In taking up the profound and necessary challenge of Afro-pessimism, scholars engaged in black study must not only attend to the relation between blackness and nothingness that Frank B. Wilderson III and Jared Sexton elaborate in their encounter with the work of Frantz Fanon but must also investigate the resonance, presence, and topography of blackness in and as nothingness that is manifest at the intersection of mysticism and logic in black study. This essay is an attempt to contribute to that investigation.

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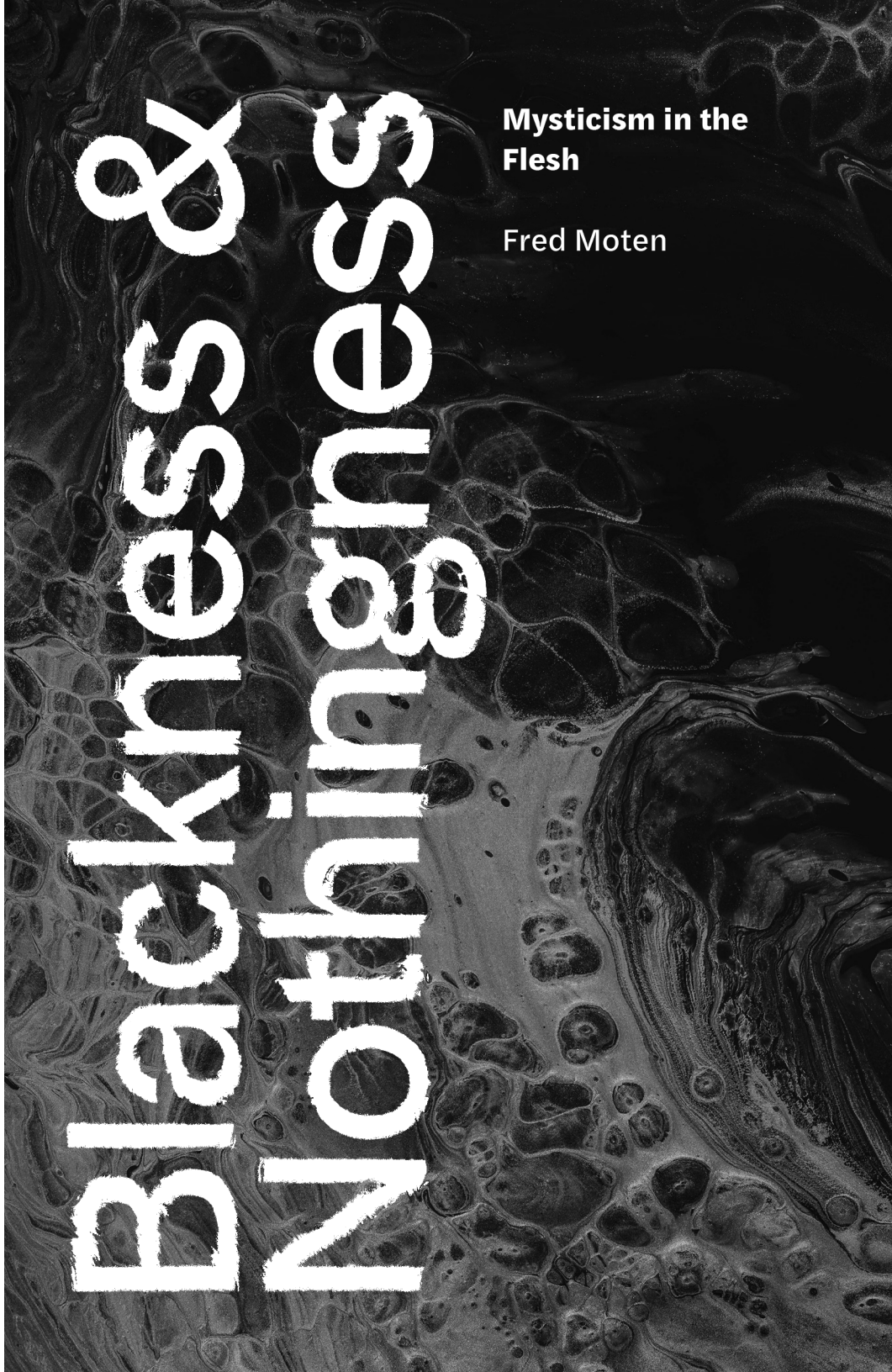

commitment even as it is continually rethought and replayed by way of our differences from one another, which is held within and holds together our commonness. The difference has to do with the proper calibration of this bipolarity. Sexton is right to suggest that the far too simple opposition between pessimism and optimism is off, and that I was off in forwarding it, or off in forwarding an imprecision that made it seem as if I were, having been seduced by a certain heuristic and its sound, thereby perhaps inadvertently seducing others into mistaking an alternating current for a direct one. The bipolarity in question is, at every instance, way too complicated for that, and I really want you to hear what we've been working on, this under-riff we've been trying to play, to study, to improvise, to compose in the hyperreal time of our thinking and that thinking's desire. There is an ethics of the cut, of contestation, that I have tried to honor and illuminate because it instantiates and articulates another way of living in the world, a black way of living together in the other world we are constantly making in and out of this world, in the alternative planetarity that the intramural, internally differentiated presence—the (sur)real presence—of blackness serially brings online as persistent aeration, the incessant turning over of the ground beneath our feet that is the indispensable preparation for the radical overturning of the ground that we are under.

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by way of and beyond a certain Boalian turn, what it is to be a specta(c)tor. Earlier, I assert that Fanon is saying that there is no and can be no black social life. What if he's saying that is all there can be? The antephenomenology of spirit that constitutes *Black Skin, White Masks* prepares our approach to sociological or, more precisely, sociopoetic grounding, as Du Bois, say, or later Walter Rodney would have it, by way of the description of the impossibility of *political* life, which is, nevertheless, at this moment and for much of his career, Fanon's chief concern. The social life of the black, or of the colonized, is, to be sure, given to us in or through Fanon, often in his case studies, sometimes in verse, or in his narrative of the career of the revolutionary cadre. It is as if Fanon is there to remind us that the lunatic, the (revolutionary) lover, and the poet are of imagination all compact. They occupy and are preoccupied with a zone of the alternative, the zone of nonbeing (antic disposition's tendency to cut and displace organic position) that asks and requires us to consider whether it is possible to differentiate a place in the sun, a promised land, a home—or merely a place and time—in this world, from the position of the settler. Is it possible to desire the something-other-than-transcendental subjectivity that is called nothing? What if blackness is the name that has been given to the social field and social life of an illicit alternative capacity to desire? Basically, that is precisely what I think blackness is. I want it to be my constant study. I listen for it everywhere. Or, at least, I try to. If I read Sexton correctly, after trying to get underneath the generous severity of his lesson, he objects, rightly and legitimately, to the fact that in the texts he cites I have not sufficiently looked for blackness in the Afro-pessimistic texts toward which I have sometimes gestured. In the gestures I have made here I hope I have shown what it is that I have been so happy to find, that projection or relay or amplification carried out by the paraontological imagination that animates and agitates Afro-pessimism's antiregulatory force.

