that legitimate parties to exchange can value, until we can get it to the black market, where (the) license has no weight, and hand it around out of a suitcase or over a kitchen table or from behind a makeshift counter. Like Richard Pryor said, "I got some shit, too, nigger; now you respect my shit and I'll respect yours."[137] Maybe there's some more shit in the back of our cars that we don't even know about. Certainly this smuggled cargo would be cause for optimism, even against the grain of the unflinching ones who also carry it, even against the general interdiction—the intellectual state of emergency—enforced by the emphysemic ones who authorize themselves to speak of the spirit of the age. That spirit marks the scene in which the etiolation of black study in the name of critique is carried out by those who serially forget their own animation, the collective being that is more precisely understood as being-in-collection insofar as the latter term denotes a debt that is not only incalculable but subprime.

Therefore, by way of the brilliant black light in Frank B. Wilderson III's Afro-pessimistic sound—which materializes, in an investigation of black being, another way to forget it—I'd like to consider what it is (again and again) to lose a home. This is Wilderson:

> Slavery is the great leveler of the black subject's positionality. The black American subject does not generate historical categories of entitlement, sovereignty, and immigration for the record. We are "off the map" with respect to the cartography that charts civil society's semiotics; we have a past but not a heritage. To the data-generating demands of the Historical Axis, we present a virtual blank, much like that which the Khosian presented to the Anthropological Axis. This places us in a

structurally impossible position, one that is outside the articulations of hegemony. However, it also places hegemony in a structurally impossible position because—and this is key—our presence works back on the grammar of hegemony and threatens it with incoherence. If every subject—even the most massacred among them, Indians—is required to have analogs within the nation's structuring narrative, and the experience of one subject on whom the nation's order of wealth was built is without analog, then that subject's presence destabilizes all other analogs.

Fanon writes, "Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder." If we take him at his word, then we must accept that no other body functions in the Imaginary, the Symbolic, or the Real so completely as a repository of complete disorder as the black body. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Real, for in its magnetizing of bullets the black body functions as the map of gratuitous violence through which civil society is possible—namely those bodies for which violence is, or can be, contingent. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Symbolic, for blackness in America generates no categories for the chromosome of history and no data for the categories of immigration or sovereignty. It is an experience without analog—a past without a heritage. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Imaginary, for "whoever says 'rape' says Black" (Fanon), whoever says "prison" says black (Sexton), and whoever says "AIDS" says black—the "negro is a phobogenic object."[138]

In the United States, whoever says "subprime debtor" says black as well, a fact that leads, without much turning, to the question of what a *program* of complete disorder would be. In any case it is difficult to see how, in the impossibility that marks its "positionality," the negation that is always already negated would carry out such a program. In conversation with Saidiya Hartman, Wilderson takes care to point out that "obviously I'm not saying that in this space of negation, which is blackness, there is no life. We have tremendous life. But this life is not analogous to those touchstones of cohesion that hold civil society together."[139] What remains is some exploration of the nature of this anti-analog, which is more accurately characterized as an ante-analog, an anticipatory project pessimism is always about to disavow as celebration. Of course, the celebration of what exceeds any analogy with the

antisocial hostilities that constitute civil society is, by definition, antithetical to any agenda seeking integration in a civil society that, in any case, will have never survived such integration. On the other hand, precisely in the ongoing, undercommon instantiation of an already given, already integrated totality, celebration is an ontological claim, an ontological affiliation, a social and historical paraontology theorized in performance; it gives criticism breath while also being that to which criticism aspires. If "the tremendous life" we have is nothing other than intermittent respite in what Hartman accurately calls the ravages and brutality of the last centuries, then feeling good about ourselves might very well be obscene. But what if there is something other than the phantasmatic object-home of assimilationist desire—which is rightly seen by Hartman simply to be the extension of those ravages and that brutality—to which we can appeal, to which we have always been appealing, in flight or, deeper still, in movement? Again, the question concerns the open secret, the kinetic refuge, of the ones who consent not to be a single being. The corollary question is how to see it and how to enjoy it. This is a question concerning resistance, which is not only prior to power but, like power, is everywhere—as the mutual constitution of a double ubiquity that places the question of hegemony somewhere beside the point. The dark, mobile materiality of this ruptural, execonomic generality is a violence in the archive that only shows up by way of violence to the archive. Because I don't want to kill anybody, because I want us to enjoy ourselves past the point of excess, I am violent in the archive. Because I am a thing seeing things I am violence in the archive.

