



# *Philosophy born of massacres. Marikana, the theatre of cruelty: The killing of the ‘kaffir’<sup>1</sup>*

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This article probes the possibility of the reasons of reason by interrogating the deconstruction of the subject – the Black man subject as policeman, and the Black man subject as miner – upon the grounds set out by the killing of miners at Marikana. The South African press referred to the events of 16 August 2012 as “The Marikana massacre” and reported that not since the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 had such force and brutality been witnessed. Guided by the murder tactics handed over by White policemen, the Black policemen shot Black men,<sup>2</sup> one after the other, for no

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1 This article is a work-in-progress. I have given three talks on different aspects of Marikana [Philosophy born of struggle 2013, as part of my keynote address at Purdue University), The Caribbean Philosophy Association 2014, St Louis), Philosophy born of struggle 2014, Augusta, Georgia)]. This article is the first written account of a particular philosophical position on which I am currently working, “Philosophy born of massacres”.

2 I am not overlooking the role that White policemen played in Marikana nor the fact that Police Commissioner Phiyega – a Black woman, who has recently been referred to as “The Caster Simenya of the Police”, on account of her alleged intersexed birth – gave the command to use force – a term she has repeatedly uttered when questioned by the media. Whilst I have, on previous occasions, addressed the Black man subject – from trade unionist to capitalist – with emphasis on the role played by Cyril Ramaphosa, Deputy President, businessman, politician, I am not focusing on his role in this article. My concern is with understanding the relationship between Black men as policemen and Black men as miners, and why, under close scrutiny of the footage available, the

reason other than to assert the authority of the right to kill when wearing a South African police uniform. I call the resulting massacre a theatre of cruelty, which informs my point of departure for a philosophy born of massacres. This article addresses the salient features of what marks this relationship between the Black man who considers himself a product of postmodernity and post-apartheid, and the Black man who considers himself the miner.

## Prologue

### *Between philosophy of being and the event of being. Ontological reflections. August 2012.*

Memories. The month of August brings to my Being the fear of revolt, the fear of revelation of what lies hidden under my skin. Every year, starting in 1974, the year after our forced removal from District Six on August the 4th 1973, the hives make their appearance – lumps knitted into the tendons of my flesh. Hives, thick and lumpy, not to be mistaken for a mosquito bite, a love bite, a bruise or a youthful blush, but thick fleshy mounds of flesh that rebelled each year in memory of me, my flesh, our flesh, flesh that was punished, denied, bundled together and driven away, forcibly removed, relocated. A revelation took place through the telling of a tale – the first story of our first forced removal from District Six was written seventeen years later, when my annual hives, now rebellious teenagers, appeared in Toronto, this time when I had to bring them to reckoning, confront the gathered, clotted, redness of my blood with the force of the black ink that leaked from my pen onto paper in a new city, a new country, to which my body had been moved. Writing the hives was an event; writing was the event. Writing the hives as a historical moment, a slice of my life in District Six, was *my* event. It was a historical moment: a first-time writing because I could not lift my head up from my pillow on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1990. The body labours under memory and pays the price of silence or death. And in that moment when silence speaks to consciousness, the unconscious listens when we force it out of hiding, force its hand, make it say what we have been instructed not to say. “Don’t tell mamma and pappa about the hives – it will only make them feel worse and make their defeat a medical condition”. In the aftermath of a head that did not move, but a consciousness that was forced to, I wrote District Six, I wrote Rosa the girl in my memory that represented all girls I grew up with, I wrote ‘No Rosa, No District

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former so fervently shot and killed the latter, which, considering the overall event, can only be called a massacre.

Six'. District Six had been bulldozed, flattened. There was no Rosa, no girl who ran inside and outside houses filled with flavour and fervour. The home of my ancestry was gone, we were removed from it, and whilst the physical land still stood after being ravaged, its children taken away, memory forced itself upon me like a forgotten trauma, fraught with unsayable things to say. A narrative was started, a silent, quiet one in the middle of the night, when bodies were asleep and where the ghosts of memory visit, haunt, remind, instruct, then fade into consciousness like a ripe tomato, waiting to burst in your face before your teeth sink into its tenderness. The short story was written then sent away, like a child one releases to the world to foster, care for, pick up and make its own. On August 4th 1991, there were no hives. Writing buried them – that is what I told myself. Now if only I could make my unconscious believe it. The publication of 'No Rosa, No District Six' brought about the end of the hives. I had publicized them not by telling of their presence – that happened year after year – but by untying the knot of memory, a knot that was known to my mother whose mother did not need to know that every year our defeat would stage itself upon my body, my flesh would rebel, perform the production of state cruelty. And yet, in the moments when the month marches to meet me, August, that month – as I call it – then that day, that fourth day, that day where I watch my body wait for time to pass – ticking in my sister's colon, grinding under my grandmother's teeth, hovering over the ghost of my grandfather's amputated legs. The eyes of doctors who watch a teenage girl accompanied by her mother tell of hives that showed themselves for one day, and then disappear like ghosts in the rain on a winter's night on Prince George drive, is like a tale that has no beginning and no end. I watched the eyes of doctors show light, then dim with disbelief. The prognosis was poor. She is the same girl whose grandfather's legs were amputated, one after the other, one year after the next, one year after their forced removal – a family memory, a community's memory, District Six, the old slave quarter, lives within our flesh. She is the same girl who hears her grandfather speak another language and who looks to her mother. "It is his language. IsiXhosa is his language. He just never spoke it in District Six", says her mother. Pappa sits with a blanket I have never seen before. He wraps it around him and sits in his wheelchair and gazes at the blue sky between grey township flats pregnant with poverty. If only I could let memory fade away and tell my unconscious to do the same. Each year I remember 1990, the year I wrote the story; the year the hives retreated and I told myself I hope I never see them again. Flesh that force itself outside, on your skin, part of you but outside, for you to see your hidden or forbidden is flesh that will always be in charge of your consciousness. The speaking subject is a divided subject; for it is in writing where speech and the imagination find representation away from the speech that restricts it, contains it, forbids it. The ontological reflection is both necessary and urgent: it is the event that connects you to other events ...

## August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The event

### *The scene of the crime*

It is that month again: twelve days later. Telephone calls to inform on what the television screen is producing as an event reaches the ear of the philosopher; the details of the radio broadcast suggest that one ought to consider the viewing. There, upon the invitation of a dear friend, the philosopher proceeds to view the event with another.