Black optimism and Afro-pessimism are asymptotic. Which one is the curve and which one is the line? Which is the kernel and which is the shell? Which one is rational, which one is mystical? It doesn't matter. Let's just say that their nonmeeting is part of an ongoing manic depressive episode called black radicalism/black social life. Is it just a minor internal conflict, this intimate nonmeeting, this impossibility of touching in mutual radiation and permeation? Can pessimists and optimists be friends? I hope so. Maybe that's what friendship is, this bipolarity, which is to say, more precisely, the commitment to it. To say that we are friends is to say that we want to be friends. I want to try to talk about the nature and importance of the friendship I want, that I would like us to have, that we are about to have, that in the deepest sense we already more than have, which is grounded in and enabled by that

MYSTICISM IN THE FLESH

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

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

Over the course of this essay, we'll have occasion to consider what that means, by way of a discussion of my preference for the terms *life* and *optimism* over *death* and *pessimism* and in light of Wilderson's and Sexton's brilliant insistence not only on the preferential option for blackness but also on the requirement of the most painstaking and painful attention to our damnation, a term I prefer to *wretchedness*, after the example of Miguel Mellino, not simply because it is a more literal translation of Fanon (though often, with regard to Fanon, I prefer the particular kinds of precision that follow from what some might dismiss as mistranslation) but also because wretchedness emerges from a standpoint that is not only not ours, that is not only one we cannot have and ought not want, but that is, in general, held within the logic of im/possibility that delineates the administered world of the subject/citizen. But this is to say, from the outset, not that I will advocate the construction of a necessarily fictive standpoint of our own but that I will seek out not just the absence but the refusal of standpoint, to actually explore and to inhabit and to think what Bryan Wagner calls "existence without standing" from no standpoint because this is what it would truly mean to stay in the hold of the ship (when the hold is thought with properly critical, and improperly celebratory, clarity). What would it be, deeper still, what is it, to think from no standpoint; to think outside the desire for a standpoint? What emerges in the desire that constitutes a certain proximity to that thought is not (just) that blackness is ontologically prior to the logistic and regulative power that is supposed to have brought it into existence but that blackness is prior to ontology; or, in a slight variation on what Nahum Dimitri Chandler might say, blackness is the anoriginal displacement of ontology, that it is ontology's anti- and antefoundation, ontology's underground, the irreparable disturbance of ontology's time and space. This is to say that what I do assert, not against, I think, but certainly in apposition to Afro-pessimism, as it is, at least at one point, distilled in Sexton's work, is not what he calls one of that project's most polemical dimensions, "namely, that black life is not social, or rather that black life is lived in social death." What I assert is this: that black life—which is as surely to say *life* as black thought is to say *thought*—is irreducibly social; that, moreover, black life is lived in *political* death or that it is lived, if you will, in the burial ground of the subject by those who, insofar as they are not subjects, are also not, in the interminable (as opposed to the last) analysis, "death-bound," as Abdul JanMohamed would say. In this, however, I also agree with Sexton insofar as I am inclined to call this burial ground "the (administered) world" and to conceive of it and the desire for it as pathological. At stake, now, will be what the difference is between the pathological and the pathogenic, a difference that will have been instantiated by what we might think of as the view, as well as the point of view, of the who have nothing have. What is this nothing that they have or to which they have access? What comes from it? And how does having it operate in relation to poverty?

At the same time, for Sexton, recognition of this attenuation (which marks the fact that the tone world is, as it were, surrounded by the deaf world) is already understood to indicate possession, as it were, of ontological reach. Maybe there's another implicit distinction between ontic extension and ontological grasp. But who but the transcendental subject can have that grasp or attain the position and perspective that corresponds to it? Husserl, at the end of his career, when his own attainment of it is radically called into question, speaks of this exalted hand-eye coordination as the phenomenological attitude; a few years earlier, when his career was much nearer to its fullest height and he could claim to be master of all he surveyed—modestly, on the outer edges of his work, under the breath of his work in a way that demands a more general attunement to the phenomenological whisper—Husserl spoke of it in these terms: "I can see spread out before me the endlessly open plains of true philosophy, the 'promised land,' though its thorough cultivation will come after me." Marianne Sawicki is especially helpful here because she so precisely teases out the implications of his imagery: "By means of this spatial, geographical metaphor of crossing over into the 'new land,' Husserl conveys something of the adventure and pioneer courage that should accompany phenomenological work. This science is related to 'a new field of experience, exclusively its own, the field of "transcendental subjectivity,"' and it offers 'a method of access to the transcendental-phenomenological sphere.' Husserl is the 'first explorer' of this marvelous place."

We should be no less forthright in recognizing that such positionality is the desire that Fanon admits, if only perhaps to disavow, when he conducts his philosophical investigations of the lived experience of the black. Two questions arise: Does he disavow it? Or is it, in its necessity, the very essence of what Wilderson calls "our black capacity to desire"? Certain things about the first few paragraphs of Fanon's phenomenological analysis seem clearer to me now than when I was composing "The Case of Blackness." The desire to attain transcendental subjectivity's self-regard is emphatic even if it is there primarily to mark an interdiction, an antagonism, a declivity, a fall into the deadly experiment that will have been productive of "a genuine new departure," the end of the world and the start of the general dispossession that will have been understood as cost and benefit. But that desire returns, as something like the residual self-image of the phenomenologist that he wants to but cannot be, to enunciate the (political) ontology he says is outlawed, in what he would characterize as the abnormal language of the demand, called, as he is, to be a witness in a court in which he has no standing, thereby requiring us to reconsider,

interesting and implicit here, what Kant is always working toward and through, is the political subject as a natural kind, the political subject as the subject of natural history, natural history as a field that is presided over by the political animal. The mobile hold and block chapel of pidgin, the little Negro's church and logos and gathering, this gathering in and against the word, alongside and through the word and the world as hold, manger, wilderness, tomb, upper room, and cell: there is fantasy in all of these, which makes you wonder what happens when you put your fantasy on hold, when what is seen and sung of being-unheld is, at once, not held on to and not passed on.

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Insofar as I am concerned, by way of a certain example to which Sexton appeals in order to explain (away) the difference that lies between us, with what surrounds, with what the nature is of surrounding and enclosure, I am also, of necessity, concerned with the relation between the inside and the outside, the intramural and the world. The difference that is not one is, for Sexton, a matter of "ontological reach." Perhaps he thinks of that difference as set-theoretic, a matter of calculating over infinities with the understanding that the infinity of social death is larger, as it were, than that of social life; that the world is bigger than the other (than) world, the underworld, the outer world of the inside song, the radical extension and exteriority that animates the enclosed, imprisoned inner world of the ones, shall we say, who are not poor in world but who are, to be more precise, poor-in-the-world. Black people are poor in the world. We are deprived in, and somehow both more and less than deprived of, the world. The question is how to attend to that poverty, that damnation, that wretchedness. I invoke Martin Heidegger's formulation regarding the animal, that it is poor in world, up against the buried contour of his question concerning the way that technology tends toward the displacement of world with a world-picture, in order to make the distinction between the animal's status and our own, which some might call even more distressing. What is it to be poor in the world? What is this worldly poverty, and what is its relation to the otherworldliness that we desire and enact, precisely insofar as it is present to us and present in us? Sexton characterizes this worldly poverty as attenuated ontological reach, knowing that to say this is tricky and requires care. What if poverty in this world is manifest in a kind of poetic access to what it is of the other world that remains unheard, unnoted, unrecognized in this one? Whether you call those resources tremendous life or social life in social death or fatal life or raw life, it remains to consider precisely what it is that the ones

pathologist. Against the grain of the enervating effects of the analytic assumption of black sociality as pathological—which need not be derived from the idea that black life is lived in and as a set of complex, errant proximities to the sovereign's crypt—I believe that blackness, in its necessarily pathogenic, irreducibly aesthetic sociality, bears the potential to end this funereal reign with an animative breath.

