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Meditations on the Sea and its African Subjects

ABSTRACT In this chapter I engage with various online newspaper accounts of the African body that lands on European beaches via the Mediterranean Sea. Dead by exhaustion from crossing the ocean or dead as a consequence of boarding a sea vessel, which has capsized because it was not equipped to carry the embodied subject identities of Africans leaving the continent in droves to seek refuge on the continent of the European colonizer, the African body as a matter of concern for Europeans has garnered perverse and troubling interest in various United States and European online newspapers over the past ten years. The European colonizer usurped African land and people from the fifteenth century onwards, kidnapped African labour, whilst simultaneously exploiting and extracting raw materials to develop its wealth in a starving, ailing, and disease-infested Europe.

KEYWORDS African bodies, the Mediterranean Sea, Black Mediterranean, African phenomenology, death-bound subjects

I should like to demonstrate three things: First, that philosophy is not a system but a history, essentially an open process, a restless, unfinished quest, not closed knowledge; second, that this history does not move forward by continuous evolution but by leaps and bounds, by successive revolt, and consequently follows not a linear path but what one might call a dialectical one—in other words, that its profile is not continuous but discontinuous; third, after this rough sketch of a theory of theoretical development, of a theory of theoretical history, that African philosophy may today be going through its first decisive mutation, the outcome of which depends on us alone, on the courage and lucidity we show in bringing it to its conclusion.

—Paulin Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*

The concept associated with Black Marxism that I find most productive and most potentially transformative is the concept of racial capitalism [...]. Global capitalism cannot be adequately comprehended if the racial dimension of capitalism is ignored.

—Angela Davis, “An Interview on the Futures of Black Radicalism”

The coronavirus pandemic kept people around the world indoors. Conferences, seminars, and research trips were suspended and then cancelled. Like all scholars, one examines possibilities to stay abreast with contemporary events, and in the digital age, reading online newspapers and searching through links has brought about a new possibility for research, scholarship, and engagement with a community of scholars.

I was struck by my first online reading of Africans depicted as a nuisance to the beach officials of European shores, who had to record deaths as well as find families of the survivors. In reading online newspapers on a regular basis, I realized that I had saved several notes of previous articles on the same subject matter. I was both drawn to and disturbed by the images of bodies strewn across long sandy beaches, the lack of dignity afforded to an African body, physically sprawled across the sand, the ambiguity of disgust and pity of the European gaze,¹ captured as a still: frozen,

1 There are several references to “the European” in this text, some of which include: European scholars, the European colonizer, European enslavement, and also European humanitarianism. These references are particular to the person of European descent, and who in the context of the African continent is first and foremost a usurper, a colonizer, and an enslaver who entered African soil uninvited, and as such a beneficiary of African forced labour and forced extraction of minerals for European profit. There are also several references to: European shores, European beaches, European soil, and the European continent, which refer to the physical place, the topographical and geographical location of Europe with its physical borders. On the African continent, the European who lives and benefits continually from the history of colonialism is called a colonial; he/she/they represent the colonizer’s interest in Africa and continues its mission. On the European continent, the European is the person who is born into a life of privilege acquired through African colonization, who learns, adopts, reproduces, and maintains the ethos of its ancestry and is raised to protect Europe, as such to protect its borders from African entry. It is well known that children born of one European parent and one African parent are never considered European; they are in fact, almost always asked: “where are you from?” The question in and of itself suggests that appearance and belonging are key indicators of European identity for a claim to the European continent is restricted to those who bear and carry a physical identity with no trace of Africanness. Black experiences bear testimony to the fact that the definition of “the European” is only afforded those who resemble the physical features consistent with Christianity, cast in the image of an illusion of God as White,

unmoved, and the narrative that suggests both. Clipboard in hand, tallying African bodies destined to be sunk into the earth—unnamed, unclaimed, unrewarded, unpaid by European reparation, born with one foot in the grave and the other at the bottom of the ocean, the European humanitarian is tasked with counting how many black bags and coffins will be needed for the daily disposal of African bodies. The African body, in death, is both criminalized for the failure of the sea voyage that led to death and for leaving the African continent via the sea to enter the European continent, which is always constructed as an illegal act.

In 1641 Descartes published his first meditations,² showing the significance of critical thinking, and what it means to interpret and reason within the world he lived in. The task undertaken here, in writing meditations, immediate, off the cuff, guttural responses upon sight of the visual images displayed of dead African bodies, is very much in the tradition of intention that Descartes set out. The daily loss of African bodies at sea, which online newspapers have reported on for several years, needs analysis and interpretation along with a historical critique of how the bodies got there, and why the sea route to Europe is the alternative to a life of destitution that is mundane and banal.³ Any form of study of subject matter that addresses the life of Africans comes with a history of social and political thought that informs such a study; it is, therefore, significant to foreground African phenomenological thought and Black Consciousness thought—from Angela Davis, Paulin Hountondji, Steve Biko, Leonard Harris, and Lewis Gordon. The work of these scholars is crucial in paving the way for an engagement of African bodies⁴ as subjects of the sea.

blonde, and blue-eyed and Europeans being the closest in physical appearances with any one of the characteristics that define such physicality.

- 2 René Descartes, a French philosopher, published his *First Meditations* in Latin in 1641 and then in French in 1647.
- 3 I use the terms “mundane” and “banal” here to refer to the day-to-day grind of labour, which for many Africans does not allow the sustainability of a livelihood. A mundane act offers the actor no social or economic interest; it is dull. Banality here also refers to the repetition of the same act, the various performances of labour, as carried out by mine workers, for example, that bring little monetary reward, except survival at most.
- 4 The argument in this chapter is framed around the African body whose subject identity is taken away as he, the masculine stereotypical *he* (articulated as the threat to Europe because he is an African man with desire for the White woman who he will impregnate and make Europe impure), enters Europe via the sea as either an unwelcome trespasser and therefore a criminal, or dead, and therefore a burden for burial on European soil. The focus on the body here is not to diminish the embodiment of African existence nor to assert any form

The first epigraph above, taken from Beninese philosopher Paulin Hountondji's *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1983), enables the scholar of African philosophy to consider the history of Africa's colonial past and present—within which a multitude of philosophical questions lie bare, naked, and unretrieved. It is with this historical landscape in mind that one begins to question the death of Africans as subjects of the sea, en route to a future that is linked to Africa's history of usurpation (the illegal act of seizure of land and people) and colonialism (the practice of control over the illegal seizure of Indigenous land and people, accompanied by the occupation of settlers who engage in exploitation and oppression in order to maintain a life of governance and ownership over the land), and as such crucial to the study of philosophy. There are various moments in the history of Africa—as the place where African philosophical thought evolves from continuous engagement within the world of experience—which emerges as a dialectical one. It is within this cruel and contentious African past that scholars ought to examine critical events as sites where African philosophical thought can be generated. The second epigraph, offered by Angela Davis, which is taken from an interview conducted by Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin and published in *Futures of Black Radicalism* (2017), shows her appreciation of the concept of *racial capitalism*⁵ as well as her public acknowledgement of the work of Cedric J. Robinson, whom Davis credits with the term. Davis, speaking on how she learnt from Robinson regarding the uses of history and how his work facilitated her theorizing, draws out some of the content of Hountondji's assertion by situating both ontological dialectics (in my view, the relation between the African and the European) and relational dialectics. The concept of *racial capitalism* also brings us to a South African moment not only where we link the prevalence of historically charged terms that encompass racialized and politicized identity such as *Black* but where we recognize, through the trial of Bantu Stephen Biko, the significance of Biko's precise use of the English language, grounded in the history of colonialism, when addressing relations between the colonizer and the colonized, the usurper and the usurped in South Africa. Biko is concerned with the historical accuracy of the subject's identity and calls the subject who usurps the usurper; the

of dissociation between the mind and the body but rather to offer a critique of select newspaper articles that have reported on African subjects as bodies: as a nuisance, an unsavoury entity that becomes a problem for Europe.

- 5 The term is utilized here as per Cedric J. Robinson's conceptualization in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983), to indicate the process of extracting labour of the racialized subject in order to gain social and economic value.

subject who colonizes, the colonizer. Biko connects the word to the act (that which the person enacts with their agency) and therefore to the actor, linking the act and its benefits to the actor, as is evidenced in Biko's collated collection *I Write What I Like* (1978): "connecting the act (usurpation) to the actor (the usurper), the act of colonization to the actor (colonizer) and examin[ing] the features that mark these acts of cruelty, such as the actor who benefits from colonialism (the beneficiary) who benefits from racism and colonialism" (Maart 2020b, 27).⁶ Biko had argued for the necessity of the dialectic in 1970s South Africa.⁷ Relying on Hegel, like so many Black Consciousness ideologues before him, as evidenced in the work of Frantz Fanon, the emergence of the Black Consciousness movement was Biko's articulation of *the dialectic as reason*: that Black Consciousness was the logical response to White racism. The Black Consciousness ideologues within SASO, like Barney Pityana, Biko, and others, had weighed the considerations of adopting Black Consciousness—as a philosophy of consciousness and as a politics of consciousness. Thus, they offered the reasoning of the relevance of Black Consciousness to confront racism and the racist regime, and more importantly to transform and change the society within which they lived. Karl Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach"⁸ (eleven short philosophical notes, written very much in the tradition of Descartes' meditations) were drawn into the very process of creating a Black Consciousness movement to address, confront and transform the aftermath of colonialism and meet racism head-on. Further along in the same collection *I Write What I Like*,

6 For scholars who are familiar with the Black People's Convention—South African Students Organisation (BPC-SASO) trial, especially the period where Biko was the key witness, which took place the first week of May 1976 under the spiteful and fearful command of Judge Boshoff, the last segment of the transcript, "The Importance of Language," speaks to the importance of Biko's and SASO members' interest in forging a language of historical agency that links the act to the actor: a vernacular that shifts the focus on the acts perpetrated by the settler colonial. In this way, the Black Consciousness scholar takes control of the language of his historical experience of the settler.