Perhaps what is required is an acknowledgment of the fact that the discourse of social development, of the ongoing advent of the Earth that is both in and out of this world, has always been subprime. What we want is always already unaffordable and, moreover, the financialization of everyday life was a plantation imposition. Consider, then, a certain underground speculation. What if the subprime crisis is best understood as a kind of collateral agency (something Lauren Berlant approaches in the faces and bodies of the ones who are preoccupied in subprime Chicago, in the invasive form of a seemingly undifferentiated mass of fat, black maternity acting out as adjuncts in the general neighborhood of the neighborhood)?[140] Then it is also the disruption and resocialization of an already given crisis. For a minute, by way of policy that accompanied another of those periodic attempts to deconcentrate that mass and its ongoing project(s), home ownership became a kind of carnival, a country-ass hoedown, an embarrassing barbecue. It was a kind of squatting, sanctioned by the presiding public-private partner-

ship so that it could continue in its brutal habit of enclosing our common capacity, insofar as we are one another's means, to live beyond our means. The dispersed remnants of the motley crew (which was, in the first place, composed of remnants) was engaged in a kind of general taking—an expropriation, however temporary—of refuge, a serial postponement of externally imposed contingency whose supposed intermittence is better understood as a whole other timeline's broken circle. It's not that people don't hate to lose the home they were holding, the home they didn't have; it's just that they had no moral scruples about engaging it, about claiming it, about moving in together (out from) under the virtual auspices of authority. Driven by manmade catastrophes of high water and boll weevils, drought and cotton, by scientific management and fucked-up customary spontaneities, the subprime debtor is bedu in the bayou, in the desert, in the cell, in school, still the itinerant researcher. Stopped for a juked-up minute, this bookish, monkish, Thelonial, disobediently Jeromeboyish homegirl at study, learning dark arts on the Octavian highway of Loseiana, in the indebtedness of mutual aid, for which she remains without credit, also remains to be (im)properly thought, which is to say, celebrated.

This is an ode to the subprime debtor. What is owed to the subprime debtor? Think of her as a poacher in that black-lit river of the mind where the water remembers; consider the double edge of the black act, the relation between the black act and the black arts. Poaching in black(ened) face and strange habit is the jurisgenerative, extralegal, contemplative performance of the ones who were and continue to be present at their own making (onstage, under enclosure, hard row, long road), the transgenerational sharing of a mobile deixis marking there in here so we can get there from here. We bear an interinanimation of displacement and location that cannot be borne, as the speculative and material foundation of another world. What Daphne Brooks calls the Afro-alienation act is an irruption of this bearing, this gestic, jestural natality.[141] Consider the evasiveness of the natal occasion, the moving, ludic refuge of the big mama, the play mama, and the auntie. Consider the relation between leaving and claiming, lost and found, which means thinking before the concept of fabrication. If it is true that the colonist fabricates the colonized subject, or that the master fabricates the slave, it is also true that the irrepressible making and unmaking of the ones who are made and unmade makes them more and less than that. The lack is terminally conceived in isolation from its excessive double and must of necessity show a kind of critical hostility to what it clearly sees as certain fantasies of

fullness. On the one hand, what's implied in this fantasy is loss, violated ownership; on the other hand what's implied in the clear-eyed, unflinching identification of colonized or enslaved, which is to say interdicted, subjectivity is a being-fabricated that laments the ontology its evacuated, evacuating positionality serves to orient. Moreover, loss and fabrication are cognate if we are only made in dispossession. The remainder is ownership, but can it remain? Can the fabricated bear a trace of what lies before their fabrication? Think about Fanon's rejection of negritude's proffering of a kind of memory of ownership. The nothing that remains in or as that rejection is borne in an assumption and analytic of abandonment or "absolute dereliction." Thinking (through) this interinanimation of fabrication and abandonment more or less demands the meditation of and on ubiquitous and unexplained incompletion—something that is both more and less. But Fanon's work is brutally cut off when he begins to consider an irreducible presence at its own making as a mode of abandon (a certain choreographic permissiveness that recurs in revolution's punctuation of the impossible social life that is its condition of possibility). Whoever chooses not to acknowledge Fanon's approach to this question leaves that question behind, thereby abandoning himself to the empty positionality of an eternal preface to something s/he can neither sense nor want. Meanwhile, what lies before being-fabricated needs neither to be remembered nor romanticized when it is being lived.