### *The screen opens*

8:30am. Dawn has settled. It is properly morning – unmistakably so. Miners gather together, slowly, each seeking out his peer, and together, the human cluster starts to grow. Within minutes there are a good hundred. In the distance, the dark blue uniformed Black policemen, black helmets in place, stand with legs spread and ammunition at each pocket of their uniforms, fitted to the function of killing ... bulging pockets are spread across arms and legs. The miners are seated. The familiar chant of A-m-a-n-d-l-a! rings out. The heads of thousands of Black men rising to the chant with hand movements to accompany the verbal outcry, A-w-e-t-h-u! The confirmation chant reverberates throughout the field where mineworkers sit. It is a familiar scene; it is the scene of protest. My eyes survey the entirety of the field – as far as the television camera allows. Mayibuye! Hands go up and out. The thundering of the collective chant enlarges mouths. Moments later, placards with black writing make their appearance – each a demand that speaks to the miners' exploitation. There is barbed wire strewn across the terrain where miners begin their march. The police are only a few feet away. Elders wrapped in blankets, one resembling leopard skin, another a green blanket, each wrapping an envelope of culture and heritage sealed from the onslaught of a thinking that dishonours tradition, negates heritage. The scene moves to the familiar – the Afrikaner policeman who takes charge, shouts commands, lays down the procedure and instructs on what is to be done. Police vans, big, large, bulky, drive with large containers attached to their boots. The boot of the bakkie [transl: truck] is open and we see reams and reams of barbed wire, ready to be strung across the landscape where bodies are seen to be marching, where barbed wire has already been placed. Moments later, the extended wiring begins. A helicopter circles above the blue sky. Within seconds, police, Black policemen, emerge. Sign and signifier do not match in my imagination. Black policemen run across the field under the Afrikaner command in a ugly-like wave, front to back,

and move across the field to score – the goal, to kill. Police and trucks outnumber miners.

Bullets ring. Flesh bellows as bullets pierce its being. Blood spews on the warm, brown earth.

*Breaking news.* An interruption. Another television station interjects. The real interrupts the televised; the televised interrupts the real. The camera moves to the legs of the Black policemen as they move, run, shoot, kill, then hunt in order to shoot and kill again. A White policeman, a leader of a cluster, throws his hands up intermittently, as though applauding the execution of the command. Again, bullets ring out, Black bodies fall, blood leaks on the ground. A close-up shows the eyes through the helmets of Black policemen who take aim, to shoot, to kill. In a corner of the screen, a group of policemen pull razor wire to the edge of a square to ensure that the chicken trap is tight. The miners will be caught even as they run alongside the road. Once inside, there is no exit. They are trapped. Within seconds they are gunned down. Their bodies sink into the earth ... one after the other. And in the parting moments when life leaves their bodies, their plight plummets, and our disbelief sinks beneath the earth for a burial of silence. A witness becomes an alibi when in silence she participates, colludes, accepts that her silence is complicity, and fails to recognise that democracy promises freedom, and with freedom comes responsibility; democracy can only promise if she delivers on that responsibility. Each generation owes democracy the duty of revelation. In silence we watch as the remaining miners disperse. In our dried open mouths, shock has blown between the guttural estuaries of our parted lips. The Black policemen track down the Black men who are on their way home, between and among rocks where they lie wounded and distraught. In the path paved for their protest and wherein refuge to return home is sought, they face the inescapable avarice of their Black brothers, hungry for their death. Each miner, whether en route to their homes or in refuge under a rock, is tracked, shot, killed, and when the dust has settled on the blood, warm with rebellion, the camera moves away to offer the miner the dignity death demands – not his death nor his life, but the death of the image that the camera captures in the act of reporting. Their ghosts look back at us, at heritage, at history, at struggle. Shock is a response motivated by disbelief. Thinking forces itself within the circumference of the known in order to make meaning. Meaning is not always the objective of the philosopher, but thinking is. What kind of thinking was present here? Why massacre miners? Why would a Black man kill all those Black men with such avarice, such hunger, almost lascivious, almost already an act of desire? Who was the Black man, the postmodern Black man killing? Was he killing his narcissistic other – his heritage, his history, which he wants to erase because it reminds him of a time he was treated as less human, a time when suffering spoke his name, was written in his blood? What does the

massacre of the Black man do for the country's consciousness? Fanon would shudder if he observed how decolonisation brought us to this moment of colonial obedience – furthering the objective of the coloniser by killing the native. Human not human, human dehumanised: the subject of the event is not the killing of the Black man, but the killing of the native Black man, the 'kaffir'. That word, *the* word, the unspoken word, the deed that situates the word – the word is the subject and it has its own history within my history – within my blood. 'Kaffir' consciousness, I do not take you lightly.

## 1. The violence of the letter

The most crucial aspect of resisting the hegemony consists in struggling against its attempts to form one's subjectivity, for it is through the construction of the minority subject that the dominant culture can elicit the individual's own help in his/her own oppression (Abdul JanMohammed 1987: 247)

Mark Mathabane's book, *Kaffir boy* (1986), popularised the term 'kaffir' in the US and gave American readers some insight into how Black men were dehumanised through usurpation, colonisation, racism and apartheid. The word 'kaffir' is derived from Arabic meaning 'infidel' or non-believer, or non-Muslim. Portuguese colonisers adopted the term and used it upon East Africans when they became involved in the Arab slave trade.<sup>3</sup> Dictionary sources also note that Kaffraria was the descriptive name given to the southeastern part of what is currently the Eastern Cape, which was called 'the land of the kaffirs'. Districts such as King William's town and East London were annexed by the British and known as British Kaffraria, although annexed in 1865 as part of the Cape Colony. Territory beyond the Kei River to the Natal frontier (now KwaZulu-Natal) was known as Kaffraria proper. In the twentieth century, the term came to represent the most offensive racial slur to be uttered by the apartheid regime and the White population against Black people, to suggest a range of attributes ranging from backward, tribal, illogical, steeped in tradition, lazy, uncouth, without reason and rationality, tempestuous, slow-thinking, but also rebellious, stubborn, defiant. In present South Africa, it holds the same type of offence as is associated with the term 'nigger' and much like in the United States, it is often uttered by one Black person to another as a term of debasement. Given the history of the term 'kaffir', and being aware of the fact that the purpose of this article is not to offer a history of colonialism and apartheid, it is interesting to note that Robert Mangoliso Sobukwe, born in 1924, the founder of the Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa, was born in Graaf Reinett, the Eastern Cape; Stephen Bantu Biko was born in King

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3 See <[www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)> and <[www.en.m.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.m.wikipedia.org)>

William's Town, the Eastern Cape, in 1946 and was one of the founding members of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania; Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born in 1918 in Mvezo, a small village close to Mthatha, also in the Eastern Cape. The majority of the miners at Marikana came from the Eastern Cape.

