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Philosophy of Skepticism

Authors

Arman, Zuri
Lang, Justin

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'You got so much to bleed to clean slate'[1]: Notes Toward a Black Philosophy of Skepticism

zuri arman + Justin Lang

"Afro-pessimism is driven, in my view, by the determination to name and combat anti-Blackness, most especially the hard core negrophobia around which it is elaborated, and it was prompted to adumbrate itself these concerns by what has revealed itself to be, not a restricted and local hang-up of a few Black people laboring in the United States, but a *global* tendency to talk *away* from slavery and its afterlife in the historic instance . . .in the Americas and the Caribbean, in Europe and the Middle East, in Africa and Asia, in Australia and the Pacific Islands . . .so too, among those Black populations most explicitly marked by its ongoing history.
—Jared Sexton, "Affirmation in the Dark: Racial Slavery and Philosophical Pessimism"

If an essential feature of your existence is that the norm is not able to take hold, what mode of being becomes available, and what mode might you invent?
—Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human*

It is our opinion that it is necessary to totally destroy, to break, to reduce to ash all aspects of the colonial state in our country in order to make everything possible for our people . . .The problem of the nature of the state created after independence is perhaps the secret of the failure of African independence.
—Amilcar Cabral, *Return to the Source*

We must not be afraid of allowing the old self, rife with the negativisms of this society, to die so that a new, more revolutionary and progressive self can be born. Then and only then do we stand a chance of destroying this oppressive society. It is with this thought in mind that we use the weapon of criticism and self-criticism to correct the way we deal with each other . . .We must exorcise those characteristics of ourselves and traits of the oppressor nation in order to carry out that most important revolution—the internal revolution.
—Safiya Bukhari, *The War Before*

This essay applies an analysis of anti-Blackness to the post-colonial nation-state in order to advance an anti-colonial politic that is attentive to both metaphysical and material relations. We argue that interpretations of anticolonial writings which overemphasize a material analysis while neglecting metaphysical concerns minimize the contributions of thinkers such as Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, and C. L. R. James, who emphasized the importance of instituting a new being, which they termed as the "New Man," *alongside* a new material base. These thinkers gesture toward an understanding of politics as a "premiere ontological enterprise," subtended by a "metaphysical infrastructure" which classifies beings based on differentiated political capacities.[2] They analyze the ways the colonial state functioned to obliterate political capacity in colonial subjects, and each express a skepticism of the post-colonial state being able to rid itself of this function. Thus, their offerings to revolutionary thought are less confined to frameworks for attaining state power. Rather than an expressed commitment to any particular political formation, they were committed to *whatever* formation deemed conducive to constant, mass participation and the development of a new society wherein forms of struggle, organization, and association produce new beings and new modes of social relation. "Introducing invention into existence" requires the destruction of every relation instituted by the colonial state.[3] The persistence of colonial methods of organizing (in)capacities in the post-colonial state—even in socialist states where national liberation movements came into power—invokes furthering an anticolonial analysis through a skeptical approach to the state form itself. We aim to build upon these thinkers' skepticism of the state by examining the metaphysical operations of gender in positioning Blackness as antagonistic to the categories of nation, state, and gender itself. This positioning forecloses the attainment of the nation-state as a potential trajectory of Black revolutionary struggle. Conversely, we argue that pursuits of the nation-state place constraints on our capacity to begin the work of achieving a new being.

The concept of the nation-state emerged in a particular European context in which "empirical," internal statehood was consolidated prior to a "juridical" statehood in relation to neighboring states. The European state came into the World as a sovereign, structurally masculine, self-determined political,

economic, and social formation. Conversely, post-colonial African nation-states are inescapably defined by their relation to the "international society" of fellow nation-states.[4] Therefore, the nature of the African nation-state cannot be assessed outside of its relation to the World composed of international organizations that serve as "post-imperial ordering devices."[5] Foundational to this World is a symbolic order in which Blackness is rendered abject and a hierarchical racial ordering schema in which African-descended people are characterized as less-evolved, backwards, and deformed humans.[6] The condition of Blackness is one of structural "feminization." Being "the defined" without access to self-definition on the world stage, Black "abjection places Blackness under the sign of the feminine, the object," contra to the masculine European subject "regardless of sex."[7] The Black is marked as an always-already open vessel subjected to gratuitous violence that stabilizes the symbolic order and coheres the World's material reality. Being composed of Black subjects, the Black African nation-state is oriented in accordance with anti-Black aims in which the national body, the bodies of the nation, and the state infrastructure are instrumentalized to achieve the ends of Man for labor and leisure.

The position of Black juridical statehood as "openly vulnerable to the whims of the World" is constitutive of the international order the Black state enters into.[8] Attempts to secure and cohere proper statehood through internal order and external recognition both open the state up to further subjection by the international order and exacerbate internal contradictions produced by the exercising of state power. As Walter Rodney argues, the decision to adopt discrete, unitary states based on colonial boundaries and allegiances to territorial sovereignty concretized a fragmented Africa that was more open to neo-colonial exploitation and less capable to engage in cooperation and solidarity.[9] Attempts to sustain internal order and sovereign authority are constantly on unstable ground due to Black states' external openness, thus states often turn to forms of arbitrary violence to maintain authority when systems of legitimation are disrupted from the outside.[10] Following the African and Caribbean radicals who proposed forms of regional federation as alternatives to unitary states at the moment of independence, we are interested in what pursuits of alternative forms of order or even *disorder* might offer to escape

the trappings the international system places on Black states.[11] We move with their skepticism of the nation-state's capacity to amass the political and economic power to shift the international order, as well as their skepticism of state imperatives of "internal order" and "authority" being conducive to the development of the new society.

While radical anti-colonial thinkers and revolutionaries were skeptical of the colonial state and desired to move beyond its logics, infrastructure and imperatives, they did not adequately grapple with the metaphysical infrastructure subtending the related but distinct concept of "nation," its function, and the subsequent metaphysical residues present within even *Black* post-colonial nations. That is, they did not interrogate how gender is a specifically European tradition that can only make Black people co-conspirators in their own subjugation by inducing performances of gender that are consistent with colonial and neo-colonial domination. Gender is not something that Black people possess through identification or performance. Rather, they are possessed by "the investments or valuations placed upon gender as a genre for designating Human distinction."[12] The desire for gender is the desire to be valued in a world that proffers value on the basis of adherence to gender normativity, but the *Black* desire for gender is the unknowing desire for further domination because gender is one method among many for denigrating Black people and justifying our enslavement and colonization. Indeed, the assignment of roles based on perceived biological difference sustains our current genre of the human—Man.[13] Additionally, gender is essential for the maintenance of the nation as gender roles make possible the stable replication of the family unit which is, itself, "a miniature of the nation."[14]

While the European subject performs gender as a "mother" or "husband" to advance the ends of the nation-state they belong to, Man uses gender to instrumentalize Black people against their own interests. More specifically, Man subjects Black people to an (un)gendering praxis Zakiyyah Iman Jackson calls "ontological plasticization." This is a mode of domination that—through racialization—both ungenders and excessively genders Black(ened) people by "remap[ping] Black(ened) gender and sexuality, non-teleologically and nonbinaristically, with fleeting adherence to normativized heteropatriarchal codes."[15] Gender does not hold for

the Black as Man plasticizes Black gender to make the Black into whatever form necessary to sustain antiBlack abjection. Through the plasticization of Blackness via gender, Black(ened) people are "produced as sub/super/human at once."[16] Jackson is critical of aspirations for human recognition as a pathway to liberation, as Black(ened) people are already selectively recognized as human as a means of furthering our instrumentalization.

