African Literature, Animism and Politics

Caroline Rooney

Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures

African Literature, Animism and Politics

African Literature, Animism and Politics considers the ways in which the inventions of Africa differ from inventions of the Orient. Certain Africanist discourse is preoccupied by the status of African thought, where Africa has been repeatedly construed as both unthinking and unthinkable. This highly original and groundbreaking book sets itself up against this tradition in readdressing questions of animism, hybridity and fetishism, and in attending to a 'writing Africa': an Africa that reasserts and reinvents itself.

Drawing on anthropology and African philosophy, *African Literature, Animism and Politics* also uses readings of literary texts to interrogate conceptual suppositions that serve to eclipse the subject of Africa. Through readings of *Antigone*, it explores how a thinking of the family within Western philosophy and psychoanalysis serves to deny other inheritances. Caroline Rooney also reveals how the category of 'hybridity' is used paradoxically to discriminate between tolerable and threateningly transgressive forms of hybridity.

The book marks an important contribution to colonial and postcolonial studies in its clarification of a particular Africanist discourse, and in its far-reaching analyses of the literature of animism. Caroline Rooney's analyses open up fresh lines of research such as: a rethinking of the death drive in terms of spirit possession; theorisations of creativity in terms of receptivity; formulations of a poetics of eclipsement and of a spirited empiricism; an analysis of strategies deployed in constructing hybridity; and the proposition of another politics/ethics in relation to the figure of abiku and the brother–sister ideal.

It will be of great critical interest to those working in philosophy, anthropology, literary and critical theory, politics and psychoanalysis.

Caroline Rooney was born in Zimbabwe, and is Lecturer in English and Postcolonial Literature at the University of Kent.

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African Literature, Animism and Politics

Caroline Rooney

London and New York

First published 2000
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Rooney, Caroline.
African Literature, Animism and Politics / Caroline Rooney.
p. cm. – (Routledge research in postcolonial literature ; 4)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. African literature–History and criticism.
2. Politics in literature. 3. Politics and literature–Africa.
4. Animism in literature. I. Title.
II. Routledge research in postcolonial literatures ; 4
PL8010 .R66 2001
809'896–dc21 00-062741

ISBN 0-203-16583-7 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-26044-9 (Adobe eReader Format)
ISBN 0–415–23751–3 (Print Edition)

In memory of

Emily Kusangaya **Marguerite Robinson**

And for you, J.B.

Contents

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the editors of the *Oxford Literary Review* for permission to reprint 'Clandestine Antigones'. It first appeared in the *Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 19, 1997. I am also grateful to Ama Ata Aidoo and Dangaroo Press for permission to reprint excerpts from Ama Ata Aidoo's 'Loving the Black Angel' and 'Images of Africa at Century's End', both from *An Angry Letter in January*. My thanks to Stephen Gray for permission to reprint an excerpt from his translation of Wilma Stockenström's 'On the Suicide of Young Writers'. Although I have made every effort to locate copyright holders, I have failed to establish contact in a few cases, and offer my apologies.

I am grateful to the University of Kent for a sabbatical term during which most of this book was written. I would like to offer warm thanks to my colleagues at the Centre for Colonial and Postcolonial Studies at Kent, Rod Edmond, Abdulrazak Gurnah and Lyn Innes, for their support and encouragement, and for setting many admirable precedents. More widely, this book has benefited from intellectual engagements with many colleagues, students and friends, and I wish to thank the following for the stimulation of ongoing exchanges: Maggie Awadalla, David Ayers, Glenn Bowman, Elizabeth Cowie, David Cummings, Rana Dayoub, Grace Ebron, Derek Matyszak, Andréa Mercier, Jan Montefiore, Wendy Shorter and Anastasia Valassopoulos. For useful responses to the project in its early stages, I am grateful to Benita Parry and Ato Quayson, without wishing to oblige their approval of what has emerged. I am further grateful to Angela Smith for her careful reading of a penultimate draft of the manuscript and for her valuable advice. I have benefited from the interest and expertise of my editors at Routledge, Craig Fowlie and Milon Nagi. I thank them for their help and, more widely, thank the staff at Routledge for their support. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ayman al-Kharrat for the generosity of his expertise in taking the photograph for the cover. This book has taken shape as one of a number of possible projects over the years. I am deeply appreciative of the following for their thought-provoking influence on my work, their helpful suggestions, and for standing by: Timothy Clark, Victoria Mavros, Forbes Morlock, Felicity Rooney, Maurice Rooney, Nicholas Royle and Nancy Winfield. Finally, I wish to thank Julia Borossa for her astute readings of the work at various stages and for being such an inspiring and sustaining co-traveller.

Introduction

> I believe that we should most faithfully render the Bantu thought in European language by saying that Bantu speak, act, live as if, for them, beings were forces.
>
> Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*

> The Igbo world is an arena for the interplay of forces. It is a dynamic world of movement and of flux … *Ike*, energy, is the essence of all things human, spiritual, animate and inanimate. Everything has its own unique energy which must be acknowledged and be given its due.
>
> Chinua Achebe, 'The Igbo World and its Art'

> *Ashé*, often translated as 'power', is a concept that designates the dynamism of being and the very vitality of life. *Ashé* is the creative source of all that is; it is the power-to-be, the principle in things that enables them to be.
>
> Emmanuelle Chukwudi Eze, 'The Problem of Knowledge in "Divination": The Example of *Ifa*'

> $E = mc^2$
>
> Einstein

Step, this begins with a step. Or have I lost you already? Animism, it is a question of movement. In order to advance this, let us consider the following three excerpts that have been selected for a repeated scene of exposition. This scene is one of being in the dark and thence of divining something beyond what can be immediately sensed. The following extracts are taken from Aristotle's *Physics*, and two African novels, Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* (1974) and Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1913). The advantage of this unusual juxtaposition is that it dislodges the centrality given to colonialism in approaching African thought and culture as that which has the definitive power to separate 'primitive' African philosophies from the modernity of Western thought, a modernity that nonetheless extends back to classical Greek philosophy, at least. Here are the excerpts for consideration:

> It is evident, then, that time is neither movement nor independent of movement.

> We must take this as our starting point and try to discover – since we wish to know what time is – what exactly it has to do with movement.
>
> Now we perceive movement and time together: for *even when it is dark and we are not being affected through the body*, if any movement takes place in the mind *we at once suppose that some time also has elapsed*; and not only that but also, when some time is thought to have passed, some movement also along with it seems to have taken place. Hence time is either movement or something that belongs to movement. Since then it is not movement, it must be the other.
>
> Aristotle, *Physics*, Book IV, 219a (my emphasis)[1]

> After a while she became more accustomed to the extreme dark and quite enjoyed blowing out the light and *being swallowed up by the billowing darkness*. One night she had just blown out the light when *she had the sudden feeling* that someone had entered the room. The full impact of it seemed to come from the roof, and was so strong that she jerked up in bed. There was *a swift flow of air* through the room, and whatever it was moved and sat down on the chair. The chair creaked slightly. Alarmed, she swung around and lit the candle. The chair was empty. She had never seen a ghost in her life. She was not given to 'seeing' things.
>
> Bessie Head, *A Question of Power* (my emphasis)[2]

> It was very early in the morning, *long, long before the sun was due*, and he was bathing in an ugly place, where it was most fearsome … In this pool the water was *pitch dark*, intensely black. On the opposite bank, directly across from where he was, but inside the water, was a yawning cave, a dark black tunnel which stretched *beyond one's vision* … a place fit to be inhabited only by the *tikoloshe* …
>
> Chaka once again splashed himself vigorously with the water, and at once the water of that wide river billowed and then levelled off. Then it swelled higher and higher till he was sure it was going to cover him, and he walked towards the bank. No sooner was he there than *a warm wind began to blow with amazing force*. The reeds on the banks of the river swayed violently to and fro, and shook in a mad frenzy; and just as suddenly as they began, they quickly stopped moving and were dead still, and they just stood erect as if no wind had ever blown … In the centre of that wide dark green pool the water began to ripple gently … where the water was rippling he saw the head of an enormous snake suddenly break surface.
>
> Thomas Mofolo, *Chaka* (my emphasis)[3]

In all three passages, we have the same starting point: someone is placed in the dark and discerns or divines a movement. What Aristotle gives to us as 'time', 'not movement', is far from being so swiftly concluded in the texts of Head and Mofolo. In the novels of Mofolo and Head we do come to a consideration of time but through a certain comprehension of being that Aristotle may be said to

elide in the swiftness of the decision: 'time, not movement'. In order to argue this more fully, I should like to discuss each of the extracts one by one.

Aristotle's task is to propose a concept of time in a refutation of other theories of time holding sway in his day. He is scathingly critical of the idea of time as a sphere, as that within which we are all included and, although he does not say so at this point of critical rejection, the objection might be that this idea constitutes a spatialisation of time, a figuring of time in terms of space. He is also critical, albeit less so, of the idea of time as movement. In both these cases, we could say that the weakness is that time is not established as time: it is space or movement. Thus, there is the need to re-pose the question: what is time? In the above extract, Aristotle says that if we are in a darkened room, thus being deprived of the sense of sight by which we would register movement, we are still able to feel a passage of time. We would sense this without or beyond our senses (this being, in philosophical terms, what is spoken of as the 'non-sensuous sensuous'). The important point here is that, by this, Aristotle is able to affirm that we are able to discern time as something not reducible to movement. The move that effects this perception can be further analysed.

It would seem that to concentrate on a sense of time as purely time, a death-like paralysis, a playing dead, needs be assumed. That is, we would need to lose touch with the physical world that billows all around us and flows through us as we breathe in and out, and in doing so we would come to assume a virtual disembodiment. Only in this imagined disembodied state, or in a repression of the body-world, could we claim to sense movement beyond the senses. Given this, what we could be said to sense is what goes on being, what continues to move, without (our) being in the world. Now as to what continues here in a ghostly movement-without-body, what would we suppose this to be? The supposition Aristotle gives us is time: it must be time. Moreover, with the repression of the moving body-world, movement is that which is perceived only by the mind. The thought of movement as time would thus seem to depend on a withdrawal from the on-going living world and so would seem to be the thought of what goes on being without (living) being. This is suggestive of a somewhat vampiric logic: life drained of life in order for the movement that is then the on-going of time, the movement that belongs to time. Having strayed a little from what Aristotle says, let us turn to *A Question of Power*.