7 Biko's use of the dialectic in his articulation of Black Consciousness emerges very early on, although noted in 1971 in "The definition of Black Consciousness," collated in *I Write What I Like*. Of note is the fact that Biko, in his written account, cites "historical materialism," instead of Hegel's *historical idealism*. Marx, whom Biko also cites, puts forward dialectical materialism as a materialist philosophy, and in the printed version of Biko's paper, he evokes Hegel's historical materialism, thus erroneously citing Hegel but offering a blend between Hegel and Marx, which in itself offers food for thought.

8 Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach" (1845) was never published in his lifetime but was put in print by his friend and comrade Friedrich Engels in 1888 as an appendix to a pamphlet.

in chapter 12 entitled “Fear—an Important Determinant in South African Politics,” Biko addresses what settler colonials in White-dominated South Africa were afraid of—not Black people but Black Consciousness. The title of Lewis Gordon’s book, *Fear of Black Consciousness*, addresses this very topic. “Fear of Black Consciousness is the fear of truth. It’s a truth in which Black people are recognized, treated and understood as agents of history. And as agents of history, we also are able to live our freedom with dignity and respect.”⁹

On Writing Mediations as a Methodology for Writing African Philosophical Thought

In his *Discourse on Method and The Meditations*, Descartes believed that he had invented a method of reasoning based on mathematics. The critique of the sea and its subjects undertaken here, whilst inspired by Descartes’s method, is guided by the philosophical thought of Paulin Hountondji, Leonard Harris, Lewis Ricardo Gordon, and Steve Biko. The critique offered in the following six selected meditations is also influenced by the work of Guyanese-Tanzanian Walter Rodney’s¹⁰ (1982 [1972]) critique of historical materialism, especially Rodney’s exposé of Europe’s hand in carving the historical relationship between colonialism and imperialism that left African countries impoverished, which in turn set the basis for an afterlife of destitution for many that resembles a state of a continuous massacre. I assert that it is the magnitude of this historical brutality that Africans still struggle to recover from, much of which lends itself to a theory of economic destitution, with all its contradictions (Harriss-White 2002).

In offering these meditations—as a methodological approach to thinking, analysing, and writing (the latter for dissemination)—I am mindful of the intertwined relationship that histories of usurpation, enslavement, colonialism, and capitalism encapsulate for Africans. Thus, whilst offering a critique of histories of the sea and its subjects, it is noteworthy to consider a broader spectrum of events that still inform both the afterlife and the continuum of dispossession within the day-to-day lives of Africans. I am

9 See Lewis Gordon’s lecture on “The Fear of Black Consciousness,” April 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DpFaKpkEyY>.

10 Racial capitalism as a concept is first evidenced in the work of Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. I employ the term “racial capitalism” here, firstly vis-à-vis Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1982 [1972]) and secondly vis-à-vis the work of Biko.

also mindful of the work of Françoise Vergés, especially her contention that there is no capitalism without racism, some of which she articulates in her chapter “Racial Capitalocene” (Vergés 2017, 73). Questions posed by Vergés in the said chapter are ones many scholars of African descent ask when undertaking work that draws on both scholarly and existential experience simultaneously for which there is often little to no precedent. Black scholars are often positioned by European scholars as survivors of the racism and colonialism one is meant to have endured, and which should have destroyed one’s spirit, which leads to verbal and non-verbal questions of how is it that one is still present, and active, in the intellectual space of the master. The measure of how Black or African a person is, when determined by European scholars, is often one of suffering. For the latter to see evidence of it in the form of verbal articulations that are considered inferior to theirs or evidence of dress and physical appearance that suggests that one is a candidate for an Oxfam handout is generally the preferred requirement. I speak here of questions on methodology because the European “we” as a standard for scholarly engagement is not a position I care to embrace, nor is the denunciation of existential presence one I care to undertake. Research methodologies or approaches when studying African subjects of the sea, as per the title of the chapter, are not simply undertaken to draw attention to Africans as refugees or illegal aliens in Europe but ones that place my existential experience of enslavement and forced removal within the very parameter of the study. European scholars have on many occasions attempted to inflict guilt upon Africans like me, who survive the brutalities of colonialism and enslavement from which they most generously benefit, despite their verbal protestations to the contrary. This somehow leaves them outside of the critique as conscientious storytellers of Black subjugation and leaves people like me, in our overcoming, with little evidence showing in the way that the European gathers social evidence, the target of disbelief, and as such, the target of possible ridicule. Likewise, when one sits at conference tables with European scholars, they often assume that by talking to them on matters of the world, that separation, disassociation, and alienation must have settled within the body of “the African” they left behind after the usurpation, the looting, and the killing; that “the African” must have been erased within those of us who make it across the ocean, to face them as scholars and intellectuals in our own right, albeit in the very language of our colonization, because we show not one sentiment of the memory of their colonization nor the manner in which they would like to see it manifested.

Being treated as a “not-so-African African” comes with an unwritten script of having to be grateful and as such happy to enact the separation

from the impoverished and “suffering” African that the European scholar has already put in place; all one has to do is follow along like a good post-modern “not-so-African African.” Adopting a “we” is not afforded to those who approach events within and outside of the African continent with an ethical responsibility in addressing matters that take place on African soil and the African seas, both past and present. For most European scholars, the evidence of suffering is less evident in the pen of the African intellectual who inscribes with rigour and thoughtful consideration in English, the language of the colonizer. This is a language I was forced to speak and had to wrestle with, where I did not exist, was not wanted, and therefore had to challenge to a fight, break into like a thief when no one was looking, take apart, assert myself within the lined grammatical corridors that removed the tongue of my ancestors on slave ships, the weight of which lies heavily on my tongue. I had to inject the English language with words it chose to forget and hoped I would too; I had to learn to take charge of the English language so that when I speak it and write it, it knows that whilst it has changed hands from master to previously enslaved, I command it to do its job of representation, expression, precision, and persuasion, under my watchful interrogation. On the question of methodology, Vergés asks:

What methodology is needed to write a history of the environment that includes slavery, colonialism, imperialism and racial capitalism, from the standpoint of those who were made into “cheap” objects of commerce, their bodies as objects renewable through wars, capture, and enslavement, fabricated as disposable people, whose lives do not matter? (Vergés 2017, 73)

History as philosophy, and as such the African body as the focus of its history, is an important consideration for African philosophy. The African body¹¹ carries the consciousness of its history—through the flesh, with the body as materiality, the body as material evidence and material witness,

11 Whilst I am acutely aware that the African continent is composed of fifty-four countries, eight territories and two independent states with little to no recognition, the individualized, national, and ethnic identity of the subject who is from the African continent and lands on European beaches, dead or alive, is ignored because to the European, there is only one identity that comes from Africa, however erroneous, that is, the African who comes begging, who enters European land illegally to extract the benefits of what Europe has to offer, who wants something from the European, and brings with him only disease, poverty, a strange culture, a foreign language, customs that are backward and that are scoffed at and considered unworthy, and uncivilized. As such, as per the discussions that fostered the meditations I offer here, I use the African continental identity as per the online newspapers selected for unpacking and discussion.

and the body as historical memory, in flight across the sea. These acts of fight and flight must be noted as part of the contemporary stage of African history.

All philosophical inquiry demands that we tell the truth; that we question the assumptions of everyday life, and everyday consciousness of presence. Here, I wish to assert the necessity of a metaphysics of presence that turns the boat back 400 years. The African producer of philosophical knowledge reflects through meditation as a form of thinking-through, a process often of painful contemplation and cruel realization of what presents itself as a condition of the present. The Black Consciousness scholar as knowledge producer is thus occupied with the task of examining the conditions under which history inscribes itself upon the African body: as fleshed, in flight, undressed and disrobed by the oceans' currents. To the Black Consciousness scholar, the glare of the humanitarians—the very definition of oxymoronic cruelty that bears the act of kindness—who position their gaze at the dead African body on the banks of the Mediterranean, whether in Italy or Spain or the coastal banks of Libya, one of the most historical fifteenth-century seaports of European enslavement, pierces past the pretence of polite political paradoxes.

What makes any phenomenology African is the experience of the African as the subject of study, the African location from which lived experience informs the construction of knowledge of the said subject, and the history of the thinking subject who inscribes and produces knowledge from her ancestral roots within the African continent. Much like philosophy, phenomenology as one of its branches is not considered unified in any way. It is rather an area of philosophy where the reflection of structures of consciousness and the phenomena within which consciousness is present as self-consciousness is what offers phenomenology its core. African phenomenology, as such, demands a process of thought and reflection on activities and events that constitute the consciousness of the people of the African continent.