The question concerning the point of view, or standpoint, of the pathologist is crucial, but so is the question of what it is that the pathologist examines. What, precisely, is the morbid body upon which Fanon, the pathologist, trains his eye? What is the object of his "complete lysis?" And if it is more proper, because more literal, to speak of a lysis of universe, rather than body, how do we think the relation between transcendental frame and the body, or nobody, that occupies, or is banished from, its confines and powers of orientation? What I offer here as a clarification of Sexton's understanding of my relation to Afro-pessimism emerges from my sense of a kind of terminological dehiscence in Patterson's work that emerges in what I take to be his deep but unacknowledged affinity with and indebtedness to the work of Hannah Arendt, namely, with a distinction crucial to her work between the social and the political. The "secular excommunication" that describes slavery for Patterson is more precisely understood as the radical exclusion from a political order, which is tantamount, in Arendt's formulation, to something on the order of a radical relegation *to* the social. The problem with slavery, for Patterson, is that it is political death, not social death; the problem is that slavery confers the paradoxically stateless status of the merely, barely living; it delineates the inhuman as unaccommodated *bios*. At stake is the transvaluation or, better yet, the invaluation or antivaluation, the extraction from the sciences of value (and from the very possibility of that necessarily fictional, but materially brutal, standpoint that Wagner calls "being a party to exchange"). Such extraction will, in turn, be the very mark and inscription (rather than absence or eradication) of the sociality of a life, given in common, instantiated in exchange. What I am trying to get to, by way of this terminological slide in Patterson, is the consideration of a radical disjunction between sociality and the state-sanctioned, state-sponsored terror of power-laden intersubjectivity, which is, or would be, the structural foundation of Patterson's epiphenomenology of spirit. To have honor, which is, of necessity, to be a *man* of honor, for Patterson, is to become a combatant in transcendental subjectivity's perpetual civil war. To refuse the induction that Patterson desires is to enact or perform the recognition of the constitution of civil society as civil butchery. It is, moreover, to consider, by way of Sexton, that the unspoken violence of political friendship constitutes a capacity for alignment and coalition that is constituted and continually enhanced by the unspeakable violence

that is done to what and whom the political excludes. This is to say that, yes, I am in total agreement with the Afro-pessimistic understanding of blackness as exterior to civil society and, moreover, as unmappable within the cosmological grid of the transcendental subject. However, I understand civil society and the coordinates of the transcendental aesthetic—cognate as they are with the brutal indistinctness in which failed and successful states and citizens, sovereigns and subjects, mix it up—to be the fundamentally and essentially antisocial nursery for a necessarily necropolitical imitation of life. So that if Afro-pessimists were to say that social death is not the condition of black life but is, rather, the political field that would surround it, then that's a formulation with which I would agree. Social death is not imposed upon blackness by or from the standpoint or positionality of the political; rather, it is the field of the political, from which blackness is relegated to the supposedly undifferentiated mass or blob of the social, which is, in any case, where and what blackness chooses to stay.

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

> Now, all that remains are unspoken scraps scattered on the floor like Lisa's grievance. I am nothing, Naima, and you are nothing: the unspeakable answer to your question within your question. This is why I could not—would not—answer your question that night. Would I ever be with a Black woman

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

Consider the relation between nothingness and exhaustion as Deleuze describes it (by way of Samuel Beckett): the real presence, the presence of the thing in exhaustion, its differential ecology, its "echo-muse-ecology," to quote Stephen Feld, its clamor, its *clameur*, its claim, its demand, its plaint, its complaint, its working and layering and folding, as in Jacques Coursil's an(a)themic inclination, which also trumpets a movement from the subject of politics to the subject of life. To be subject to life might be understood as a kind of being enthralled by generativity. What the biopolitical continuum (the trajectory of sovereignty's illegitimate, speculative dissemination) attempts to regulate, suppress, and consume is the social poetics, the aesthetic sociality of this generativity. The care of the self, which can be figured as a kind of dissident member of the set of the self's various technologies, is part of the history of sovereignty as surely as the biopolitical deconstruction of sovereignty is an extension of that history. Another way to put it might be that biopolitics is already given in the figure of the political animal; that the move from natural history to biology is a held trajectory; that the regulation of generativity is already given in the idea of a natural kind. Teleological principle, which is meant to disrupt and disable the catology that accompanies biopolitics, reestablishes its ground and impetus, which is sovereignty. This asserts something that has to be worked through: the relationship between teleological principle and sovereignty, which will be established not by way of recourse to God as sovereign creator but by way of an appeal to transcendental subjectivity as a kind of manager (of anoriginal creativity or generativity). What's

in appositional proximity to his pessimism even if I would tend not to talk about the inside/outside relationality of social death and social life while speaking in terms of apposition and permeation rather than in terms of opposition and surrounding. Perhaps this difference turns out to bear and make some greater difference if it is accompanied by another kind of attunement to some other, broader notions of enjoyment and abandonment; perhaps the difference can be made clearer by way of the brilliance of Sexton's interpellation of Gordon's brilliance.

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

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

Nevertheless, my first impulse in reading Wilderson's long, Trane-like recita-

> again? It was earnest, not accusatory—I know. And nothing terrifies me more than such a question asked in earnest. It is a question that goes to the heart of desire, to the heart of our *black capacity to desire*. But if we take out the nouns that you used (nouns of habit that get us through the day), your question to me would sound like this: Would nothing ever be with nothing again?

When one reads the severity and intensity of Wilderson's words—his assertion of his own nothingness and the implications of that nothingness for his reader—one is all but overwhelmed by the need for a kind of affirmative negation of his formulation. It's not that one wants to say no, Professor Wilderson, you are, or I am, somebody; rather, one wants to assert the presence of something between the subjectivity that is refused and that one refuses and nothing, whatever that is. But it is the beauty—the fantastic, celebratory force of Wilderson's and Sexton's work, which study has allowed me to begin more closely to approach—of Afro-pessimism that allows and compels one to move past that contradictory impulse to affirm in the interest of negation and to begin to consider *what nothing is*, not from its own standpoint or from any standpoint but from the absoluteness of its generative dispersion of a general antagonism that blackness holds and protects in and as critical celebration and degenerative and regenerative preservation. That's the mobility of place, the fugitive field of unowning, in and from which we ask, paraontologically, by way of but also against and underneath the ontological terms at our disposal: What is nothingness? What is thingliness? What is blackness? What's the relationship between blackness, thingliness, nothingness, and the (de/re)generative operations of what Deleuze might call *a life* in common? Where do we go, by what means do we begin, to study blackness? Can there be an aesthetic sociology or a social poetics of nothingness? Can we perform an anatomy of the thing or produce a theory of the universal machine? Our aim, even in the face of the brutally imposed difficulties of black life, is cause for celebration. This is not because celebration is supposed to make us feel good or make us feel better, though there would be nothing wrong with that. It is, rather, because the cause for celebration turns out to be the condition of possibility of black thought, which animates the black operations that will produce the absolute overturning, the absolute turning of this motherfucker out. Celebration is the essence of black thought, the animation of black operations, which are, in the first instance, our undercommon, underground, submarine sociality.

In the end, though *life* and *optimism* are the terms under which I speak, I agree with Sexton—by way of the slightest, most immeasurable reversal of emphasis—that Afro-pessimism and black optimism are not but nothing other than one anoth-

er. I will continue to prefer the black optimism of his work just as, I am sure, he will continue to prefer the Afro-pessimism of mine. We will have been interarticulate, I believe, in the field where annihilative seeing, generative sounding, and rigorous touching and feeling require an improvisation of and on friendship, a sociality of friendship that will have been, at once, both intramural and evangelical. I'll try to approach that field, its expansive concentration, by way of Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell's extended meditation on nothingness; by way of Fanon's and Peter Linebaugh's accounts of language in and as vehicularity; by way of Michel Foucault's meditations on the ship of fools and Deleuze's consideration of the boat as interior of the exterior when they are both thoroughly solicited by the uncharted voices that we carry; by way, even, of Lysis and Socrates; but also, and in the first instance, by way of Hawk and Newk, just friends, trading fours. Perhaps I'm simply deluding myself, but such celebratory performance of thought, in thought, is as much about the insurgency of immanence as it is about what Wagner calls the "consolation of transcendence." But, as I said earlier, I plan to stay a believer in blackness, even as thingliness, even as (absolute) nothingness, even as imprisonment in passage on the most open road of all, even as—to use and abuse a terribly beautiful phrase of Wilderson's—fantasy in the hold.

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> Where we were, not—withstanding, wasn't there …
> Where we
> were was the hold of a ship we were
> caught
> in. Soaked wood kept us afloat. … It
> wasn't limbo we were in albeit we
> limbo'd our way there. Where we
> were was what we meant by "mu."