## 2. The violence of the word: saying it or not saying it

We live in letters and words, in phrases, in coded alphabetical letters out of which we pour the already accumulated violence if we do not write the word, but only the alphabetical letter. If we remove the flesh of the word, and replace it with an alphabetical letter, we have erased the history of that word, the violence of the very world that created that word. Words are used to inflict pain, to perpetuate the legacy of the violence the word bears, and such an act, an act intended for the purpose of brutality, should keep us aware, always, adamant not to reproduce the violence by uttering the word. It is after all the violence that the word conjures that infuriates and frustrates because, despite our agency, we cannot go back and replace the word or make it go away because the word cannot be separated from its history; adamant not to reproduce the violence of the word to inflict the memory of that brutality, the history of its violent operation and reproduce those realities through our retelling, we refrain from using it and hope that it never surfaces again. Our worlds are already made up of the forbidden – words we are not meant to say for fear that the violence the word contains will be restaged, that we as subjects of oppression and humiliation will be restaged, that it [saying it, saying the word] will trigger a memory that will take us back to the time when that word was our humiliation, our death, our destruction. In the articulation of our refusal to use the word – in speech or in writing, however superior our stance is or may sound to ourselves and to those who wish to hear it, and to hear it as morally correct or ethically sound, we cannot distance ourselves from the violence that is always already present in our withholding of a word out of fear or protocol. The k word has just as much violence as the n word – both letters stand for 'kaffir' and 'nigger', respectively, and each has its own history of violence. Writing the violence of the word is necessary; an alphabetical substitute, however morally correct it may sound to some, is not always the best option for making visible the violence that is still present, not buried or invisible, carried out in our midst, while we struggle with the absence of the words with which to say it – say the word, that word. Writing the word has no audio effect, of this I am aware [sound inflicts, while writing its mere imitation forges a consciousness of thinking, a register of the thinking on the killing] and thus, in writing it and not saying it, the effect is always different, always at the distance of the word, which, when spoken, draws us into its history as its spoken agents, its carriers. I do not wish to assert a moral ground for writing, nor for needed scholarship that has to take place because

we have witnessed an event, an act, which, because of the existing protocol, we assure ourselves that not saying it – not saying that the postmodern Black policeman whom we observed on the televised screen kill the miner when, in fact, it was the killing of the kaffir, which produced silence and shame among us, nationally and internationally – will not make it go away. The killing of the Black man cast as the native has a history that is rooted in our first concepts of fear. The Black man as fear is a narrative that we are fed since birth – even if, or while that Black man is our father, uncle, brother, grandfather. The native at Marikana has always been in our homes – as the imagined Other whose fate is always death.

I am not using the term 'kaffir' for the purpose of outrage or effect; I am using it, because it is necessary to refer to the genealogical trajectory of the Black man in South Africa, without apology or shame, without delusion or avoidance, without denial or disavowal. The very act of negation, when unspeakable, serves the purpose of punishment and silence: I will not allow it to do either.

### 3. The Black man subject as fear

#### 3.1 Pedagogy of hatred, pedagogy of killing

In most societies, children are taught that, if they misbehave, they will be punished; whether the imaginary act imposed by the parent or caregiver leads to or causes torment, trauma or torture, however playful the introduction of fear and horror seems, the effect on children seems to be of little consequence to those who impose scary tactics in order to achieve the desired disciplinary effect – subdued children who do as they are told. What seems more important for the parent or caregiver is that the child experiences fear and as a consequence learns discipline. Teaching them to be scared of the monster, the bogeyman, the *tokoloshe*<sup>4</sup> – the evil spirit, with embellishments that depict the disfigured Black man who comes in the middle of the night to bite their heads off and who will jump out of the cupboard if they do not behave, are all part of the pedagogical package that parents offer their children. This not only suffices to scare most children who are very young; it teaches them from a very early age to fear and hate a particular version of the Black man, the indigenous Black man. Let us be absolutely clear in our articulations of fear and intimidation: we learn it as young children and our first encounter is one based on unreason, on the unthinkable act of being eaten and taken away by a Black man. This unthinkable act, this act of thought, is also an act of knowledge production. For to know is to be empowered

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4 See <[www.m.wikipedia.org](http://www.m.wikipedia.org)> for further elaboration of how the *tokoloshe* is depicted in isiXhosa mythology and how it is used to scare children.



to believe, and to believe is to be empowered to act, whether in speech, the imagination, writing, or the flesh. Which child questions reason, especially that of their parents, however intelligent and reasonable he/she is taught to be prior to this foundational lesson, for when they are told that there is a scary Black man in a cupboard waiting to pounce on them, a scary unknown big Black man who will come in the middle of the night, whom they lie in fear of for minutes, seconds, their unconscious and consciousness playing havoc with one another, developing all of the mechanisms of hatred as time inflicts the incident upon the clenched muscles in the body, there is no possibility of unlearning this parental pedagogy nor does the time come when the child confronts the parent on why this inhumane story was introduced to them in the first place. This is 'internalised racism 101', if you are Black, 'How to kill and hate a Black man without getting tired', if you are White, that children are forced to endure when they are under the age of five years. Prior to this, most parents will encourage their children to talk, to walk, to eat, to be healthy; this act of teaching the fear of the Black, indigenous man, is a fundamental act of knowledge; it is fear personified, fear internalised, fear instrumentalised, which sets the foundation for an understanding of the role of the Black man in our society, and as foundational thought, White hegemonic culture relies on that the daily construction of racism will allow the foundation to set, and the house of killing of the Black man to be built, with security and certainty. In Latino cultures, it is El Coco; he lives in the jungle and clearly he is an indigenous man, a reminder that your indigenous ancestors are still around despite their so-called absence in your house, and will come and get you if you do not obey your colonised, Catholicised, urbanised, lets-take-our-distance-from-el-Indio parents.<sup>5</sup> Hence, you will learn to behave, adopt manners that your parents have learnt and not remind them of where they come from, learn to be an urban Indio, determined to deny your indigenous roots at all costs. El Coco is violent, aggressive, a ruthless savage who lives in the bushes and will be called upon when necessary. The fact that he is available upon the request of your urban Indio parents is an indication of how secure your parents are that they can manipulate and call on the Native at any time and certainly to scare you – you

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5 I am using the phrase el Indio in reference to how it is used in folklore, and drawn on to instil fear among children during the telling of fairytales, especially among the South and Central American middle and upper classes where the content expressed is also about the denial of their indigenous heritage. The majority of South and Central American peoples are classified as *trigueño*, which as per the classification on their identity documents, notes a mixed racial heritage primarily of Native American descent and a small percentage of Spanish heritage (often exaggerated) and, of course, the much-denied African heritage. *Trigueño* also means the colour of corn. The word *mestizo* is more commonly used and suggests someone of native heritage with one European parent. I ought to note that my personal experience is one gauged through my lived experience in Colombia, and my extended visits to a number of the neighbouring countries. See also <en.m.wikipedia.org>

have no idea that this is where you come from, your heritage, but you know one thing for sure – there are men who still live in the bushes, and you want to stay far away from them. Young Black children are taught the same fairy tales as White children, and around the globe the tale is altered to portray the native and the indigenous as villain out to kill and destroy your family. Snow White and Rapunzel were all saved from horrible witches [read: Jewish women, characterised as physically deformed, crooked features such as hands and noses, dark] by White men. No Black man from Umlazi, Soweto, Lavender Hill, the Bronx, or the tugurios [transl: slums] of Colombia own a white horse to use as their mode of transport and, therefore, as the fairy tale goes, could never rescue a Black woman from servitude. Even Black women with weaves who manage to have the length of their hair as long as Rapunzel's could not change the face of racism and force a Black man to rescue her by simply throwing her hair over the wall of her small, compact, shanty house, township dwelling, ghetto or 'hood' – it simply does not happen. It is no wonder that every time a White woman kills her children, in the US especially, she can at random invent some Black man who came out of the bushes and killed her children – she can rely on the fairy tale that everyone knows, based on the belief that White men rescue and Black men kill, because it is implanted in the minds of all those around her. What is even more interesting is that the White policemen will entertain her fantasy many a time, fully aware that she has invented it – they were taught the same fairy tale – yet they play along long enough to further their own hatred until evidence, not reason, proves otherwise. As such, our early childhood memories consist of fearing a dark-skinned man, a Black man, who is portrayed in the fear narrative as one with unusual, grotesque, features to our young imaginations, big lips, a big nose (certainly bigger than ours); hence the identity as a monster – someone who is not quite as human as we are, who exists in dark spaces, of whom human beings are aware and whose function is to inflict pain on children. The objective of the narrative is to ensure that children are so scared that they will obey all instructions meted out by adults. In isiZulu culture, *el ghogho* and in isiXhosa culture, passed on to the Coloured population, the *tokoloshe* is also a small, deformed, dark man, with unusual habits, who has no thinking ability and who does not speak.