In the above extract, we have a comparable starting point: in the dark – *swallowed up* by the dark – the protagonist has the feeling, without senses, of an entrance, a movement. Here, this movement, which in its inception cannot be detected by the senses but yet is 'felt', supposed, is not then supposed to be time. If it were a case of a sense of time, without the protagonist diagnosing this as such, it swiftly becomes a case of movement: 'swift flow of air'. It is as yet disembodied movement, airy and eerie, which suggests, briefly, the thought of a ghost – suppose it is a ghost? – which is quickly rejected on the grounds of not 'seeing' anything. There is nothing there, nothing that presents itself to the senses, apart from a flow of air and the feeling of a certain 'whatever'. At this point, the text goes on to give us this development: 'whatever it was wanted to introduce itself

at some stage, because one night she was lying staring at the dark when it seemed as though her head simply filled out into a large horizon.'[4] Aristotle's philosopher-in-the-dark seems to enter his/her own head, in the deprivation of the senses, but so as to have the world 'die', go away, or so as to 'die' from the world. In Head's account there would seem to be a reversal of this. Instead of the mind or consciousness losing sensory awareness of or contact with the world, withdrawing from the affective, moving, touch of the world, in Head's text the dividing line between the mind and the physical world dissolves, which produces the sense or sensation of being absolutely co-extensive with the being of the world, not transcendentally detached from it. What we might have here is an extreme experience of the real: being at one with life. It is at this point that the *flow* of air in the *billowing* dark begins to take on form, in a manner suggestive to me of foetal development in that what we are given is an evolution of increasingly precise formation that culminates in an independent living creation. We are told, after the 'flow', of the 'form of man' which rapidly becomes affirmed as indeed a 'he' in the *flowing* robes of a monk or prisoner. From 'air' to 'it' to 'form of a man' to a man, 'he', to robes of a 'monk', the protagonist comes to the point of supposing a name: 'He was … He was …' (ellipses in text). Then further definition is attempted in saying that the name associated with him is that of an almost universally adored God. He must be? We are not told, but it gets us guessing: he must be: Mandela or Sobukwe (thinking of the prison garment)?; Ghandi?; Krishna?; Christ?; Buddha? Who-or-whatever: 'Yet, he was intensely alive.' This living numinous flow is said to become part of 'the *flow* of her life'. In short, instead of supposing an 'it must be time', we are to suppose some force of animation, a living genesis, coming into being in a near borderless continuity of self with the natural world. What comes to be here is a creation that is given the name of Sello. The spirit-creations in *A Question of Power* are usually read in terms of the insane hallucinations of a case of paranoia or, if not to be rationally dismissed, as mystical or supernatural phenomena.[5] However, in the terms of the text itself, it may be that we are being offered something closer to a philosophy of nature, a physics, as Aristotle offers us his philosophy of nature, where these philosophies of nature would differ. It is necessary to cite at some length to show this:

> It was the kind of language she understood, that no one was the be-all and end-all of creation, that no one had the power of assertion and dominance to the exclusion of other life. It was almost a suppressed argument she was to work with all the time; that people, in their souls, were *forces*, *energies*, stars, planets, universes and all kinds of swirling magic and mystery; that at a time when this was openly perceived, the insight into their own powers had driven them mad, and they had robbed themselves of the natural grandeur of life. As Darwin had perceived in the patterns of nature: 'There is a grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally *breathed into a few forms* or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning

> endless forms most beautiful and wonderful have been, and are being, evolved. (my emphasis)[6]

Thus, Head says via her protagonist, in the language she understands, that it is not a case of religious mysticism – godlike creators as the be-all and end-all of creation – nor is it ultimately a case of madness (whilst there would be important debates to consider here, not least Jacqueline Rose's extremely thoughtful reading of *A Question of Power*);[7] it is a matter of the natural magic of creative evolution, the science of life, biology. Placing the first excerpt cited from *A Question of Power* alongside the above excerpt, it could be said that what we have in the first excerpt is a particular instance of, precisely, a creative evolution: from the 'flow of air', 'originally breathed' into a form which results in a creature that is intensely alive. We may be reading a poetic allegory of material genesis, or an amateur scientific allegory of a creative process. Interestingly, Head claimed that her other vocation, her vocation aside from writing, was that of biology. Like a certain Freud and like Ferenczi, she declares a great admiration for biology. In a letter to Randolph Vigne she writes: 'I read a bit of Darwin because in my next incarnation I hope to be a biologist'.[8] The description given of the materialisation of Sello recalls an earlier description of Head's of the creative process, in which a certain sense of an African spirit comes to take on the form of a man. In a letter to Patrick Cullinan in which Head discusses the creation of the main male character of her first novel, *The Cardinals*, Head writes:

> You know – that funny book I sent – 'The Cardinals' – I started to create a mythical man there and he has since appeared everywhere. I write about him all the time – yet he is not a flesh and blood reality … Imagination is something that I distrust profoundly and the way I have *created this man out of air*, shocks me in a terrible way, in my reasonable moments (my emphasis).[9]

That Head's text intuits a certain link between a biological evolution of life forms and a creative evolution of forms that take on a life in the mind is an intuition that modern science can confirm. Enrico Coen, in *The Art of Genes*, explains how the making of organisms is akin to a creative process. He writes:

> Genes do not provide an instruction manual that is interpreted by a separate entity; they are part and parcel of the process of interpretation and elaboration … This is very similar to what happens when humans create something.[10]

Coen refers primarily to the creation of paintings to explain the makings of organisms, whilst Head's writings may be seen to lend support to his argument in using the evolution of an organism as an analogy for the creative process. Let us now turn to the passage from Mofolo's *Chaka*, for which the second excerpt cited from *A Question of Power* happens to serve as a useful co-text.

This passage from *Chaka* marks a crucial moment of election in Chaka's

destiny. It is comparable to the scene in *Macbeth* where Macbeth is singled out for greatness by the witches. What could be said to happen to Chaka in this bathing scene is that he comes into contact with the living power of nature itself, which flows into form in the body of a huge snake. In having the experience of being recognised or singled out by the snake, Chaka may be said to wish to arrogate the power of the vital or generative forces of nature to himself. In short, in Mofolo's novel, he seeks to make himself, in Head's terms, the be-all and end-all of creation. As in the passages from Aristotle and Head, we are first placed in total darkness, and this gives rise to a feeling of eerieness, of a something invisible yet there, beyond what can immediately be sensed. As with Head, but not with Aristotle, this affect or feeling becomes a movement of nature but beyond the particular natural phenomenon. The water that billows and the strong wind that blows are movements of nature but intensely so, so that we become aware of not just the pool or the wind in the reeds but of a moving force as an animating power. It is this intensive life force or invisible energy that comes to be embodied in the majestic and frightening body of the snake.

We seem to have moved a long way from Aristotle's *Physics*, Book IV. Ironically, what the thought of time represses is the time of the thought, the time in which the thinking occurs. What the thinking of time represses is the present continuous tense: I am thinking. This elision of the present continuous is not just true of this instance, but far more widely so of Western philosophy, thought and criticism: this is perhaps crucial, so I will return to it a little further on. We are told, 'some time has elapsed', and this formulation is suggestive of an hysterical absencing, a fainting fit. Coming to, so to speak, we can say, this lapse of time is the gestation of the thought in the time of its making, its thinking. Aristotle's little scene of the philosopher-in-the-dark, which unphilosophically I can't help picturing (a man seated at a table, elbows on the table and head in hands, eyes shut, door shut, window shuttered), could be sub-titled 'the origins of philosophy' or 'the beginnings of Western metaphysics'. That is, the living, moving, hurly-burly world, the world in fact, is shut out in order to have the time to think, and the starting point here is a removing of the self from existence to think of existence. This could be the auto-affective, self-moving, self-starting thought of 'what if I were to die?' or 'imagine me dead'. With a nod in the direction of Descartes, we might get, 'thinking myself dead, I yet find that I think, therefore I am'. Why not, 'I am thinking I am yet living'? We have the simple present of a metaphysical 'in general' because the on-going specificity of the present continuous has been shut out to begin with, foreclosed – and it is because of this that 'I' can return to myself in time and confirm that, in truth, 'I am', from a speculative loss of being.

Once Aristotle has supposed that time is not reducible to movement, he suggests that time is what is measured of movement. It is that which is counted not that which counts: numbers count, time is counted.[11] Rushing this, time is counted according to the 'now'. The 'now' is both 'the present' and that which is not, in that as soon as it is posited it is both past and to come. The now, the present, refers to what is absent – the before and after. Time is thus thought of in

terms of presence and absence, being and non-being. This problematic is one that Derrida inherits from Heidegger and traces back through Heidegger to Hegel, Kant and Aristotle, in order to assert that this thinking of time in terms of being and non-being is *the* philosophical conception of time.[12]

What Mofolo and Head may be said to draw attention to is what the thought of time forgets or represses. This is a matter of according value to what is yet living, the mattering of the aliveness of life rather than the counting of time. If what the measurement of time, time as measurement, occludes is the on-going life, a continuous coming-into-being, this is what of movement cannot be measured or counted. The only way to give a number to this is to arrest it, stop its flow, cut it short: a question of killing in order to count the now of the no longer now or no longer now of the now? Or what time cannot measure of movement is its animation, its vitality … that 'whatever it is', which is to say its measure is deadening, or if not, ghostly. In *A Question of Power*, Sello – he of the 'He was … He was …' – is ultimately, only in the closing pages, identified as Time:

> He had the long history of the human race in his heart, as he was Old Father Time. Whatever would happen next she could not say.[13]

In *Chaka*, Chaka is a would-be Father Time in that his ambition is to rule over all of creation for all time. Chaka's will to the universalisation of history involves the endless sacrifice of lives. While these other lives count for nothing as far as a would-be immortal Chaka is concerned, the narrator of the novel keeps constant track:

> In order to comprehend this fully, we should use the example that the number of people killed by him in the ways we have described, is equal to the number of the Basotho, counting every man, woman, and child, multiplied three or four-fold. Imagine them all being killed![14]

Chaka's/Time's reign is in this way measured by the number of lives sacrificed. Sello's case as Father Time is somewhat different. Early on in the novel, he shows Elizabeth, the protagonist, what he has on or in his mind or conscience:

> Then Sello seemed to put in the plugs all at the same time, and she found herself faced with a vast company of people. They had still, sad, fire-washed faces. The meaning of the stillness, the sadness and intensity of expression did not reach her till some time later, when Sello exposed a detail of his past. It was death. It was the expression of a people who had been killed and killed and killed again in one cause after another for the liberation of mankind.[15]

Unlike in the case of Chaka, Sello, with the history of the human race in his heart, is the memory of the costs of history which is associated with his working

for redemption, as realised by the protagonist who states with reference to the multitude of those killed: 'Why, an absolute title has been shared. There are several hundred thousand people who are God'.

The selective and condensed consideration of the texts concerned here yet serves as a means of introducing possible disjunctions between Western thought and, what I will call, animistic thought. Animism is not without a thinking of time; it perhaps rather concerns a different thinking of being in relation to time. What is at stake here, in this discussion, is the relation of time to the thought of being, how being is thought, and what is also at stake is the whole question of the status of philosophy, Western, in relation to thought not recognised as such, as philosophy or as thought. The question of whether it is possible, indeed permissible, to speak of animism as a philosophy has a long history, as I will come to give some indication of. First, a brief summary of the issues raised so far will be attempted.

Whilst Aristotle's philosopher senses something beyond the senses which is surmised to be time, in the extracts from Mofolo and Head, a feeling of something beyond the senses takes shape in the perception of movement and then form: a moving force takes on a form which may serve further to suggest an idea or ideal. Whilst Aristotle's perception presents a somewhat ghostly sensation, the sense of a presence in its absence, in its absence its presence, the texts of Head and Mofolo render the invisible, say, the energies or forces of life, visible in entities that give the sensation of being extremely alive. The emphasis is on the event of a coming into being. While what is initially presented in terms of the vital forces of life – that is, spirits – comes to be given in terms of an accumulation of time; it is of a time haunted by the absence of life. While movement is given in terms of creative evolution, the presence of time concerns an absence of being.

Why 'animism'?

'Animism' is a rather unfashionable term because of the ethnocentric, universalising and ill-informed ways in which it has been used. It belongs to the repertoire of terms that have aimed to distinguish between primitive and modern thought. Its use as an anthropological term was promoted by E.B. Tylor in *Primitive Culture* (1871) to designate a non-monotheistic primitive religion of spirits. James Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, aligns animism with magic and schematises intellectual development (both he and Tylor were influenced by Herbert Spencer's evolutionism) according to three stages: that of animism or magical thought and practice; that of religion; and that of science. One principle line of objection to Frazer's positing of an animist world picture has been that it constitutes an armchair anthropology that fails to base itself rigorously on the specificities of fieldwork studies, this constituting the reaction to it on the part of Malinowski and his followers. Moreover, Paulin Hountondji has coined the term 'unanimism' as a critique of the synthesising gesture that lumps together the considerable diversity of African beliefs as but one unified belief: a unanimity of animism. He writes: 'there is a myth at work, the myth of a primitive unanimity,

with its suggestion that in "primitive" societies – that is, to say, non-Western societies – everybody always agrees with everybody else'.[16] Hountondji is certainly correct to challenge this imposition of a cultural homogeneity on quite different societies. However, what ought to be pointed out is that Hountondji's position serves to endorse Western philosophy, or philosophy with this as its disciplinary basis and model, as *the* generalisable mode of thought, whereby the thought of other cultures becomes implicitly an ethnic speciality, presumably best approached through the disciplines of anthropology and history.