Philosophy and the Newspaper

Renowned philosopher Leonard Harris, drawing from the philosophical discourse of Frederick Douglass, is diligent in his assertion that we develop philosophies born of the struggle of peoples who strive for justice (Harris 1983). Harris references Frederick Douglass in his formulation of *philosophy born of struggle*, especially when Douglass asserts in his 1857 West India Emancipation speech: “The whole history of the progress of human

liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle” (Douglass 1857, web). In *A Philosophy of Struggle: The Leonard Harris Reader*, edited by Lee McBride III, Harris contends that “genuine philosophy is *philosophia nata ex conatu* (philosophy as, and sourced by, strife, tenaciousness, organisms striving) *ex intellectualis certamen cum sit* (the result of intellectual struggle with corporal existence), always inclusive of undue duress—it is sentient beings that can be afflicted, and thereby no concept of form, dialectic rationality, phenomenology, sagacious insight, confessions, testimonial, or witnessing is warranted without the expressed inclusion of the afflicted seen as such” (McBride 2020, 20). The meditations offered here draw on one of Leonard Harris’ key tenets of his philosophical thought: *philosophy born of struggle*.

Online European and United States-based newspapers, with their informative headlines, and their alleged concern for human rights when reporting on events from the African continent, usually depicted as catastrophic, bring a particular here-and-now moment to one’s understanding of daily events. Peculiar as it may seem to some, especially to a younger generation of avid online readers, the delight a freshly printed newspaper brings to one’s daily grasp is no longer a privilege one can enjoy. Printed newspapers that cover events on the African continent are often hard to come by. For those Black Consciousness readers who wish to stay abreast with news online, disturbing as the content is and can be with its graphic display of the *damned of the earth*¹² caught in floods, African children sold into sexual slavery, or images of the contorted bodies of drowned Africans in flight to Europe, where the emphasis is overwhelmingly on Black¹³ dead bodies that are strewn across sandy beaches, the news is debilitating. These bodies are often cinematographically photographed, as though the death of Africans is a fictional, cinematic account, and yet they are sites from which to take political action whilst also developing philosophical thought.

In the newspaper narrative of the African recklessly entering European waters, as is evidenced by those selected and cited for this paper, the story

12 Frantz Fanon’s 1961 title, *Les Damnés de la Terre*, offers an account of the dehumanizing effects of colonialism. The English translation of *Wretched of the Earth* utilizes the phrase “wretched” instead of “damned” as the appropriate translation. I return to both wretchedness and damnation, later in the text.

13 The European identifies Blackness, the visual embodiment that draws on the racialization based on skin colour and erases the physical and geographical location of the subject. In doing so, the European erases its relationship to the very African it robbed. The African is then just “the Black,” the one who is not White, who does not belong.

is usually centred on the plight of West Africans and Central Africans (the specificity noted here as per the newspapers that occasionally cite regions and not countries) escaping poverty and famine, en route to a “better life” not somewhere but anywhere in Europe: the continent of their colonizers.¹⁴ As a scholar of African history reading online newspapers within the geographical location of the African continent, surrounded by materiality that situates one into the narrative one is reading, with the accompanying image that acts as captivator, one is immediately drawn to the pattern one detects: a pattern that begins to look familiar, a repetition of sorts, a depiction of drowned African bodies as irresponsible, and the death a site for spectacle and ridicule. Identifying with the dead African boy on the beach, the image of the “irresponsible parents” immediately established in a crude sentence, one is soon drawn into the frame of the European gaze—as the object of derision—a subject that has lost its subjecthood because it committed a crime, a transgression. That crime is leaving the African continent; that crime is rejecting wretchedness and damnation by attempting to enter the shores of Europe; that crime is not recognizing that the limitations of one’s movement lie within the borders of one’s Africanness and one’s Blackness. This Africanness and Blackness, as physical in shape, in form and flesh, as contained, confined, and trapped within one’s own body, one’s skin, with its pigmentation, after centuries of dehumanization *should* serve as its border.

Calling into question this time of the now—the moment of my thinking and reflection before any of my thoughts emerge as writing—the return of my gaze is compounded by images I have received, and the visual scrutiny my examination fosters. My throbbing colon—the large intestine within the body that regulates it and controls all substances that enter the body—is where the experience of the visual theatre of coloniality resides, and where it elicits a guttural response that echoes in my blood. It produces a shudder, a tremor, a moment that places my body within the soil of the earth. My composition is disrupted, shaken, and my thoughts race toward the constant reminder of the colon in coloniality, the word made flesh. Ancestral waves that travel through the earth’s crust and draw my body into the event are precisely how my thoughts register the moment: drawn into the mechanisms of coloniality through the colon. My meditations create a visual collage of the history of the African body engaged in activities that are not preoccupied with death but with life, such as pleasure and enjoyment. Death appears as the destruction of African life created by the colonizers.

14 The term “colonizers” as plural is utilized here for reasons which speak to the many European colonizers of the African continent.

To be engaged with journalistic writings on the African plight where death is imminent immediately places one in a mode of tension. One feels a compulsion toward offering an account of the phenomena one reads about, and of which, as an African who returns the gaze plastered with the photographic history of forced removal from my ancestral home, protests against settler colonialism, memories of the banning of fishermen from the sea by the apartheid government, which destroyed the livelihood of Indigenous fishermen, I recognize with staggered immediacy that I have placed myself in the frame of the image that produced my discomfort. This placement forced itself into my reading and brought about my clenched jaw, the curses that flow from my pursed lips on the unspoken history of the African subject who was robbed of land and sea, the knowledge of which now collides, throbs, pulsates in my loaded veins. My existential reading starts to spread with images of past and present; whether I care to place myself outside of the reading or not, I am very much in it: in flight, a subject whose maternal ancestry speaks from the land from which her ancestors were forcibly removed—Bengal, Java—cargoed, transplanted, in the name of Dutch colonization and Dutch enslavement. A subject that speaks from another branch of ancestry, who was robbed of life at the sea where work as fishermen and fish as food provided livelihood to my grandfather's Xhosa history along the coast of the Eastern Cape. As subject I speak from the South Atlantic Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Southern Ocean: in the murmurs of the water, in the roughness of the 1650s seas, the Dutch-orchestrated theatre of cruelty gushed against the water and thrust my maternal ancestors from the cargoed Indian ocean into the choppy currents of the Cape. My reading has forged a presence for my biographical history; it is not merely an existential one but one that is locked into my lived experience as a descendant of the previously enslaved, still colonized, still bearing the calendar names Maart and September, as a testimony to the month of Dutch enslavement, Dutch timing and colonization of my ancestors, Dutch ownership over Bengal, Java, and the Cape, among others. European colonizers relied on the physical, geographical, and natural resources of the earth, like the soil and the sea, to create the unnatural condition of enslavement, and colonialism bore its fruit.

My reading of the content of the online newspapers is held together by a tortuous gaze; it simultaneously questions, interrogates, and then forges an examination of philosophers who sought out newspapers to write philosophical meditations. Michel Foucault, for example, points to several tensions between philosophy and journalism in the manner one gives an account, and to the fact that such an account ought always to be historical. About his work Foucault had often said: "This is why, for me, philosophy

is a sort of radical journalism” (quoted in Vandeputte 2020, 220). Walter Benjamin was a diligent reader of *Die Fackel*, a German newspaper styled in the gazette format, which was published by Karl Kraus (1874–1936), who studied law, philosophy, and German literature, and whose father was a papermaker. Kraus focused his commentary and journalistic critique on Viennese society, which philosophers of the day took great interest in. Michel Foucault and Walter Benjamin are among a great many philosophers who relied on newspapers for their daily dose of philosophical debate. One such newspaper, the German weekly newspaper *Der Spiegel*, was founded by British-born journalist John Seymour Chaloner and Hanover-born journalist, publicist, and politician Rudolf Karl Augstein in 1947. *Der Spiegel* played an enormous role in the everyday dissemination of thoughts and ideas that were indicative of its era, and upon which philosophers relied. In South Africa, the journalistic writings of settler colonial Donald Woods, whose ancestors were part of the 1820s British settlers in South Africa, wrote for the Eastern Cape’s *Daily Dispatch* during the apartheid era. Woods’ journalistic writing drew the attention of medical doctor Mamphela Ramphele,¹⁵ who challenged Woods’ depiction of Biko when writing on the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania. Ramphele demanded that Woods meet Biko not only to correct the error of his unsavoury liberal judgments that inked the newspaper pages but to go to one main source of where the South African Black Consciousness discourse was articulated.¹⁶ Wood’s subsequent engagement with Biko and his determination to publish Biko’s words opened up the historical dissemination of Black Consciousness philosophical thought in South Africa in a very public manner. The settler, whether journalist by profession or simply journeying as a privileged, entitled liberal during the apartheid era, often took credit for discourses of liberation that came to the attention of the masses because the conditions of apartheid and racism fostered such relations of mastery of the experience of the colonized. The Native¹⁷ was kept out and prohibited from reporting on the conditions of his experience of racism by the hero-hungry settler, whose

15 Mamphela Ramphele studied and graduated as a medical doctor. She is known for her contribution to the history of Black Consciousness, some of which include the open secret of her being Steve Biko’s girlfriend and the mother of one of his children, Hlumelo Biko.

16 Mamphela Ramphele confronted Donald Woods at his office at the *Daily Dispatch* newspaper and challenged him to meet Steve Biko.

17 The “Native” is a term that the apartheid regime used to refer to Black Africans. When used by White South Africans it was used in derogatory ways to suggest naked, uneducated, non-humans. In the 1903 Intercolonial conference, the term “aboriginal natives” was also used.

verbal protestations against the very racism that he benefits from, and candidly reports on, he expects, no, demands recognition for, and applause from, the African colonized masses.