How many children ask their parents why there is a Black man in their house who is not related to them? Better still, why would they allow the bogeyman to take their children away in the night if they loved them? In a nutshell, we are taught to fear and hate Black men who are not civilised enough to socialise with our family members, and who have to hide, who exist at the margins of our imaginations and whose only function is to be retrieved for the purpose of horror and violence. However, when he emerges on the protest pitch, demanding more

money for his labour than his image is worth, the Black man in whose image he is cast, has to kill him.

The cinematic depiction of King Kong, first released in the US in 1933 in the midst of the depression, then in 1976 and again in 2005 while the US was at war in Iraq, speaks clearly about the political climate Hollywood understands and to which it directly supplies the fuel for the fire – Black men, dark-skinned Arabic men, readily produced targets to hate and kill. Although the main theme of the plot in *King Kong* – how to protect fragile White women from Black men, who eventually have to be killed, castrated, because they cannot contain their desire, has been reiterated throughout nearly every genre in Hollywood. After all, unlike Othello, who found it hard to believe that a White woman could love him, and who so easily fell under the spell of Iago (watering the seeds of his insecurity, Iago brings the Black man to the brink of his violent savagery – commit murder and reject love because he does not believe he is worth it), *King Kong* brought out the Black man's relentless pursuit of the White woman, if only to hold her in his arms and breathe his unwanted desire down her neck. If only he can show her how much he loves her, surely then we can see that he is not all ape, and that he is just as close to man as his tenderness demonstrates. But killing *King Kong* was killing the big ape in the Black man – the big ape who cannot be controlled, whose savagery reminds us and him that one can expose him to all that is humanly possible – even freedom, a constitution for his own redemption and yet, in his pursuit of being human he was chastised, reprimanded, mocked, warned, threatened, and forced to the brink of extinction because he could not overcome his apehood. *King Kong*, is, the Black man.

## 4. The nigger is cool, the 'kaffir' is not

### 4.1 Making negrophobia sexy

The majority South Africans would rather latch onto terminologies adopted in the US, which, my young Black male students would argue, allow for a particular kind of solidarity. Others happily utilise the US reference as a basis for their own, rather than unpack the South African historical foundations and/or contemporary expressions because the US terminologies allow theirs a particular kind of legitimacy, a known position articulated by both revolutionaries and scholars whose works have reached international circulation and, given the racist publishing history in South Africa, has allowed them to seek out ways to make their own experiences known and legitimate. Films such as *In the heat of the night*, starring Sidney Poitier as Mr Tibbs, which I have taught in a course I designed called, 'Everything you wanted to know about rapists, racists, Nazis

and murderers but could never ask Hitchcock, Fanon or Lacan', has allowed for discussions on the house negro and the field negro in my classes, but never on the depiction of the kaffir. If and when the term 'kaffir' has been mentioned to direct a particular kind of ontological discussion on Black existentialism (I am thinking of one student in particular), his verbal articulation was met with immediate criticism of what almost all of my students considered an unfortunate reminder. Yet, US popular hip-hop culture has brought its presence into the living rooms of South Africans in ways that are both interesting and problematic; it has drawn its followers into the same linguistic arena, irrespective of their racialised identities, with the assumption that if you are hip, you can say any word, because being hip has no identity politics – being hip is the identity. Friends and colleagues have shared their experiences with me in the past few months of being parents of teenage children, at times asking for my assistance in grappling with how their South African sons and daughters are calling one another, "my niggs". One of my colleagues noted that she asked her daughter, "what would you do if your friends at school said 'my kaffs' or 'my k', how would you feel? Would you still feel it is okay to say it?" The young girl in question shrugged her shoulders and told her mother, "Why do you always spoil everything; why won't you just let me be cool, like everyone else?" US hip-hop culture has popularised words and phrases such as "my niggs", overturning histories of brutality by making it part of the everyday construction of speech – of discourses of hip-hop cultural bonding among its followers in the zone where race is not the issue, but the performance of race a commodity. As such, the "my niggs" expression is part of a process of making racism sexy, providing hip-hop followers with a sense of cool and sass, luring them into the zone of nonbeing.<sup>6</sup> In reference to the friend with whom I had the conversation about her daughter, I asked: "So, is this the question of if they don't know the history, they won't feel the pain?" She shrugged her shoulders, shook her head and added: "My daughters already say things like why do I force my history onto them." And thus while "my niggs" is treated as cool and sexy, the kaffir is not; the kaffir is still the protesting native who holds onto his native blanket and is not prepared to embrace democracy in the new South Africa.

#### 4.2 There is nothing sexy about usurpation, colonialism and racism

Let us pause for a moment and move away from US hip-hop culture and examine the Pondo revolt of the Eastern Cape of March 1960, referred to as the action taken by iKongo (the Congress, when it was not referred to as Intaba – the mountain) to reject tribal authority. This was a protest organised by peasants against the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. Peasants attended rallies on foot and

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6 See Gordon 2007

horseback, determined to take a stand against the apartheid state's usurpation and brutality. The apartheid regime sent in a tribal committee to explain the Bantu Authorities Act to those who were subject to it, that is, that they had to accept that more of their land had been taken, and obey the orders of their colonisers. Eleven people were killed at the site and several died later from their wounds. Peasants refused to pay taxes and successfully boycotted White businesses, with Anderson Ganyile, a member of the ANC Youth League, adding strength to the existing local leadership. In November 1960, the apartheid regime declared a state of emergency, detaining thousands of people, and hundreds stood trial. Thirty Pondo people were sentenced to death for standing up for their rights and for refusing that the apartheid regime take their land while they stood by as amiable alibis. The question of rights lies deep in the everyday construction of the Black man in South Africa.