What I need to stress at this outset is that this book is not and has not attempted to be an anthropological study, whatever tangents or moments of cross-over that there may be in terms of shared concerns, and that its interest is not in reviving an outmoded anthropological use of the term 'animism'. The work concerns rather a literature of animism, in both a broad and narrow sense. In fact, the term 'animism' is being retained precisely to open up both that which it has been used to fence in, cordon off and disallow, and that which a disallowance of the term serves also, in turn, to disallow. Changing just the terms of the debate can yet be a way of evading its on-going stakes. Whilst the unfashionable term 'animism' is to be retained in this work, as part of a discursive history, keeping this visible, the task will be one of challenging the prejudices that have been attached to it and working with it in such a way as to attempt the beginnings of conceiving anew the meanings that may be ascribed to it. In this, this work shares an impetus with Nicholas Royle's project to re-work the term 'telepathy', where Royle cites Derrida as follows:

> Every conceptual breakthrough amounts to transforming, that is to deforming, an accredited, authorized relationship between a word and a concept, between a trope and what one had every interest to consider to be an unshiftable primary sense, a proper, literal or current usage.[17]

While changing the terms can shift the debates, there is also a stigmatising of terms so that they may be used *to stigmatise* in the desire for 'proper' meanings. 'Animism' belongs to a vocabulary of stigmatised and stigmatising terms, alongside perhaps: 'primitivism', 'nativism'; re-stigmatised as 'neo-primitivism', 'neo-nativism', where the 'neo' tends to mean anything but. The criticism concerns a supposed desire for purity of origin on the part of others, but it often actually serves to discredit other origins in order to maintain a purity or singularity of origin, as will be explored in the following chapters. 'Primitivism' has been so equated with 'inferiority', that we forget it refers to 'the first': that which is in the first place or the first of its kind. At least with 'animism', it is possible to work with its improperness, in more ways than one. For a start, it never properly names the ideas or thought of particular cultures: it cannot, being but a vague and approximate translation (where this is appropriate for literature in its difference from anthropological factuality). Then, it is something of a boundary-hopping word, used not only by anthropologists and philosophers (for instance, Derrida uses it now and again due, no doubt, to its being part of an intellectual

inheritance), but by poets (Yeats, Soyinka), and psychoanalysts (Freud, Ferenczi). Moreover, etymologically, it can be seen to refer to an improper, or supposedly so, combination of meanings, concerning what crosses over from life to death to life, and crosses species. Drawing only on *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, we have: **anima** as 'inner personality' and **animus** as 'animating spirit' [L = spirit, mind]; **animal** derived from *animalis* having breath [*anima* breath]; **animate** as living, lively [L *animatus* pp of *animare* give life to (*anima* life, soul)]; **animism** from *anima* life, soul. So, just consider: animal, mind, spirit, breath, life, soul.

In *The Invention of Africa*, V.Y. Mudimbe carefully and astutely traces the invention of Africa in anthropological and theological discourses together with the responses of African philosophers and scholars to this discursive production. With respect to the debates outlined, it could be said that possibly the major preoccupation of this Africanist counterpart to Orientalism has been the debate over whether what Tylor identifies as 'animism', Frazer as magical thought, Lévy-Bruhl as 'pre-logical thought' and Tempels as 'Bantu philosophy' can or cannot be given the status of a philosophy or of a system of thought. Whilst the term 'animism' was brought forward to identify a thinking of the primitive, even if the term 'animism' is not the one used in later debates, the question of how to think or place the thought of the so-called 'primitive' remains the hotly debated question. In a partial and broad survey of this, Lévy-Bruhl's thesis, that primitive thought is to be defined by its pre-logical nature, is offered as an explicit rebuttal of both Tylor and Frazer. In his critique of the English school of anthropology, which he characterises through its interest in animism, Lévy-Bruhl writes:

> Do the collective representations of the communities in question arise out of higher mental functions identical with our own, or must they be referred to a mentality which differs from ours to an extent yet to be determined? Such an alternative as the latter did not occur to their minds.[18]

That is, whilst Frazer and Tylor uphold a belief in 'mental functions identical with our own', Lévy-Bruhl attributes to the 'primitive' a different mental functioning, whereby the question of how to account for the differences of 'primitive' institutions and beliefs is supposedly resolved. The point is made that Tylor and Frazer err in trying to explain the difference between 'savage' and 'civilised' mentalities, an error in that the supposedly pre-logical nature of the former would not admit of such explanation: 'It is useless to try and explain the institutions and customs and beliefs of undeveloped peoples by starting from the psychological and intellectual analysis of "the human mind" as *we* know it.'[19]; 'The primitive's mind works along the lines that are peculiar to it.'[20] Lévy-Bruhl's institutional background is that of the École normale supérieure, where he began as a philosopher, with German philosophy as his speciality. His positing of a pre-logical mind, in which primitives are incapable of recognising their own contradictions, has something of a Hegelian cast to it, as will be made clearer in Chapter 2. For the moment, Abiola Irele's comment on Lévy-Bruhl's work may be put forward: 'His enterprise consisted in working out in the realm of

epistemology, and to its furthest limits, the antithesis between Western and non-Western man that is inherent in Hegel's philosophy of history.'[21] For all the ethnocentrisms of Tylor and Frazer, their assumption of the identity of the human mind is far more sane and, indeed, undeniably accurate. Tylor makes the point in his discussion of animism that aspects of it are to be found in Western culture, something denied by Lévy-Bruhl in his wider attempt to refute a theory of animism. In considering the ideas of Leibniz and Berkeley on force, Tylor writes:

> To go yet farther, I will venture to assert that the scientific conceptions current in my schoolboy days, of heat and electricity as invisible fluids passing in and out of solid bodies, are ideas which reproduce with extreme closeness the special doctrine of Fetishism.[22]

Lévy-Bruhl, in the face of many criticisms, eventually abandoned his term 'pre-logical', substituting for it 'mystical'. Tylor's intuition, that there may be grounds for comparing animism with natural science, is a line of enquiry that has been upheld by contemporary thinkers, for instance by the intellectualist anthropologist, Robin Horton, and the philosopher, Anthony Appiah.

In 'Neo-Tylorianism: sound sense or sinister prejudice?', Horton defends the intellectualist approach of Tylor whilst criticising his failure to combine this with sociological knowledge. Horton writes:

> I started out with the intellectualist assumption that both the gods and spirits of traditional Africa and the ultimate particles and forces of the Western world-view were alternative means to what was basically the same explanatory end.[23]

Horton goes on to state that in order to account for the difference between the theoretical models, it was necessary to take into consideration differing social organisations. The basic point is that African religion may be read as an intellectual understanding of the world as opposed to an anti-Tylorian reception of it as, say, an atheoretical or non-logical symbolic practice. In 'Back to Frazer?', Horton defends Frazer's crediting of magical thought against the aestheticising readings of the Symbolist school. Whilst the latter are said to treat African religions in terms of the creation of images for their own sake, Horton proposes that this 'magical' thought and practice shares, to some extent, with science, and to a lesser extent with religion, in having an investment in explanation, prediction and control. This is too condensed to do justice to the arguments; nevertheless, Horton challenges the Symbolist grouping together of 'magic, religion and art', retaining rather a quasi-Frazerian grouping of 'magic, religion and science', whereby art is set to one side: 'Art would then be expressive, and the rest is instrumental'.[24] Without being able to go into the intricacies of the debate, a couple of points will be made. As regards the literature studied in this book (and beyond), spirits are mainly presented as realities and not as metaphors, symbols,

figurative devices, but where it yet becomes necessary to learn new languages of spirits. That is, Western preconceptions as to what 'spirit' is or 'spirits' are can be misleading. Horton, in needing to defend his line of enquiry against an aestheticisation, seems to somewhat bypass the symbolic nature – symbolic here in a broad sense, not the narrowly aesthetic one – of all languages of knowledge and belief. That said, the bracketing off of art seems to me to be problematic. Here art would be aligned with the imaginary and non-literal, the creation of images for their own sake. Apart from the fact that art – whilst not really a conceptual endeavour – also can convey ideas, what I wish to stress is that there is yet a creative practice and process to be taken into account. The importance of this is that this creative dynamic does seem to be implied in animism and animism in it, which raises the question of how we, in the West, may over-aestheticise creativity. Finally, Appiah, whilst partially agreeing with Horton's alignment of African religion with natural science – or, we could say further, possibly also a philosophy of nature – maintains that we are yet still dealing with what, in other respects, would need to be understood as a religion with its symbolic elements.

Returning to the question of the status of African thought, Tempels is a key figure because he argues, in *Bantu Philosophy*, against the primitivising of African thought and he endeavours to show how it can be read as a consistent philosophy.[25] Whilst Tempels has his followers amongst African intellectuals, it is perhaps Hountondji and Wiredu who are best known for refuting the case that Tempels tries to make. I will not go over all the arguments, which have already been expertly reconsidered and contextualised by Mudimbe, and where, of course, they can still be read in their original forms. Again, I will confine myself to a few selective remarks.

Wiredu states that the prevalence of misconceptions about traditional African thought means that 'many Westerners have gone about with an exaggerated notion of the differences in nature between Africans and the peoples of the West'.[26] Wiredu's proposition is that traditional thought lacks the critical argumentation, clarification and modern rationality to qualify as philosophy, and that it is better aligned with the spiritism of folk ideas in the West, prevalent in earlier ages but yet surviving today. While this is a possible route, we could also take art into consideration, and not just folk art. Freud maintains that the remnants of animism in the West survive in art, something that Tylor also argues for.[27] In order to consider how 'remnants' may be something of an understatement, let us consider a few of the canonical masterpieces of High Modernism. The 'Circe' episode in Joyce's *Ulysses* is highly animistic in many respects, not least with spirits returning from the dead. The 'Ithaca' episode can be seen as the counterpart of 'Circe': it treats in scientific and impersonal terms the energies and forces that 'Circe' treats in psychic and personal terms. Then, as Hillis Miller shows in his insightful reading of Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, this novel is all about the living on of spirits, with a strange figure at its overlooked centre: a source of water that bubbles up from the ground who is also a witch-like crone.[28] Eliot's *The Waste Land*, of course, is famously a reworking of *The Golden Bough*, arguably assuming with Frazer (albeit with its own in-lays of ethnocentricism), an identity of the

human mind. And, although this will not be demonstrated here, it may be claimed that the theories of creativity of Valéry and Stein have their animistic inflections, and so on. And this need not be confined to Modernist writing: Shakespeare's last plays may be read, without too much difficulty, in terms of animism and magic. Of course, this is not ethnophilosophy, even as the writers concerned may be drawing on the thought of other cultures. Rather, it is a case of supporting Wiredu's claim that the spiritism of African culture has been exaggerated as a mystifying otherness. However, 'the remnants of animism', so to speak, that I would affirm can be found in Western art and culture are idiosyncratic, deracinated and sometimes symptomatic of an alienated consciousness. This is certainly worlds apart from the wide prevalence of serious, lively, socially relevant intellectual traditions and knowledges, that would support an expression of animism, as found in societies all over Africa. Whilst Wiredu is understandably keen to place the emphasis on a modern, critical African philosophy appropriate to the needs for modernisation in Africa, this tends to result in too strong a characterisation of traditional thought as mere superstition, a term stressed by Wiredu from his rational humanist perspective. To be fair, Wiredu argues for the necessity of evaluating and sifting the thought concerned with respect to identifying what may be harmful in it and retaining what may be advantageous. Hountondji's rejection is more extreme.