The plasticization of Blackness, through the concepts of gender and the human, also operates at the register of political capacity. The World plasticizes Black political capacity toward whatever end is necessary to sustain itself, including the "unequal integration" of Black states into international society.[17] The state functions as the structure through which this plasticization of capacity lands on Black masses.[18] While the colonial state imposed on Black masses a position of political incapacity, the post-colonial state makes available specific forms of political capacity that adhere to a concept of "nation" that overrepresents the interests of a neo-colonial leadership class invested in a proper, coherent state within the international system.[19] The pursuit of proper gender/human/state functions as "borrowed institutionality"—the "attempt to be in ways that we can never be" nor should we want to be—for the Black.[20] These categories function to open us up to further instrumentalization.

While an attempt at a departure from these relations, the call for a "New *Man*" remains a form of attempted borrowed institutionality because it does not account for the structurally feminized and materially instrumentalized nature of Blackness and Black existence. Thus, it retains traces of aspirations toward a mode of human being that is itself reliant upon structural violence against Black(ened) people. Calls for a New Man stage the imminent task of decolonization as a confrontation between European Man and *Black* Man, rendering Black women passive objects and naturalizing the violence of anti-Blackness onto their bodies which *remain* tools, but for a *new* man. Again, this relation of domination corresponds to an underlying metaphysical relation that materializes through the European tradition of gender that violates *everyone* marked as Black. There is a metaphysical continuity, though "New" signals there is an attempt on the part of these thinkers to be skeptical of the structures they inherited and attempted to transform. We can refer to their actions as a praxis of

"skeptical metaphysics" that attempted to undermine European influence and chart a path to African liberation. Unknowingly, however, they contributed to their own shortcomings by retaining gender as an organizing principle and, in effect, legitimizing it as an inherently African invention. The same was done with the nation-state as a political formation; it became a taken-for-granted aspiration rather than one to be thoroughly interrogated and perhaps discarded.

We borrow "skeptical metaphysics" from Albert Camus, who refers to it as a type of meaning-making system that is aware it is a human creation rather than one pre-ordained by an extra-human entity.[21] Calls for a New Humanism surely centered the agency of the human subject by displacing God as the source of existential purpose, but they didn't fully obliterate the pre-figured and unquestioned existential frame of gender that preceded it. We recognize that these revolutionary figures aspired for a different type of nation than their capitalist and neo-colonialist adversaries but we query if they were after something beyond "nation," which necessitates a Eurocentric method of social differentiation based on biological dimorphic sex and gender. If this is the case, then we are skeptical of their retention of gender and the metaphysics that menacingly trail behind it. We term this disposition "skeptical(of) metaphysics."

We enter into dialogue with these anti-colonial thinkers and revolutionaries engaged in struggle on the African continent equipped with our Black skepticism to push them further in their analysis of the colonial and post-colonial situation. Our analysis is done through a lens of (anti-)Blackness because African nations confront a World in which they are racialized as Black. European colonialism was a racial project that used Blackness to institute power relations though these relations are obscured by that very Blackness. Because post-colonial violence is understood to be between racially Black people instead of beings structurally positioned as Black, the issue of race recedes though "the very production of Africa . . .occurs through ideas of race."[22] We terry the matter through an analysis of anti-Blackness to move away from politically organizing around shared identity and instead towards shared relations to structures of power that operate without the consent and knowledge of the dominated.

The response to anti-Blackness, then, requires a "Blackened consciousness"—a way of navigating the world not reducible to Black identity—that philosophizes towards a confrontation with (neo-)colonial powers.[23] Blackness, Jared Sexton writes, has the potential to radically rearrange and destroy current social relations as a "ceaselessly universalizing universality, attentive to, insistent on, *and* skeptical about every particularity, every local situation through which it is articulated."[24] Therefore, our skeptical(of) metaphysics does not leave gender unscathed. Our method is a form of *care-full* but incisive questioning that attempts to incite disorientation, however fleeting, that may provide new conceptual ground for theorizing the liberation of Black people not only on the continent, but across the World (perhaps concluding, if it ever concludes, with the destruction of said World); it is never truly complete because once disoriented we always seek new bearings. But skeptical(of)metaphysics is undertaken with the recognition that any conceptual foundation upon which one builds to engage in struggle is subjective and conditional, yet pursued-as-if-objective while, crucially, one remains open to its perpetual critique and, if necessary, disposal. It is an attempt at a *Black* universality that "cannot settle or rest or accept what is universal," including the universals put forth by those who are racialized as Black because they contain remnants of a colonial past.[25] Skeptical(of) metaphysics entails a skepticism of the constituted self at the most intimate level. Ultimately, we ponder how we might construct a path and walk it as if it were destined while remembering that we laid the bricks ourselves; they can collapse at any moment, returning us to the Black abyss we've been relegated to but also from which "an authentic upheaval can be born."[26]

'My noose is golden':[27] The State, Authority, and Political Capacity

While desires for a post-colonial nation-state may aspire for something beyond the colonial white-over-Black relation, we argue that this relation was held intact rather than being disrupted. This is because the Black African nation-state necessarily enters into a World stage that is foundationally anti-Black in ways that escape the material. As we will demonstrate in this essay, this is intimately tied with Judeo-Christian notions of (anti-)Blackness that

structure the ideological mechanisms of the individual European nation-states that comprise the World. As a result, when we study the internal affairs of African nation-states with regard to categories like gender, they must be considered in relation to the outside entities that exert anti-Black force onto them and, consequently, shape the behavior of African nation-states in relationship to their own citizenries from without. In effect, the post-colonial African nation-state is an instrument for colonial ends in much the same way as the colonial state, particularly in terms of gender.

Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg's essay, "Why Africa's Weak States Persists," provides a useful distinction between "empirical statehood" and "juridical statehood" in assessing the condition of African states. Empirical statehood refers to the internal affairs of a state such as the defining of those within its borders and the manner it governs the populace. This includes having a "stable community" and "the capacity to exercise control over a state's territory and the people residing in it" by "pronounc[ing], implement[ing], [and] enforc[ing] commands, laws, policies, and regulations."[28] Conversely, juridical statehood considers a state in relation to the "international society" that is "composed solely of states and the international organizations formed by states."[29] Importantly, this international society is not interested in the welfare of those within states and a state may not have all the internal qualifications for statehood but can still be recognized by the international society. Jackson and Rosberg noted that many African states such as Rwanda, Congo , Chad, and Uganda among others would not qualify as states based solely on empirical data but are still recognized as such by the international society.[30]

Post-colonial African states and the European states that are now their peers have very different trajectories in their consolidation due to the divergent historical contexts in which they originate. European states emerged at a particular moment in which it was imperative to centralize commercial activities at the onset of capitalism in the sixteenth century. Indeed, capitalism does not pre-date the construction of the modern state but rather is the result of the political and economic activity only able to be centrally conducted once management is consolidated into a singular entity. "Expanded bureaucratic state structures" facilitated capitalist-colonist expansion by "determining the direction of investment, establishing political security for such investments,

[and] encouraging certain commercial networks and relations while discouraging others."[31] In short, the European state settled its internal affairs before entering into relations with other neighboring states. Also important to note is that the modern state formation is inseparable from capitalism. Nationalism, the state's ideological bedfellow, emerged in the nineteenth century to convince the state's constituency to support its economic and political ends.[32] With now-developed European states engaged in bitter competition with one another as "'natural' enemies," nationalism allowed political elites to capture the reason of the European proletariat who were swept up by their respective national imagination and then "mobilized . . .to destroy the productive capacities of those they opposed, or to secure new markets, new labor, and productive resources."[33] The nation-state controlled not only the means of economic production and political association but, further, also defined the "mode of being human."[34] With total reign over being, Europe-as-Man was able to orient the behaviors of its subjects to achieve state-directed ends with total ontological sovereignty through either nationalism or direct, monopolized force. Man constructed its being without regard for outside entities.

In contrast, African post-colonial states were never allowed political, economic, or ontological sovereignty as they were constrained by their relation to the international society and its principles put in place by Man. Therefore, "in Black Africa (and, by implication, in other regions of the Third World), external factors are more likely than internal factors to provide an adequate explanation of the formation and persistence of states."[35] Post-colonial states could not even deliberate on *if* they wanted to be states. They were forcefully invited into the international arena which encourages development among its members but has a narrow definition of what this development means—becoming a proper state—regardless of the reality that it is not in the best interests of the formerly colonized. Membership into the international society did, however, assure access to material resources and provide external support in the case of internal dissent.[36] Similarly, nationalism is a method to conceal turmoil and congeal a national body by preventing the politicization of ethnicity.[37] These national borders, supported by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) formed in 1963, are nothing more than colonial impositions that undermine traditional boundaries and further entrench

African subjects into colonial precarity. African states, nations, and nationalism, then, are colonial inventions that incapacitate Black African people from meaningfully engaging in what Sylvia Wynter calls the "politics of being" and redefining what it means to be.[38] Instead, Black African peoples are instrumentalized to serve Man, who is himself foundationally anti-Black at the level of metaphysics. This metaphysical relation—endemic to European nation-states and the international society they comprise—can be traced to Man's Judeo-Christian antecedents prior to its secularization into a rational human figure.

Anti-colonial revolutionaries and theorists put forth critiques of the post-colonial state on two registers: critiques of neo-colonial leadership repurposing the machinery of the colonial state to sustain their position of power on the one hand, and critiques of the state itself as a political formation on the other. The critiques which fall in the second category argue that the issue is not only who comes into power, but that the methods by which parties attain power and their assumptions of organization, authority, order, development, and territory do not depart from colonial—that is, Man's—imperatives. Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, and C. L. R. James are key thinkers in the anti-colonial tradition as they root their frameworks for anti-colonial struggle in the development of a "new man" and "new society" rather than a strict adherence to securing state power. Their insistence on a new society made them skeptical of the reproduction of the colonial state after the achievement of independence.

Central to their analyses were how the colonial state structured subject positions through the negation of political capacity. In Cabral's writings, he referred to this function as the "essential characteristic of imperial domination .. . "the negation of the historical process of the dominated people by means of violent usurpation of the freedom of development of the national productive forces."[39] The colonial situation (which is ongoing) negates Black capacity to affect the World on *our* own terms. Achille Mbembe and Crawford Young argue that the colonial state crushed Black capacity through violence. Violence functioned as a means and an end, for legitimating and authenticating the colonial state and communicating to the colonized that they had no rights against it. The colonized were understood to be "a bundle of drives, but not of *capacities*," a "body-thing" "subordinated to

the one who fashioned, and could now use and alter, him/her at will. As such, he/she belonged to the sphere of objects."[40] The colonial state did not recognize a civil society amongst the colonized, thus within the structure there was no formation to place limits on state sovereignty; the colonized were structurally positioned not as subjects of politics, but of guardianship and domestication. This logic of expansive state sovereignty grounded a form of state reason wherein the state functioned as "master" over its politically incapable subjects and had unconditional access to the legitimate use of violence.

The post-colonial state continued this relation, as the crystallization of the postcolony was "everywhere carried through in an authoritarian manner that denied individuals any rights as citizens."[41] The establishment of post-colonial sovereignty was a non-contractual process because the structural relation of political incapacity remained, even with a new native elite in power; they merely became new faces directing Man's imperatives of hegemony, accumulation, management, and order. The post-colonial state retains the language of violence which in any moment can become the summary logic of state rule. As an alternative to direct violence, the postcolony also uses allocation—the control and distribution of resources—to maintain power and create an indebtedness to the state.[42] However, the state has the capacity to revoke resources and return to arbitrary violence at any moment. What is significant about this relation is, again, that it monopolizes capacity within the state and its political class, denying capacity among the general population.