This is all to say that the paraontological distinction between blackness and black people is forgotten in the discursive assemblage of Afro-pessimism. So, therefore, is the black thing that assemblage seeks to understand or to constitute as the impossible aim of an analysis that turns out to be nothing other than a prologue to the disavowal that Afro-pessimists, to their credit—which is, of necessity, bad—attempt to disavow. Insofar as it is always behind a kind of theoretical red line, the sociality that Afro-pessimism does not and cannot want, however much they are willing to claim it as its own impossibility, is shadowed by another impossibility that a certain disability enables the Afro-pessimist to desire—the very citizenship and civic obligation that evades him, whose unavailability for him he has taken great pains to prove, whose destruction he believes his *empty* positionality to foster. His desire is, of course (and this is contrary to his analysis as well as his own affective relation to that desiring subject), not unrequited. He is trapped within a brutal and obsessive codependence that he cannot, and cannot want to, refuse. For to refuse what has been refused to you is only possible from the perspective of having had something (beyond the constant imposition of a

lack or barrier or impossibility). But having had, in this case, is not the description of some previous, violated ownership; it is, instead, a prophecy of having given everything away (in having consented *not* to be a single being, in having been continually acting out and enacting the massive theoretical implications of holding and being held, against ownership, in dispossessive enjoyment of the undercommon underprivilege). Everything I love is an effect of an already given dispossession and of another dispossession to come. Everything I love survives dispossession, is therefore before dispossession. Can we own or claim dispossession while resisting it? Can we resist it while embracing it? We make new life, we make our refuge, on the run. We protect the old thing by leaving it for the new thing. Refusal is only possible for the ones who have something, who have a form, to give away—the ones who ain't got no home anymore in this world except a moving boxcar full of the sound and scent of animate pillows, strangers, readers; except a built clearing in a common word they break and scar to rest and lay to rest; except Aunt Kine's house which ain't hers, which is hers to hold and hand when we got no place to stay, and then they take it away, but she already gave it away.

Meanwhile, some folks, whose situational commitment to revolution is a function of the high regard in which they hold their own violated sense of personal dignity, are too subject to being-situated; they justify their own misapprehension of revolution as the violent response to a given transgression, a given gratuitousness; they step to black history as if it were nothing other than a serial injury inflicted upon them; as if every injury were their private property, which they legitimately claim, insofar as they have a kind of consciousness of it that is unavailable to the ones who are just up from Tupelo or still hustling on the streets of Accra. It seems, sometimes, that a consciousness of personal injury that moves in excess or in a kind of eclipse of any awareness of personal loss. Though there is a constant discourse of (social) death, the precipitating event is always trauma, which accompanies one's own living death rather than the loss or death of something other or more than oneself. Or, if there is something lost it is oneself, which is to say one's standing, which is to say one's patrimony, which is to say one's delusionally self-made single being. Having lost one's father, one also mourns the loss of one's heteronormatively derived dignity. That loss often takes the representational form of a mother who just won't do or just won't do right. Memoir is a privileged mode here but, as Albert Ayler used to say, "It's not about you." The memoirist, who declares himself, more or less simply, to be nothing, and who claims the right to speak for nothing everywhere, misses

everything, with a brilliant, blinding insight. But on the city's edge, where everything is fucked up, everything is everything. Something is held out in somebody's hand because, as Billy Preston used to say, "nothing from nothing leaves nothing; you gotta have something if you wanna be with me." But this is just to say that even in the enactment of Afro-pessimistic purity something shines through, and therefore remains necessary, in its prodigiously indefinite extension of the political analysis of the unalloyed *ex nihilo*. Meanwhile, the nothing we are is alloyed in sharing.

The crisis is given—in a kind of acceleration-in-equilibrium—as our quintessence. You have to be more than critical about some shit like that. The subprime debtor, clothed in and tainted by the sin/garment of pathological black maternity, actively instantiates her own paralogic, like a paratrooper (dropped behind lines), like a hermetic meaning or a hermitic tenor (John Gilmore, between the lines, playing studies in ignorance). The awareness of nakedness is immediately manifest as something ready to wear. Is there knowledge in the service of not knowing, of study as unowning knowledge? The ones who are in the know say not. They speak, instead, of the postblack, emphatically disclosing their own prematurity in the insistence with which they unify black criticism and black misery. People speak, too, of the post–civil rights era, or the post–soul movement. However, these things don't die, they multiply, in whatever mixture of what is to some the unlikely and the embarrassing. They are the derivative's material precursor and disruption, as returned externality, the excluded bringing the sound and fury of outsourced risk like a redirected storm surge, derelict content, absolute volume, sowing utopian disaster on the run like a bunch of heretical prophets of shock, reverberating a noisy backbeat of doubt that even Alan Greenspan couldn't pretend not to hear. It keeps happening like that; that other history of working with and in catastrophe; the parastrophic poetics of emergency is still good—not as destruction but as out inhabitation, total disorder as the carnival alternative. Meanwhile, the half-life of antagonism, as Wilderson would have it, is what Marxists used to call, when they were talking about something other than themselves and the incapacity they are glad to be unhappy to claim as their own, contradiction. Again, it's not that we're not that; it's just that we're all that and then some.