Hountondji rejects 'Bantu philosophy' or ethnophilosophy as an invention, seeing that in the past of Africa there has never been anything like a philosophy. Both Mudimbe and Appiah draw attention to his educational background. Hountondji studied at the École normale supérieure and was strongly influenced by Althusserian Marxism. Houndontji can be read as defending both the right to practice and the desirability of furthering a modern African philosophy, quite justifiably so. However, the spectre or threat of a traditional African philosophy, the ever-returning question of this thought, is set up as something of an adversary in this project. Along with Mudimbe's just considerations of the debate, Appiah's contributions to it in *In My Father's House* are a very fair appraisal of it. Moreover, Appiah's flexible and dextrous essays serve to move the debate on. Appiah avoids falling into the polemical trap of an either/or: *either* modern philosophy of a Western universalist formation *or* traditional thought. What Appiah is aware of, more so than Wiredu or Hountondji, is that while the Western-educated African intellectual may be quite distanced from traditional thought and traditional culture, or desire to be so, traditional thought remains very much a part of contemporary Africa, in a dynamic and often pluralistic way. What cannot be simply argued away is this: 'Most Africans, now, whether converted to Islam or Christianity or not, still share the beliefs of their ancestors in an ontology of invisible beings.'[29] While Appiah shares with Wiredu and Hountondji a commitment to philosophy as a critical discourse, he argues: 'if philosophers are to contribute – at the conceptual level – to the solution of Africa's real problems then they need to begin with a deep understanding of the traditional conceptual worlds the vast majority of their fellow nationals inhabit'.[30] With this, one or two conceptual elaborations offered by Appiah in

working critically with Horton's theories will be touched on as being of relevance to this study.

Appiah writes:

> Horton's thesis is not that traditional religion is a kind of science, but that theories in these two domains are similar in these crucial respects. The major *difference* in the contents of the theories, he argues, is that traditional religious theory is couched in terms of personal forces, while the natural scientific theory couched in terms of impersonal forces.[31]

Earlier, I cited Horton producing an analogy between the waves and particles of scientists and the spirits of African beliefs. The physicist Erwin Schrödinger in 'The Spirit of Science' argues that 'spirit' is that which may be aligned with the scientist as subject but – being subjective – is not an object of study. The spirit of science, as expounded in the essay which is addressed to an audience of non-specialists, would seem to consist in discovering underlying principles, especially when these serve to bring the various sciences closer together. Here, Schrödinger speaks with excitement of Einstein's equation, given in the simplified form of E = M: 'we learnt from Einstein that energy and mass were one and the same thing'.[32] He further says that this 'puts an end once and for all to the duality of force and matter',[33] and that to think in terms of particles is at odds with metaphysics which relies on this dualism and related dualisms. We come back to motion. Incidentally, Aristotle's concept of absolute time, presuming an absolute position, is not scientifically upheld. Stephen Hawking writes:

> The big difference between the ideas of Aristotle and those of Galileo and Newton is that Aristotle believed in a preferred state of rest, which any body would take up if it were not driven by some force or impulse … But it follows from Newton's laws that there is no unique standard of rest.[34]

Returning to Schrödinger, he writes that energy: 'is, as a concept, equivalent to motion and to force generating motion'.[35] With respect to the arguments of Horton and Appiah, whilst science treats energies and forces as impersonal, from an animistic perspective these are treated in more personal terms, thus as spirits. However, it may be that a subject/object dichotomy breaks down. Put another way, with animism, the phenomenal world is understood through subjectifying rather than objectifying it, where this is not simply a matter of the subjectivity of perception but of perceiving the subjectivity of the so-called object. In this, 'man' would be considered to be less of a transcendental subject and more of a being amongst other beings. What could be proposed is that what is at stake in this is the capacity for forms of empathetic understanding, where this would entail the ability to read the world creatively as opposed just to critically, whilst a strict opposition between the creative and critical could yet be called into question. At any rate, this issue of an empathetic understanding relates to a point made by Appiah concerning a difference between African and Western cultures

of knowledge. Drawing on both Soyinka and Horton, Appiah argues that whilst Western intellectual culture is marked by its adversarial nature, its African counterpart is far more 'accommodative'.[36] In general terms this would seem to be the case, and it would help to account for the fact of the simultaneous accommodation of competing belief systems in a suspension of a criterion of exclusivity.

In *A Question of Power*, the cultivation of a vegetable garden is offered as a scene of learning which serves to illustrate the question of a difference in intellectual attitude. The bossy, adversarial attitude of a Danish development worker called Camilla is contrasted with local Setswana attitudes. Elizabeth reflects:

> She [Camilla] takes the inferiority of the black man so much for granted that she thinks nothing of telling us straight to our faces that we are stupid and don't know anything … She's never stopped a minute, paused, stood back and watched the serious, concentrated expressions of the farm students. There's a dismal life behind them of starvation and years and years of drought when there was no food, no hope, no anything. There's a magical world ahead of them with the despair and drudgery of semi-desert agriculture alleviated by knowledge. When people stumble upon magic they study it very closely, because all living people are, at heart, amateur scientists and inventors.[37]

Whilst scientific knowledge is here equated with magic, we are also given an empathetic mode of understanding and learning in the characters of the European Gunner and the African Small-Boy. Small-Boy comments: 'We have everything here, in the right proportions, for vegetables. I think they like this garden, and our watering system. Gunner always says vegetables don't like being splashed all over with water every day.'[38] With this allowance for the preferences of vegetables, treated with a non-cynical amusement in the novel, we have an instance of the subjectification – say, the positing of subjects for knowledge as opposed to objects of knowledge – spoken of earlier, where a judgement of 'irrational mysticism' would be a miscomprehension.

Although I have touched on questions of African philosophy/ethnophilosopy/-folk philosophy with respect to animism in the above, this is not to be the focus of this book. Rather, the far more preliminary question to be engaged with – and possibly more appropriate one, given my intellectual history within the English departments of primarily Western universities – concerns how Western philosophical and critical thought serves, in the first place, to prevent a reception of the thought in question. Most seriously, there are ways – be they crudely obvious, subtly muted or genuinely perplexed – in which a thinking Africa becomes that which is given as unthinkable.

Mudimbe's own contribution to the debate that he delineates in *The Invention of Africa* is a highly pertinent one for this study. He proposes that traditional African thought – or whatever substitution you may prefer – constitutes a *gnosis*, 'a kind of secret knowledge', or what could also be thought of as an eclipsed wisdom. Mudimbe asks of the enquiry into an African *gnosis*: 'Is it not inverted,

modified by anthropological and philosophical categories used by specialists of dominant discourses?'[39] This book is to pick up on a particular aspect of such inversions and displacements through exploring how it is that Western thought – particularly in its logocentric and metaphysical determinations – is that which serves to eclipse the subject of Africa, what I want to call 'Writing Africa'. When Mudimbe speaks of an *inverted* specialist discourse, what is implied is that in studying African thought it is the specialist who becomes the subject of this thought as opposed to those whose thought it is. Whilst Mudimbe, in *The Invention of Africa*, is primarily concerned with the social sciences and philosophy, it may be argued that literature has an important role to play here, for a number of reasons. For a start, the literary text has its own writing subject: quite simply it is a signed text in its own right. Only the most solipsistic or self-aggrandising of critics could deny that the text has at least some authority: the signature testifying to the words of the text as the words of the text. This would, of course, be true of non-literary texts.

Which brings me to my second point. It is that the literary text is an amateur, non-specialist discourse: that is to say, the only accredited discourse does not have to be the discourse of a specialist. While the philosopher or anthropologist needs abide by the rules and regulations that determine their discourses as specialisms, the literary text has a comparative freedom of expression. If the categories of the specialist modify and distort that which they report, literary discourse is paradoxically possibly capable of more literal translations, as well as being capable of more inspired ones, even at the same time (for the state of inspiration or possession could be thought in terms of a desire to literally translate or convey the spirit of another). Given that an African *gnosis* resists the epistemic grids of Western thought – as will have been noticed, there is the ineluctable slipperiness of whether intellectuals talk anthropologically or philosophically over what might be variously read in terms of philosophy, science, religion, magic, not to mention a physical and psychological therapeutics – the hybrid amateurisms of literature allow for mediation. It will be objected that, given the orality of African cultures, 'literature' is a colonial discourse. If so, it should be added that, while traditional African cultures are not highly literate, they may yet be said to be highly literary with their considerable repertoire of folk tales, proverbs, poetry, epics, and so on. Even if the literary forms change or are reworked, literature is, of all discourses, the one closest to an oral poetics and to a poetics of performance. Or, there is a creative performativity of which literature partakes. The African writer is often engaged in redeploying and reinventing traditions, both African and Western, whereby it is worth considering that Africa is not only ever invented for it invents itself: Mudimbe's title, 'The Invention of Africa', can also be heard to say 'Africa's invention', the invention that belongs to it. What also interests me are the exciting possibilities of new configurations of knowledge, in particular, between contemporary Western science, traditional African philosophies and a rethinking of creativity.

The term 'animism' is not only an improper one but an amateur one, where this is not a matter of frivolity. It is being used here with respect to the *gnosis*

referred to by Mudimbe as a lever to create some space between an eclipsed African wisdom and an eclipsing Western thought: the term refers to both what is eclipsed and that which eclipses without being simply identifiable with either. This work does not seek to posit a purity of cultural origin and in this it is not 'neo-nativist', although that term does not frighten me: when it does raise my suspicions is when it is used as a put-down, as an attempt to discredit the thought of an African originality and to police cultural receptions. The emphasis of this work is rather on a plurality of inheritances, while at the same time the hope is for the reinstitution of African *claims* to an originality that has been so often disavowed by Western, and sometimes Westernised, intellectuals. What this work is really trying to do, along with the efforts of others, is to help to create a space for a better reception of African texts and African discourses, both past and to come. There is much to be learnt from the accommodative receptivity of African cultures.

What is a disadvantage for anthropology in the over-arching use of the term 'animism' has some advantages in other contexts. That is, given that the material of this work is primarily literary and philosophical, the generalising and floating tendencies in the use of the term 'animism' can be both conceptually and strategically advantageous. Concepts necessarily generalise in that, as Wittgenstein points out, they are for use on more than one occasion.[40] As touched on already, the anxieties that surround a 'unanimism' may be seen to concern the construction of African people as essentially Other: as if the speculative possibility of an African ontology in *philosophical* terms were then made to imply a different ontological *existence*; even, as if a different philosophy were made to imply a different mind. However, an insistence on the historical and cultural existence of African *thought* is that which works against the racialisation of mentalities as produced, for instance, by Lévy-Bruhl's refutation of animist philosophies. The issue is rather the way in which Western thought is accorded a generalising licence, both as a term and as a body of thought – where this homogeneity could be called into question – whilst the term 'African thought' is posed as being in constant need of justification. This issue further concerns the right to assume a subject position.