In his article, "A bag of soil, a bullet from up high" – included in the book *Rural resistance in South Africa*, Jonny Steinberg documents a source's retelling of the massacre at Ngquza:

The whites took Botha Sigcau, king of Eastern Mpondoland, up in a helicopter. They flew him to Ngquza, and there the helicopter stopped, hovering just over the rebels. Then the white commander put a rifle in Botha Sigcau's hands, and he said: 'Whether we end this rebellion is your decision to make. We can do nothing if you cannot fire the first shot. The choice is in your hands, not ours'. Botha Sigcau thought for a little while, took the rifle from the white man, aimed at the rebels below, and fired the first shot. It hit a man in the chest and killed him. That is how the massacre began (Steinberg 2011: 233)

In situating the details of this massacre, especially with reference to the Eastern Cape where a justifiable reference to the kaffir and Kaffraria has been adopted in South African documents, I also wish to point to how particular philosophical analyses, and by extension those that are taken up in humanities and the social sciences, have refrained from offering critical articles of its use. Among African American scholarship, there is an immense reluctance to write articles on the depiction of the nigger. Tommy Curry, however, takes a position for which, despite being chastised, he continues to demonstrate powerfully:

Today, the Black intellectual writes and assimilates Blackness into the colonial categories of disciplines to escape the brutality of actual death – real physical death – and attempts to distance themselves from this death through class mobility and social recognition, making themselves the Black intellectual class able to observe the dying Black folk from afar. It is because of

this negrophobia (being seen as the Nigger that must be killed), this running away from the death of those “other” Blacks, that Blackness is written out of the academic enterprise generally, forced into conceptual expressions of convergence and canonical imitation (Curry 2014: 2)

### 4.3 The ontological reflection is both necessary and urgent. It is the event that connects you to other events...

I am the child of the mother whose father is isiXhosa and whose mother is Hindu, South African born, by way of Java, by way of Bengal – all of which are by way of Dutch and British colonisation. Maart, the third month, the month of my grandfather’s family enslavement, and his cousins who bear the name April one month later. It is said that my grandmother, a September, married my Maart grandfather against her mother’s wishes after having ten children with him, the day my mother turned sixteen. I rarely speak of my father’s heritage, partly because I only got to know him a week before I turned 19; he died shortly after I turned 25. By all accounts, his heritage is quite similar to my mother’s. My paternal grandmother, with her Mauritian heritage, had the word ‘s-l-a-v-e’ written on a document, it was relayed to me, which she hid in a box under her bed. Dutch, French and British colonialism was written in her DNA, which of course her colonisers assured she not forget and thus engraved it on her certificate of birth. After we were forcibly removed from District Six, my grandfather, the fisherman, had his legs amputated: the right leg in our first year in Lavender Hill, and the left leg the following year. Each severance corresponding with the time of our forced removal and each severance further entrenching Fanon’s assertion: “The negro suffers in his body quite differently from the White man” (Fanon 1994: 117). In those moments when the silence of melancholia dominates, despite the sound of children playing in grey-slab township flats, broken windows pregnant with poverty, clothes stuck where glass once lived to keep out the sound of dislocation, the new sound of taxis, buses, and the activity of dinner scraped together by the gathering of glass bottles that were exchanged for ingredients to make supper, he sat at the window, watching the mountain, talking to her, asking her to give an account of what the sea he could no longer see looked like. There, in a moment where one listens without the knowledge of the speaker, I asked my mother, who had crept behind me for the same purpose of observation I had undertaken, why papa was speaking that language. “It is his language”, she said. Her eyes rested upon my opened mouth, which was my only response to her declaration. I was robbed of this knowledge, because she knew, and I did not. The defeat of forced removal had brought about a retreat to his native tongue, in the intimacy that only he could hear, and where he was not exposed to insults of his kaffirdom, but

where his soul needed to hear him say the words of his mother tongue in order to give the message “isiXhosa, I have not abandoned you”.

Only his mother tongue could save him from the monotony of melancholia. He could speak to his ancestors, call upon his heritage, as he sat wrapped up in a blanket I had never seen before. I use the term ‘kaffirism’ not to suggest that my grandfather was of royalty, but rather to note the abundance of attributes that he was accused of possessing – it was an accusation – when describing his lack of sophistication, which generally meant his reluctance to conform to a Blackness that was offered by his colonisers and those who called themselves Coloured as a sign of pride or consolation. Being called a kaffir is a term I heard all the time while I was growing up. I assumed, until I was sixteen years old, that it was because my grandfather was dark skinned, as was customary in Coloured townships. I had no knowledge until that time that he was isiXhosa, that he could speak the language, or that he had given up so much of his identity to live in the slave quarter, then forcibly removed to a Coloured township to be with my grandmother, who I always thought was the one who “did not belong”, of which children did not hesitate to remind me. Throughout my childhood, young children, who drew insults when verbal articulation failed them, reminded me that my grandmother belonged in an Indian area and that my sister was a kaffir. I am five years older than my sister, now deceased; I grew up with her being called a kaffir everyday, especially since she took liberties in speech that was forbidden for someone considered as dark as she was. She had to know her place in the hierarchy of pigmentocracy<sup>7</sup> – she did not. Those who perceived themselves to be kind referred to her being “as dark skinned as your grandfather”. When I did not behave, I was not called a kaffir, but was reminded that I had kaffir family, that I would divulge my heritage, and that teachers would have the arduous task of having to erase it, which meant excessive forms of punishment such as caning and worst still, expulsion. I was expelled from school from the time I was eight years old for offences ranging from back-chatting to showing contempt and dismissing the entire student population during the 1980s boycott in order to

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7 Pigmentocracy is a term I devised to express the extent to which a hierarchy of pigmentation operates in Black communities, and in Coloured communities in particular, where divide and conquer strategies, as a consequence of our troubled relationship to White supremacy, gave rise to narratives of light skinned/dark skinned dichotomies dominating conversations escalating to a point to determine logic that can only be described as perverse and traumatic. For example, becoming acquainted at primary school at age twelve with attributes that would be afforded to light skinned girls, and those to dark skinned girls and that these were determined by pigmentation; the realisation that I was somehow expected to be familiar with them when choosing a high school was both shocking and frightening.

take part in a protest march without the permission of the principal; my mother forced the school to take me back each and every time, and reassured both the principals of my primary and high schools that they would be very sorry if they did not. Her suggestion was laden with lioness aggression, first and foremost, not predicated on the fact that the principal ought to believe that I was an asset to the school; the matter of convincing the two principals became increasingly difficult for my mother as I grew older. My mother saw nothing wrong in the manner that I questioned teachers; my sister, on the other hand, to whom the offence was inflicted on a daily basis, never challenged anyone to the point of expulsion.

When I started university, I took an interest in black and white photographs, and tried to gather as many from my relatives as possible. I noticed that my grandfather was not on any of the photos taken on our trips to Durban, where some of my grandmother's distant relatives lived. I asked my mother why my grandfather never went with us to Durban. She remarked: "pappa did not want to see the look on their faces when they looked at mamma and then at him ... and he knew what they said when he was not around, she could have married a Black man but instead she married a kaffir". I was nearing my twenties when I had this discussion with my mother and my grandfather had just died. "Oh, don't worry ... they did not like the look on his face either. He could never hide his contempt for them ... and he didn't care if they knew."