The pathologizing discourse within which blackness's insurgent *mater*iality has long been framed takes a couple of reactionary forms in relation and with reference to the subprime crisis. One, which proudly claims the mantle of reaction, criminalizes. But black maternal criminality is also irre-

sponsible, in this view. The tendency to lie, to overreach by way of somebody else's swindle, in the wake of their interested unasked question, is a function of always already disabled self-possession, a fundamental incapacity for personal responsibility, an inability to mature, an endless developmental delay, a reckless childishness that demands instant gratification after hundreds of years. Here's where criminality and abnormality converge and it is the meeting place of the two modes of reaction, the other of which rejects that name in the name of a kind of recycled progress, a certain old-new liberality. In this other mode, the subprime debtor is a victim of predatory lenders and a long history of residential and financial segregation and exclusion while also remaining, most fundamentally, a victim of her own impulses, which could be coded as her own desire to climb socially, into a neighborhood where she doesn't belong and is not wanted—the general neighborhood of home ownership, wherein the normative conception, embodiment, and enactment of wealth, personhood, and citizenship reside.

The distinction between pathologic and paralogic, upon which our entire history turns, emerges here as well. Consider the subprime debtor as guerilla, establishing pockets of insurgent refuge and marronage, carrying revaluation and disruptively familial extensions into supposedly sanitized zones. Deployed by the imposition of severalty, demobilized from the general project, she infiltrates domesticity, restages race war's theater of operations under the anarchic principles of poor theater. In this, she extends and remodels the freedom movement's strategies of nonexclusion, where courts of law were turned into jurisgenerative battlefields, where public schools and public accommodations became black study halls, greyhounds-contra-hellhounds where fugitive spirits, sometimes misconstrued as evil even by themselves, take freedom rides on occasions that parallel the radical commensality of the counter-lunch. The subprime debtor, in the black radical tradition of making a way out of no way (out), is also a freedom fighter, a community disorganizer, a sub-urban planner.

But where does this transsexual revolutionary come from? (She is revolutionary in that old extra way; he violently brings their ordinary culture to bear in a kind of nonviolent overturning and eschews the clotted, marmish imperatives of "exposure" or "psychological warfare" that compose the half-measures of the ones who think they have nothing beyond their fantasies of patrimonial honor either to lose or defend.) Where do we get these Tiresian audiovisions of broken home ownership? Where are we coming from and what is the time of our irruption? Having considered the relation between

impossible maternity, on the one hand, and the inalienable natality that evades each and every natal occasion, one is given to believe that what is given is that the given cuts the given. Fanon's phenomenology is inadequate to this broken, breaking givenness, though it infuses—though it is, as it were, regifted in—his work, as the thingly contragrain and mechanical countertime that his disciples seem sometimes to be trying too hard not to hear. In refusing to pay—or in enacting a constitutional inability to pay—the debt we have contracted, we pay the debt we never promised, the one they say should never have been promised, the one that can't be calculated, and thereby extend another mode of speculation altogether.

Melinda Cooper and Angela Mitropoulos argue that the moralistic denunciation of usury that neoliberalism cranked out in the aftermath of its latest episode of recognizing, which is to say policing, the crisis is really an attempt to eliminate all forms of incalculable debt, particularly insofar as those forms constantly bear the capacity to induce "the liquefaction of securitized investment" in the mixture of surprise and precedent that every day composes the new *commercium* as the stolen life traditionally led in common projects on brilliant corners.[142] What's cool is that in their very language—which I can't help but think bears the echo of an old reference to the sweetly flowing liquefaction of Julia's clothes, that brave vibration each way free, the fugitive desire she walks around with, in that housecoat, always threatening to blow up whatever outpost on "the household frontier"—Cooper and Mitropoulos move with Robinson in the line he studies and extends, beyond the critique of *them*, and what *they* think, and what *they* try to do, toward the life *we* (dis)locate and imagine when the materiality of the subprime cuts the sublime by grounding its excess in the anarchic materiality of social flesh in history. What we say must seem stupid to the regulators; the unbroken code of our enchanted, inkantatory refreshment of the paraontological totality—theorizing what it is to hold some land or what it is to be let to hold twenty dollars—is so much undercomputational nonsense to the ones who cannot see the con/sensual, contrarational beauty of blackness, the universal machine.