Hountondji's definition of African philosophy is as follows: 'African philosophy does exist therefore, but in a new sense, as literature produced by Africans and dealing with philosophical problems'.[41] What is problematic in this assertion is that it could reintroduce the very racial essentialism that is objected to in positing an ethnophilosophy, particularly since Hountondji makes this claim: 'A work like *Bantu Philosophy* does not belong to African philosophy, since its author is not African; but Kagame's work is an integral part of African philosophical literature.'[42] The weakness of this is that Kagame's work builds on that of Tempels whereby what Kagame retains of the hypotheses of Tempels could then count as somehow 'un-African', although it could also be that Tempels' work has no legitimacy until and unless affirmed or corroborated by African philosophers, a proposition worth taking seriously. Hountondji's definition of African philosophy may be usefully read as an assertion against Africa and

Africans being but the *objects*, collectivised or rendered representative, of thought for a Western subject, a complaint which would entail the recognition of individual African *subjects*. The philosophical subject as African may be heard in a double sense: the acknowledgement of an African assumption of the subject position in order to philosophise with reference to Africa or with Africa in mind. The question of 'ethnophilosophy' would then not be 'the collective thought of others' – as so often pursued in the West – but a matter of the engagement of subjects, intellectuals and writers, with a multiplicity of intellectual inheritances and traditions. And, it seems to me, that this is a direction in the reorientation that Hountondji argues for that is taken further in the work of Appiah as well as in the work of Eze – the work of the latter two, amongst others, serving to configure a critical and dynamic continuum of thought that belies a polemical opposition of 'traditional' and 'modern'. The implication for European intellectuals is for them to engage more with the work of African philosophers, intellectuals and writers, those who both conceptualise and inscribe their intellectual and cultural inheritances. What Jahnheinz Jahn argues at the outset of *Muntu* bears repeating:

> For several centuries Africa has had to suffer under the conception of the African past formed by Europe. As long as this was so, the European conception was 'true', that is to say, effective. But the present and the future on the other hand will be determined by the conception that African intelligence forms of the past. Neo-African culture appears as an unbroken extension, as the legitimate heir of tradition.[43]

As regards African thought, it is by no means reducible to animism. For this reason, the term is being set apart so as not to conflate itself with African philosophy/philosophies or African religion(s). Whereas in the past the term has arisen as an armchair textualisation of 'primitive thought and culture', the aim is to try to turn that textualisation over to the writers of the cultures concerned where literature intersects with both colonial discourse and African philosophies. Animism could be most pertinent to a literary–philosophical crossover, where it could be argued that there is an accommodative relation between the philosophical and creative (more so than in the West), just as in modern African intellectual cultures, the writer may be an intellectual and the intellectual a writer: thinking of Senghor, Fanon, Achebe, Soyinka, for a start. While 'animism' may refer to an inscription of an affirmation or thinking of spirits within African culture, but not only African culture, it also refers to what a Western intellectual culture tries to deny, disallow, disavow, discredit. What is at stake in this is a double disavowal: an anti-naturalism that seeks to deny that all human beings are a part of nature; and a certain hyper-materialism that seeks to deny the vitality or dynamism of matter. Simply, it is an insistence on the dualities of spirit/body, mind/matter, energy/mass, man/nature, human/animal, and so on. As is so often pointed out, the Western subject tends abjectly to project onto others that which it prevents itself from confronting in and of itself.

With respect to the double disavowal just sketched, this results in the invention of an Africa seen as both savagely natural and bizarrely mystical, whilst the animism within Western culture fails to be recognised. I am working with this admittedly generalising term for the sake of conceptual interventions, while the broadness of animism is that it is a cross-cultural and trans-historical phenomenon that also traverses epistemic boundaries. Having said that, it becomes necessary to zone in a little. This will be done through a consideration of both an encyclopaedia definition of animism and a reading of Birago Diop's poem, 'Breath'. The Routledge *Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* offers the following:

> **animism**
>
> The belief in spirits which inhabit or are identified with parts of the natural world, such as rocks, trees, rivers and mountains. In the nineteenth century, writers such as Sir Edward Tylor argued that animism represented an early form of religion, one which preceded theistic religions in the evolution of 'primitive thought'. The term is sometimes used loosely to cover religious beliefs of indigenous population groups, e.g. in Africa and North America, prior to the introduction of Christianity, and is still widely used to describe the religious practice of so-called tribal or indigenous groups in areas like Southeast Asia.[44]

Animism is thus here given as a religion, even as it is more than this in Tylor's work. That said, the definition struggles, understandably, with the Western opposition of 'spirit' and 'nature': 'spirits which inhabit'. As Fritz Kramer comments:

> Our rather woolly talk about 'spirits' can easily awaken the impression that the African cults revolve around invented, hallucinated shades and entities … But in fact the basic words in African languages by which we translate 'spirit' denote first and foremost the spirit of something.[45]

With this slight shift towards, say, the vital or energising spirits of natural entities, we can see that we are not dealing with mere superstition or obscure mysticism. In traditional Western thought, the opposition of the spiritual and the material tends to promote a thinking of the latter as inert or mechanical rather than dynamic or, indeed, spirited. As the citations with which this introduction began show, and as has begun to be elaborated, there is a widespread African perception of the dynamic or vital nature of matter in which nature and spirit are not opposed (where this may be correlated with the dramatic shifts in perception introduced by quantum physics). Spirit could be seen as referring to what Eze speaks of as 'the very vitality of life' – the life of each life, as Western philosophers speak of the being of beings – and as referring to what Achebe speaks of as the uniqueness of each creation. If animism is to be considered in terms of religion, what is at stake is the sacredness and, we could say with

various inflections, 'moving power' of life. Beyond this, the emphasis is on forces and energies where animism may be related to, as broached earlier, a philosophy or science of nature. Kwasi Wiredu has maintained: 'Our indigenous religions or, at least some Akan religions known to me, seem to be quite empirically orientated.'[46] Kramer, too, addresses spirit possession in terms of a confrontation with empirical realities, as will be further debated at the end of the Chapter 1. So, an understanding of 'spirits' needs to entertain a consideration of real forces and energies. What could be at stake are ontological considerations somewhat different to those found in the West, as will be tentatively explored below, although the very term 'ontology' becomes problematic due to what it supposes as a Western term.

In the West being is thought of in opposition to non-being, and being/non-being are thought in terms of presence/absence. This would seem not to be particularly the case with African philosophies. As Tempels suggests of Bantu philosophy, it is as if 'beings were forces'. The terminology is possibly problematic here for, very tentatively, it could perhaps be more appropriate to speak of energies, in speaking of being, where the term 'forces' may be more apt for the social interplay of beings. Since I am not sure, I will keep open the question of what it is that the term 'forces' serves to translate. Mudimbe extrapolating from the work of philosophers that refine Tempels' hypothesis, such as Kagame and Mulago, states:

> *Ntu* is the fundamental and referential basic being-force which dynamically manifests itself in all existing beings, differentiating them but also linking them in an ontological hierarchy … Its presence in beings brings them to life and attests both to their individual value and to the measure of their integration in the dialectic of vital energy.[47]

Being is thus variously considered in terms of energy, force, vitality where such terms are not necessarily opposed to non-being and absence. There is rather, as given by Achebe, an interplay of forces (spoken of also as energies), which allows for the interplay of moving from invisibility to visibility. With this, absence need not signify non-being so much as invisibility or inaccessibility as well as the actuality of potentiality.

Spirits move. As explored by Fritz Kramer, in some African cultures only that which is capable of independent motion is considered endowed with spirit, whilst in others all of nature is endowed with animation. Without going into the differences between various philosophies of spirit, spirit is considered in terms of movement where this is further a question of being moved. Spirits move us in that they animate and affect us and can captivate and possess us. I say 'us' in order to indicate the cross-cultural dimension of this.

While in the West we – well, the philosophers – may think of being in relation to non-being, it has seemed to me that, as regards a literature of animism, being is perhaps rather thought of in relation to other being. That is, if we are dealing with the interplay of forces and the moving powers of being, then being is not

defined so much by its presence (and absence) but by its participation in a world of energies and forces. Earlier, I raised the distinction between the simple present and the present continuous. Western metaphysics relies on the simple present which, as a positing of presence, offers a timeless essence. Thinking in terms of a present continuous, the essence of being would be its creative capacities. In contradistinction to an 'I am' or a 'what is …?', what might be more apt could be a positing along the lines of an enactment of being: 'I am being …'; 'what is it being?' The case of spirit possession serves to bring out the significance of what is being struggled with here. Spirit possession can be understood as the mimetic enactment of a spirit, its being as an embodied enactment: a living out of this spirit or that spirit. It is, in effect, a creative performance but not so much as a mere mimicking of something as a captivation by it. Having come to propose this mainly on the basis of readings of literary texts, Mudimbe's summary of Kagame's linguistic analysis is interestingly pertinent: 'Kagame insists that the Bantu equivalent of *to be* is strictly and only a copula. It does not express the notion of existence and therefore cannot translate the Cartesian *cogito*. It is by enunciating *muntu*, *kintu*, etc., that I am signifying an essence or something in which the notion of existence is not necessarily present.'[48]'I am signifying'; not 'I am *x*', but 'I am signifying, inscribing, enacting *x*'.

Whilst animism refers to the spirits of nature or animate spirit, in a broad usage it can refer also to the spirits of the dead, but who thereby are not just dead. In order to explore this, we will turn now to a poem by the Senegambian writer, Birago Diop, entitled 'Souffle', or 'Breath', a poem multiply anthologised as something of an animist anthem. Here is a fragment from the poem that serves as its refrain:

> Listen more to things
> Than to words that are said.
> The water's voice sings
> And the flame cries
> And the wind that brings
> The woods to sighs
> Is the breathing of the dead.
> Who have not gone away
> Who are not under the ground
> Who are never dead.[49]

The poem's title is translated as 'Breath' and, as both Horton and Kramer have pointed out, the word for 'spirit' in many African languages is 'breath'. What may be seen in the above refrain is that nature has its own language: 'Listen more to things', 'water's voice sings'. What is striking about the poem is that it gives us the natural world as the writing or composition of a poem. Just as the poem is inspired by the spirits in the natural world, this world is itself the expression of inspirations in its 'breathings'. The world is thus like a living text that creates itself in a writing-voicing of being. The poem speaks of how it is that

while the dead have their breaths taken from them, they are not dead in that breath continues. Diop writes:

> [O]ur fate is bound to the law, /And the fate of the dead who are not dead / To the spirits of breath who are stronger than they/ We are bound to Life by this harsh law/ And by this Covenant we are bound / To the deeds of the breathing that die/ Along the bed and banks of the river,/… that quiver/… that cry.

The harsh law of life concerns, most certainly, a certain recognition of mortality, while this is put: 'spirits of breath who are stronger than they'. This suggests that death is a matter of succumbing to stronger *living forces* – rather than succumbing to non-being – and that the dead, whilst losing their own breath, live on as part of the on-going stronger forces of life to which they have capitulated. The sacred law of life, the Covenant, could be read in terms of an acceptance of individual mortality as necessary to the continuance of life. Inasmuch as Life continues, the spirits of the dead continue. It makes sense: it is not the dead who are in *death* immortal but *life* that is, the life in which the dead have participated and so live on in its living on. Reed and Wake summarise the poem in this way: 'The life of man is bound to the life of nature because nature is full of the spirits of the human dead … and these are bound to the spirit of nature itself.'[50] Jahn, drawing on Kagame writes: 'Strictly speaking … it is false to say that the dead "live". They do not "live", but exist as spiritual forces … Only when he [the ancestor] has no further descendants is he "entirely dead".'[51]

Diop's poem can be juxtaposed with the Tonga concept of spirit, *muuya*, as Kramer summarises:

> It is unembodied but rather a motion one perceives in something. For this reason the Tonga compare it with the wind; they call the spirits 'wind' 'because we do not see them. We know what they are by what they do, just as we do not see the wind but know that it is present by what it does'.[52]

More specifically, *muuya* refers to what creates species being and while it can give rise to specimens of itself, it can also flow out of a specimen and take possession of another being, in which that other being's spirit may be ousted. Thus, spirit could be conceived of as animating creative force, whilst possession and death could be considered in terms of being overcome by stronger forces. This displaces the Western metaphysical preoccupation with being in relation to non-being, with emphases on other being and on-going being, a proposition to be explored at various points in this work. Moreover, it is not that death is denied; rather it seems that it is the acceptance of the harsh law of mortality that leads to the affirmation of life.

Diop's poem, 'Breath', whilst anthologised as an independent work, is actually extracted from Diop's short story entitled 'Sarzent the Madman'.[53] In this story a man, who has served as a sergeant in the French army during the Second

World War, returns to his village with the intention of modernising the village according to strictly rational values. However, the intention backfires as Sarzent, as he is called, comes to be possessed by the spirits of the ancestors. His madness is a case of the return of the spiritual and cultural values that he has tried to repress in himself: or, he is possessed by the spirits of the ancestors. It is the ancestors who speak the poem 'Souffle' through Sarzent. Thus, the poem is an assertion not just of the living on of the dead but of the living on of an African philosophy of life with an animistic perception and values. Inasmuch as this concerns that which goes on being and so is that which goes on being, it will always have the power to oust that which tries to deny it. Animism, the undeniability of living spirits and the living on of spirits, can but keep not so much 'returning' as continuing, however much denied.