For direct engagement with the online newspaper articles in question, and in full recognition of the limitations that such reproduction offers, this segment offers six meditations, based on the selected online articles (amid hundreds, each with similar threads), that offer an account of African bodies in flight, declared dead on the coastal shores of Libya and Morocco on the Mediterranean Sea, either en route to Italy and Spain or on the shores of the latter, dead before entry.

Newspapers as Trackers of Massacres

First Meditation: “IOM Fears Over 300 African Migrants Drown En Route to Europe.” February 11, 2015 (IOM 2015)

In the above-noted online article, journalist Joel Millman reports from Switzerland with a caption: “IOM Fears Over 300 African Migrants Drown En Route to Europe.” IOM refers to the International Organization for Migration, which considers itself a lobbying group. It has headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, was under the leadership of Director General William Lacy Swing until 2018, and was subjected to the legacy of his influence until he died in Malaysia in June of 2021. Further along in the same article, it notes: “IOM denounced the actions of Libya-based people smugglers responsible for the deaths of hundreds of African migrants sent to sea during a storm in unseaworthy inflatable dinghies” (IOM 2015). Swing goes on to say, “What is happening now is worse than a tragedy—it is a crime—one as bad as any I have seen in fifty years of service” (IOM 2015). It is hard to believe that North Carolina-born Mr Swing has neither seen nor heard of crimes worse than 300 people put into a boat to cross a stretch of water, starting from one coastline to another, even if the destination is in Europe. The unseaworthy nature of the dinghy is not only a put-down on the choice of vessel that attempts to transport Africans but speaks to the general tone of how the plight of Africans is undermined, the vessel’s significance minimized, and the assertion that it is not worthy of sea travel. The minute the African leaves his¹⁸ place of abode, he is transgressing the European law of African confinement, whether the African travels to Europe or not.

18 The masculine “he” is utilized here with intent as the construction of the “feared” immigrant to Europe is a masculine construction. As such, whilst I am fully aware that White women are partners in colonialism and racism, unless

The African body is constructed as its own fleshed, psychological, and geographical border, not worthy of leaving the land from which he is born, and any instrument or vessel that transports the African to another place is unworthy, whether of sea or sky travel. The European construction of the African's presence is unwanted and illegal, defying the law of memory. European law is devised so that the European does not see the African from whom he stole. The African is meant to stay where he is, to live and dream within his flesh, his skin, contained by it, determined by it, not reaching outside of it. "These smuggling networks act with virtual impunity and hundreds are dying. The world must act," Swing continues (IOM 2015).

The author of the article, in keeping with the notion that Africans should be allowed to speak out against the reason for their plight, reported the words of one of the IOM staff members—a non-African at that—who had allegedly spoken to one of the newly arrived Africans on the beach who made it to the shore alive: "We know what fate we are going towards and (understand) the probability of dying,' one of the African survivors told IOM staff. 'But it is a sacrifice we consciously make to have a future'" (IOM 2015). The content of the latter statement could only be repeated by and cited by a non-African, for whilst the African does not need a translator, the words of the African, once spoken, are immediately reinterpreted, re-issued, renamed, rephrased, repeated from a mouth that is not African. For the African to speak, to assert the truth of his condition, is for the European Human Rights watchdog a bark that he does not want to hear. The bark is a cry that must be quelled. The IOM staff must be the victor, the carrier of the knowledge that has been spoken, the carrier of the death that the African speaks of not fearing, which the humanitarian appropriates: reciting it, believing that its spoken-ness is worthy because he has said it. The African appears again, as having been translated, spoken for, and spoken on behalf of. There is no permission sought. None is needed from an African in flight. His reasons are animated explanations, which he does not have the right to put forward; the humanitarian has to do it on his behalf.

Second Meditation: "Dozens of bodies wash up on Libyan beach." February 21, 2017 ("Dozens of Bodies" 2017)

The article noted above shows images of dead bodies strewn across the beach lying a few metres apart from one another with contorted facial expressions, which the camera captured for the reader, fully exposed

outrightly feminized, I employ the masculine terms he/his when referring to humanitarians by gender pronoun.

to the last aching grimace. The images are offered to the reader who is assumed to be European—directed at the gaze of negation, not empathy, disgust not sympathy; the faces are agony fraught, and the flash of the camera has managed to capture the aftermath of a death, an expression frozen by the iciness of the sea, which has not yet left the body. The bodies are numbered, hence the assertion of dozens, which are arranged like eggs, in trays, countable, pointed to from a distance, silent, not hatched. These “dozens” that the “Libyan beach” has “washed up” are brought to our attention as debris, as waste the sea spat out. From the caption and spread out across the online pages, we see images of what constitutes the expression “washed-up.” Like unwanted corks from a cheap bottle of wine, African bodies lie lifeless among the litter, with expressions still frozen, captured by the moment of death—the moment when the last breath was exhaled in disbelief. There was nobody to help, and the African was not delivered to his family living in packed accommodation in Rome, nor to the refugee camp on the outskirts of the metropolis of Madrid with bleached floors and steel doors. There was no biblical exodus for the Africans who sought to leave via the sea, no pathway paved in recognition of previous enslavement, as negotiated by Moses. Moses did not open the sea for the plight of the Africans whose birth in Africa is without a cradle, without the stolen minerals and raw materials that manifest Africa’s wealth that European colonizers stole. It is clear from the onset of the article that no measure of dignity has been applied to the African bodies whose importance is acquired through the coffins that are ordered in advance to bury the unwelcome dead bodies as quickly as possible.

The author of the article continues: “The Libya-Italy human trafficking route claimed at least 4,579 lives last year [2016] and the true number is thought to be much higher” (“Dozens of bodies” 2017). This is noted just below another image of contorted flesh, formed by the onslaught of death. The article continues: “January 2017 saw 288 migrants perish en route to Europe, the highest monthly toll seen since the 2011 uprising that drove Libya into chaos and turned the country into a death trap for the many Sub-Saharan Africans seeking to escape conflict, famine or poverty” (“Dozens of bodies” 2017). The author did not hesitate to take aim at Libya as a site of unrest and instability nor resisted drawing Gaddafi into the scene of the crime, as many articles of the kind have done. At the Africa–Arab summit of 2010, Muammar Gaddafi apologized for the Arab slave trade, noting: “On behalf of the Arabs, I’d like to condemn, apologize, and express deep sorrow for the conduct of some Arabs—especially the wealthy among them—towards their African brothers. The wealthy Arabs treated their African brothers in a disgraceful way in the past” (Chiwanza

2020). The Arab slave trade is not unknown nor are European humanitarians unfamiliar with how they relied on wealthy Arabic people to trade Africans to Europe. The article goes on to further note: “After years of civil war that ousted former strongman Moammar Gadhafi, Libya continues to be ruled by one UN-backed and one rival government that are locked in a protracted conflict, as well as several militias” (“Dozens of bodies” 2017). The holier-than-thou sentiments of the humanitarian approach ring loudly. European humanitarians are the descendants of the colonizers who massacred Africans for raw materials; they are also the financial and moral beneficiaries of colonization and are directly responsible for the continued dehumanization of Africans for over 300 years, now starring in their own Hollywoodized, hero-friendly broadcast, showcasing their civility, silent on their cruelties. The colonial crimes of their European ancestors have been carefully hidden. Now, in the twenty-first century, in guilt-free bliss, they throw food parcels from the sky to starving children on the African continent in acts of desperation to demonstrate postmodern photo-ready humanitarianism in imitation of the Christian gesture of manna dropping from heaven, which (according to biblical scriptures) the Israelites were gifted with during their exodus when food was scarce and the plight was to get away from slavery and oppression.

The humanitarian interventionist approach seeks to allegedly stop the deaths of Africans who swim or sink their way to the Libyan coast; not that Libya is not in Africa but that it is the first leg of the journey towards Europe. Yet the discourse of the desperate African, when journeying to Europe, is an act of transgression according to the unspoken law of European humanitarianism. The European humanitarians erase the crimes of their forefathers, erase the repercussions of past cruelties, and appear in full newsworthy gaze to hand over food and sustenance to people from the African continent which they robbed but we, allegedly, cannot feed or clothe ourselves. Usurpation and continued extraction determine the basis for the conditions of destitution. The European who extends the pious hand does so on the condition of colonial amnesia: that the African who seeks entry into Europe is destitute, and apparently through his own fault, his own neglect. This forgetting is not one any African can undertake since the material conditions of existence forbid it. The article notes further along: “The pandemonium has created an ideal situation for human traffickers profiting off misery and many who have survived the journey to Europe have described atrocities like rape, torture and forced labour happening to migration inside Libya” (“Dozens of bodies” 2017). Exploitation, colonialism, and usurpation were given magnificent names and their head-hunters—and I mean this in every sense of the word—enslavers, murderers, and rapists were called explorers,

voyagers, empire builders, expansionists, missionaries: the latter were titles that gun-slinging missionaries carried with pride for they believed God had sent them to civilize through the Christian name. “Onward Christian Soldiers,” a hymn written by the Christian priest Sabine Baring-Gould in 1865 and put to music in 1871 by Arthur Sullivan a few years before the Berlin conference of 1884, proclaimed European Christians to be soldiers of Christ. This performance of song and posturing was the mantra of British soldiers who killed and massacred Africans with the belief that God was on their side. In the twenty-first century, the hymn remains a regular feature in English-speaking Africa, encouraging the Christianized colonized to sing in praise of our ancestors’ murder and massacre, our own demise.