102 Chomsky, *Language and Mind*, 9.

103 "One World in Relation: Édouard Glissant in Conversation with Manthia Diawara," trans. Christopher Winks, *Journal of Contemporary African Art* 28 (2011): 15.

104 "One World in Relation," 5.

105 See Polly Greenberg, *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes* (London: Macmillan, 1969). Hear Greenberg's *Head Start: With the Child Development Group of Mississippi*, CD FW02690, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2004.

Chapter 3: Chromatic Saturation

1 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Paladin, 1970), 77–78.

2 For more on translation and its relation to his concept of "anoriginal difference," see Andrew Benjamin, *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy: A New Theory of Words* (London: Routledge, 1989).

3 I am invoking, and also deviating from, Nahum Dimitiri Chandler's notion of *paraontology*, a term derived from his engagement with Du Bois's long anticipation of Fanon's concern with the deformative or transformative pressure blackness puts on philosophical concepts, categories, and methods. For a full account and elaboration of paraontology see Chandler, *X: The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

4 For more on Fanon's relation to phenomenology see David Macey, *Frantz Fanon* (New York: Picador, 2001), 162–68.

5 Jared Sexton and Huey Copeland, "Raw Life: An Introduction," *Qui Parle* 13, no. 2 (2003): 53.

6 There is a certain American reception of Agamben that fetishizes the bareness of it all without recognizing the severity of the critique he levels at movements of power/knowledge that would separate life from its form(s). The critical obsession with bare life, seen in its own vexed relation with the possibility of another translation that substitutes naked for bare and perhaps has some implications, is tantamount to a kind of sumptuary law. The constant repetition of bare life bears the annoying, grating tone that one imagines must have been the most prominent feature of the voice of that kid who said the emperor has no clothes. It's not that one wants to devalue in any way the efficacy of such truth telling, such revelation; on the other hand, one must always be careful that a certain being-positive, if not positivism, doesn't liquidate the possibility of political fantasy in its regulation of political delusion. There's more to be said on this question of what clothes life, of how life is apparell'd (as John Donne might put it); this, it seems to me, is Agamben's question, the question of another commonness. So why is it repressed in the straight-ahead discourse of the clear-eyed? This question is ultimately parallel to that concerning why Foucault's constant and unconcealed assumptions of life's fugitivity are overlooked by that generation of American academic overseers—the nonseers who can't see because they see so clearly—who constitute the prison guards of a certain understanding of the carceral. Judith Butler might say that

they see too clearly to see what lies before them. See her analytic of the "before" in the second chapter of *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1989). See also Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998) and *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

7 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1970), 77.

8 Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952), 88.

9 This is an image—taken from Diderot's reading of Samuel Richardson—that Brooks deploys in his analysis of melodrama. See Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 19.

10 Or it might show up as a refusal of the resonance of Fanon in Sexton and Copeland, or in Achille Mbembe and David Marriott, or in important work by Kara Keeling and Frank Wilderson. See Kara Keeling, "'In the Interval': Frantz Fanon and the 'Problems' of Visual Representation," *Qui Parle* 13, no. 2 (2003): 91–117 (wherein she takes up that passage in Fanon with which I began, thereby both authorizing and directing the course of my own reading; wherever I might diverge from her understanding, I do so only as a function of her thinking, in kinship and respect). See also Kara Keeling, *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); David Marriott, *On Black Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, trans. A. M. Berrett et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Frank Wilderson III, *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

11 Michael Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary* (London: Blackwell, 1999), 214.

12 Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 174; hereafter abbreviated "T."

13 For more on the relation between evasive previousness and unavailable natality, consult Nathaniel Mackey's multivolume epic *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*, especially the first installment, *Bedouin Hornbook*, Callaloo Fiction Series, Volume 2 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986).

14 See Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), "Black Is a Country," in *Home: Social Essays* (New York: Morrow, 1966), 82–86; and Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

15 See Theodor W. Adorno, "On Jazz," trans. Jaime Owen Daniel, modified by Richard Leppert, in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 472.

16 Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 57–58.

17 Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg*, 58.

18 Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg*, 59n14.

19 Hear Cecil Taylor, *All the Notes*, Cadence Jazz Records CJR 1169 CD, 2004.

20 Louis Althusser, "From *Capital* to Marx's Philosophy." In Althusser et al., *Reading Capital: The Complete Edition*, trans. Ben Brewster and David Fernbach (New York: Verso, 2015), 21.