## 5. The deconstruction of the subject

### 5.1 The Black man subject as miner, the Black man subject as policeman

Every concept has its own history. The history of the Black man subject in South Africa has several overlapping trajectories, a long and very complex history – usurped, brutalised, regionalised, coastalised, forced inland, ghettoized, tribalised, yet defiant, rebellious, determined, are all within the range of possibilities as points of departure for tracking this trajectory. It is, therefore, important that we analyse the trajectory within which the concept – Black man – has been built, populated. To fight for the rights of the Black man subject means to understand and to deconstruct the history of that subject. As such, the deconstruction of the subject is at the centre of the fight for the rights of that subject. But which subject? The Black man subject in the event of Marikana shows varied trajectories – it leads us to the Black man subject as miner, and the Black man subject as policeman.

The deconstruction of philosophy does not always permit the deconstruction of the Black man subject; philosophy has erased the Black man subject, made



him invisible, rendered him insignificant, reified him, written his presence as the absence of the words to say it because he is written as death, dying, defeated. Malcolm X (1965: 12) reiterates this: “negro, from the prefix *necro* – meaning death, corpse, a dead people”.

The deconstruction of the Black man subject is necessary, because we need to understand the history of the Black man subject on whose behalf we claim rights, in whose name we fight for freedom, and in whose name we uphold the South African constitution. The subject’s history is always at the centre of his identity – everything that occurs to the subject is an event. The subject is identical to itself and yet, as I will demonstrate later, the Black man subject is split. The inverse *duboisian* split is at the centre of the Black man subject; when the Black policeman sees his history of subjugation embedded in another Black man, the protesting miner, he has to kill it, destroy it. If he sees it once, twice, one hundred times, he has to kill it all at once. To analyse the subject is to analyse all the hidden assumptions implied in the ethical, philosophical, political use of the term subject.

What is the hermeneutics of the subject?<sup>8</sup> Hermeneutics – written, verbal, non-verbal – the protest march of miners finds its place within the scope of interpretation that is necessary in order to analyse the subjects that constitute the event. Why should philosophy then call upon the Black man as subject? Is it because philosophy promises the subject his humanity, having previously declared him a slave? Philosophy of the present, philosophy as we currently know it, has outlawed slavery and asserted the need for rights, for the Black man subject to be human even when being human has meant that he understood his oppression; that he understood himself as oppressed, and that consciousness of self meant consciousness of another, his master.

## 5.2 Did you say “the end of philosophy” just when your crimes are being exposed?

Who calls out this end of philosophy and for which purpose? Marx, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in the nineteenth century? Wittgenstein and Heidegger in the twentieth century? Where are your philosophical protestations on the slave trade? Where are your philosophical articulations of Germany’s Second Reich, as they usurped Namibia in 1903, killed, massacred, murdered and brutalised the Nama and Herero peoples until 1906, using barbed wire (the South African police learnt well from your example) to contain the remaining usurped masses, who then starved to

8 I am using the term to refer to the interpretation of texts, especially literary texts, and as such to refer to the interpretation of the Black man subject as policeman and the Blackman subject as miner at Marikana.

death – their defeat measured by African skulls in the sand, refusing to hand over their land, even when Germany planned its first holocaust on Southern African soil and had the audacity to contest the word holocaust, now having given it to the Jewish population, which it desecrated, handing over the word like a gift of life? Yet, to Namibia, you afford the word genocide, denouncing your own callous colonial efforts, erasing your own grotesque gestures – that sudden slight of hand and mind, which allowed you to cross continents having decided on the place for you to usurp, kill, murder, maim, brutalise, massacre, exterminate, in order to offer your people a home? *Did you say the end of philosophy?*

As you sing Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves, Britons, never never shall be slaves. You, British colonisers, you take your brutality and turn it into a hymn, your patriotic salute to empire building where you usurp and enslave! When Karl Jaspers writes, “Philosophy is a long hymn to Reason”, did he have Rule Britannia in mind, or was he instead considering the Christian justification of slavery, usurpation, massacres, and the premise upon which the holocaust was built? James Thomson’s poem Rule Britannia, was set to music by Thomas Arne in 1740, the year Marquis de Sade was born, the year of the publication of David Hume’s *A treatise of human nature*, which his followers call ‘moral philosophy’. Relying on slavery, he furnishes us with both the history of British colonialism and its history of repression, when in the Treatise, he restricts the role of reason to the production of action by asserting: “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” (Hume: 195). Was Hume saying that reason is based on our emotions or that reason, steeped in the acquisition of slavery for the fulfilment of empire, is the passion of empire? *Did you say the end of philosophy?*

Let me take you to the mid 1800s, to a man most scholars revere as a thinker, and upon whom we call in philosophy at every opportunity we get – Karl Marx. Young scholars, do not limit yourselves to what philosophers have written in books, look at where their agency is located and how it is articulated, look at correspondence to friends, family, lovers, since that is where you see their ontological reflections of existence, of self and other. I am referring to the correspondence between Marx and Engels about a colleague and friend they had in common, namely Ferdinand Lasalle. Lasalle was born in Breslau and studied philosophy in Berlin where he became a young Hegelian. He was arrested during the 1848 revolution and after his acquittal spent much of his time writing the history of Socialism. Marx and Lasalle disagreed on several matters but maintained contact for a number of years. Marx always appeared sceptical of Lasalle and was often astounded by his articulate manner and competitiveness. Upon Lasalle’s death, when Marx was now certain that Lasalle would no longer be a threat to him, Marx rationalised Lasalle’s behaviour in a letter to Engels in 1862:

It is now entirely clear to me that, as his cranial structure and hair type prove, Lasalle is descended from the Negroes who joined Moses' flight from Egypt (that is assuming his mother, or his paternal grandmother did not cross with a nigger). Now this union of Jewry and Germanism with the Negro-like basic substance must necessarily result in a remarkable product. The officiousness of the fellow is also nigger-like (Lawrence & Wishart 1975).<sup>9</sup>

But Marx was wrong: Lasalle was officious and opinionated because he was an Aries, born on 11 April 1825! It is interesting to note that there is a strong resemblance between Lasalle and Marx – both Jewish, with dark eyes, dark brows and curly hair – on the few occasions when Marx was photographed without his beard, the resemblance to Lasalle was uncanny. While we are on the subject of Jewish people who are treated as Blacks and Negroes, lest we forget, Adolf Hitler's assertion that "the Jews are bringing Africa into the Rhineland". Hitler's statement was a clear indication that he understood Jewish peoples to be African. The elimination and destruction of Jewish people did not only rise to recognition with this belief that Jews were Africans in the 1930s, but also predates it as anti-semitism was carried out throughout the centuries. *Did you say the end of philosophy?*

It is only in the last century that questions of freedom, liberation, revolution, struggle and decolonization – when oppressed people in the third world, all of the wretched of the earth, revolted against slavery, usurpation, colonialism and racism – that African, African-American, Asian, Indian, indigenous, and South and Central American philosophy scholars began to question the philosophy they were taught, and examined the very clear absences of their own existential experience from inscriptions of philosophy [the reproduction of the dominant paradigm is evident when the scholar engraves that which denounces his Being, out of fear and lack, and steeped in the language of writing his absence, he asserts it] that a shift in thinking took place – a shift prompted by a shift in political action: this is the culmination of what has been produced as one of the strongest, most thought-provoking, most urgent, strands of philosophy in the past twenty-five years – philosophy born of struggle.<sup>10</sup>

I now turn to this political action of inscribing presence and wherein I insert the subject as the Black man, and the subject as the kaffir.