The post-colonial state maintains both the material and metaphysical structures of the colonial state. Even with a "Black" leadership in terms of identity, the postcolony positions its population as Black structurally through the continued negation of political capacity. The logic of only the centralized state having the capacity to organize production is the result of colonial assumptions of "the backwardness of the masses" in comparison to the urban elites who took over state machinery.[43] Sam Mbah and I.E. Igariwey argue that "the reliance of state power over workers and peasants directly contributes to Africa's underdevelopment."[44] Using the example of the Ujamaa villagization movement in Tanzania, Mbah, Igariwey, and Modibo Kadalie argue that what began as a self-governing initiative at the local level failed because

the state aimed to take control.[45] The socialist state, what Joseph Edwards calls "the final stage of monopoly capitalism," does not depart from Man's imperatives as it is based on a logic of the calculation and management of objects, from the control of bodies to the procurement of goods and resources.[46] An obsession with development sustains logics of capital, even in the form of the socialist state, as it prioritizes the production and distribution of commodities at the expense of social relations.[47] Edwards reminds us that "the fundamental question of the revolution is not one of making more commodities available to people," but of attaining the capacity to affect the World on our own terms.[48]

Cabral, Fanon, and James theorize alternative forms of political association and organization so as to not perpetuate the incapacity of the masses in the post-colonial situation. Cabral and Fanon were aware that any formation which prevents the direct participation of the masses "endeavors either to expel them from history or prevent them from setting foot in it."[49] For these thinkers, setting foot in history refers not to entering "into the stream of Western historical time," but to the capacity to enact a new trajectory through crafting a new society intent on "reduc[ing] to ash all aspects of the colonial state."[50] Destroying the colonial state in its entirety, including the relations which it organizes, requires the destruction of the metaphysics which subtend it. The new society attempts at breaking out of the Western hold/mold over/of being through forms of association that exceed political categories and structures intent on calculating and managing Black (political) life. As a skeptical metaphysics, the new society rejects hierarchy and authority in favor of horizontal relations rooted in "feelings of humanism, of solidarity, of respect and disinterested devotion to human beings."[51]

As such, Fanon's focus in *The Wretched of the Earth* is not state-building but the process of struggle, wherein he theorizes that collective participation in revolutionary violence creates a new unified people. Collective revolutionary violence not only introduces "the notion of common cause, national destiny, and collective history, " it incites capacity amongst the people to self-organize on their own terms—"the masses allow nobody to come forward as 'liberator.'"[52] Armed struggle makes the nation and creates a "state of genuine collective ecstasy" as an opening for a leap toward the new is put on the table.[53] Fanon emphasizes

the development of "a new way of thinking" and a new man that departs from the trajectory of Europe.[54] He critiques the post-colonial state as stifling this process, perpetuating the colonial gap between the rulers and the ruled and curtailing the self-activity of the masses.

Drawing upon lessons from Fanon and other national liberation struggles, Cabral also emphasizes the process of struggle over the attainment of state power. He departs from Fanon however, focusing not on the violence of armed struggle, but its function of creating space for "forging a nation" and new relations between "a new man and a new woman."[55] Cabral was skeptical of a state which emerged through militarized struggle and prioritized military victory over building popular organization from the ground.[56] The concept of "revolutionary democracy," as outlined in one of Cabral's lectures to the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) collected in *Unity and Struggle,* directly challenged the logics of the master state and the authority of the party and military. Rather than seeking to secure itself as the ruling party over the population and creating a system of authority wherein the party cannot be questioned, Cabral emphasized the necessity of a relation in which the party is always open to scrutiny and the people can remove the party whenever they see fit. While Cabral and the PAIGC did envision their process of revolutionary democracy as a state-building project, their method of developing dispersed, semi-autonomous village assemblies encouraging popular participation as the base of their state ran counter to frameworks of centralization.

Centralization and bureaucracy are the primary enemies of C. L. R. James and Grace Lee Boggs in their co-authored text *Facing Reality*. They take on the Hungarian Revolution as their case study, to examine the pitfalls of the "proper" socialist state and theorize potential formations through the alternatives revolutionaries developed in their struggle against it. They argue that state power is a "continuously mounting bureaucratic mass" that must be destroyed lest we be destroyed by it.[57] State bureaucracy destroys the possibility of self-organization amongst the masses, and they argue that mass self-activity is the site from which the new society is created. Further, they posit that the "nationalization of production does not alter the basic framework of capitalist society," as their interpretation of capitalist society is couched within a

broader analysis of Man's metaphysical infrastructure.[58] Centrally organized production does not transform the foundational logic of rationality which aspires toward the control and order of all things, including the people. The new society requires the freedom of experimentation, as Fanon says, "introducing invention into existence." Thus, James and Boggs posit the workers councils of the Hungarian Revolution as a political form which invites constant experimentation and mass self-organization from below.

Fanon, Cabral, and James engage in what we have identified as skeptical metaphysics, as they make clear the ways in which the state functions to incapacitate Black subjects from meaningfully engaging in the politics of being and thus attempt to move toward new forms of association wherein "a new human beyond Western 'man' is possible."[59] While they deploy skeptical metaphysics via the New Man and aim for a new society by catalyzing Black capacity through reorienting the domain of politics, we suggest that to fully reduce the colonial state to ash we must *care-fully* push these thinkers toward a skeptical(of)metaphysics to attend to the traces of Man which remain in their formulations. In positing a "new" metaphysics in their critiques of Man, they retain metaphysical categories and European customs such as gender, nation, and the human. As a mode of *dis*orientation rather than reorientation, we are skeptical not only of how the state orders (in)capacities, but of order itself. We find traces of this mode of thinking in their critiques of authority, bureaucracy, and management, and their advocacy of constant self-critique. However we attempt to raise them to "another level of theorization" to examine the ways in which the "old" is sustained in the "new."[60] To unsettle the coloniality of being, we must, again, be "skeptical about every particularity."[61]

Cabral and Fanon approach this mode of skepticism in their analyses of religion and custom. Fanon argues that the customs of the colonized were abolished in the context of colonization, thus he and Cabral both question their function in revolutionary struggle. They were skeptical of metaphysics as it manifested in religion and superstition, positing instead the need for modern notions of science and empiricism.[62] In *Wretched*, the mystification of colonial relations through religion is a repeated concern for Fanon. He argues that armed struggle counters mystification and gives "the masses a ravenous taste for the tangible."[63] Basil Davidson, in

his analysis of the PAIGC, argues that the move from magical to material thinking among the participants in struggle marks "the stage where a socio-economic revolution of structures, and not merely a substitution of authority at the top, becomes actually possible."[64] However, replacing a metaphysical system based on traditional custom with one of science resettles the aspirations of struggle within a mode of Western thought these thinkers aimed at breaking out of. And these thinkers attest to the metaphysical infrastructure which subtends socio-economic structures else-where in their writing. Skeptical(of)metaphysics reads custom and science as operating on the same register, and query the use of either as means of cohering a national body.

'What shouldn't I be?'[65]: The Colonial State, Custom, and the Politics of Being

For the purposes of this section, we follow Frantz Fanon in defin-ing metaphysics as a society's "customs and the sources on which they were based."[66] We are interested in *custom* because in the colonial situation, indigenous African ways of being were sup-planted by European forces that imposed Eurocentric law through the guise of traditional *custom*ary law. More specifically, we are interested in the custom of *religion* because religion, specifically Christianity, provided the onto-epistemological framework for the eventual development of secular humanism—Man. Christian humanism, with its own prescriptive statement for being, preceded secular humanism and its attendant discourse of Science. Con-sistent in all these iterations of humanism and discourses is the abjection of Blackness in particularly gendered terms that renders Blackness structurally feminized and Black people instrumental-ized to secure the metaphysical being of Man and the material reality of the European nation-state. As we will argue later in this essay, this relation was not broken with the post-colonial state which provides the grounds for our skeptical(of)metaphysics which is also "skeptical(of)nation-state" and "skeptical(of)gender.