There are flights of fantasy in the hold of the ship: the ordinary fugue and fugitive run of the language lab, black phonographies' brutally experimental venue. Paraontological totality is still in the making. Present and unmade in presence, blackness is an instrument in the making. *Quasi una fantasia* in its paralegal swerve, its madworked braid, the imagination produces nothing but exsense in the hold. Do you remember the days of slavery? Nathaniel Mackey rightly says, "The world was ever after, / elsewhere. / … no / way where we were / was there." Do you remember

if consciousness of double consciousness is an effect of paraontological considerations? What if this auspicious Du Boisian beginning is thrown offtrack in Fanon, but precisely in the service of its placement in and on multiple tracks? Here, I think, is how the distinction between sociology and sociogeny turns toward a sociopoetic cognizance of the real presence of the people in and at their making, where that retrospective ascription of absence that Fanon's inhabitation of the problematic of damnation, which is activated in his return to his native land, is given in and to a lyrical, analytic poetics of the process of revolutionary transubstantiation that begins with the experience of the nonnative's nonreturn to the village and to the consensual exsense of its social speech, where and by way of which we study what it is to live in what is called dispossession. This is a problematic that shows up in relation to mu, to nothingness, as well as in relation to the question of being, its unasking, (and the unmasking of the one who frames it).

John Donne says, "If I an ordinary nothing were, / As shadow, a light, and body must be here. // But I am none; nor will my sun renew." In the absence of what is taken for light, in the absence of the thought, the scheme, that is called a body, how do we describe extraordinary, or absolute, nothing? Is this certain uncertainty, an inability to distinguish oneself from one's things that implies, more precisely and more urgently, that disruption of the distinction between self and thing that makes possession possible? The body schema manifests itself as (a breakdown in) the relay between (knowledge of) the necessity of grasping and the capacity to grasp where necessity and capacity each denote, in turn, a relay between knowing and acting. No ontological reach, no epistemological grasp. Meanwhile, it is precisely this implicit knowledge (of the difference between self and thing) that enfleshes questions. Linebaugh speaks of this nonsense, the extrasensorial assertion, which must have emerged in the ship's hold, which was a language lab, a zone of experimental, audiovisual intonation but also—and it is Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley who approaches this almost complete unapproachability—a scene, an erotic vestibule, a prison house of violent pleasure, where flesh is rendered in the absolute exposure of a terrible open secret. Linebaugh's critics, some in their best old-fashioned Marxist ways, anticipatory of Patterson's dismissive relegation of lore in the interest of data, say no, nothing could ever come of such formal deprivation (other than the poverty of the informal, which they have neither the capacity nor the desire to think in its incalculable rhythm). To which I would answer yes. Only nothing. Only that less and more than subjective and subjected sociality. Fantasy in the hold. And this is to say, basically, at the level of Sexton's real intellectual and social aims, if not at the level of the specific critical objects of our work, I am totally with him in locating my optimism

> Locked in this suffocating reification, I appealed to the Other so that his liberating gaze … would give me back the lightness of being I thought I had lost.… Nothing doing. I explode. Here are the fragments put together by another me.…
>
> We were given the occasion to confront the white gaze. An unusual weight descended on us. The real world robbed us of our share. In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one's body is solely negating.…
>
> "Look! A Negro!" …
>
> "Look! A Negro!" …
>
> "Look! A Negro! …
>
> "*Maman*, look, a Negro; I'm scared!" Scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be scared of me. I wanted to kill myself laughing, but laughter had become out of the question.

Fanon investigates what it is to be eager to grasp, to uncover, while having been robbed of the capacity to have a share. No past, no future, nonexistent, "my originality had been snatched from me." The failed natality of the fabricated explodes so that the mechanism (the instrument, the toy) can, at the very least, piece itself together. This is the itinerary of Fanon's black deconstruction, which ends in an image of inquisitive reassembly, *as if* the futurial project of blackness that he forecloses was always meant to live on only in and through him. The reification he decries suffocates in the absence of other aspirations. This attends the bodily schema's collapse into an epidermal-racial schema. In the aftermath of this interplay of implosion and explosion, Fanon's lesson takes the form of a postmortem reconstruction. This is forensic phenomenology: autopsy, eyewitness, unflinching determination of the cause of our sociality, which is taken for our death, given in or initiated by a metaphorics of biochemistry and supplemented by figures of text and textile. The pigmentation alluded to at the beginning will now be applied to newly woven cloth so that livery can be made in the service of a strict visual determination. Fanon sees it all so clearly, now, and the irony, of course, is that the eyes he sees with are not his. One sees only from the Other's perspective, with the other's instruments, that which is of the Other's fabrication. How do we account for this forced borrowing of normative sense, normative senses, and the forms they take? Moreover, what remains silent in this ocular field? Does Fanon step out of the brutal structural adjustment this regime of credit enforces? The forensic knowledge that underwrites this postmortem is an imposition/gift conferred on "the occasion to confront the white gaze." What

where we are? No way where we are is here. Where we were, where we are, is what we meant by mu, which Wilderson rightly calls the void of our subjectivity, which we extend, in consent beyond all voluntarity, in our avoidance of subjectivity.81 And so it is that we remain in the hold, in the break, as if entering again and again the broken world, to trace the visionary company and join it. This antiphonal island, where we are marooned in search of marronage, where we linger in stateless emergency, is our mobile, constant study, our lysed cell and held dislocation, our blown standpoint and lyred chapel. We study our seaborne variance, sent by its prehistory into arrivance without arrival, as a poetics of lore, of abnormal articulation, where the relation between joint and flesh is the pleated distance of a musical moment that is emphatically, palpably imperceptible and therefore exhausts description. Having defied degradation, the moment becomes a theory of the moment, of the feeling of a presence that is ungraspable in the way that it touches. Such musical moments—of advent, of nativity in all its terrible beauty, of the alienation that is always already born in and as *parousia*, of the disruption in duration of the very idea of the moment—are rigorous performances of the theory of the social life of the shipped, given in the terror of enjoyment and its endlessly redoubled folds. If you take up the hopelessly imprecise tools of standard navigation, the deathly reckoning of difference engines, maritime clocks, and tables of damned assurance, you might stumble on such a moment about two and a half minutes into another Cherry and Blackwell's duet called "Mutron." You'll know the moment by how it requires you to think the relation between fantasy and nothingness: what is mistaken for silence is, all of a sudden, transubstantial.

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

relinquish the fantastic when they make, or even when they bear, the choice to leave the hold behind. In resistance to such departure we linger in the brutal interplay of advent and enclosure. Marcus Rediker offers us a scene of that interplay:

> They resumed paddling and soon began to sing. After a while she could hear, at first faintly, then with increasing clarity, other sounds—the waves slapping the hull of the big ship, its timbers creaking. Then came muffled screaming in a strange language.
>
> The ship grew larger and more terrifying with every vigorous stroke of the paddles. The smells grew stronger and the sounds louder—crying and wailing from one quarter and low, plaintive singing from another; the anarchic noise of children given an underbeat by hands drumming on wood; the odd comprehensible word or two wafting through: someone asking for *menney*, water, another laying a curse, appealing to *myabeca*, spirits. As the canoemen maneuvered their vessel up alongside, she saw dark faces, framed by small holes in the side of the ship above the waterline, staring intently. Above her, dozens of black women and children and a few red-faced men peered over the rail. They had seen the attempted escape on the sandbar. The men had cutlasses and barked orders in harsh, raspy voices. She had arrived at the slave ship.