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9 See also <[www.libcom.org](http://www.libcom.org)>

10 See Harris 2000.

## 6. Philosophy calls us to the event

Consciousness, knowledge, mind, thinking, reason, reality, action – the tenets of philosophy suggest that philosophy has to be called on. Philosophy conveys a theory or attitude that acts as a guiding principle for human behaviour – at least that is what it is meant to do. Philosophical thought is not produced through the reading of what university professors deem necessary and important for students to study; it is always already present within each community, based on the events that sustain it, the ideas that emerge from these events and that simultaneously situate its survival and its death. There is an event that requires our knowledge and our thinking in order to take action: the event of Marikana, the event is Marikana. Within the very event, the event of the killing of Black men, Black miners who are killed and massacred by Black men who are policemen, lie Lacan's fundamentals of psychoanalysis in which human beings dwell, cross over, merge, become one, are severed, cut, castrated, killed, murdered, massacred, converge, and lay themselves bare for scrutiny, in order to build a theory of the subject. Psychoanalytic interpretations of the Black subject in Southern Africa has also been tackled by scholars like Jean-Paul Rocchi (Rocchi 2012) more specifically, and in the African diaspora by Sabine Broeck (Broeck 2013) more generally, each with powerful theoretical underpinnings.

Philosophy needs to know that, in its attempt to depict the slave, and for years reading, re-reading, and reconstructing Hegel's master-slave dialectic, the kaffir, the nigger, the Jew and the gypsy are alive and well despite constantly being massacred.

Marikana, the event, is the effect that exceeds its causes. The critical deconstruction of the event, the formation of the space within which to insert the forbidden, the unspoken, the not-to-be-spoken-word, the word that holds the history of the Black man's history of usurpation, humiliation, brutalisation, dehumanisation. The kaffir holds the memory of the Black man, the history of the Black man as traditional, the Black man who refuses to be stamped out by modernity and postmodernity. The kaffir is an event in itself, an event of death, an event of the survival and perseverance, an event of the past, which has not been stamped out despite attempts over the centuries, rearing its head in the present. The unspoken spoken of Marikana, in turn, opens up the possibility of understanding what separated the kaffir from the Black man, the Black policeman from the kaffir, the effect from the cause. Causality as the basis for all thought and knowledge of the external world is at the very heart of philosophy. While causality is always tied to determinism, according to Hegelian philosophers, every event is

the inevitable and necessary consequence of the contemporary state of affairs.<sup>11</sup> Was the killing of the miners necessary? Was the killing of the miner at Marikana, the killing of the kaffir? Were either one of them necessary consequences of the state of affairs within which we South Africans find ourselves twenty years after the first democratic elections?

The imaginary, the symbolic, and the real converge – they seek representation, a new representation – a new explanation of the traumatic encounter with extreme violence to which I give the name massacre. Massacre: whilst born of the colonial master, at Marikana it slumbered in the hands of the slave, the previously disenfranchised slave killing the previously disenfranchised slave brother who refuses modernity and postmodernity. For the colonised, colonialism and its trimmings – slavery, racism – is that traumatic encounter with the coloniser, which, in turn, has determined our concept of meaning, of understanding what it is to be human. The Lacanian Real is discerned by its traces and its aftershocks, for to trace the historical trajectory of a contemporary event is necessary, urgent. History does not close its doors because we ask it to. No concept of freedom can run away from its history of enslavement.

What kind of event fits each of these dimensions? Did the Black policemen create another category for the Black miner as not-so-human, almost-human, human capital whose use-value is slave labour or death, or did the Black policeman trace the protesting rebellious Black man back to the kaffir?

Doing philosophy from the foundations of Southern African events is doing philosophy within a context and through a medium – a context and medium from which our analysis of historical events are taken, a context and medium considered both valuable and traumatic, both gut wrenching and grotesque, both critical and urgent, a context and medium under scrutiny, cast at the backdrop of the Southern African world where it experiences its existentialism as both raced and colonial. Malcolm X was one of those revolutionaries, much like Stephen Bantu Biko, who did not hesitate to rely on philosophy, whether Greek or European, and turn it toward the plight of African-American peoples. On the streets of Chicago, he spoke to crowds of people who gathered to hear him. He is particularly known for the manner in which he integrated the Socratic declaration, “the unexamined life is not worth living”, to which Malcolm X added when speaking of the plight of African Americans, “the examined life is painful”. The materiality of race does not allow us to overlook its construction nor to ignore its ironies, however displeased we may be with the colonised. Philosophical thought, when inscribed, has to be a product of time, a product of an event; apartheid in South Africa is a product of

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11 See Žižek 2014

the history of racism. Each event exists within another event; each event is part of the history of White Supremacy. It is thus, when understanding the relationship between the transcendental and the ontological, when philosophy defines its meaning, situates its purpose. Being mindful of usurpation, colonialism, racism, massacres – the transcendental and the ontological – one may approach the event. The event begins with the disclosure of Being, with the horizon of genealogies of meaning as the basis for the discussion of the event. Is the event an alteration of the way reality appears to us or a shattering transformation of reality itself? Does philosophy reduce the autonomy of an event, or can it account for this very autonomy?<sup>12</sup> I now return to the scene of the crime – Marikana, the killing of the kaffir – as a theatre of cruelty.

## 7. A return to the scene of the crime

### 7.1 The theatre of cruelty

The Theatre of Cruelty has been created in order to restore to the theatre a passionate and convulsive conception of life, and it is in this sense of violent rigour and extreme condensation of scenic elements that the cruelty on which it is based must be understood. This cruelty, which will be bloody when necessary but not systematically so, can thus be identified with a kind of severe moral purity which is not afraid to pay life the price it must be paid.<sup>13</sup>

I borrow the subtitle of this article from Antonin Artaud who developed a form of theatre called, *Théâtre de la cruauté*, which has been translated as Theatre of cruelty. Some of my earlier work, "The Theatre of racism", (Maart 2004) also draws on this concept. Artaud was born in Marseille in 1896; both his parents were born in Smyrna, which at various times was considered either Greek or Turkish. Several references note that Artaud was of gypsy ancestry, whereas the more scholarly references overlook his ancestry and assert that he was French, as is often the case with reference to the identity of writers, artists and scholars whose labour brings esteem to Europe, and who are readily claimed as European, much like Algerian Jacques Derrida. Artaud was a surrealist who developed his own theatrical theories, some of which are collated in his book *The theatre and its double*. In his formation of the theatre of cruelty, he purposefully assaults the senses of the audience with the intention that they feel the unexpressed

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12 See Žižek 2014.

13 See Artaud 1964.

emotions of their unconscious. He believed that theatre should represent reality and, as such, he staged it.