21 "Black as Symbol and Concept," in *Art as Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt*, ed. Barbara Rose (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 86–88.

22 Stu Broomer et al., "Black," *Arts/Canada* 113 (1967): 3–19; hereafter abbreviated "B."

23 Yve-Alain Bois cites the following statement by Reinhardt: "I've never approved or liked anything about Marcel Duchamp. You have to choose between Duchamp and Mondrian." See Bois, "The Limit of Almost," in *Ad Reinhardt*, ed. William Rubin and Richard Koshalek (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 13.

24 Bois wonders if the nonsentence Reinhardt pronounces on theater ("Theater, acting, 'lowest of the arts'") alludes to Fried's in/famous essay on what he took to be the degrading force of theatricality in minimalist art, "Art and Objecthood." The essay originally appeared in *Artforum* a couple of months before Reinhardt's death on August 31, 1967, a couple of weeks after his encounter with Taylor. See Bois, "Limit of Almost," 13, 30n21. Also see Reinhardt's unpublished notes from 1966–67, collected by Rose under the title "Art-as-Art," in *Art as Art*, 74; and Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148–72.

I would like to acknowledge the influence of Paul Kottman's ideas regarding what he calls "the politics of the scene" on my attempt to think through this interplay of politics and theatricality.

25 Bois, "Limit of Almost," 15.

26 Bois, "Limit of Almost," 16.

27 Clement Greenberg, "The Crisis of the Easel Picture," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Arrogant Purpose, 1945–1949*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 223, quoted in Bois, "Limit of Almost," 17.

28 See, for instance, Mondrian's 1927 essay "Jazz and Neo-Plastic," in *The New Art—The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, ed. and trans. Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James (Boston: Da Capo, 1993), 217–22.

29 See Harry Cooper, "Mondrian, Hegel, Boogie," *October* 84 (1998): 136.

30 See/hear Cecil Taylor, "Cecil Taylor Segments II (Orchestra of Two Continents)," *Winged Serpent (Sliding Quadrants)*, LP Soul Note SN 1089, Soul Note, 1985.

31 Bois, "Piet Mondrian, New York City," in *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 183.

32 Cooper, "Mondrian, Hegel, Boogie," 134.

33 Bois, "Piet Mondrian," 182.

34 Cooper, "Mondrian, Hegel, Boogie," 136, 142.

35 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1968), 227.

36 See W. E. B. Du Bois, "Sociology Hesitant," *boundary 2* 27, no. 3 (2000): 41.

37 Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (1968), 242.

38 Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1991), 273. See also Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (1968), 227, and Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*,

trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2004), 163; hereafter abbreviated *W*/P. Forgive my oscillation—undertaken, primarily, due to considerations of style (which is not only eternal, as Mackey says, but fundamental)—between the poles of these translations.

39 Cooper, "Mondrian, Hegel, Boogie," 140.

40 Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 39.

41 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 39.

42 See Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

43 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 168–69.

44 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 176–77.

45 This is a Kantian formulation that I have elsewhere tried to explicate by way of the work of Winfried Meninghaus. See my "Knowledge of Freedom," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 4, no. 2 (2004): 269–310. See also Winfried Menninghaus, *In Praise of Nonsense: Kant and Bluebeard*, trans. Henry Pickford (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); and Immanuel Kant, "On the Combination of Taste with Genius in Products of Beautiful Art," in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 196–97.

46 Perhaps this paradox—wherein the colonized intellectual must deconstruct and disavow what the anticolonial revolutionary has to claim, in a double operation on and from the same questioning, questionable body; wherein national consciousness and mental disorder are interinanimate—is proximate to what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak thinks under the rubric of the "'native informant' as a name for that mark of expulsion from the name of Man." Perhaps Fanon's late work operates as something on the order of a refusal of that expulsion and of that name, even in his invocation of it. See Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 6.

47 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Penguin, 1973), 487.

48 See Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Unveiled," in *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove, 1967), 47.