Another such gesture is one of celebration and reverence of colonialism, as is the case in many African countries during colonialism. For example, Jan Van Riebeeck’s day was celebrated in South Africa from April 6, 1952 onwards to commemorate 300 years of his “discovery.” To the Black Consciousness scholar, this was the celebration of uninvited usurpation and settler coloniality whereby the colonized were given the day off to enjoy our enslavement with a braai (barbeque), which is usually accompanied by alcohol.¹⁹ The liberals within the apartheid regime thought it best to change the name of this celebration to “Founder’s Day” in 1980 at the height of the national liberation struggle until the demise of the celebration in April 1994 and the birth of the “one person one vote” policy. Returning to the caption: the reference to “Libya-based people smugglers” is a criminalization of the present acts of aiding and abetting Africans in flight, set on crossing the Mediterranean, and of the profiting of funds from the voyage, with the clear intention of steering away from any unearthing of Arab slavery, and the complicity of the Arabs in selling their African brothers to the European enslavers. European colonizers usurped, enslaved, and shipped human cargo to various parts of the world, their boats and voyages paid for by European royalty, which never bore the stamp of criminalization but of biblical reverence. European hypocrisy permits the criminalization of smuggling when such acts perform the trade of transporting human bodies, which are illegal according to those having written

19 The Kaaps (the language the enslaved spoke when they were brought to the Cape as human cargo as a result of having been colonized by the Dutch in Java, Malaysia, and Bengal) and the Afrikaans word *braai* is not quite the same as a barbeque but similar. Under colonialism and apartheid, farmworkers were paid in alcohol, also known as “The Tot-system,” which meant that farmworkers did not receive any monetary payment for their labour. Alcohol, as such, has systematically been used in South Africa among the Indigenous population, who was made landless, to further the wretchedness of usurpation.

the law, without the consideration that the African body as a person, who has agency, consented. The callous care-economy of the Europeans, which hides behind the laws they write and put into practice, constructs the “poor African” as one that is bamboozled by thugs and money-grabbing Arab North Africans, destined to sink them to the bottom of the ocean or washed up on European beaches as dirty laundry.

Third Meditation: “The Libyan Slave Trade Has Shocked the World. Here’s What You Should Know.” *Time Magazine*, December 1, 2017 (Quackenbush 2018b)

In the online article above readers are again introduced to a multitude of images of African bodies accompanied by a narrative indicating that they have been barred from entering the coastal borders of Europe, especially those with proximity to the African continent. With several images of youthful Africans in a detention centre in Zawiyah, 45 kilometres west of Tripoli, stacked side by side, cuddling distance from one another, one of the images showed bodies packed to the capacity of tinned sardines that have been drawn from the sea. The focus was on Libya (as it often is), a country whose world-renowned leader was known for his apology for the Arab slave trade, allowing for a swift shift in blame, once again, and on a North African country. In this article, the focus was on the African bodies that survived the trip. As a reader one’s gaze is led by the photographic images on the computerized screen and one’s reading capacity is driven by the titles and subtitles, one of which reads: “Why is there a slave trade in Libya?” This is the question posed in the article, as though there had never been a slave trade where Africans were forcibly taken as human cargo to Europe and the Americas with the help of Libyans and the Arab North African region. The article continues:

The Libyan Coast Guard—supported with funds and resources from the E.U. and more specifically, Italy—has cracked down on boats smuggling refugees and migrants to Europe. With estimates of 400,000 to almost one million people now bottled up in Libya, detention centres are overrun and there are mounting reports of robbery, rape, and murder among migrants, according to a September report by the U.N. human rights agency. Conditions in the centres have been described as “horrific,” and among other abuses, migrants are vulnerable to being sold off as labourers in slave auctions. (Quackenbush 2018b)

Leonard Doyle, Director of Media and Communication of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), according to *Al Jazeera* accused Libya

of not having a “Rule of Law” (Donnelly 2017); calling out the above-noted events with language purporting to awaken us from our slumber, he notes: “as shocking as it seems, it’s indeed true” (Donnelly 2017). Doyle had previously worked in Haiti and the Philippines in the humanitarian sector, and before that was Washington Editor and Foreign Editor of *The Independent* (UK). As a White man of European descent, Doyle must be aware of the global oceanic slave trade, initiated by the Portuguese and Dutch and then pursued and enacted by the French, Belgian, British, Spanish, Italians, and Germans. Despite the lavish education Doyle has had the privilege to enjoy, he exhibits the classic amnesiac lack of knowledge when it comes to European history. Why would either rule of law or the practice of slavery be shocking to readers interested in the plight of Africans? Unless Doyle is trying to place the events of Africans seeking “refuge”—a phrase I use with caution and contention—in Europe via Libya as a practice that only occurs on the African continent where the “poor” innocent and caring Europeans have only the task of drawing our attention to what Africans are doing to “themselves.” Doyle, like so many humanitarians, sandwiched between hypocrisy and leisurely ignorance packaged together by an inflated saviour-of-the-African mentality, shows no signs of questioning his role in the after-life of colonialism that has given rise to a process whereby Africans, in wretchedness and destitution, leave the depleted African continent for which Europeans are responsible. Further along in the same article in *Time Magazine*, the author notes:

On Wednesday, African and European leaders met at a summit in the Ivory Coast and agreed on an urgent evacuation plan that would see about 15,000 people flown out of Libya. Most of the migrants will be sent back to their home countries. Speaking at the summit, French President Emmanuel Macron, called the abuse “a crime against humanity” and vowed the summit members would “launch concrete military and policing action on the ground to dismantle those networks,” according to *The Guardian*. The deal also included initiatives to target traffickers, including setting up a task force to dismantle trafficking networks. (Quackenbush 2018a)

Macron is quick to draw our attention to the use of the phrase, “crimes against humanity,” first used in the Nuremberg Charter in 1945, then at the Nuremberg Tribunal in 1946 where twenty-four prominent members of the leadership in Nazi Germany were tried in a court of law. The phrase hides in the flesh, under the knuckles of the 1884 leaders at the table of the Berlin conference, where premeditated murder against Africans was planned with fisted precision—death, murder, massacres, and perpetual incapacitation for those who were spared death and instead were subjected to brutality

so unspeakable that the pain would continue in the muscle memory of their children's children centuries later. France is built on crimes against humanity. Macron must have entered his position as president with little to no historical memory of how France was established as a European empire, or he suffers from colonial amnesia so much so that he simply fails to mention that more than two million Africans were enslaved by France between 1625 and 1848. King Louis XIII legalized the slave trade in 1642 and King Louis XIV offered a subsidy for each enslaved person who was brought into France's colonies. Many of the enslaved that France acquired came from Angola and the Congo: the Belgian King Leopold II was not the only beneficiary of the massacre of ten million Congolese. As King Leopold II's property, the people of the Congo lived under forced labour conditions, extracting raw materials for Belgium and its ally France on their own land, mourning the massacred. Whilst the Portuguese led the process of usurpation, colonialism, and enslavement in Africa, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Britain followed suit in what they then called expansionism. The concept of "crimes against humanity" was not part of their vocabulary because, in their vocabulary based on their mindset, Africans were not human. Likewise, thievery and forced labour were not crimes—they were the rights of usurpers who built themselves into European powers, many with the royal approval of the kings and queens who facilitated the massacres. Knighthood and royal medals were bestowed upon blood-stained shoulders at lavish ceremonies, with invisible blood dripping from the walls onto the floor where gleeful and gluttonous attendants removed their gloves to showcase their diamonded fingers with casual cruelty and shook hands with one another, sealing their unspoken agreement as murderers. In his book *Civilisation: How We All Became Americans* (2019), Régis Debray notes that Emmanuel Macron sings the French national anthem with his right hand on his heart, as is practised by citizens of the United States of America, and not with his hands at his side as is customary in France. When asked in an interview why he focused on this, Debray responded:

That is the cost of his youth: for this generation has known nothing other than the hegemony of American visuals, an unconscious domination that has become like second nature. And the Finance Inspectorate or banking is also a mental ecosystem in which the United States, the parent company, takes the code name "globalisation." (Aeschimann 2017)

Further along in the book, Debray takes another pierce at the conscience of the reader: US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley condemned the abuses, saying: "To see the pictures of these men being treated like cattle,

and to hear the auctioneer describe them as, quote, ‘big strong boys for farm work,’ should shock the conscience of us all” (Quackenbush 2018a). There is nothing unusual in the descriptions offered in the *Time Magazine* article discussed here. Not only is the article riddled with descriptions of enslavement that date back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it mimics the very history that the US-American and French leaders now want to bury. Instead of addressing the matter of the African bodies that lie visibly stacked together, in flight, the article focuses on the role of Libya to suggest that Libyans are responsible for the flight of Africans to Europe. Africans are not fleeing to Europe because Europe is more beautiful or because it offers better culinary experiences than the continent; Africans are fleeing to Europe because it is where the stolen wealth of Africa lives, which today still greases the wheels of modern-day European capitalism with accumulated interest, which started in the sixteenth century and climaxed after the Berlin conference of 1884.