## 7.2 The viewer and the televised account of the scene of the crime

The televised screen did not stop; there were no interruptions other than the viewer who looks away when witnessing the events of Marikana through the medium of the television, the country's eyes, looks in disbelief, and turns off the set, disconnects it from the electric outlet and walks away from the scene of cruelty. There is a scarring that takes place, an event of memory that is engraved upon the consciousness of the viewer that does not take its leave, despite attempts at erasure or forced forgetting, and which acts as reminder, trigger, sparked by sight, smell, and emotion. A visual image obtained in televised reality, an oxymoron of time and place, is saved in memory only to be retrieved and recalled in order for consciousness to construct its approach towards it, in order for the unconscious to speak to consciousness so that the latter can respond through the body, its agency; the choices reflect the range of mechanisms the unconscious offers for availability. When silence is not an option nor cowardice its quiet accomplice, the viewer has to speak. But such an act requires full viewership with critical abilities that allow the viewer to reflect on the human action, and the stage upon which it was performed. The performance of violence is not a simple act; its dimensions reach far beyond the immediate comprehension of viewership. One cannot always surmise the magnitude with which intention serves its purpose where murder, not massacre, is concerned, but one can undertake to study the history of the subjects involved in order to grasp why the act, the event, holds deeper significance than meets the eye.

The logos – the origin of truth, constitutive of reality itself – is the historical conception of reason. In the case of Marikana, when situating the signifier and the signified in our psychoanalytic schema as an attempt to understand the relationship between the physical instantiated symbol and the thought that emanates from the symbol, one can suggest that the signifier is the flesh, the embodiment of the Black man, and the signified the thought that emanates upon gazing at the signifier – that thought situates the historical figure of the kaffir, because the latter embodies the physical instantiated symbol. The process of signification is crucial in understanding the dynamics of killing, which led to the massacre. There is meant to be unity between the signifier and the signified, but for the Black policeman who witnesses the signifier, the trauma of a historical past emerges and threatens his identity, premised on the belief that democracy has offered him a particular identity on which he cannot go back; there cannot be unity between him and the Black man miner, the Black man protestor, because the

Black policeman separates himself from what he has signified; he disassociates from the signified (the kaffir) in search of another signified, and within the search, he hunts the present one and destroys it. What certifies the validity of any signified is ultimately the logos. Therefore, as demonstrated earlier, while logos is not reason, it constitutes an origin, a false truth, an oxymoron. The *ergo cogito sum* – “I think, therefore I am”, often translated as “I am thinking, therefore I exist”, can be put forward in the event of the Black policeman as “I am thinking how I can exist”. Existence presupposes death; for to see the possibility of death, an old death, the possibility of a new death, gives existence a priority over Being. Existence presupposes freedom; it is the saliva, the breath of freedom. The “I am” for the Black policeman is also the “I am that which I do not wish to see”. The drive towards killing is one directed at the physical erasure of presence – the Black policeman does not want to see the kaffir. Philosophers such as the esteemed UNISA Professor Ramose, whose work has inspired the need to re-examine how *ubuntu* operates within the decolonisation arena when the coloniser is still orchestrating the process of democracy.<sup>14</sup> The *ubuntu* expression, “I am because we are”, is complicated by internalised racism, compounded by deep-seated psychological impediments that stand in the way of the postmodern Black man grasping the “we” when that “we” does not rid him of his ancestral self.

### 7.3 Double consciousness and the killing of the double

The duboisian double consciousness is a consciousness in itself.<sup>15</sup> According to Du Bois, double consciousness is that moment when the Black man sees himself and then sees himself being seen by the White man. The consciousness of the kaffir, one demonstrated by the display of attributes associated with the indigenous Black South African man, who refuses to perform his masculinity with denial of his historical past and according to the rules of postmodernity, forges a possibility for us to rethink how we understand the relationship between the Black South African policeman and the miner. The Black policeman sees himself, he sees his double, his ontological self, his history; the double does not match the Black man who holds the gun, and whose only choice, with gun in hand, is to kill his double, which is what he was hired to do. The kaffir consciousness, to which I refer in this instance, is one where the Black man, whose dignity has not been restored and who has to earn it in order to maintain it, earns it by shooting the kaffir, because he cannot allow his past to disrupt his present; he cannot allow the kaffir to rob him of the joy of working so closely with the White man who has given him recognition; and therein, in this recognition, he has been taught

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14 See Ramose 2002.

15 See Du Bois 1903.



how to kill himself. The public double suicide is when the Black man (policeman) kills himself (the Blackman protestor), and allows his ancestral past (himself, the Black policeman) to be killed.

In the field of psychoanalysis narcissism, considered a personality disorder, is also considered a state of self-centeredness arising from failure to distinguish the self from the image of the self. Based on Greek mythology, Narcissus, a superb hunter, was renowned for his beauty. He was so proud of his skill and his beauty that he held those who showed him consideration with contempt. Nemesis, who paid careful attention and who studied those around him in order to plan their demise, observed the consideration that Narcissus paid his image. Nemesis lured Narcissus to a river, where he saw his own reflection, fell in love with it, without realising that it was an image, his image, and drowned.

#### 7.4 What does it mean to be a problem?

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.<sup>16</sup>

Cornel West answers this declaration as follows: “No, Mr Du Bois, I am not the problem, White Supremacy is the problem”.<sup>17</sup>

This means that, while apartheid was unfolding and the best man – the late Nelson Mandela – was put forward for the job of solving the country’s problem – “die swaart gevaar” [Black fear; the fear of the Black man] De Klerk showed the best form of Black man to the world and to those who shouted Amandla! in his name while the indigenous Black man, the construction of the kaffir, remained the problem. Mr Mandela went into prison with his ethnic dress (read: tribal at the time of the trial) and he emerged twenty-seven years later with a suit and tie, considered the proper attire for a Black man who was negotiating the freedom of

16 See Du Bois 1903.

17 As noted on several occasions in Cornel West’s speeches, but particularly noted at the twentieth anniversary of Philosophy born of struggle, held in November 2013 at Purdue University.

87% of the population. The emphasis here is on the protester and revolutionary whose protest politics allows the state to incarcerate him, and to which he enters the path of punishment in his tribal outfit; the man who emerges, the man who negotiates his freedom, walks out of the hands of his killers wearing a suit and tie, because he understands European reason – he understands the reasons of reason as postulated by his colonisers; he understands that freedom has a price, and that price is the denunciation of the Black man whose ancestral identity informs his Being in the world.

The good Black man denounces his tribal dress, and denounces violence against his colonisers; only an ignorant kaffir would still want to wear tribal clothes, and perform his tribal identity under a South African state where the gun has been passed on from the White hand to the postmodern Black hand, because the White man knows how humiliated the Black man must feel to see the kaffir, to see himself being seen by himself, and to see the White man look at the kaffir and glance in his direction, “Do you see what I see. This is still who you are?”

When Fanon asserts in *Wretched of the Earth* “violence frees the native”, he fails to foresee that beneath the veneer where the native surfaces, the Black man emerges and all the Black man wants to do is kill the native, kill the kaffir. The postmodern Black man sees himself being seen by the White man, sees the White man take aim at the kaffir and knows that he cannot be seen as the kaffir. There in freedom or death, the postmodern Black policeman chooses massacre – a death, all at once, a death to replace all deaths. Here, as reflected, are the reasons of reason.

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