While the birth of the modern state is situationally specific—a result of the material reality at that particular time and space in Europe's history—its conceptual components, particularly those that would materialize as race, predate its rise. Indeed, the state emerges from a lineage of homologous onto-epistemological

structures dating back to Renaissance Christian humanism wherein
the symbolic "master code" was arranged in dichotomous religious
terms: good "Redeemed Spirit" and evil "Fallen Flesh."[67] The mas-
ter's symbolic code ordered bodies and oriented their capacities in
accordance with the descriptive statement of the Christian human—
the antecedent to Man—who was a subject of the Church. The
Redeemed Spirit was proximate to life whereas the Fallen Flesh
symbolized death and was avoided. For subjects considered within
God's kingdom, one's fall from grace into the category of Fallen
Flesh was contingent upon transgressions against the descriptive
statement; one had to sin. The Black, however, was permanently
situated in the category of Fallen Flesh due to the (de/hyper-)valua-
tion of Blackness within the symbolic order of Christianity. On this
matter, Sylvia Wynter writes that the Black

> *had been already classified (and for centuries before the Por-*
> *tuguese landing on the shores of Senegal in 1444)* in a category
> "not far removed from the apes, as man made degenerate
> by sin" . . .the "diabolical color," Black, had become the
> preferred color for the depiction of "demons" and the signifi-
> cation of "sin" . . . So that as a result, in addition to their being
> co-classified with apes, who "iconographically . . . signified
> sin," Black Africans were generally thought in "medieval ape
> lore," a precursor to the theory of Evolution, to be "degener-
> ate" descendants of "true man" (Fernández-Armesto 1987).[68]

Because Blackness was demonized, the Black was positioned as
the "plastic limit case" upon which Man's religious apparatus was
erected, an "essential stabilizer."[69] Therefore, "Black peoples—the
darkest humans, nadirs of degeneration—were death manifest,"
irrecoverably relegated to the "dark abyss."[70] Further, Wynter
characterizes the biblical fall from grace as "post-Adamic" but
Cecilio Cooper aptly points out that the fall was also post-*Evic*
(and post-Luciferian) and "resistance to name it as such is a hall-
mark of cisheteropatriarchal political investments."[71] Though
Black people are demarcated as outside of the Christian kingdom,
this gendered aspect reveals the valuation of man-over-woman,
which is essential for understanding the mechanism by which the
colonial state transposed its patriarchal gender onto colonized
subjects; autonomous Black political capacity is erased through
(un)gendering practices. Gender harms Black women *and* men

but European colonialism deployed it in a way that created more cleavages between the two by vesting men with traditionally patriarchal power, hindering potential attempts to confront the colonial situation itself by manufacturing Black libidinal investment in the (neo-)/colonial project.

Anti-Blackness is the result of a religio-symbolic ordering schema that has maintained a stranglehold over Western thought and kept its knee in our necks globally. Again, Blackness is the site of convergence between the physical and metaphysical because "the terrain of conquest is at once empirical and supernatural," if only in the minds of the colonizer.[72] Thus, the nation-state perpetually couches the Black within the metaphysical *and* physical "matrix slot of Otherness" on a racialized hierarchy around which it organizes itself.[73] The state, a complex amalgamation of cultural secularizations for the sake of capitalist development, thus retains a religious infrastructure and method of operation. So, while the same actors did not compose the modern bourgeoisie, the symbolic structure they inhabited and would later materialize as racial capitalism remained the same. And while God is displaced, the reliance on metaphysical reasoning for conceptual organization remains:

> The nation-state has also allocated a number of attributes which serve to replace older religiously rooted attributes like: nation, fatherland, national flag, national anthem, and many others. Particularly *notions like the unity of state and nation serve to transcend the material political structures and are, as such, reminiscent of the pre-state unity with God.* They have been put in the place of the divine.[74]

Metaphysics, then, is central to how the colonial state would impose its will onto African people. They waged a covert war on African metaphysics by imposing their anti-Black religion on African peoples and masked it as traditional African custom; in the process Europe plasticized Black being and Black customs. This was detrimental because as Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí notes, "the organization of religion in any given society, including religious symbols and values, reflects the social organization."[75] Colonial religion is undeniably anti-Black. It used the image of Blackness and people marked as Black as "landmarks against which enlightened white Christians could gauge their degree of declension

toward obliteration" and mortality by subjecting Black people to eternal mortality.[76] Similarly, without (anti-)Blackness as a nation-building technology and Black bodies as instruments, there is no nation. Nationalism requires a racial outgroup.[77] Blackness is a "plastic" to bind otherwise disparate peoples; Black people are robbed of their bodies to serve both as labor and as receptacle for violence.

Because Black African people are subjected to ontological plasticization in which their very being and body is used to cohere Man's existence, the same is true of African customs once they are *Blackened*. "Blackened" emphasizes the relational nature of (anti-)Blackness. African customs may not have been self-referentially racially Black, but once Europe imposed Blackness onto African-descended people they were subjected to the condition of Blackness—plasticity. This process is concurrent with the "nativization" of African people that "flatten[ed] ethnocultural difference and belonging into a racialized collectivity" at the onset of colonial indirect rule.[78] "Nativization was racialization," thus our emphasis on anti-Blackness even within predominantly Black contexts.[79] Indirect rule was not color-blind. Instead, indirect rule practiced a form of apartheid undergirded by "formalized racial thinking" in which the European maintained a physical distance from Black natives for fear of cultural contamination.[80] Therefore, colonial and neo-colonial rule even on the continent was/is explicitly racial even if unacknowledged as such.