Fourth Meditation: “More than 110 immigrants die in the Mediterranean in three days.” *The Guardian*, November 12, 2020 (Tondo 2020)

The above article was followed by a bolded subtitle: “Bodies of 74 people wash up on beach in western Libya as baby boy dies on rescue boat” (Tondo 2020). To be washed up is to be treated as an object of the sea not a subject of the sea—the water has cleansed you, washed from you the dirt that you entered it with, and the ocean served you dead and clean to the beach, as the ocean does, indiscriminately, of all unwanted matter. The baby boy that has died is further evidence of the active construction of the reckless African who offers death to a child as its possibility for survival—the contradictions of destitution from the volcanic ashes of colonial cruelty births and rebirths to sustain its ancestral line. “Four shipwrecks in the space of three days have claimed the lives of more than 110 people in the Mediterranean, including at least 70 people whose bodies have washed up on the beach of al-Khums, in western Libya,” the article continues (Tondo 2020). Below the caption, there is a photo of several life jackets strewn across the beach, against neatly smoothed white sand that stands in stark contrast to the suggestion of the white beach as a gift of God, which has to be preserved; the disruption was caused when it met the dark bodies of the “immigrant” (Tondo 2020). In this article, it was reported that local fishermen were able to save many from the sea, who were all, “in shock and terrified [...]. They saw loved ones disappear beneath the waves, dying in front of their eyes” (Tondo 2020). In all the articles, the response from

a humanitarian organization would be noted; in this case, it was *Alarm Phone*. “‘This is a massacre at Europe’s borders,’ said a spokesperson for *Alarm Phone*, a hotline for migrant boats in distress. ‘What else can we say? We have called for radical changes for years and still dying continues. It is devastating’” (Tondo 2020). Staff from humanitarian organizations, NGOs and the Red Cross all offered their commentary. “‘We did all we could to rescue those on board,’ said the medical team of the NGO Italian Emergency, operating onboard the *Open Arms* [a rescue vessel]. ‘All this took place just a few kilometres away from an indifferent Europe. Instead of preparing a structured search and rescue system, they instead continue to bury their heads in the sand, pretending not to see the cemetery that the Mediterranean Sea has become’” (Tondo 2020). The etiquette of care and the new amnesiac generation of care-capital drivers who withdraw capital from the banks of Europe feeds this economy of humanitarianism that features prominently in all the news articles covering the events of “immigrants” who have washed ashore, as the phrase notes.

Alessandra Di Maio first coined the term “Black Mediterranean” in “Il Mediterraneo Nero: Rotte dei Migranti nel Millennio Globale,” in *La Città Cosmopolita* (later translated into English), noting “Black is the colour of the sea during the crossings of the million migrants who have ‘burnt’ it in the past three decades. It is the colour of the Mediterranean when Africa and Europe meet in its waters” (2012, 145). Whilst Di Maio may have considered her title strategic or politically astute enough to draw attention to Black identity, the Black bodies she draws into her title become bodies without a history, without a continent, which plays into the denunciation of African history as part of European empire history.

In Gabriele Proglia et al.’s collection *The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders and Citizenship* (2021), the editors cite Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* as their inspiration. Whilst Gilroy’s text, by situating Hegel’s master and slave dialectic as integral to the era of modernity, offers a more elaborate account of the psychosocial components of African cultures that were transported to the United States by the enslaved Africans, the same cannot be said about Proglia and Hawthorne’s text. The African continent is composed of fifty-four countries, and five disputed countries and/or territories, two independent states with over 3,000 Indigenous languages, cultures, ethnicities, and dialects. Proglia and Hawthorne, along with the contributors in their collection, do little justice to the history of African civilization. Although *The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders and Citizenship* contributes to the study of the politics of the Mediterranean, there is an overwhelming focus on Black (as racialized identity), and not African (as continental identity), and certainly a narrative of immigration precedes

any other narrative, which lacks the flesh of the history of which they write. Referring to the Mediterranean as Black and not African refers directly to racialized identity and skin colour, which speaks to the question of whether upon sight—where the seer is *only* the European and the African the subject who is *being seen*—the mere visualization (the seeing) of the person, the identification which takes skin pigmentation as its primary source, meets the one and only criterion of the person as an immigrant and therefore a refugee. A refugee is someone who leaves their country because of war, famine, persecution, violence, or natural/environmental disaster. And whilst I take issue with this emphasis on refugees and immigration, the editors vehemently oppose Fernand Braudel's inability to acknowledge the slave trade and the role of Africans in the making of Europe and European capital in his book *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1949). Europeans who live as settler colonials in the colonies are never referred to as refugees or immigrants; their presence is put forward, legally, as Europeans as in the case of South Africa; classified as White, they enjoy all the privileges that the system of White domination ensures.

In the meditations offered above in response to the title of this article (and several of the ones I perused), particular importance is given to the Mediterranean: as though it has biblical and Godly status. The Mediterranean is portrayed as though it is part of Europe's heritage, a border but more significantly a physical and metaphorical *opening* that has to be preserved for the exclusive use of Europeans. Those who are forbidden from entering the *opening* are generally dark, Black (as racialized), and African, and as such constructed as seeking refuge inside of what that *opening* represents. Andrea Dworkin in her ground-breaking text *Intercourse* (1987) offers an account of the sexual act of intercourse as a prerogative of men who are socialized and groomed by other men since boyhood to take up their place in the world as dominators and violators of women. This grooming entails the simultaneous elements of seduction as violence and violence as seduction and can include physical chasing, cajoling, sweet-talking, belittling, humiliation, beating, strangling, and any form of violation to obtain the submission of a woman. Rape, battery, and sexual assault are all acts of violence: taking, stealing, usurpation, annihilation, destruction, and gaining illegal, unlawful access to a woman's body, which is known to produce trauma from violence and an afterlife of that violence where various forms of humiliation, oppression and exploitation under patriarchy is guaranteed. Dworkin and her radical feminist peers equated the cultural premise of heterosexual sex with rape; the radical feminists of her generation argued that there is a pervasive heterosexual culture where women are hated, and all forms of violence can be enacted against women

that is always justifiable in a patriarchal world. Yet the very same White women who utilize the critique of patriarchal oppression, within which they locate themselves as the oppressed and exploited, somehow cannot see themselves as perpetrators, as violators of Black people and African peoples, even when the benefits of continued coloniality and racism offer them each and every day of their feminist lives that delicious dessert called White privilege. The hole, as opening, that they are guarding—as per the Mediterranean as *an opening* to Europe, which allows access—is the entrance passage to the land where the stolen wealth of Africa was utilized to sustain and enrich a dying, disease-infected, impoverished Europe. Europeans will guard all holes from Africans which lead to the entrance to their White privilege.

Many Black Consciousness scholars-cum-activists are either accused or branded as hating White people, particularly Europeans and settler colonials in South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, for example, because we dare to challenge and confront the rewards that the afterlife of slavery and colonialism offer the agents and beneficiaries who participate in White Supremacy yet deny the significance in their lives. Similarly, Dworkin was very clear in her understanding of what she believed being human meant: “Questions of what is human, what is being, suggest questions of what is naked, what is sexed. Questions of metaphysics are questions of sex” (Dworkin 1988, 28). Dworkin detailed all aspects of human existence, especially the body and all its parts against which violence was committed. She believed that *when* we are attacked and hated, it is all of who we are as a human that is attacked. I offer Dworkin’s words here alongside a quote from my forthcoming book *Black Consciousness and the Politics of the Flesh*. Writing on skin in her second chapter, “Skinless,” in *Intercourse*, Dworkin notes:

The skin is a line of demarcation, a periphery, the fence, the form, the shape, the first clue to identity in society (for instance, color in a racist society), and, in purely physical terms, the formal precondition for being human. It is a thin veil of matter separating the outside from the inside. It is what one sees and what one covers up; it shows and it conceals; it hides what is inside. The skin is separation, individuality, the basis for corporeal privacy and also the point of contact for everything outside the self. It is a conductor of all feelings. Every time the skin is touched, one feels. All feeling passes through it, outside to inside. The skin is electric, hot, cold, opaque, translucent, youth, age, and sensitive to every whisper of wind, chill, and heat. The skin is our human mask; it is what one can touch of another person, what one sees, and how one is seen. It is the formal limits of a body, a person, and the only bridge to human contact that is physical

and direct. Especially, it is both identity and sex, what one is and what one feels in the realm of the sensual, being and passion, where the self meets the world. (Dworkin 1988, 26)

Racism has no boundaries, no borders, no lines of warning, no distinct shape or form, no smell or texture only *the condition*—created by the White subject—of Black presence, in every shape, every form, every life, and every subject whether one is considered “lighter” or “darker” than the expected physical skin colour of what “the Black” is [...]. Your African heritage is extracted whether seen or unseen and every person whose skin pigmentation suggests that not enough evidence of “the European” can be detected will be subjected to the scrutiny and interrogation whether physical, emotional, psychological, verbal or non-verbal that structural, systemic and institutionalised forms of racism teaches its agents within their schools, churches, homes and within the culture, language, pedagogy of the benefactor who is always agent first, and beneficiary second, both equally criminal, both essential for the reproduction and maintenance of the system of White domination, which the subject as White liberal fiercely denies. Skin pigmentation is the outer part of the flesh; it covers the flesh of the body, and acts as a sheath, shielding the body against the weathering of being and time. Skin covers the flesh, envelopes it, and is the outer form—the very containment of the body. For the body is the personhood, the human, which also acts as a vehicle and transports, carries the history of the subject wherever the subject ventures. And then, along comes the White subject who transports their racialised history and acts, as taught by White Supremacy, and stamps, marks, determines that skin pigmentation is the foundation for racialisation. (Maart, forthcoming)

If what is human stems from nakedness, and if what is naked exposes us, exhibits us in front of the *seer, who does not see but examines*, looks only for the difference in skin pigmentation, nose shape, eye shape, eye colour, hair texture, and hair colour, and on that basis is confronted with emotion that generates fear, then racism speaks to the revelation of that difference as the fear of not being what one fears. The fear of the other is always riddled with desire—and the fear of such desire, the denunciation of that desire, the withholding, denial, and repression, fuels the fear of sex, the fear of reproduction that erases the European, transforms the physical identity of the European to an identity that is unrecognizable. The European master cannot recognize his presence in a subject whose enslaved identity he relies upon to be the master.