Creativity and politics

The more that I have worked towards arriving at something of a general understanding of animism, the more it has seemed to me to that it could, in certain respects, be considered as a philosophy or thinking of creativity in a very wide sense. That is, it is creativity as the composition or writing of being in a living world that must necessarily continue to be written or inscribed. If I speak of writing, it is clearly not in the narrow sense of the written word but in the sense of a weaving of a tissue or text that may be read. As given above, the Tongo may be seen to speak of a creative motion that becomes visible and thus readable in what is created. An alignment of animism with creativity ought not to be, in fact cannot be, reduced to an aestheticism. Rather, it is a question of how creativity and living realities are not opposable, where a creative drive is bound up with survival instincts and the desire to transmit and perpetuate life. In that art is a creative process it constitutes an apt medium – though certainly not the only one – for considerations of animism. Since my own subject is the study of literature, this is at any rate bound to my interest, my bias, and enabling familiarity. Whilst this work is to engage with other subjects – philosophy, psychoanalysis, anthropology – its main sources are literary ones, as that which it is more 'at home' with due to inclinations, affiliations and educational training. Amongst the selection of literary texts to be drawn on are those that offer an explicit engagement with spirits, where the perspectives range from a deployment and redeployment of traditional cultural beliefs to less obvious articulations or reinventions of animism. Not only African texts are considered in order to indicate that what is at stake is a cross-cultural phenomenon. Even so, the range of texts brought into the discussion is, unfortunately, very strictly limited and it would have been possible to bring in a great many other texts: spot all the omissions. In this, the entire book is just something of an introduction. It is not a survey.

The proposition of a 'creative Africa' is controversial. It is even a bit of a stereotype strategically pitted against the counter-stereotype of an Africa that is accorded no originality, but where certain stereotypes are not necessarily without truth: a rational West, a creative Africa, if this does not preclude the creativity of

the former nor the rationality of the latter. In the late eighties, an exhibition was held in Paris entitled 'Magiciens de la terre', magicians of the earth, or of the world ('terre' could be translated in both senses), where the work of artists from all around the world was exhibited with respect to showing the creative animism, earthy magic of this work. *Third Text* devoted an issue to translating articles from *Les Cahiers du Musée Moderne*, produced at the occasion of the exhibit, in order to examine the suppositions underlying it. In brief, the various objections raised may be summarised in terms of a lop-sided over-evaluation of creativity, especially in its spiritual aspects, at the expense of political and material considerations. Jean Fisher writes:

> If we have imposed a terminology of fear and superstition on the artefacts and ceremonials of others it is because our own language is inadequate to describe what is outside a narrowly interpreted Judeo-Christian tradition that has lost touch with the real, with nature as the embodiment of life-force … Can we seriously, and without cynicism, still believe 'of the earth' to be a matter of aesthetics or 'spirituality' without acknowledging that for others, suffering the consequences of Western barbarism, it is fundamentally a *political* issue?[54]

James Clifford, in his contribution to the debate surrounding the issue, makes the point that what Western culture conceives of as primitive traditions and relegates to the past (and, we could add, continues to fetishise and colonise as its own lost origin or originality), is a matter of what keeps renewing itself as 'newly traditional'. Drawing on Trinh T. Minha, Clifford writes:

> New definitions of authenticity (cultural, personal, artistic) are making themselves felt … authenticity is reconceived as a hybrid, creative activity in a local present-becoming-future. Non-Western cultural and artistic works are implicated by an interconnected world cultural system without necessarily being swamped by it.[55]

Clifford ends his article with citations from practising Native American artists, including one that resonates with Diop's poem and story: 'Whites think of our experience as the past. We know it is right here with us.'

Fanon rejects Alioune Diop's celebratory introduction to a French translation of Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy* on grounds somewhat similar to Fisher's objection to a celebration of the spirituality of others that fails to register the political claims and material predicaments of these others. Basically, Fanon sees that the endorsement of a life-affirming African philosophy against the 'metaphysical misery of Europe' is not of much use to a political struggle against colonialism. He writes:

> Be careful! It is not a matter of finding Being in Bantu thought, when Bantu existence subsists on the level of nonbeing, of the imponderable …

> Bantu society, being a closed society, does not contain that substitution of the exploiter for the ontological relations of Forces. Now we know that Bantu society no longer exists.[56]

Fanon's objection is threefold. First, he refers to how Bantu people are forced to exist in the position of that which is not accorded an equal ontological status in European terms. He speaks of the 'imponderable' here, whilst I will come to address an Africa given as unthinkable. Second, Fanon makes the point that a culturally specific Bantu philosophy is not capable of extending itself to an analysis of colonial exploitation. While there could be arguments for and against this, Fanon goes on to proclaim Bantu society as surpassed, and this is a sweepingly rhetorical and wilful gesture in that it shows ignorance of African history and appears to be based on Fanon's own personal sense of alienation in having lost an African inheritance and having acquired an identification with French culture. This also goes against his injunction that Negro children need be educated not only about European pasts but their own.

There are many kinds of political considerations that attend or are bound up with a thinking of animism, spirits, creativity, as hopefully the following chapters will show. In this book, which is to intercut African literature with Western philosophy and the other way round, these are to revolve around some of the following cues: the not-part of the family; the more than one inheritance; the disavowals and avowals of creative and generative sources; the formulations of 'progressive' and 'regressive' hybridities; the eclipse of the other as subject; a politics of the other; the sister–brother ideal; the foreclosures of Africa in Western discourse; the misrepresentations of Africa; privileged economies of fetishism; spectres of Marxism and capitalism; spirits of communism and African socialism.

What is at stake in these various lines of enquiry is countering the repeated supposition that animism is either surpassed or that which must be surpassed for the sake of scientific progress. Apart from the fact that animism re-creates itself in different forms – something that could inform a distinction between a political post-colonial writing and a phantasmatic postmodernism – what is ironic is that if anything has been somewhat overtaken it is traditional Western thought, the thought of the second enlightenment that yet extends back to Plato and Aristotle. That is, in the light of contemporary physics and biology, the thought of the second enlightenment emerges more as a secularisation of religion than as an endorsement of science. A number of scientists who have worked in the area of quantum physics have affirmed that non-Western philosophies of spirit and spirits accord more closely with their discoveries than does traditional Western thought, where more attention has been paid to Eastern philosophies than African ones. The third enlightenment is under way? I think so. Nonetheless, the thought and ethos of the second enlightenment has not been surpassed socially or historically for it is massively entrenched, not least in the logic and workings of global capitalism. And it may be that that enlightenment is not to be surpassed, only that its strictly limited universality is to be accommodated within a true or

truer universality. While the book is to zone in on a 'Writing Africa', there are far-reaching political and philosophical implications involved in this.

'Writing Africa' concerns the writing of Africa in more than one sense. It concerns the ways in which Western intellectuals and writers have invented Africa, as will be addressed at length in the second chapter, and it concerns Africa's own inventions, its writings and philosophies. It may seem ironic to speak of a writing Africa when historically African cultures have been predominantly oral. However, the speculation is that if there has been an emphasis on living inscriptions and transmissions in African cultures, then writing would be everywhere and not confined to written texts, although it would be more complicated than this and there would be other considerations to entertain. In particular, there is the consideration of how oral cultures are cultures of citation, where citing is writing, as will be elaborated upon at various points in this work. 'Writing Africa' concerns, furthermore, the fact that this book can but inescapably participate in a writing of Africa, but where this also concerns, as an attempt amongst others, the writing in of an overlooked Africa.

Freedom and spirit

Has not post-colonial discourse been a discourse of liberation? Has not colonial discourse, too, been a discourse of liberation?

This struck me in reading Said citing Balfour in *Orientalism*, from a speech made by Balfour justifying the colonisation of Egypt, as follows (although this is but an excerpt from a longer excerpt):

> All their great centuries – and they have been very great – have been passed under despotisms, under absolute government … but never in all the revolutions of fate and fortune have you seen one of those nations of its own motion establish what we, from a Western point of view call self-government … Is it a good thing for these great nations – I admit their greatness – that this absolute government should be exercised by us? I think it is a good thing.[57]

It seems strange that Balfour can say this so unselfconsciously: colonisation brings freedom! If he can say that without hearing how contradictory it sounds then it could be that he simply believes what he says: that it will be evident to all concerned that English rule will not itself be a despotism in turn but liberalising and liberating. Said, drawing on other aspects of Balfour's speech, considers that Balfour's calculated defence is that England is justified in governing Egypt in that it knows more about Egypt than Egypt knows about itself. While I would not dispute this reading, Said perhaps gives to Balfour a crafty scheming intelligence that Balfour might lack on a conscious level. That is, Balfour is set up as something of a mastermind, a bit of an evil genius, in seeming to lay claim to a superior knowledge through which power may be seized. It may be that the intelligence of the reading of Balfour's speech is that of Said, while Balfour's

explicit words make him sound more naive. Balfour could be seen as offering, without any ironic self-consciousness, the platitude of the West's civilising mission as an enlightening, democratising, liberalising one. Colonial discourse, at least since the Enlightenment, has been a discourse of liberation.

What is interesting about Balfour's understanding of freedom is that it concerns *submission* to a law where the thought of this presumably would differ from 'Egyptian despotism' in being a willing submission to a law and ideal in the name of England. It becomes a sort of servile narcissism, one possibly taught at public schools: you must want to submit to the idea and ideal of England. At any rate, the message of colonialism is a law of freedom: if Oriental, you must be free from your rulers; if African, you must be free from nature. Spivak notices in her reading of Kant in *A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason*, that Kant emphatically speaks of freedom as a necessity to be enforced. Spivak writes: 'The freedom of desire is the condition of possibility of the concept freedom. Yet there are many passages [in the philosophy of Kant] where the functioning of this freedom is described as a compulsion.'[58] Freedom thus conceived comes across as a necessity, which could be formulated, colonially speaking, as the necessary submission to the capital ideal of Western man.

Thinking of how Said draws on Foucault in *Orientalism*, in terms of the discursive construction of the Oriental, I thought of how Foucault speaks of the discursive construction of the homosexual in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, where this identity is then assumed to lay claim to liberation. Colonialism, of course, institutes with itself and its promise of liberation a demand for liberation on the part of the colonised. However, there is more than one understanding of freedom here. As opposed to the idea of freedom as submission to the law of Western man, there is the idea of a freedom of spirit. Nawal El Saadawi cites former Black Panther activist and journalist Mumia Abu Jamal from an interview given by him while on death row, as follows:

> The spirit of freedom, of human liberation, cannot be held within one vessel. It is like holding air in a glass: The rest of the area around the glass is not a vacuum, it doesn't stop there. It's the same for the spirit of revolution. I am just one vessel. There are many other vessels. Let's keep pouring and pouring on until it becomes the air that we breathe.[59]

El Saadawi, in another essay, cites Ngugi speaking of his imprisonment: 'Fear not those who kill the flesh, but fear those who kill the spirit. They cannot kill my spirit even if they kill me as they have killed others. They will not kill the determination of this country to remain free.'[60]

In Chapter 1, there will be further reflection on this emancipatory spirit.

Where Said does not follow Foucault is in his retaining of the concept of a capital subject, a colonising one. What needs be sketchily proposed here for the sake of the chapters to come, is that the colonising subject is one that lays retrospective claim to being the origin. Aijaz Ahmad writes:

> commercial developers and adventurers like Rhodes in Southern Africa, Frederick Luggard in Nigeria, and Hugh Cholmondeley Delamare in Kenya, played important roles in later colonization on the African continent. Although the British government initially kept a safe distance from these adventurers … it later adopted many of their early dreams … Eventually, the government took the natural step of establishing administrative, colonial control over those areas in which British trading companies were involved.[61]

What may begin as a gamble or adventure or pushy scramble leads to the colonising power legitimating itself as the origin retrospectively, at which point the originality of the colonised other(s) is disavowed. However, this has a particular pertinence as regards Africa. The discursive production of the Orient at least accords the Orient a culture of its own, whereas the invention of Africa tends to deny that Africa has a history and culture of its own altogether. This is what is explored in Chapter 2 of this book.