49 See Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1970), 85–87.

50 Imagine potency, here, as a translation of *potenza* (as opposed to *potere*) or *puissance* (as opposed to *pouvoir*) and, therefore, as moving within the specificity of a conceptual distinction that the unaccompanied utterance of the word *power* fails to mark. If I could arrange the typographical equivalent of a certain gesture, a certain inflection, the raising of a hand or voice, I would, just to let you know that what I'm after is a vivrant thing, an undercommon public thing, a social thing. This is to say that it is not, contra Arendt, a political thing; that her relegation of the social in favor of a regulated and specifically political publicness

is, in fact, inseparable from her commitment to an already given structure of power in which both acknowledged and unacknowledged constituents subsist in a shadow they cast but cannot control. That submissive subsistence is manifest as ritual dramas that fail to perform, ritualized distinctions (within strict enclosures of conceptual diversity) that fail to differentiate. With regard to the former, each election is more fully exemplary than the last. At the same time, Arendt's distinction between (necessarily collective) *power* and (fatefully individual) *strength*, and between these and the "natural" *force* (of "energy released by physical or social movements") as opposed to the *authority* that is vested in persons by institutions, exemplifies a certain impotence of theoretical power that is derived from commitment to a closed structure of political power that aggressively fosters and protects the privatization of the public thing, such that its birth and continuity are both best understood as crisis. See Arendt, *On Violence*, 44–46.

51 See Gilles Deleuze, "The Exhausted," in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 152–74. I thank Peter Pál Pelbart for bringing this essay to my attention.

52 My thinking is enabled by and indebted to that of Wilderson and Miguel Mellino. Wilderson's call to attention came on May 20, 2006, during his invocation for a conference he organized at the University of California, Irvine, titled "Black Thought in the Age of Terror." Mellino's insistence on a new analytic of the damned that places Fanon in the tradition of revolutionary modernism is given in "Notes from the Underground: Fanon, Africa, and the Poetics of the Real" (unpublished manuscript). Mellino's amplication of *il dannito* brilliantly echoes an earlier recovery of the term given in the work of Walter D. Mignolo. See his "On Subalterns and Other Agencies," *Postcolonial Studies* 8, no. 4 (2005): 381–407. I thank David Lloyd for alerting me to Mignolo's essay and for every other incalculable thing. This essay is dedicated to him.

53 See E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon, 1964), 9.

54 See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (2004), 169.

55 Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (2004), 2.

56 Fanon, "Appendix," in *A Dying Colonialism*, 64–65.

57 Fanon, "Conclusion," in *A Dying Colonialism*, 180–81.

58 See Althusser, "From *Capital* to Marx's Philosophy," 22–29.

59 Bertolt Brecht, quoted in Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 28.

60 Deleuze, "The Exhausted," 152.

61 See Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Writers and Readers, 1995), 3–7.

62 Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage, 1991), 2.

63 For more on complex personhood see Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 4–5.
64 Deleuze, "The Exhausted," 154.
65 Deleuze, "The Exhausted," 154. Elsewhere it may be possible to think of exhausted, exhaustive seriality as glissando or, at the same time, as Glicentin consent.
66 Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (2004), 176. In his translation, Philcox substitutes "lament" for Constance Farrington's "howl." I have allowed myself to follow a series of suggestions more fully given in the "uncorrected" version. See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (1968), 243.
67 See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (2004), 157–59.
68 Walter Rodney, *The Groundings with My Brothers* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1975), 63–64.
69 Miguel Mellino, "The *Langue* of the Damned: Fanon and the Remnants of Europe," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 1 (2013): 79–89.
70 Bryan Wagner, *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1.
71 Jared Sexton, "The Social Life of Social Death: On Afro-Pessimism and Black Optimism," *InTensions* 5 (2011): 28. www.yorku.ca/intent/issue5/articles/jaredsexton.php.
72 See Abdul R. JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound Subject: Richard Wright's Archaeology of Death* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
73 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), xiv; hereafter abbreviated BSWM.
74 Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 5.
75 Wagner, *Disturbing the Peace*, 1.
76 Frank B. Wilderson III, *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2008), 265.
77 Wagner, *Disturbing the Peace*, 2.
78 See Wilderson's "Acknowledgments" in his *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, xi). There he thanks, among others, Saidiya Hartman (to whom anyone who is trying to think about anything is indebted), for requiring him "to stay in the hold of the ship, despite [his] fantasies of flight."
79 Nathaniel Mackey, "On Antiphon Island," in *Splay Anthem* (New York: New Directions, 2006), 64.
80 Mackey, "On Antiphon Island," 65.
81 Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, xi.
82 Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell, *El Corazón*, ECM 1 1230, LP, ECM Records, 1982.
83 Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007), 2.
84 Nathaniel Mackey, *Atet A. D.* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2001), 118.
85 Mackey, *Splay Anthem*, ix.
86 Mackey, *Splay Anthem*, ix–xii.