In *The Predicament of Blackness*, Jemima Pierre provides a case study on the role of customary law in the simultaneous racialization and ethnicization of African people through the period of indirect rule in the British-colonized Gold Coast that would become Ghana. Direct rule "aimed at providing a small local elite access to European 'culture' and 'civilization' in return for strong allies in the colonial enterprise."[81] Conversely, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, European powers implemented the new policy of indirect rule "premised on the perceived diffusion of colonial power through 'native custom.'"[82] Direct rule negated African customs while indirect rule recognized and incorporated them to plasticize them. Their bastardization was key to the instrumentalization of Black people towards colonial ends and the implantation of specifically European ways of being human as a gendered subject. Though gender hurt both African men and

women, European *policy* more explicitly targeted colonized men in terms of violence committed *against* them and power vested *in* them.[83] This obscured relations of violence, creating the illusion of a structurally masculine Blackness that is impossible because, again, as a condition of plasticity, Blackness is structurally feminized. As a result, Black men understood colonization as the *stripping* of gendered entitlements by European men rather than the *imposition* of gender "produced differentially" along the color line, therefore "assum[ing] that vulnerability to violation properly belongs to the female."[84]

Indirect rule functioned via a double process of racializing Africans into a mass of Black natives and then further dividing them into distinct tribal and ethnic groups.[85] Each tribe was then understood to have its own customs and customary law distinct from European "civil law." Though they were imposed from without, the new tribal identifications and their respective system of "customary" law were "traditionalized, adapted, and rationalized as the *natural* outcome of *cultural* differences among now-distinct ethnic/tribal groupings."[86] Colonial power was then enforced through customary law and influenced the consciousness of the masses, rendering them "impressionable, stretchable, misshapen to the point that the mind may not survive."[87]

These "customs" bore more of a resemblance to European traditions and metaphysics, particularly constructions of gender, revealing plasticization and colonialism to be gendering phenomena. With the advent of customary law, colonial powers injected their patriarchal Christianity into the religion of African peoples. This is particularly troubling because "the ramifications of patriarchalized religions may be greater in Africa than in the West because religion permeates all aspects of African life."[88] This meant gender, specifically the man-woman dyad, was not only naturalized but *super*naturalized as inherent to African metaphysics, detrimentally centering gender in understandings of being. For starters, British colonists gendered traditional Yorùbá gods and masculinized the gods they considered more powerful to mirror their patriarchal Christianity.[89] Relatedly, missionary churches excluded African women from leadership roles.[90] Given the centrality of metaphysical infrastructures in the creation of material reality, this had direct implications for the gendered governance of colonized subjects in the Gold Coast and post-colonial Ghana.

While male former chiefs were potentially granted leadership positions—though with the loss of sovereignty which prevented the attainment of proper manhood but still initiated the process of borrowed institutionality—women were totally barred from participation in politics by European law. This differential treatment extended into education as African girls were *master*-classed on becoming proper wives and mothers but colonists trained African boys to become native politicians acting on behalf of the state to manage local matters such as "marriage, divorce, and even pregnancy."[91] African women were not citizens in their own right and only gained citizenship through marriage.[92] They were also unable to own land unlike times previous to colonial rule, when land was neither conceptualized as property nor sold .[93] Importantly, some local Africans cited "custom" and "tradition" as the reason for this change in relationship to land and the subjugation of women.[94] This ignored the very recent imposition of colonial power via *custom*ary law. Through the ontological plasticization of Black African being and the supplanting of their native ways of existence, Europeans were able to fix bodies within certain positions in accordance with gendered and sexed expectations that were necessarily conservative, anti-Black, and hinged upon the disavowal of African women. She is relegated to being someone's wife in the interests of birthing a family for the colonial nation's use. In contrast, the British groomed African men for bureaucratic positions in the colonial state, mystifying that they, too, were incapacitated by the same force.

'Look around and see what you've got left'[95]: The *Old* in the *New* Man

As demonstrated above, thinkers like Cabral and Fanon were justified in their skepticism of custom . In the colonial situation in which cultural warfare is part and parcel, it is difficult if not impossible to tease the distinction between "authentic" customs and those imposed by colonial powers. Therefore, any talk of "custom" or "tradition" warrants suspicion. What Cabral did not see, however, are the ways his calls for a New Man and the overvaluation of empirical science as a tool for the attainment of a new postcolonial society are also indebted to European metaphysics. In this section, metaphysics refers to the European tradition of philosophical and scientific inquiry into the nature of being and

existence. As we've shown, (anti-)Blackness is the foundation of even the precursor to secular Man. Anti-Blackness sutures religion to science, making them homologous onto-epistemological structures. In each, Blackness is the "enabling condition . . .performing a generative function."[96] Therefore a skepticism of custom also requires a skepticism of science to truly be a skeptical(of) metaphysics. The creation of a New Man signals a desire to periodize Man by bringing his reign to an end but "New" obscures that the old still lingers. As Fanon writes, "A man who has language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language."[97] In other words, the use of any given language implies a metaphysics that gives way to a universalizing World aspiring for totality. Therefore, we query the use of "Man."

When speaking of European modernity's adoption of the term "Man," Sylvia Wynter remarks that "the noun 'Man' now also functions as an ostensibly neutral and universal term" that is understood to include all genders, class, sexual, racial, and religious variations and, in doing so, naturalizes men, the bourgeoisie, heterosexuality, and whiteness as the default way of being.[98] That is, the deployment of "Man" collapses any internal distinctions and antagonisms under a gendered, sexualized, and classed Christian figure. The European tradition of thought and governance called Man ranges from its foundational thinkers such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, and Herbert Spencer who are each important figures in the scientific study of being. Marx, in particular, is the darling of revolutionary theory with his oft-cited concept of dialectical materialism. Underpinning the metaphysics of Hegel, Marx, Darwin, and Spencer, however, is a teleology that presumes progress, linearity, continuity, evolution, and "historical inevitability."[99] For example, just as Darwin posits that species emerge through the natural process of Evolution (rather than God), Marx posits the *eventuality* of communist revolution—a telos. It is important to note that Hegel, Darwin, and Spencer were explicit about either the deformity of Black people or the synchronicity of discourses of race and species.[100] While this was not the case in Marx's thought, there is reason to be skeptical of structural pitfalls in his theory when the matter of Blackness is raised because of his proximity to these thinkers. Because of the teleological nature of "Man," we wonder if "New" does not signal a clean break from "Man" but rather paints Man Black, retaining particularly anti-Black gendered

and sexualized notions of being in structure and therefore practice, if not in word. The subjugation of women and other marginalized groups in the post-colonial situation then, is a symptom of this underlying metaphysical commitment.

We emphasize that Cabral, in particular, was progressive relative to others in terms of gender. He stressed the importance of women not only taking part in struggle but also voicing their demands to one another and to men. For him, women's liberation was essential to the building of a new society and this theory guided party practices.[101] Girls were encouraged to go to school and there they could be politically educated while the PAIGC also educated adults to raise collective consciousness about the need to fight gender oppression.[102] Village councils replaced traditional councils and required that two of its five members be women.[103] This disrupted the norm of men having complete political power. Further, the PAIGC politicized food production— which was considered feminine labor—to recognize it and women's essential role in providing sustenance for the nation.[104] In contrast to colonial forces, the PAIGC also provisioned the ability for divorce and did not allow party members to engage in polygyny, which devalued women's labor.[105]

These were all important developments, but one facet reveals investments in gender that have long term impacts: women were encouraged to enter every role except as members of the military. Stephanie Urdang noted in her visit to the country during the revolutionary period that she "seldom saw women armed . . .and those that were, were generally cadres of the party who were armed for self-defense, rather than soldiers of the army."[106] The gun has been over-determined as a tool for self-determination. Why then would women not be armed if their liberation is essential to the decolonial project? Women being armed would enable their direct involvement in relations of force and the capacity to exert force onto their male compatriots, particularly when they were trying to retain antiquated relations. The PAIGC emphasized the "war was transitory" and armed struggle was simply one aspect of that transition and should not to be over-valued at the expense of other forms of labor. But women not being armed limits the capacity of women who are now, again, *aids* on the New Man's battlefield.