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

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

I'm not sure that Fanon really listens or that, more generally, he really senses the symposium he prepares for us. This preparation could be said to take the form of a sacrifice in which he takes on the unpleasant task of rigorously describing what's so hateful in the way antiblackness mishears what it overhears. Faulty recordings can't help but trigger violent disavowal. The distance between "I don't sound like that" and "I'm not like that" is infinitesimal in its immeasurable vastness. Does black speech, does the little Negro, assume a culture or bear a civilization? If not, then how could it be speech? What does it mean to consider that black speech is the sound of natal alienation, the sound of being without a heritage, without a patrimony? It means, first of all, that all these terms must be revalued, precisely from the already exhausted perspective of the ones who are both (de)valued and invaluable. When Fanon speaks of "local cultural originality," who or what is speaking? Who speaks the possession of a language, of a culture, of (a) civilization? Who speaks the necessity of a heritage such that its absence is understood as relative nothingness? Fanon moves by way of a model of the subject that is evacuated even as he writes. This is a James Snead formulation in a sense; a Gordon formulation in another. Derrida speaks, too, out of Algeria, of a problematic of accent, correspondent in its way to the Martinican swallowing of *r*'s of which Fanon speaks. The dispossessive force of black speech confirms, in one sense, and obliterates, in another, the "monolingualism of the Other." My language is not mine, also, because its undercommonness cuts me and mine. The trouble is that Fanon leaps from an analysis of the social situation of pidgin in France, its force as a verbal adjunct, to a visual imposition, without investigating the social situation of the making of pidgin and without raising the question of its structure, its syntax, its logic. It is simply assumed to be both subsequent and subordinate to the standard in its givenness. Is it possible for the new returnee actually to think about pidgin? Another way to put it is that Fanon prepares us for Glissant in his lysis of the morbid body, which begins with an attention to language that is then carried through in his investigation of the structure of epidermalization, of which the supposed imposition of pidgin and the imposition of the desire for French, in their interinanimation, form a kind of verbal supplement and servant.

> "Dirty nigger!" or simply "Look! A Negro!"
>
> I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects.

self-regard—are the limits of poetic possibility, which is, itself, animated by both lyric and lysis, continually driven toward new fields of exhaustion. We have to continually work—where aridity is only insofar as it is inseparable from hyperhydration; where thirst and submergence converge; in the hold on the open sea—through this interplay of the establishment and the breakdown of the cell if we are ever to attend the birth of an insurgency that Fanon prophesies and enacts. The splitting of the cell is inseparable from the splitting of the ego that could be said to impose narcissism while also constituting narcissism's closure. There is a hydroptique phono-optics of the general balm and it's the general bomb!

It is as if Fanon is providing commentary on the unpublished notebook of his own return, precisely in order to tell slant the experimental slant. This powerful sociolinguistic self-analysis is a kind of jumping-off point, but what I want to do is slow down and linger, for a little while, over the question of the little Negro, which is a monument to the mind of the little Negro dockworkers and fieldworkers, and work shirkers, and so on. The black man's relegation to pidgin understood as prison, as imprisonment in passage, or as naked, experimental incline, or both, begs the question of the relationship between blackness and the black man, the paraontological distinction that is everywhere implicit in Fanon's text, precisely at or as the point in which self-analysis becomes possible, that space Sexton talks about in which we discern the distinction between vantage and view. But in neither Fanon nor Sexton nor Wilderson, even in texts that we are constrained to call autobiographical, and, moreover, nowhere in the cramped and capacious nowhere from which the vast ante- and anti-autobiographical field from and within which black thought and black literature plots its escape and fantasizes its flight, can the brutally unauthorized author be said simply to be talking about him- or herself. He or she's talking about *the* self, precisely in the service of a complete lysis of that morbid body and/in its morbid universe. Fanon says, "We are aiming at nothing less than to liberate the black man from himself," which is to say the self that he cannot have and cannot be, but against which he is posed as the occupant of no position. Is this liberation complete in Fanon? Can self-analysis, which is the name Cecil Taylor gives to improvisation, liberate us from the self, or does it only further secure our incarceration? Again, this is a question that emerges not only in relation to Fanon but also in relation to Olaudah Equiano and Mary Prince, Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, Du Bois and Anna Julia Cooper, Wilderson and Saidiya Hartman, permeating through and in an autobiographical trace that continues to animate the black radical tradition. On the other hand, the new black music is this: find the self, then kill it, as M. NourbeSe Philip's work instantiates. But, to echo Ralph Ellison again and again, so few people really listen to this music. It is,

plement, votive and unelect.84 Blackwell offers what is held in mu as the impossible-to-understand black thing, the Cherry thing as a seriality of openings, a vestibular chain, a kind of spillway, as Hortense Spillers might say.

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

> Multi-instrumentalist Don Cherry, best known as a trumpeter, includes voice among the instruments used on the "*Mu*" albums and resorts to a sort of dove-coo baby talk on one piece, "Teo-Teo-Can," emitting sounds that might accompany the tickling of a baby's chin if not be made by the baby itself. It recalls Amiri Baraka's comment on hearing a John Coltrane solo that consisted of playing the head of "Confirmation" again and again, twenty times or so: "like watching a grown man learning to speak." In both cases, as with the

Dogon trumpet burst and as it's put in "Song of the Andoumboulou: 58," one is "back / at / some beginning," some extremity taking one back to animating constraint. The antelope-horn trumpet's blast and bleat, Cherry's ludic warble and Trane's recursive quandary are variations on music as gnostic announcement, ancient rhyme, that of end and beginning, gnostic accent or note that cuts both ways.

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

Serial form lends itself to andoumboulouous liminality, the draft unassured extension knows itself to be. Provisional, ongoing, the serial poem moves forward and backward both, repeatedly "back / at / some beginning," repeatedly circling or cycling back, doing so with such adamance as to call forward and back into question and suggest an eccentric step to the side—as though, driven to distraction by short-circuiting options, it can only be itself beside itself. So it is that "*Mu*" is also *Song of the Andoumboulou*, and *Song of the Andoumboulou* also "*Mu*." H.D.'s crazed geese, circling above the spot that was once Atlantis or the Hesperides or the Islands of the Blest, come to mind, as do John Coltrane's wheeling, spiraling runs as if around or in pursuit of some lost or last note, lost or last amenity: a tangential, verging movement out (outlantish). The ring shout comes to mind, as do the rings of Saturn, the planet adopted by Sun Ra, one of whose albums, *Atlantis*, opens with a piece called "Mu."

aridity. But we will note the beauty and insistence of Fanon's animating claim, his animated clameur. He writes, "There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge. In most cases, the black man cannot take advantage of this descent into a veritable hell."

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

> Society, unlike biochemical processes, does not escape human influence. Man is what brings society into being. The prognosis is in the hands of those who are prepared to shake the worm-eaten foundations of the edifice.
>
> It is considered appropriate to preface a work on psychology with a methodology. We shall break with tradition. We leave methods to the botanists and mathematicians. There is a point where methods are resorbed.

To absorb again, to dissolve and assimilate. "That is where we would like to position ourselves." This appeal to resorption, another biochemical term/process that is free of human influence. Fanon deploys biochemical metaphors for the ana/lysis of sociogenic products by way of sociogenic means. And here's the crux, making explicit what would emerge from this overlay of social and biochemical processes, sociopsychoanalytic and experimental practices. Is the laboratory, the encounter, the experimental zone of nonbeing, the paraontic or anontic zone? The otherwise-than-being-ness of the experiment, which turns out to be ante-ethical as well if ethics is even, as Emmanuel Levinas understands it, neither illness nor death. This internal sociality of the experiment, a sociality and sociology of the anontic, a social biopoetics of and in the experiment, is given in the ongoing disturbance of language that is language's anoriginal condition. The experiment is poetic; pidgin is a poetics.