87 Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 56.
88 Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 58–59.
89 Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 57.
90 Nahum Dimitri Chandler, "The Problem of the Centuries: A Contemporary Elaboration of 'The Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind' circa the 27th of December, 1899," unpublished manuscript, 2007, 41.
91 Nishida Kitarō, "The Logic of the Place of Nothingness and the Religious Worldview," in *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, trans. David W. Dilworth (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), 96.
92 Nishida, "Logic of the Place of Nothingness," 96.
93 Nishida, "Logic of the Place of Nothingness," 123.
94 Nishida, "Logic of the Place of Nothingness," 95–96.
95 This sentence gestures toward a convergence I keep imagining between Fanon's analysis of *Le petit Nègre* and Thornton Dial's sculptural *Monument to the Minds of the Little Negro Steelworkers*. At stake is the possibility of another reinitialization of the interplay of critique and celebration in black life and thought.
96 Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 181.
97 Jared Sexton, "People-of-Color-Blindness," YouTube video, 1:23:31, posted by UC Berkeley Events, October 27, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNVMI3oiDaI.
98 Yamada Kōun, *The Gateless Gate: The Classic Book of Zen Kōans* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2004), 11.
99 Steven Heine, "Four Myths about Zen Buddhism's *Mu Koan*," blog.oup.com/2012/04/four-myths-about-zen-buddhisms-mu-koan/ (accessed May 18, 2013).
100 Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (New York: Routledge, 2006), 10–11.
101 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, ed. and trans. Seán Hand (New York: Continuum, 1988), 81.
102 Deleuze, *Foucault*, 100–101.
103 Jay Wright, *Disorientations: Groundings* (Chicago: Flood Editions, 2013), 56.
104 See Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967).
105 Peter Linebaugh, "All the Atlantic Mountains Shook," *Labour/Le Travail* 10 (1982): 110–11.
106 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), 6–7.
107 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), 10.
108 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), 14–15.
109 See Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (2008), 175.
110 Frederick Douglass, "To Thomas Auld, September 3, 1848," in *Frederick Douglass: Selected Writings and Speeches*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2000), 115.
111 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), 17.
112 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), 18–19.
113 Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952), 8.
114 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), 10.

115 Plato, "Lysis," trans. J. Wright, in *The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 146.
116 Jacques Derrida, *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 24.
117 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 41.
118 Plato, "Lysis," 162.
119 Plato, "Lysis," 163.
120 Derrida, *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, 19–20.
121 Plato, "Lysis," 166.
122 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), xv.
123 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), xvi.
124 See Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthetics of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).
125 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), 89–91.
126 John Donne, "A Nocturnal upon S. Lucy's Day," in *The Complete English Poems*, ed. A. J. Smith (New York: Penguin, 1977), 73.
127 Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic," *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 14, nos. 2–3 (2008): 191–215.
128 Sexton, "The Social Life of Social Death," 27.
129 See Deleuze, "The Exhausted"; Steven Feld, "From Ethnomusicology to Echo-Muse-Ecology: Reading R. Murray Schafer in the Papua New Guinea Rainforest," *Soundscape Newsletter*, no. 8 (1994); and hear Jacques Coursil, *Clameurs*, Universal Music (France) 984 748 2, 2007.
130 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy—First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Fred Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 429.
131 Marianne Sawicki, "Edmund Husserl (1859–1938)," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource* (accessed March 24, 2013), www.iep.utm.edu/husserl.
132 Fred Moten, "The Case of Blackness," *Criticism* 50, no. 2 (2007): 177–218. A slight revision is printed in this volume.
133 Benjamin Kunkel, "Into the Big Tent," *London Review of Books*, April 22, 2010, 12.
134 Kunkel, "Into the Big Tent," 12. See also Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
135 Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 246, 243, 243–44.
136 See Stanley Cavell, *Philosophical Passages: Wittgenstein, Emerson, Austin, Derrida* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 101; and "One World in Relation: Édouard Glissant in Conversation with Manthia Diawara," trans. Christopher Winks, *Journal of Contemporary African Art*, no. 28 (2011): 5.
137 Richard Pryor, *Craps*, Umgd B000001ECF, Umgd, CD, 1994.
138 Frank B. Wilderson III, "The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal," in *Warfare in the American Homeland: Policing and Prison in a Penal Democracy*, ed. Joy James (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 31–32.

139 "The Position of the Unthought: An Interview with Saidiya V. Hartman. Conducted by Frank B. Wilderson III," *Qui Parle* 13, no. 2 (2003): 187.

140 Lauren Berlant, "Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 4 (2007): 754–80.

141 Daphne A. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 3–9.

142 Melinda Cooper and Angela Mitropoulos, "In Praise of Usura," *Mute* 2, no. 13 (2009), www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/praise-usura.