Placing excerpts from *Intercourse* and *Black Consciousness and the Politics of the Flesh* upon the same page, one followed by the other, allows for a more elaborative joining of forces: a critique that places the African

subject of the sea at the centre of the European imaginary, and places the politics of sex, the politics of the flesh, and the politics of racism alongside one another.

Fifth Meditation: “Death, despair on Europe’s African frontier.”
Northwest Arkansas Democratic Gazette, May 26, 2021
 (Northwest Arkansas Democratic Gazette 2021)

Three key concepts in the title above stand out: death, despair, and Europe’s African frontier. The erroneous declaration that it is Europe’s African frontier—the frontier that belongs to Europe, is front and centre in the title of the online newspaper article. The photographic display shows dead African bodies as well as those barely alive clamouring for life onto rocks jutting out of the sea, marking a territory between Africa and African-occupied Spain (as per the vernacular of the article, and as per the legal claim to parts of the African continent Spain once had). This is an oxymoron that mocks the demise of the empire-building Spain, with its colonial slogan of “the empire on which the sun never sets” that it once was so proud of. The expression was used to show how it was always daylight in at least one part of Spain’s many colonized territories; unfortunately, the same slogan was used by the British Empire during colonialism. The words *death* and *despair* stand beside each other in the title of the article; anyone who reads the article with such wording expects the word African or Black to feature in it; this is the conditioning that we have received within the world where the mention of Africa is usually followed by the words: famine, disease, war, and violence. To have despair, or be faced with it, means that one has a complete loss of hope. The caption tells the reader that they are about to read about the plight of Africans, and as such, a death-bound journey is implied each time such a caption is used. The reader, in visibly reading the title, and then seeing the familial bodies of despair and destitution, relies on the memory of the narrative that is in circulation: a recurring theme from which repetition develops into familiarity.

“They piled pebbles on the fringes to stop the shiny golden covering from blowing away. Two burly men in white coveralls then arrived with a plastic coffin. Their boots scrunched on the shingle as they carried the corpse away: yet another body, picked up off yet another European shore” (*Northwest Arkansas Democratic Gazette* 2021). The tone of the article appears sympathetic yet riddled with “humanistic” overtures—spitting distance from sheer patronization. The objective is to show how poverty-stricken and desperate the Africans are. “After beaches in Greece, Italy and elsewhere,

a fleck of Spanish territory on the northern coast of Africa this week became the latest deadly flashpoint in Europe's battle to stem migration flows from less fortunate regions of the world wrecked by conflict, poverty and other miseries" (*Northwest Arkansas Democratic Gazette* 2021) Further along, it noted: "In an unprecedented 48-hour siege that quickly overwhelmed Spanish authorities, more than 8,000 people clambered around border fences and swam from Morocco to the Spanish-governed enclave of Ceuta" (*Northwest Arkansas Democratic Gazette* 2021). Many European countries still maintain active ownership of land and countries they usurped and colonized and declare African land as theirs without flinching, expecting the colonized to accept such a declaration. To the English-speaking world, colonized in language and culture by the British, the Malvina Islands off the coast of Argentina do not belong to Argentinians and are known as the Falkland Islands. It is after all Margaret Thatcher's reputation of being the "Iron Lady" in 1982 that convinced the British that it was worth going to war for. When usurped and occupied territories are located in other parts of the world, the colonized are expected to erase their ancestral memory and accept the illegality of European law.

Abdul R. JanMohamed in his text *The Death-Bound-Subject*, from whom I borrow the term, undertakes a critique of death and subjectivity of the enslaved in the literary texts of Richard Wright. JanMohamed argues that the death-bound-subject is fully aware of the threat of death. For JanMohamed the death-bound-subject is formed from childhood onward, in other words, birthed into the afterlife of destitution created by transatlantic slavery, which was furthered on United States soil. Parents are, as such, aware of the imminent threat of death—for themselves and their children. For Africans who flee their homes, their journey often starts in one country; they travel through several to eventually cross the Mediterranean ocean. The prospect of death is no more real than the death of the material conditions under which they live—one that has been depleted from mineral wealth in particular, by Europeans. Social death, which can also take the shape of wretchedness and melancholia, in many parts of the African continent is one of perpetual exclusion from enjoying the rewards that one's labour produces, which one cannot afford to purchase. The modern-day hierarchies of class, skin pigmentation, gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation have their roots within the colonial period and cannot be overlooked and simply placed as histories of oppression that emerged without the hand of the colonizer. Persecution based on racialized identity, ethnicity, caste, class, gender, and sexual orientation, as well as on how ostracization is inflicted, are key indicators that drive despair. Social death was also exercised against Jewish peoples in Venice in 1516, where the

government forced Jewish people to live in the Venetian ghetto. Likewise, as per the many racialized geographical spaces Jewish people were forced to live as marginalized and ghettoized throughout Europe, a similar measure was legally introduced for Jewish people who migrated from Europe to South Africa after the First World War, who lived and owned businesses in the old slave quarter of the Cape, District Six, as they were not allowed to own businesses in the Central Business District (CBD). The ghetto's separation from the city of Venice was only ended in 1797 by Napoleon. Forcing people who have been racialized to confined spaces, like ghettos, homelands, reserves, and townships, which we see in the lives of Jewish peoples and African peoples, Indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, for example, and places where social death was instituted to force a nation to die out, is well documented in European history.

I return to JanMohamed's *The Death-Bound-Subject*, in particular his discussion of "Uncle Tom's Cabin: The Dialectics of Death" in chapter two. Abdul JanMohamed analyses one of the chapters in the said text by Wright, "Big Boy Leaves Home," to show readers what happens when a White woman sees two boys swimming. "When the white woman who stumbles on the boys swimming, 'black and naked' which implies that their blackness was as offensive as their nakedness, she immediately panics, and her fiancé, who follows her to the pond, immediately assumes that she has been molested" (JanMohamed 2005, 43). Although JanMohamed's text examines the work of African American Wright's work of the deeply racist 1940s United States of America, the similarities of the threat of death in the formation of Black subjectivity are extended to any context where enslavement and colonialism set the ground for the life of the Black subject, which is always linked to Africa.

Sixth Meditation: "Dead children washed up on Libya beach, says charity." BBC News, May 25, 2021 ("Dead children" 2021)

The title above appeared on the BBC website on May 25, 2021. The online article is laden with images of Africans in flight. The opening of the article shows an image of a designated official assisting an exasperated African youth, with an orange and white rescue ring around his body. The wetness of his body is visible to the reader, and it is clear from the location of the photo that it captured the young man as he was "rescued." In the distance, a younger youth with his hand raised, as though in a classroom asking for permission to speak, signalling, "don't forget about me," could be seen in the water. Further along, a series of photos are used as embellishments to

the caption. The most daunting image of the article is the one where five officers in militant camouflage attire chastise and restrain a young African man. The young man is kicking and screaming, and the photo image was able to capture the moment of his despair. The article does not address the treatment of the officers, many of whom are armed, but instead shifts the focus back to Libya, and brings us back to the question of recklessness and danger, and the irresponsibility of the African parent. It notes as follows:

The NGO *Proactiva Open Arms* received some of the photos from inside Libya and said they are of people who had tried to cross the Mediterranean to Europe, a dangerous route for migrants. They show the partially clothed bodies of small children and a woman, bloated and half-buried in the sand. (“Dead children” 2021)

In this edition of the news, several Africans are “caught in the act” so to speak, as the images to support the title of the article are posted in abundance. The images show coast officers escorting “the African as criminal, and as trespasser” caught in the act. In all the online articles I perused on the topic, including this one, there is a fascination with images, posting them, sharing them, and unpacking the details of Africans who had been caught and fished from the sea. One of the images posted online in the newspaper, which has since been removed, shows a small child in a polka-dot one-piece sleepsuit. Sand has partially obscured the body of the child, and there is a stillness, a quiet; the visual placement of the image directs the reader to a head buried in the sand, which is suggestive and reads as a sign of ignorance, which the reader cannot overlook. Another photographic image (also now removed) shows a woman in green trousers with her body spread out, like a bird in flight, but whose wings were not large enough to swim ashore. The woman’s top is pulled up over her head where her physicality pays testimony to her feminine form but her faceless posture, with a body in a stage of undress, is very much the image that is presented. Dead. Feminine form. The sea. Faceless, nameless, she is a statue of death. This is where her theatre of cruelty ended.