It is sometimes claimed that Said, along with Bhabha and Spivak, constitute the founders of the theoretical critique of colonialism.[62] While honour is due to all three, this constitutes something of a colonial fiction in itself. Stepping back just a little there would at least be Fanon with his philosophical, psychoanalytic and political critiques of colonialism. Then, too, there would be many other intellectuals and poet-philosophers to mention here, such as: Césaire; Senghor; Nkrumah; Nyerere; Cheikh Anta Diop. When Said, Bhabha and Spivak are singled out as a founding trio, where this is not *their* fault (Bhabha indebting himself to Fanon; Said resisting his identification with what has been termed 'post-structuralism'; Spivak critical of the neo-colonialisms of a thinking of the post-colonial), the positing of this founding moment reminds me of Hegel turning his back on a dark Africa stripped of its history to announce grandly that the sun rises in the Orient. History repeats itself. While there has been a long-standing African critique of colonialism from the early decades of the century, with the beginnings of the negritude movement in the thirties, this tends to be overlooked. What is implied in such a popular framing of an instituting moment is that a properly theoretical, philosophically grounded, study of colonialism, neo-colonialism and post-colonialism can only get going once intellectuals from the East apply themselves to Western intellectuals (Foucault, Lacan and Derrida), where this is then to provide models for or be extended to an African critique of colonialism. The possible vaguely Hegelian assumption is that Africa can only be brought into a history that it does not have. There are two problems to be introduced here. The one is that paradigms of analysis derived from the critique of Orientalism do not fit the African case that well except in an extremely general way, as argued in Chapter 2. This is but an example of a broader predicament in terms of the question of the transferability of concepts. The second issue is that if French intellectual discourse is strongly influenced by the prevalence of a Hegelian discourse in France this could possibly prove something of a difficulty

as regards a forgotten Africa, or rather, unacknowledged Africa, whilst this is merely a perplexity to be aired and not a claim to be insisted upon.

This book, whilst divided into chapters with their sub-divisions, is the gradual unfolding of an argument. The first chapter traces how the figure of Antigone and what she symbolises – in brief, amongst other things, an ethics or politics of the sister in relation to the outlaw brother – is read within Western philosophy. Whilst Antigone is read by Hegel, Derrida and Lacan in terms of an assigned impossibility, which I posit in terms of a foreclosure, I show how she has a political significance for those involved in anti-colonial and anti-neo-colonial struggles with reference to writing by Mahasweta Devi, Assia Djebar and others. In attempting to maintain something of a creative perspective alongside the philosophical one, there is always likely to be the turbulence of their convergence. So, like a pilot, I apologise if it is something of a bumpy ride at first. While the first part of the chapter is written mostly on the side of the literary, the rest of the chapter develops concerns raised by readings of Antigone and *Antigone* in a more critical manner, particularly with reference to a politics and theories of hybridity and fetishism. Here, aspects of the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Derrida, Spivak and Butler are addressed with recourse to readings of Rushdie, Mahaswata Devi, Okri, Tutuola and Larsen. The chapter also reconsiders the so-called death drive (with which Antigone figures are identified) in terms of concepts of spirit possession and with particular reference to the work of Ferenczi. In the second chapter I consider Hegel's reading of Africa with respect to his philosophy of world history. I show here how Africa is foreclosed from history in Hegel's thought, constituting the not-part of history as, in certain ways to be argued for, Antigone constitutes the not-part of the family. Hegel's discussion of an animistic or fetishistic Africa is analysed in order to diagnose a European Africanist discourse to be distinguished from Said's diagnosis of Orientalism, and as may be seen in colonial fictions of Africa. The chapter goes on to offer readings of South African literary texts in order to explore a poetics of eclipsement, so to speak, and an art of the undeniable. What subtends this exploration, and goes beyond the scope of the book, are questions of an aesthetics of capitalism in relation to a creativity of communism.

It could be justifiably objected that, given the concerns of this project, too much attention is devoted to Western intellectual traditions. However, I – and the readers of this work – can hardly claim to work outside these traditions where the task is not only one of tracking what they serve to distort or evade but one of trying to reconceptualise, if possible, the limits of this thought in the hope of opening it up to other thought. Then, Western thought is not just Western thought, in more ways than one, as hopefully this book will show. For a start, Western thought is hardly just *Western*, both as a conceptual activity and in its indebtedness to other cultures, and it is hardly purely *thought*, but itself entangled with cultural and religious beliefs and reliant on creativity and fabrication. This work hopes to challenge somewhat the hierarchical privileging of conceptual labour over creative elaborations and collaborations.[63] What also interests me is the dislocation of preconceived textual alignments according to the imperial

imperatives of block formations, what for Wilson Harris is a matter of the unpredictable coincidences and reconfigurations of a cross-cultural imagination. Harris, who fleetingly and tantalisingly refers to a possible poetics of quantum physics, thinks of the imagination in spiritually dynamic terms and writes:

There are hidden numinous proportions within the mechanisms of colonialism and post-colonialism. Such numinous proportions throw a different, inner light on the mould of accident to which some sociologists and historians may cling. They give to the imagination a memory that seems to belong to the future, as though the genesis of the imagination is ceaselessly unfinished and in it incalculable rhythms and incantations have their roots in antiphony and response from buried voices of lost antecedents (never entirely lost because they belong to the memory of the future).[64]

1 Clandestine Antigones and the pre-post-colonial

> It was Antigone who symbolised our struggle.
>
> Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*

First, the bare bones of Antigone's case may be given as follows: Antigone defends the cause of her outlaw brother, Polynices. He has been slain in a battle that he initiated against his brother, Antigone's other brother, Eteocles, whom he has killed. Creon, the King, decrees that the outlaw brother not be given a proper burial. Antigone, believing in a justice beyond the law of the state, contravenes Creon's edict and is sentenced to death. Or, this is what Mandela states:

> [Creon] has decreed that the body of Polynices, Antigone's brother, who had rebelled against the city, does not deserve a proper burial. Antigone rebels, on the ground that there is a higher law than that of the state. Creon will not listen to Antigone, neither does he listen to anyone but his own inner demons. His inflexibility and blindness ill become a leader, for a leader must temper justice with mercy. It was Antigone who symbolised our struggle; she was, in her own way, a freedom fighter, for she defied the law on the grounds that it was unjust.[1]

Second, here are some propositions to get this going:
Antigone is a bearer of a message. She bears this message on behalf of the spirit of another being who is not able to make its (his or her) case for itself, in itself.

Antigone is, in a sense, writing.

She is not writing at the disposal of the sovereign subject.

She, as writing, tries to put herself at the service of the voice, petition, case of an overlooked other.

If writing, for philosophy, is put at the service of the would-be transcendental sovereign subject, Antigone, as writing, functions rather as literature does.

As far as a philosophy intent on maintaining the privilege of a singularity of authority is concerned, the reception of an Antigone is that which needs to be refused.

This is a refusal of the writing being and the being written.

In 'Plato's Pharmacy', Derrida, elaborating on a reading of Plato, puts forward a conception of writing in terms of the son.[2] For Plato, as opposed to the good son or 'thread', 'fils', the father's true son and heir, there is writing as a bastard son, the father's wayward, illegitimate issue. The good son could be considered as the faithful inscription and transmission of the paternal logos, while the bad son would constitute the contamination or corruption of the logos, where the written word would be seen as straying from the control of authorial intention, possibly in accordance with a love of the maternal. For Derrida, in working with philosophical givens, there is the supposed father as author or sender of the word and then there is what is delivered, so to speak, the issue, the written word, the son. What could be missing from this particular account is the moment of writing: writing itself, the being written and the writing being. For the moment, let us consider this in relation to the mother. While Derrida speaks of two types of son, we could say that there are then correspondingly two types of woman. There would be, first, the faithful wife, say, a writing medium that self-effacingly puts itself entirely and exclusively at the disposal of the paternal intention. Then there would be the adulterous or, even, lesbian woman, who deceives the father and conceives illegitimately so that the father cannot be sure if the child, the written word, is really his or the result of intentions other than his own. As Walter Benjamin explores, and as taken up by Christine Buci-Glucksmann, Baudelaire considered literature in terms of both the 'prostitute' (say, open to a host of invitations) and the 'lesbian' (say, intending only itself, a writing concerned with reflecting only itself as writing).[3] Apart from the sender (father)/sent (son), there would be the question of the bearer or deliverer. Here, writing could be thought of as: angel, messenger, guardian, guardian angel, sister, witness-bearer. This is better than speaking of it as a 'mother' since that could confuse us with a thinking of maternal intention, in which case the 'mother' would be a woman who behaves just like the paternal author. *Antigone* enables us to see what is at stake. For we can see that there are two brothers, the one who has paternal recognition and is the intended heir, Eteocles, and the one who is said to be the illegitimate pretender, Polynices. And then we can see that there is yet also Antigone, as a kind of guardian, who conveys a case on behalf of a brother. Moreover, she does more than convey his case for she also conveys her relation to it.

As regards the above, it could be easily objected that the written word as *sent* (as son or issue) is all that you *can* see. What could be said regarding this is that it depends on how you read or receive the text. We can see a text as 'already composed' or we can see it as a process of composition. As regards the latter, it makes itself in front of your eyes. Put another way, since this may sound weird, the text we receive is the text as it was written and as such it does not ever leave its time of composition. Although it may seem to us that we receive the text as

completed, we also receive it as being written. If, for instance, you read a letter written twenty years ago, you do not simply return to the past or find it returning, you bear witness to the moment of the letter's being composed so that the present moment of the past, in which the text comes to form itself, remains present, not statically so but continuously so in an act of making. The time of composition is, in a sense, never absent for it is there in the writing. In Derrida's *Of Grammotology*, there is a section with the title 'The Written Being/The Being Written', which in the French is 'L'être écrit', where 'being' as transcendental signified, logos, is considered along with 'being' as a word, a signifier.[4] As regards Derrida's title, what could be signified is that 'being' is a both a written word and the word that inscribes (and there is also something of a pun in 'L'être' as 'lettre', letter, which though would produce 'L'être écrite'). This is not quite yet a being in the process of writing – en train d'écrire – a being written in that sense. In French there is not a present continuous tense.

Famously, Derrida has considered that philosophy thinks of the distinction between speech and writing in terms of presence and absence. He deconstructs this opposition through maintaining a spectrality that cannot be reduced to either presence or absence. Yet could we not say that writing *is* as movement? I think that the positing of spectrality serves to deconstruct the opposition between presence and absence on the side of writing or the written, writing as a ghostly form of being. However, the opposition could also possibly be contested on the side of speech through a consideration of the present continuous. Put another way, whatever tense the written appears in, the tense of writing is that of the present continuous.

One of the reasons for addressing these different considerations of writing is that the battle between Creon and Antigone could, in some respects, be understood in terms of the ancient rift in understanding between the rational and the poetic.

Antigone is an extreme text, a text of extremes. The most difficult thing that I have found in trying to work on *Antigone*, likely to be a problem for other readers of the text, is that while she serves to call the stubborn self-certainty of a Creon into question, she herself is intensely certain of her cause. When I first worked on the text there was an automatic spell-checker activated on my computer that I could not find a way of switching off. Whenever I typed 'Antigones' (the plural), this would immediately be turned into 'Antagonise'. Antigones Antagonise, that is what they tend to do. Related to the double resoluteness of Creon and Antigone is the dilemma of the play's lack of allowance for negotiation. Negotiation is to be worked towards, if possible.