"One of the measures of the success of such a struggle is whether women are entering what was traditionally 'men's work,'"

writes Urdang, but the fact that "men's work" remains a conceptual category for which women can now aspire reveals that gendered relations were not dismantled, but expanded.[107] This is a skeptical metaphysics: a skepticism of normative relations of gender. But a skeptical(of)metaphysics is skeptical of gender itself as a legitimate form of social categorization. Rather than a *gendered* liberation, perhaps we should begin the task of envisioning a liberation *from* gender, which requires the exorcism of Man's possessively gendering force from both women *and* men. What would this entail? What forms of relation would be dismantled and perhaps incited, especially when undertaken with the memory of Blackness' plasticization—its "coerced formlessness?"[108] This returns us to the abyss of undifferentiated Blackness where genuine struggle over being can be waged.

'Everybody wears the mask but how long will it last?'[109]: By Way of Conclusion

We return to Jackson and Rosberg's claim that African statehood can best be measured by its external relationship to the World. We agree, but argue that internal metrics can also determine the degree of statehood. That is, because it is largely determined from without as a result of colonial pressures, adherence to gender prescriptions also provides a means to measure the legitimacy of a state. Measurement is "constitutive with what is measured . . .thus it matters how some *thing* is measured."[110] It equally matters one's orientation to that measurement. For example, if one desires to achieve statehood, then internal measurements of gender performativity that reveal heteronormative libidinal investments would bring glee. Similarly, if one is oriented to aspire for legible expressions of being via gender then the consolidation of an ordering apparatus such as a state formation sparks (Black) joy. We, however, are interested in neither because, as we have shown, they are new forms of bondage studded with cubic zirconia or, if one is 'lucky,' blood diamonds.

Kimathi Mohammed, an interlocutor of C.L.R. James and participant in the Black Power struggle in the U.S., offers resources for thinking through not only a critique of the nation-state as a form of order, but a critique of order itself. He argues that as "modern capitalist society has reached a stage of both

organization and disorganization that can only be fully challenged by massive political upheaval," and it is "impossible to concentrate the revolutionary energies of the Black masses into a party bureaucracy" in the first place.[111] He critiques desires for forms of organization that are "fixed, permanent, and holy."[112] His use of *holy* attends to the ways in which these frameworks of organization are understood as the only options we have, and thus shielded from existential critique. However, in a Jamesian register, he argues that "more important than the form and longevity of organization is the content of its activity and what is achieved through it."[113] Mohammed is interested in the constancy of self-critique, using what is useful and discarding it when it no longer is. What is the *function* of an organization, and what forms of relation does it facilitate? Instead of using organization to try to control and manage spontaneity, an impossibility, Mohammed is interested in the possibilities of unleashing spontaneity, using organizations which emerge spontaneously, and moving on when it is time for something new. He is gesturing toward a form of order rooted in the *dis*-ordering potentials of Black struggle.

In the liner notes to the album *Voodoo*, acclaimed recording artist and philosopher of Black culture D'Angelo and his co-author poet Saul Williams remark, "[t]he Aquarian Age is a matriarchal age, and if we are to exist as men in this new world many of us must learn to embrace and nurture that which is feminine with all our hearts."[114] This embrace means spiting the masculine attachments that constitute our very being through rigorous self-criticism to reveal that not only must we engage in horizontal struggle with those gendered as feminine, but also that we are ourselves feminized through an anti-Black praxis that appropriates our generative capacities to birth a new existence. In embrace we become "a community of subjects who craft the self through jettisoning violent and exclusive humanistic categories of intelligibility and coherence such as the heteronormative family, mother, father, and [Black] nation."[115] In doing so, we appeal to the potential of the statelessness of Blackness. We must change our relationship to the unknown, foregoing masculine attempts to know in detail. We are unsure of what we will become and do not pretend to have all the answers, but we find pleasure in this continuous unfolding, perpetual falling, and repetitive questioning. This method is our means and our end.

Notes

[1]   Earl Sweatshirt, "Tabula Rasa"

[2]   In this essay, we use metaphysics to refer to the conceptual system of any given culture which organizes understandings of the meaning of the world. In the context of modernity, instituted by trans-Atlantic slavery and colonization, Western metaphysics dominates other metaphysical systems at the level of the World. Ontology is a sub-category of metaphysics which includes praxes for living, including those governing gender, and the structural/conceptual classification of entities, e.g. what it means to "be" a human in relationship to other beings, the "demarcation of difference at the level of existence" (Douglass 114). Within the Western system, understandings of the "capacity" to affect the World guide classifications of Blackened people as abject in relation to whites. Whites are the embodiment of capacity—to possess and manipulate objects, to access political categories—while Blackened people are positioned as the embodiment of incapacity (See Fanon: "The Black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man."). As Jared Sexton writes, this is not "a statement about an inherent Black incapability, but rather about an imposed Black incapacity." These ontological relations subtend the domain of politics. The state is a structure which organizes (in)capacities, hence our skepticism of it.

[3]   Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 229.

[4]   Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood," *World Politics* 35, no. 1 (October 1982): pp. 1-24, 12.

[5]   Ibid., 21.

[6]   Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation–An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003).

[7]   Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Anti-Black World* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 69.

[8]   Frank B. Wilderson, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 56; Adom Getachew. *Worldmaking after Empire: The rise and fall of self-determination.* (Princeton University Press, 2019), 18.

[9]   Walter Rodney. "Aspects of the international class struggle in Africa, the Caribbean and America." In *Pan-Africanism: Struggle against Neo-colonialism and Imperialism. Documents of the Sixth Pan-African Congress,* pp. 18-41. 1974; Kwame Nkrumah, *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare* (Panaf Books, Ltd., 1968).

[10]   Achille Mbembe. *On the Postcolony.* (University of California Press, 2001).

[11]   Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire.*

[12]   Patrice D. Douglass, "Assata Is Here: (Dis)Locating Gender in Black Studies," *Souls* 22, no. 1 (February 2020): pp. 89-103, https://doi.org/10.1080/10999949.2019 .1711574, 91.

[13]   Sylvia Wynter, "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves In Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Désetre," in *A Companion to African-American Studies* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2006), 117

[14]   Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 142.

[15]   Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 10.

[16]   Ibid. 3

[17]   Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*, 18.