Consider the constraint of black poetry—of fantasy in the hole or whole or hold or over the side. If it's a constraint, how is it a constraint? It is, first of all, a conceptual field, as Spillers would allow. A field in which, more precisely, the concept of the object is a kind of imperative at the level of both study and performance, in zones where neither the presumption nor the disavowal of self—each in its own obsessive

nonarrival, where means and end, object and aim, converge, Tao-like, in their mutual incompleteness within a social field, as ensemblic consent, where the first is displaced by the last, by what is supposed to have been relegated to the presupposed, already posited emptiness of a vessel filled with nothing. A jug or a cup of earthenware or Lorenzo, their otherworldly interventions, the otherworldly intervention of servants and bearers, their thought of the outside, their disruption of closure, their suspension of pursuit is dismissed, in common, as already (de)valued commonness's underside, which is animated by that whose form it takes: "mere idle talk put together after the fashion of a lengthy poem." Phenomenology's variously public and private debts to the transcendental subject and to transcendental intersubjectivity are often manifest as impatience with idle talk, idle chatter, even when such chatter is understood to be the subhuman insignificance of those who are relegated to the fullest possible employment, which evokes not only the wordlessness of the work song but also the expropriated linguistic underlabor, expropriated within the general project of exclusionary, self-possessive subjectivation, that is given in the form of an implied response to the bad faith speech of antiblackness. This is to say—and I think this is what Fanon is most pissed off about, and righteously so—that the doctor's impertinent questions to his black patients already imply an answer that would be given in the gestures that accompany mute, impossible positionality. And so Fanon performs, in thought, such questioning's appositional unasking. This is the character of his complete lysis. It is complete, but, as Wallace Stevens would say, in an unexplained completion. This is the interminable as opposed to the last analysis, the interminable analysis of the last, the anaeschatalogical sounding of the unfathomable alternative. We still have to discover, we have to keep discovering, what that sounding sounds like, in the ongoing refusal of a standpoint, of a jurisdiction, for such hearing, in the ongoing critique of the critique of a certain notion of judgment. The absence and refusal of the standpoint is given in the sound of that sounding, which Fanon leads us to but to which he didn't always listen. Here's where the problematic of lyric disturbs and augments lysis. Here's where whatever it is that the pathologist means to examine, in its own degenerative and regenerative differentiation, moves in disruption of the pathologist's standpoint. This is to say that the tools and protocols and methods of the pathologist, however much they have made possible an approach, cannot, shall we say, manage entrance into the zone of nonbeing. From outside that zone, from the ruins of a standpoint, from one of the numberless husks of an inhabitable possibility, lysis morphs into autopsy so that nonbeing's generativity—as it is manifest in noise, chatter, gobbledygook, pidgin's social refusal of imposed and impossible intersubjectivity—is taken for sterility, its flow taken for

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

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

He continues:

> The Afro-pessimists are theorists of Black positionality who share Fanon's insistence that, though Blacks are … sentient beings, the structure of the entire world's semantic field … is sutured by anti-Black solidarity. … Afro-pessimism explores the meaning of Blackness not—in the first instance—as a variously and unconsciously interpellated identity or as a conscious social actor, but as a structural position of noncommunicability in the face of all other positions; this meaning is noncommunicable because, again, as a position, Blackness is

> predicated on modalities of accumulation and fungibility, not exploitation and alienation.

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

Within this framework blackness and antiblackness remain in brutally antisocial structural support of one another like the stanchions of an absent bridge of lost desire over which flows the commerce and under which flows the current, the logistics and energy of exclusion and incorporation, that characterizes the political world. Though it might seem paradoxical, the bridge between blackness and antiblackness *is* "the unbridgeable gap between Black being and Human life." What remains is the necessity of an attempt to index black existence by way of what Chandler would call paraontological, rather than politico-ontological, means. The relative nothingness of black life, which shows up for political ontology as a relation of nonrelation or counterrelation precisely in the impossibility of political intersubjectivity, can be said both to obscure and to indicate the social animation of the bridge's underside, where the im/possibilities of political intersubjectivity are exhausted. Political ontology backs away from the experimental declivity that Fanon and Du Bois were at least able to blaze, each in his own way forging a sociological path that would move against the limiting force, held in the ontological traces, of positivism, on the one hand, and phenomenology, on the other, as each would serve as the foundation of a theory of relations posing the nothingness of blackness in its (negative) relation to the substance of subjectivity-as-nonblackness (enacted in antiblackness). On the one hand, blackness and ontology are unavailable for one another; on the

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

> For myself, I was rejoicing, with all a hunter's delight, at just grasping the prey I had been so long in chase of, when presently there came into my mind, from what quarter I cannot tell, the strangest sort of suspicion.
>
> Can we possibly help, then, being weary of going on in this manner, and is it not necessary that we advance at once to a beginning which will not again refer us to friend upon friend, but arrive at that to which we are in the first instance friends, and for the sake of which we say we are friends to all the rest?

Trane says that he plays multiple lines in the same head, plays the same head multiple times, because he doesn't know the one path to the essential. Trane's questioning and unasking, his experimental method—is it Socrates's method, too? Trane's fantasy. He dreamed his treasure. Maybe he knew there was no single way. Maybe he didn't want there to be one way. He didn't want it to be one way; there were the other ways. Trane's mysticism, the polyvalent collectivity of his constant worrying of beginning, instantiates the problem of ana-lysis, of improvisation as self-ana-lysis.Derrida speaks of this nonpresence, which is insofar as it is copresence, the real presence, interdicted and interpenetrative, of archetropic return and philolytic

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

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

The language of biochemistry permeates Fanon's text, as it should. It's all bound up with the language of friendship, the massive corollary problematic of like and unlike, rending the distinction between friend and enemy that Plato gets to in

other hand, blackness must free itself from ontological expectation, must refuse subjection to ontology's sanction against the very idea of black subjectivity. This imperative is not something up ahead, to which blackness aspires; it is the labor, which must not be mistaken for Sisyphean, that blackness serially commits. The paraontological distinction between blackness and blacks allows us no longer to be enthralled by the notion that blackness is a property that belongs to blacks (thereby placing certain formulations regarding non/relationality and non/communicability on a different footing and under a certain pressure) but also because ultimately it allows us to detach blackness from the question of (the meaning of) being. The infinitesimal difference between pessimism and optimism lies not in the belief or disbelief in descriptions of power relations or emancipatory projects; the difference is given in the space between an assertion of the relative nothingness of blackness and black people in the face, literally, of substantive (antiblack) subjectivity and an inhabitation of appositionality, its internal social relations, which remain unstructured by the protocols of subjectivity insofar as mu—which has been variously translated from the Japanese translation of the Chinese *wu* as no, not, nought, nonbeing, emptiness, nothingness, nothing, no thing, but which also bears the semantic trace of dance, therefore of measure given in walking/falling, that sustenance of asymmetry, difference's appositional mobility—also signifies an absolute nothingness whose antirelative and antithetical philosophical content is approached by way of Nishida Kitarō's enactment of the affinities between structures and affects of mysticism that undergird and trouble metaphysics in the "East" and the "West." Indeed, the content that is approached is approach, itself, and for the absolute beginner, who is at once pilgrim and penitent, mu signals that which is most emphatically and lyrically marked and indicated in Wilderson's and Mackey's gestures toward "fantasy in the hold," the radical unsettlement that is where and what we are. Unsettlement is the displacement of sovereignty by initiation, so that what's at stake—here, in displacement—is a certain black incapacity to desire sovereignty and ontological relationality whether they are recast in the terms and forms of a Levinasian ethics or an Arendtian politics, a Fanonian resistance or a Pattersonian test of honor.

Unenabled by or in this incapacity, Nishida's philosophy folds sovereignty in the delay that has always given it significance, putting it on hold, but not in the hold, where to be on hold is to have been committed to a kind of staging, a gathering of and for the self in which negation is supposed to foster true emergence in "a self-determination of that concrete place of the contradictory identity of objectivity and subjectivity." What I term, here, a *delay* is understood by Nishida as "the moment [that] can be said to be eternal … [wherein] consciously active individuals,

encounter the absolute as its inverse polarity, its mirror opposite, at each and every step of our lives." It is in echoing a traditional Buddhist teaching, which asserts the *nonself* even against what are considered foolish declarations of the *nonexistence of self*, that Nishida restages a standard ontotheological skit in which sovereignty—whether in the form of the consciously active individual or in that individual's abstract and equivalent dispersion in the nation, "the mirror image of the Pure Land in this world"—takes and holds the space-time, the paradoxically transcendental ground, of the everyday unreality of "the real world," where the sovereign's endless show carries a brutally material imposition. What remains to be seen is what (the thinking and the study of) blackness can bring to bear on the relation between the un/real world and its other(s). What if blackness is the refusal to defer to, given in the withdrawal from the eternal delay of, sovereignty? What if Nishida's preparatory vestibule for a general and infinite self-determination is pierced, rather than structurally supported, by (the very intimation of) the no-place to which it is opposed in his own work? When Nishida argues that "the human, consciously active volitional world makes its appearance from the standpoint of the paradoxical logic of the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* literature," which offers us the phrase "Having No Place wherein it abides, this Mind arises," he means to assert the legitimacy of an idea or image of the whole that takes "the form of the contradictory identity of the consciously active self and the world, of the volitional individual and the absolute." What if (the thinking and the study of) blackness is an inhabitation of the hold that disrupts the whole in which the absolute, or absolute nothingness, is structured by its relation to its relative Other? What if the nothing that is in question here moves through to the other side of negation, in "the real presence" of blackness, in and as another idea of nothingness altogether that is given in and as and to things?