The humanitarian gazes at the African’s exhausted, sea-eaten body and calls for plastic burial bags to bury the frozen gaze of the African whose ancestors were never poor but rich, and who was robbed by the very Europeans who now cast pity upon them. The European then showers the drowned African with religious piety, asking why in the name of God Africans take such death-laden risks, stacking themselves together in a sea vessel like chickens in a coop knowing that they will not survive the trip. The gaze penetrates the subject without permission. Dead or alive,

the oppressive and dehumanizing nature of the European humanitarian gaze as the finder, discoverer, revealer, capturer, and exhibiter, both with physical eyes and with the lens of the camera, which undresses and fosters a pathology of pornography, is set on satisfying the viewer for whom the image is designed. The European humanitarian not only displays the body of the dead African but also poses with their freshly acquired poor dead people—images that I call, without hesitation, *pornography of the poor*.²⁰ My contention of pornography of the poor is grounded in the visual depictions, which serve as evidence and show a clear preoccupation with descriptions by the European journalists of the African body (in the articles engaged with above): the shape the African subject's body arrives in and is seen in death, the journey towards death, and thus which condition, position, posture, and form the body is found upon arrival on European shores. In putting forward this notion of a pornographic gaze of the poor, I am suggesting that the intrusive, undignified gaze that reveals the flesh of the African subject is objectified, constructed as a site from which Europeans draw pleasure.

The viewer is meant to be European; the viewer is meant to be disgusted, for disgust also serves as pleasure, as the pleasure of the perversion of poverty that makes the colonizer feel superior, good about themselves, and as the perpetual, eternal dominator. The image is designed for the viewer who seeks satisfaction from the knowledge that African bodies, in all nakedness, seek entry onto the European continent to live under European law as the modern-day enslaved. This photographic evidence of conquest in its afterlife—where the master is still the master because the previously enslaved return to him, uninvited, driven by the poverty of their condition, is the aphrodisiac of the colonizer. This is the eroticized and exoticized climax, the high, the euphoria, of the African-fleshed nipple and the navel, who returns to the colonizer, in death, for final recognition. The condition of the colonized becomes unbearable because living in the afterlife of extraction from the earth of minerals such as diamonds and gold and plundering the African earth with forced labour and enslavement drives the colonized to the very source of the reproduction of its capital interest. Now, dead on the beach, the colonizers rub shoulders with the “real” oppressed of the African continent, much like the colonials before them who fooled themselves into believing that the Africans need them like a priest needs a sinner.

20 I have made several references to my conceptualization of this term that stems back to 2004. See, for example, Maart 2004 and 2020a.

The pornographic eye sexualizes the subject by making him an object, while the objectified subject unravels and unpeels its layers of mind and flesh through a bodily posture of debasement as per the conditions that are created and to which he must respond, bringing pleasure to the gazer. The pleasure of the onlooker is derived from the condition of defeat exhibited by the subject's body: contorted, auctioned, camera-captured, and displayed for the gaze of the onlooker who experiences debasement as pleasure. Pleasure is not only the sensation of sexual arousal toward climatic satisfaction; pleasure is also the observation of suffering as gratification. Gratification of any kind has to include the satisfaction of desire; desire always includes pleasure. The master sets the material conditions of enslavement for the enslaved to relish in, and out of which the enslaved must meander, from the trappings of confinement to the condition of impoverished-ness, and from which all acts of escape are merely acts of cruelty towards further dehumanization.

It is the amalgamation of these images that produces the animalistic, which in turn sets the stage for disgust. Between and among spaces where pause and reflection meander around text and images, the question of transgression emerges as a key theme, as well as the question of the African transgressing the prohibitions imposed on the enjoyment of life in the afterlife of colonialism. Dispossession brings about a lived experience that produces a lack of fulfilment; the desire for fulfilment can be as basic as eating, seeing one's family, and living with the belief that one will live tomorrow, and it is this afterlife that the African who flees is robbed of.

To generate horror and disgust at the actions of Africans by showing the African as animalistic, the European humanitarian reporter directs its European citizens to disqualify the Africans from any form of human dignity. Images captured amid the blazing sun suggest that the flesh of Africans is not only rotting among the debris but that a dead body, an African one at that, has carried and brought disease that will spread among Europeans. In an instant, disgust overtakes pity and becomes the rallying point for a politics of disgust, where the European master holds the power over decision making, which instantaneously becomes the basis for illegality. Disgust is not only the fundamental refusal of another person's humanity, but when the other person is a dead African on a white sandy European beach, disgust has reached the lowest level of tolerance, of life, of existence.²¹

Oscar Camps, the founder of *Proactiva Open Arms*, tweeted photos of the bodies of "young children and women who had only dreams and ambitions

21 See also Nussbaum 2004.

to live” (“Dead children” 2021), noting they had been left there for three days. Freelance journalist Nancy Porsia—who also posted images of the bodies online—tweeted however that a contact of hers found the bodies on Saturday and informed the authorities, who buried them the same day in Abu Qamash cemetery. The assumption that the dead were Muslim and thus the same-day burial practice observed in Islam would apply, despite the inconsistencies, serves to further humanize the humanitarian. Further along, in the same article, the question of bodies and territory rears its head again:

And in the western Mediterranean last week, some 8,000 people including children swam or waded around a border fence to get to the Spanish territory of Ceuta from Morocco. Authorities returned several thousand soon after. (“Dead children” 2021)

Ceuta is physically very much part of the African continent; as such Africans in Ceuta are on home ground not on the European continent. A Wikipedia search cites it as: “A Spanish autonomous city on the north coast of Africa” (Wikipedia 2022). The city is composed mainly of Christians, Muslims, and Sephardic Jewish people, most of whom claim their African origins. When Spain recognized the independence of Spanish Morocco in 1956, Ceuta and the other *plazas de soberania* remained under Spanish rule. Spain considers them integral to the Spanish state, but Morocco has disputed this (Wikipedia 2022).

What Europeans seem to forget is that memory is a key component of African culture across the continent. The role of grandparents, elders, and the day-to-day conversations with the ancestors is an existential practice that enriches the lives of Africans—in speech, dreams, writing, and the imagination. The genocide of the European Roma between 1939 and 1945, similar to that of the Shoah, shows a clear indication of Europe’s insistence on ridding itself of people it considers impure, and therefore an imposition: physically, socially, and economically. Roma peoples were also called “Gypsies” because Europeans considered Roma people “dark skinned” and initially assumed that the Roma were from Egypt. But Europe today is still inflicting the same measure of hatred and disgust at Africans as death-bound subjects; if not through social death, then through various measures that allow for destruction, massacres, and extermination. I am often reminded of how Hitler racialized Jewish people. Hitler was renowned for making statements that depicted Jewish people as the carriers of Blackness into the Rhineland and secretly ruining the German race through what he believed was bastardization. Not only did Hitler see Jewish people as

African but he depicted Jewish people as secretly conspiring to destroy the cultural and political height of Germany (Hitler [1937] 1974, 295). It was not only the racialization but the depiction of Jewish peoples as nothing more than a racial slur, which by not referencing the African continent suggests it without the courtesy of naming it: the place that denotes Jewish origin, Jewish history. The magnitude of such a racial trope stripped Jewish peoples of a country, a continent, and a history of civilization.


Conclusion

The newspaper accounts discussed above, each accompanied by a strategic image, offer us a narrative of the desperate African who is also an irresponsible African, who after leaving the African continent drowns with his family and small children before reaching the coastal borders of Europe. In turn, the narrative of the European accumulation of dead bodies suggests a performance of care and sets the stage for benevolence. Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion (Ricoeur 1970, 32), which he asserts is drawn from his masters of suspicion—Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud—is useful when understanding journalistic accounts in newspapers that are meant to give the appearance of straightforward reporting yet hide, mask, and forbid a historical reading of Europeans as violators of African land and African people. Instead, the thieving, plundering European is cast as the pious, philanthropic humanitarian, who does his Godly duty and buries his uninvited African burden six feet under the ground.

Today it is the twenty-first-century European colonizer—the descendant and beneficiary of African usurpation, colonization, extraction, and exploitation—that denounces the materiality of the African body: a construction that emerges out of a set of intertwined power relations indicative of coloniality, race, enslavement, among others, that strips the African body of the wealth Europe does not want the African to be remembered for. Eighty-six years may have passed since 1937 when Hitler published his racial rhetoric that sought to justify the murder, massacre, and extermination of Jewish peoples as Africans. It does not take much reading of online newspapers, to place these readings within the broader context of the day-to-day construction of racism in Europe that feeds from the despair of Africans, to understand that the creation, perpetuation, and reproduction of racial tropes against Africans, whether of Arabic, Jewish, or any other racialized, religious, cultural, and ethnic background, remain at the forefront of the European imagination. If only the imagination was this place where thoughts and ideas were simply displayed against a mental screen with no agency, and no

possibility for murderous action. The European imagination is real, active, and put into action every single day to ensure that the African who seeks any form of permanent entry from any of its *openings*, whether through sea or land, has to know that if extermination is not achieved, a borrowed life of social death as the premise for temporality is extended, upon which conditions are always placed. In the words of David Olusoga, in *The Guardian* in September 2015: “The roots of European racism lie in the slave trade, colonialism—and Edward Long” (Olusoga 2015). The aforementioned quote speaks volumes of the belief system of Edward Long: English-born British colonial administrator, slave owner and historian, and one of the most renowned eighteenth-century defenders of slavery, who died in the early nineteenth century. The Europe depicted in these newspaper accounts is a Europe that still *dismembers* the African: picks up, picks apart, and discards Black flesh as a means to erase Africa from the currency that offered Europeans the life they are now privileged to enjoy.

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