[18]   Jackson, *Becoming Human,* 5.

[19]   Patricia McFadden. "African feminist perspectives of post-coloniality." *The Black Scholar* 37, no. 1 (2007): 36-42.

[20]   Frank Wilderson and Cecilio Cooper. "Interviews on Critical Race and Trans/Queer Approaches to Filmmaking: Incommensurabilities—The Limits of Redress, Intramural Indemnity, and Extramural Auditorship." *Performance Matters* 6, no. 1 (2020), 72.

[21]   Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Vintage Books, 2018).

[22]   Jemima Pierre, *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 5.

[23]   Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2016), 14.

[24]   Jared Sexton and Daniel Barber, "On Black Negativity, or the Affirmation of Nothing: Jared Sexton, Interviewed by Daniel Barber," Society & Space, September 18, 2017, https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/on-Black-negativity-or-the-affirmation-of-nothing.

[25]   Sexton, "On Black Negativity"

[26]   Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 8.

[27]   Earl Sweatshirt, "OD"

[28]   Jackson and Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist," 5-6.

[29]   Ibid., 12.

[30]   Ibid., 5.

[31]   Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Books, 1983), 20.

[32]   Ibid., 27

[33]   Ibid., 27

[34]   Wynter, "Unsettling," 313.

[35]   Jackson and Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist," 23.

[36]   Ibid., 18.

[37]   Ibid., 6.

[38]   Wynter, "Unsettling," 318.

[39]   Amilcar Cabral. "The Weapon of Theory," 1966.

[40]   Achille Mbembe. *On the Postcolony*. (University of California Press, 2001), 26-27.

[41]   Ibid., 42.

[42]   Ibid., 75.

[43]   Crawford Young. *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. (Yale University Press, 1994.); Mahmood Mamdani. *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. (Princeton University Press, 1996.); Michel-Rolph Trouillot. *Haiti, State against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism.* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990.)

[44] I. E. Igariwey and Sam Mbah. *African Anarchism: The History of A Movement*. (See Sharp Press, 1997), 74.

[45] Modibo Kadalie. *Pan-African Social Ecology*. (On Our Own Authority! Publishing, 2019.)

[46] Joseph Edwards. *Workers' Self-Management in the Caribbean: The Writings of Joseph Edwards*. (On Our Own Authority! Publishing, 2014), 125.

[47] István Mészáros. *Beyond Capital: Toward a Theory of Transition*. NYU Press, 1995.

[48] Edwards, *Workers' Self-Management*, 126

[49] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, 2004), 114.

[50] Minkah Makalani, 2018. "The Politically Unimaginable in Black Marxist Thought." *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, *22*(2), 33; Amilcar Cabral. *Return to the source: selected speeches by Amilcar Cabral.* (New York: Monthly Review Press with Africa Information Service, 1973, 83.

[51] Amílcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," in *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amílcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review, 1973), 55.

[52] Fanon, *Wretched*, 51.

[53] Ibid., 83.

[54] Ibid., 239.

[55] Cabral, *Return to the Source*, 78.

[56] Amilcar Cabral. *Unity and struggle: Speeches and writings of Amilcar Cabral*. (NYU Press, 1979), 66; António Tomás. *Amilcar Cabral: The Life of a Reluctant Nationalist*. (Hurst Publishers, 2021), 121-125.

[57] C.L.R. James, Grace Lee Boggs, and Cornelius Castoriadis. *Facing Reality*. 1958, 5.

[58] Ibid., 86.

[59] Makalani, "Politically Unimaginable," 33.

[60] Jared Sexton. "Afro-Pessimism: The Unclear Word." *Rhizomes* 29 (2016), 6.

[61] Sexton, "On Black Negativity."

[62] Tomás, *Amilcar Cabral*, 148.

[63] Fanon, *Wretched*, 52.

[64] Basil Davidson. *The Liberation of Guiné: aspects of an African revolution*. (*Penguin African library*. 1969), 69.

[65] Sampha, "What Shouldn't I Be?"

[66] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 110.

[67] Wynter, "Unsettling," 274.

[68] Ibid., 302.

[69] Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 50.

[70] Cecilio M. Cooper, "Fallen: Generation, Postlapsarian Verticality + the Black Chthonic," *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*, no. 38 (2022), https://doi.org/10.20415/rhiz/038.e01, 13.

[71] Ibid., 15.

[72] Ibid., 5.

[73] Wynter, "Unsettling," 266.

[74] Abdullah Ocalan. *Democratic Confederalism*. (Lulu Press, Inc, 2015), 11.

[75] Oyèrónké Oyĕwùmí , *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 141.

[76] Cooper, "Fallen," 13.

[77] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 27.

[78] Pierre, *The Predicament of Blackness*, 11.

[79] Ibid., 12.

[80] Ibid., 12, 29.

[81] Ibid., 14.

[82] Ibid., 14; Mahmood Mamdani, "Indirect Rule, Civil Society, and Ethnicity: The African Dilemma," *Social Justice* 23, no. 1/2 (1996): pp. 145-150, 145.

[83] Oyĕwùmí, *The Invention of Women*, 142.

[84] Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 84.

[85] Pierre, *The Predicament of Blackness*, 15.

[86] Pierre, *The Predicament of Blackness*, 19; original emphasis.

[87] Jackson, *Becoming Human,* 71.

[88] Oyĕwùmí, *The Invention of Women*, 142.

[89] Ibid., 141.

[90] Ibid., 138.

[91] Ibid., 127.

[92] Ibid., 137.

[93] Ibid., 137.

[94] Ibid., 146.

[95] "Get Free" by Mereba

[96] Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 69.

[97] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 18.

[98] Wynter, "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, 130.

[99] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 19.

[100] Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 160.

[101] Stephanie Urdang, "Fighting Two Colonialisms: The Women's Struggle in Guinea-Bissau," *African Studies Review* 18, no. 3 (1975), 29.

[102] Ibid., 32.

[103] Ibid., 30.

[104] Ibid., 30.

[105] Ibid., 31.

[106] Ibid., 33.

[107] Ibid., 33.

[108] Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 71.

[109] The Fugees, "The Mask"

[110] Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 184; original emphasis.

[111] Kimathi Mohammed. *Organization and Spontaneity: The Theory of the Vanguard Party and its Application to the Black Movement in the US Today*. (On Our Own Authority! Publishing, 2013), 46, 54.

[112] Ibid., 47.

[113] Ibid., 47.

[114] Saul Williams and D'Angelo, "Voodoo Liner Notes," accessed March 2, 2022, https://www.angelfire.com/ky2/DangelosVoudou/VoodooLinerNotes.html.

[115] Tiffany Lethabo-King, "Black 'Feminisms' and Pessimism: Abolishing Moynihan's Negro Family," *Theory & Event* 21, no. 1 (January 2018), 83.