Both against the grain and by way of Fanon's negation of the condition of relative nothingness, which is instantiated in what he takes to be the white man's manufacture of the black, black study is attunement of and toward blackness as the place where something akin to the absolute nothingness that Nishida elaborates and a radical immanence of things that is not disavowed so much as it is unimagined in that same elaboration converge. This is to say that what remains unimagined by Nishida—not simply radical thingliness but its convergence with nothingness—is nevertheless made open to us by and in his thinking. Nishida helps prepare us to consider, even in the nationalist divagation of his own engagement with the heart of a teaching that has no center, that blackness is the place that has no place. "Having no place where it abides, this Mind [of the Little Negro Steelworker] arises." Things are in, but they do not have, a world, a place, but it is precisely both the specificity

indicates. In this view, it's not just that pidgin is prison language but that being made to speak it imprisons. Imprisonment in pidgin, the imprisonment that is enacted in being made to speak pidgin, is, itself, an epiphenomenon of epidermalization, nothing more than its verbal accompaniment. Implicit here, again, is the assumed priority of the standard. One is made to speak pidgin in response to an imposition, in response to speech uttered in bad faith. The standard rises as a kind of background that pidgin fails pitiably and pitifully to represent. That failed representation is then burlesqued and parodied by the white whose utterance—whether in condescension or in a more direct kind of cruelty—is meant to do nothing other than impose the subordination and incarceration that is instantiated in the black man–as–good nigger's speech.

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

Again, Fanon is concerned with the narcissism of the new returnee, the social climber, as he or she links up with Arendt's own stringent analysis of the parvenu. That narcissism disallows a rigorous and requisite full inhabitation of the zone of nonbeing, an "extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge." This incline, or declivity, or ramp, bespeaks, again, the bio(al)chemical laboratory in which the black

Fanon elaborates:

> The fact is that the European has a set idea of the black man, and there is nothing more exasperating than to hear: "How long have you lived in France? You speak such good French."
>
> It could be argued that this is due to the fact that a lot of black people speak pidgin. But that would be too easy. …
>
> After everything that has … been said, it is easy to understand why the first reaction of the black man is to say *no* to those who endeavor to define him. It is understandable that the black man's first action is a *reaction*, and since he is assessed with regard to his degree of assimilation, it is understandable too why the returning Antillean speaks only French: because he is striving to underscore the rift that has occurred. He embodies a new type of man whom he imposes on his colleagues and family. His old mother no longer understands when he speaks of her pj's, her ramshackle dump, and her lousy joint. All that embellished with the proper accent.

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

Meanwhile, the phonics of pidgin is an epiphenomenon, not only in that it is an effect of, but also in that it indicates, fabrication. Moreover, it entraps what it

of having neither world nor place and the generality of not having that we explore at the nexus of openness and confinement, internment and flight. Having no place wherein they abide, in the radically dispossessive no-place of the hold, in "Mutron," Cherry and Blackwell touch intimacy from the walls. In that break, the architectonic intent of the hold as sovereign expression and recuperation breaks down. Feel the complete lysis of this morbid body/universe. Touch is not where subjectivity and objectivity come together in some kind of self-determining dialectical reality; beyond that, in the hold, in the *basho* (the place of nothingness, that underground, undercommon recess), is the social life of black things, which passeth (the) understanding. In the hold, blackness and imagination, in and as consent not to be a single being, are (more and less than) one.

We are prepared for this generative incapacity by Wilderson's work, where what distinguishes the sovereign, the settler, and even the savage from the slave is precisely that they share "a capacity for time and space coherence. At every scale—the soul, the body, the group, the land, and the universe—they can both practice cartography, and although at every scale their maps are radically incompatible, their respective 'mapness' is never in question. This capacity for cartographic coherence is the thing itself, that which secures subjectivity for both the Settler and the 'Savage' and articulates them to one another in a network of connections, transfers, and displacements." Absent the "cartographic coherence [that] is the thing itself," we must become interested in things, in a certain relationship between thingliness and nothingness and blackness that plays itself out—outside and against the grain of the very idea of self-determination—in the unmapped and unmappable immanence of undercommon sociality. This is fantasy in the hold, and Wilderson's access to it is in the knowledge that he can have nothing and in the specific incapacity of a certain desire that this knowledge indexes. It remains for us to structure an accurate sense of what nothing is and what it constitutes in the exhaustion of home, intersubjectivity, and what Sexton calls "ontological reach." The truth of the formulation that the black cannot be among or in relation to his or her own is given in terminological failure. What's at stake is how to improvise the declension from what is perceived as a failure to be together to the unmappable zone of paraontological consent. The promise of another world, or of the end of this one, is given in the general critique of world. In the meantime, what remains to be inhabited is nothing itself in its fullness, which is, in the absence of intersubjective relationality, high fantastical or, more precisely, given in the fugal, contrapuntal intrication that we can now call, by way of Mackey and Wilderson, fantasy in the hold, where the interplay of blackness and nothingness is given in an ongoing drama of force and entry.

In a tradition of Buddhist teaching that goes back to the opening of *The Gateless Gate*, a thirteenth-century gathering of *koans* (case studies that take the form of stories, dialogues, or questions meant to induce in the initiate dual intensities of doubt and concentration), that drama emerges as a deconstructive and deconstructed question, as exemplified in conventional presentations and interpretation of "Jōshū's Dog." The koan reads: "A monk asked [Zen master] Jōshū in all earnestness, 'Does a dog have Buddha nature or not?' Jōshū said, 'Mu!'" Even when we take into account Steven Heine's warnings regarding the legitimacy of traditional attributions and interpretations of the Mu Koan—which require us to consider both that it was not Jōshū who responded to the question or that Jōshū's response was the opposite of mu and that, therefore, the negative way that response is understood to open ought now to be closed—we are left with an ontotheological possibility that blackness may well exhaust. There is an appositional response, which this phantom query cannot properly be said to have called, that persists in and as an echoepistemology of passage, a sociotheology of the *aneschaton*, the instrumental interruption of telos by the universal (drum) machine, Blackwell's prompt out to the study of the last things, the study carried out by the things that are last, by the least of these, whose movement constitutes a critique of the general and necessary relation between politics and death, a critique of the critique of judgment, a deconstruction of the opposition of heaven and hell. Cherry brings the noise of the end of the world in the invention of the earth. Though eschatology is understood to be a department, as it were, of theology, it has been both displaced by an administrative desire for the teleological and appropriated by a retributive desire for a kind of finality of and in sentencing, each in its commitment to sovereignty and the already existing structures that depend on the very idea. But it's not that I want to enclose things in the dialectical movement between beginning and end. Invention and passage denote an already existing alternative for which we are not constrained to wait. We are already down here on and under the ground, the water, as worked, unwrought nothingness working fleshly releasement in a privation of feasting, a fragility of healing. Mu is a practice of mysticism in the flesh; "Mutron," the ritual Blackwell and Cherry perform, is their concentration meditation. It indexes the specific and material history of the drowned and burned, the shipped and held, as the condition for the release not just of the prevailing worldview but of the very idea of worldview, of transcendental standpoint and Pure Land. Cherry and Blackwell are initiates, who in turn initiate us, in what it is to abide in the social materiality of no place, of Having No Place, as a place for study. This shows up as a radical displacement of binary logic, moving through negation, because the way of the hold is no *via negativa*. Rather, the

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

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

interpellated by such speech, and, then, the ensuing commitment of those blacks to "speaking good French.")

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

hold is distressed circuitry, an impedance or impediment of current, a placement of the self's or the settler's or the sovereign's dyadic currency in kenotic abandon. "Mutron" is a way out of no way given in and as the exhaustion of what it is to abide, where the first and the last are neither first nor last.

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

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

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

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

Passage, which is to say this passage, which is to say the passage between these passages of Foucault and Deleuze, the passage between these and those of Wilderson and Mackey, is given in the hold that Cherry and Blackwell deconstructively reconstruct just so you'll know that the music and its performance was never about transcendence unless transcendence is understood as immanence's fugitive impurity. How would you recognize the antiphonal accompaniment to gratuitous violence—the sound that can be heard as if in response to that violence, the sound that must be heard as that to which such violence responds? Wilderson asks the question again so that it can be unasked; so that we can hear Cherry and Blackwell unask it in and as intimacy in dislocation. Unasking takes the form of a caesura, an arrhythmia of the iron system, that Blackwell presses into the interruptive, already interrupted New Orleans continuum of his roll whose distended rearticulation stretches out so you can go down in it enough to think about what it means to be somewhere you're only supposed to be going through, to be contained in the atopic atemporality that propels you, as the immanence of the transcendental hallway of our endless preparation, our experimental trial, given as our ongoing study of how to speak, the terrible beauty of our imprisonment in the passage, our life in the folds. Blackwell asks a question that Cherry anticipates, but by which Cherry is driven and to which Cherry responds in the bent, appositional reflection that unasks it. This drama is revived in Wilderson's questioning; the question is a seizure that moves us to unask it. That unasking is mu not because the question's terms and assumptions are incorrect; not because the implied opposition of nothing and something—where nothingness is too simply understood to veil (as if it were some epidermal livery) (some higher) being and is therefore relative as opposed to absolute—doesn't signify; but because nothing (this paraontological interplay of blackness and nothingness, this aesthetic sociality) remains to be explored; because we don't know what we mean by it even when we recite or record its multiphonic swerve; because blackness is not a categolistening, of neither acknowledging nor recognizing the speaker's capacity to be for or with the one to whom he or she speaks. Such being for can be spoken of in terms of contemporaneity—implying not only joint ownership of a language but also a shared spatiotemporal frame, transcendental aesthetic, body schema, or home—but might be better elaborated in terms of the differentiation of any given spatiotemporal frame, the shared and social construction of an immanent aesthetic, within the constantly shifting schemata of a fleshly historicity in which language moves to connect a vast, differential range of unmoored unowning.

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

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

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

The violence of insincere and unflattering imitation that materializes such absence of reflection is vividly portrayed in Fanon's text. However, infantilization of the ones who utter the speech that, according to Fanon, cannot be spoken, does not mean that the new speech is merely infantile. The implication, here, that the new speech is also old is not a function of anything that it retains other than an essential and irreducible vehicularity. Fanon's concern with the pathological desire to speak good French, seen in its relation to the normal desire to be spoken to in good faith, understands the speaker's being absolutely for the Other to imply reciprocity within the shared possession of a language. Speech in bad faith moves in the wake of not

ry for ontology or for phenomenological analysis. Wilderson's question—"Would nothing ever be with nothing again?"—precisely in its irreducible necessity, cannot be answered but can only be unasked in the lyricism of that ill logic that black monks incessantly, thelonially, perform, as difference without opposition, in "a black hole," as Jay Wright, "germ and terminal, expansive/in its nothingness."

What would it be for this drama to be understood in its own terms, from its own standpoint, on its own ground? This is not simply a question of perspective awaiting its unasking, since what we speak of is this radical being beside itself of blackness, its appositionality. The standpoint, the home territory, *chez lui*—Charles Lam Markmann's insightful mistranslation of Fanon, *among his own*, illuminates something that Richard Philcox obscures by way of correction—signifies a relationality that displaces the already displaced impossibility of home and the modes of relationality that home is supposed to afford. Can this sharing of a life in homelessness, this interplay of the refusal of what has been refused and consent, this undercommon appositionality, be a place from which to know, a place out of which emerges neither self-consciousness nor knowledge of the other but an improvisation that proceeds from somewhere on the other side of an unasked question? But not simply to be among one's own; rather, also, to live among one's own in dispossession, to live among the ones who cannot own, the ones who have nothing and who, in having nothing, have everything. To live, in other words, within the general commonness and openness of *a life* in Deleuze's sense (hence the necessity of a philosophy of life; hence the necessity but also the rigor of a disbelief in social death, where social death is precisely understood as the imposition of the subject's necessity rather than the refusal of the subject's possibility, which, in any case, the imposition founds and enforces). At stake is the curve, the suppleness and subtlety, not only of contemplation on social life but of contemplative social life; at stake is the force of an extraphenomenological poetics of social life. And so we arrive, again and again, at a profound impulse in Fanon that—as Chandler indicates in his reading, which is the initial reading, of Du Bois—constitutes Du Bois's horizon and which appears in the various forms of that question whose necessity is so fundamental that it must be unasked—the question of the meaning of (black) being, the question of the meaning of (black) things. We study in the sound of an unasked question. Our study is the sound of an unasked question. We study the sound of an unasked question. In the absence of the amenity (some pleasantness or pleasantry of welcome or material comfort), what is borne in the emptiness or nothingness of the amenity (of which love or soul is born, in exhaustion, as a society of friends), what are the other elements of mu? Chant and koan and moan and *Sprechgesang*, and babble and

gobbledygook, *le petit nègre*, the little nigger, pidgin, baby talk, bird talk, Bird's talk, bard talk, bar talk, our locomotive bar walk and black chant, our pallet cries and shipped whispers, our black notes and black cant, the tenor's irruptive habitation of the vehicle, the monastic preparation of a more than three-dimensional transcript, an imaginal manuscript we touch upon the walls and one another, so we can enter into the hold we're in, where there is no way we were or are.

◌

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

> "The most magnificent drama of the last thousand years of human history" was not enacted with its strophes and prosody ready-made. It created a new speech. A combination of, first, nautical English; second, the "sabir" of the Mediterranean; third, the hermetic-like cant talk of the "underworld"; and fourth, West African grammatical construction, produced the "pidgin English" that became in the tumultuous years of the slave trade the language of the African coast.
>
> Linguists describe pidgin as a "go-between" language, the product of a "multiple-language situation," characterized by "radical simplification." "Il est meme né pour permettre une communication josque-là impossible," Calvet has written.… Where people had to understand each other, pidgin English was the lingua franca of the sea and the frontier. Inasmuch as all who came to the New World did so after months at sea, pidgin or its maritime and popular cognates became the medium of transmission for expressing the new social realities.… Pidgin became an instrument, like the drum or the fiddle, of communication among the oppressed: scorned and not easily understood by polite society.

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

> Our only hope of getting out of the situation is to pose the problem correctly, for all these findings and all this research have a single aim: to get man to admit he is nothing, absolutely nothing—and get him to eradicate this narcissism whereby he thinks he is different from the other "animals."
>
> This is nothing more nor less than the *capitulation of man*.
>
> All in all, I grasp my narcissism with both hands and I reject the vileness of those who want to turn man into a machine. If the debate cannot be opened up on a philosophical level—i.e., the fundamental demands of human reality—I agree to place it on a psychological level: in other words, the "misfires," just as we talk about an engine misfiring.

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

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

When Fanon proceeds to isolate the new speech from its disavowal it is because it is the disavowal in which he is interested. This is to say that the new speech doesn't yet