It might seem strange to bring Antigone into a relation with African writing, or more broadly colonial and post-colonial discourses. However, as Mandela's statement shows, Antigone does have a relevance for anti-colonial struggles. It was when I was working on two Zimbabwean novels, Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, that the figure of Antigone first came to seem particularly strangely relevant.[5] *Bones* is a novel that deals with the Zimbabwean war of liberation, and concerns, among other things, spirit

possession, justice for the outcast and the mourning of the unmourned. *Bones* could be placed alongside *Mothers of the Revolution*, a collection of interviews with women from the rural areas who speak of their experience of the war. In particular, there are accounts given of women who became possessed by the spirits of male relatives slain in the war, spirits whose demand was for a proper burial. Sosana Marange states: 'It was through this girl that my dead son's spirit appeared … she began to talk as if she was her brother: he told us that he had died in the bush at Rosito, and what he wanted to do.'[6] And, Dainah Girori states: 'When she arrived she cried a great deal and started to explain the circumstances of my son's death. It was my son who was speaking through her. He told us that he had died in the war at Cabora Basa.'[7] Both *Bones* and *Mothers of the Revolution* ask for remembrance of those forgotten in the aftermath of war and in the inheritance of the modern nation state. In striking contradistinction to this Antigone-like scenario, Dangarembga's novel opens with the line: 'I was not sorry when my brother died'. The novel, set historically in the period of the war of liberation, concerns a young girl's entry into a Europeanised, Oedipalised family unit. She is not sorry when her brother dies because his death gives her the competitive advantage to get ahead and acquire the privileges of the white middle-class lifestyle that she aspires to. In short, the novel could be read as quite a direct counter-point to *Antigone*: 'I was not sorry when my brother died.' If Hove's text is about empathetic identifications with the misfortunes of others, Dangarembga's text shows that the imperatives of entering a Europeanised capitalist society involve a maximising of self-interest and self-control. There is, however, another daughter or sister figure in the novel who rebels against the bourgeois white-like family, and who is regarded as an 'impossible woman' in her refusal to respect her father's dictates. The two young women in the novel function as each other's double: say, one anti-Antigone, one pro-Antigone. The colonial education involves such a splitting.

The first half of this chapter will concern itself with the figure of Antigone as the not-part of the family, with references to philosophical readings of the play. In this part of the chapter, the attempt is to allow for the hearing of the case of an Antigone, going with the text and following the lines of force in the texts in question. The second half of the chapter attempts to offer a more distanced and critical reflection on issues raised by readings of a cross-cultural *Antigone* or of texts that have their own *Antigone*-like configurations. *Antigone* constitutes only a starting point here, out of which bridging points can be made towards a reading of African writing. In the first part of the chapter, there will be an engagement with Lacan's reading of *Antigone* and Derrida's consideration of Hegel's reading of the play. What this has in part been prompted by is an impression of certain comparative muteness or mutedness within French intellectual culture as regards colonial legacies whereby, given that *Antigone* may be redeployed as having an anti-colonial significance, the text serves as a possibly somewhat clandestine crossroads. What of the African Presence, *Présence Africaine*, in Paris: the legacies of Césaire and Senghor in their initiation of the negritude movement in Paris, the lively debates of the journal *Présence Africaine*, and the critiques advanced by

Fanon? Fanon himself makes visible the invisibility of the black man in *Black Skins, White Masks*, as one of its most persistent preoccupations, where he refers explicitly to the evasions of the French cultural milieu in which he writes. This invisibility is particularly addressed in the chapter, 'The Fact of Blackness', in which Fanon considers not only the problems of negritude as a reverse discourse, a discourse dependent on that which it opposes, but also how a French Marxist discourse, typified by Sartre, serves to posit an African resistance to colonialism as but a phase in a universal class struggle in which 'the negro' comes to disappear. Fanon cites Sartre, from *Orphée Noir* (although I cut):

> And undoubtedly it is no coincidence that the most ardent poets of negritude are at the same time militant Marxists … In fact: negritude appears as the minor term of a dialectical progression … the position of negritude as an antithetical value is the moment of negativity … This negritude is the root of its own destruction, it is a transition and not a conclusion, a means and not an ultimate end.[8]

Fanon goes on to dismiss Sartre as 'that born Hegelian' and to state: 'Still in terms of consciousness, black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes. I am not a potentiality of something … My Negro consciousness does not hold itself out as lack. It *is*.'[9]

What is possibly at stake in this is both a French Republican understanding of citizenship and a Hegelian concept of the dialectics of the modern liberal state and of history. As regards the former, it is something of a commonplace that French colonial policy posits the colonised as citizens of France, where the realities of inequality conflict with the promise of equality and where the universalising of a dominant culture officially promotes a certain complex invisibility of the different experiences of a shared history. Tzvetan Todorov, himself of Bulgarian origin, is one who attempts to address the issue. For instance, in 'The Co-Existence of Cultures' he writes:

> What does *republican* signify in this context? The fact that all individuals, regardless of their cultural allegiances are considered to be citizens with equal rights … The advantage of this solution lies in the fact that all members of society are participants in a culture which brings them closer and unites them; all have access to the same identity … But the disadvantage is clear for the majority is bound to be favoured over the minority.[10]

In other words, there may be access to the same identity but there is not the same or equal access to this equality of identity, and it is this which tends to be obscured.

When Fanon speaks of the *fact* of blackness, he could be seen as, among other things, confronting the distrust or avoidance of empiricism within the European intellectual traditions that he encounters. In the next chapter, we will look at how Hegel turns his back on the facts of Africa. All that will be said at this stage is

that Sartre's envisioning of the disappearance of the negro seems to owe itself, as part of a Marxist inheritance, to Hegel's concept of history in which Africans become part of history on condition that they cease to be Africans. What, far more broadly, also gives pause for thought is the considerable influence of Hegel's thought on twentieth-century French intellectual culture, which cannot be traced here. For the purposes of this chapter, Lacan's re-presentation of Freud may be said to have its Hegelian inflections, whilst Derrida speaks of the 'colonialisms and neo-colonialisms' of Hegel's thought, and this is very aptly put.

Beyond Fanon, there is also the sense of how the experience of 'loosing Algeria' constitutes a traumatic experience for the French, thus something hard to speak of, to say nothing of the traumas experienced by Algeria.

I

Clandestine Antigones

> And now where was she? How did she get here?
>
> Ama Ata Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy: Reflections of a Black-Eyed Squint*

This section will concern itself with both colonial genealogies and occult or illegitimate inheritances in the production of knowledge, especially knowledge not usually identified in terms of colonial or post-colonial discourse.

Western knowledge is not usually referred to as colonial knowledge, which could be a question of experience. In *La jeune née*, Hélène Cixous writes: 'I learnt everything from that first spectacle.'[11] There would be that learning or knowledge, and there would also be the question of imported textbooks, intellectual transferences and migration to the centres of learning in the Western world in order, it would seem, to have greater proximity to the masters, experts, sources. Once there, on the spot, so to speak, education and knowledge might not appear so visibly and divisibly labelled under 'import' or 'export'. On its 'home ground', intellectual and academic knowledge is not often thought of as colonial knowledge: it is more common to qualify it as '*Western* thought'. Speaking with reference to this thought we say 'we say' rather than 'they say', and this 'we say' is taken to refer more to 'intellectual affiliations' than to particular historical and geographical locations. In this 'we say', it is possible to function as one who passes (exams, and so on) and passes for being a Western intellectual of the first world. Out of this form of immigrancy, deconstructive possibilities arise, such as: 'If I imperceptibly infiltrate you, you are not who you think you are; I am not who you think I am'. Derrida's (and the nomination is unavoidable here) deconstruction (that assumed name), with its sensitivity to the problematics of belonging, with its attentiveness to the problematics of borders and margins, its attentiveness to the inside/outside, to the trace and the crypt, with its theory of the parasite virus, the foreign body, and so on, could be received (although not necessarily) as a thinking of (im)migrancy, in a manner of speaking. However,

immigrancy should not be used as a blanket term. It might be but one thread entwined with other threads, or not even that … an ellipsis, a reservation or hesitation, a puncturing?

What is visible of immigrancy? It is, of course, easier for some than others to 'pass' (for instance, the light-skinned amongst the light-skinned; the homosexual not known to be homosexual; the Jew not known to be a Jew; the well-schooled and 'well-taught'). In this passing, it is not only a matter of concealed differences or differences that do not reveal themselves, but also a matter of differences not recognised, passed over, disavowed, so that it may be felt important to declare: I am not actually of your gender, your race, your culture, your nation – and even these things plural (not of your genders, races, cultures, nations). If 'invisible immigrant' is a term for that which is too readily assimilated, the term 'clandestine immigrant' would designate something other than this.

The phrase 'clandestine immigrant' is to be found in Derrida's *Specters of Marx,* in the following passage:

> Marx has not yet been received. The subtitle of this address could thus have been: 'Marx – *Das Unheimliche*'. Marx remains an immigrant *chez nous*, a glorious, sacred, accursed but still a clandestine immigrant as he was all his life. He belongs to a time of disjunction, to that 'time out of joint' in which is inaugurated, laboriously, painfully, tragically, a new thinking of borders, a new experience of the house, the home, and the economy.[12]

The 'clandestine immigrant' would then refer to someone or something too unfamiliar, too unfamilial, to be assimilated. It is also said: 'One should not rush to make of the clandestine immigrant an illegal alien or what risks coming down to the same thing, to domesticate him … He is not part of the family, but one should not send him back, once again, him too, to the border.'[13] This may be cross-referenced with a remark made by Derrida in an interview, in which he speaks of reading Gide's *Les nourritures terrestes* whilst growing up in Algeria, as follows: 'No doubt like every adolescent, I admired its fervour, the lyricism of its declarations on religion and families (I probably always translated "I hated the home, families, every place where man thinks he can find rest" into a simple "I am not part of the family.")'[14] This *not-part of the family*: that will, finally, be my emphasis, and also my means of introducing – no, not introducing, say, rather, spiriting – Antigone into this discussion.

'Like Hegel, we have been fascinated by Antigone.'[15] It is Derrida who wrote that, echoing Hegel, but in repeating it, I could be smuggling myself into this 'we … have been fascinated'. Who then, 'we'? For a start, Hegel, Derrida, and, probably, Lacan. Derrida echoes Lacan who wrote:[16] 'We know very well that … it is Antigone herself who fascinates us.'[17] Who else besides Hegel, Derrida, Lacan? Others who have dwelt on Antigone/*Antigone* include: Heidegger, Kierkegaarde, Goethe; Hölderlin; Anouilh; Giradoux; Brecht; Virginia Woolf; George Steiner; Athol Fugard, Ntshona and Kani; Slavoj Žižek. And what of Freud? Lacan says

this: 'And if he (Freud) himself didn't expressly discuss *Antigone* as tragedy, that doesn't mean to say it cannot be done at this crossroads' (p. 234). Lacan says that for him, *Antigone* is the Sophoclean tragedy that is of special significance. Well, famously, for Freud the Sophoclean tragedy of special significance was *Oedipus Rex* and since Freud we have been fixated by Oedipus. This 'Oedipus compulsion' has perhaps eclipsed for a time – for the sake of a time and a history – Antigone, the sister and daughter of Oedipus.

When Freud names Antigone, it is as the pet name of his daughter and follower, Anna. Of the death of his reputedly favourite daughter, Sophie, he wrote that it is 'as if she had never been'.[18] Generalising, psychoanalysis has plenty of faithful daughter-followers (it has always welcomed women practitioners and allies); at the same time, it is perhaps haunted by a certain 'as if she had never been'. Antigone is not only the dutiful daughter, but the sister of the father's criminal desire, her very existence being that which must be disavowed in order to defend the father.

One oft-told story of psychoanalysis is that Freud, having been taken up by hysterical daughters and their fictively incestuous fathers, puts them to one side or leaves them to elaborate his theory of the Oedipal son on the basis of a self-analysis. I, or we, could say this looks like a swerve away from Antigone and her incestuous-*father*-Oedipus, although the thought occurs that perhaps the hysterical daughter cryptically transmitted the secret of the father's maternally directed incest in some way.[19] At any rate, it could be said that in the institution of psychoanalysis – in its beginnings and institutionalisation of itself as a subject with its theory of the subject – there is a repression if not even a foreclosure of the Oedipal father and his sister Antigone. The story begins, and it seems every beginning occludes, with the proto-Oedipal son and the mother, then the arrival of the father, and this completes the family. The concept of the family is arranged without her, the not-part of the family – but who she? This daughter is belated, no accompanier of Oedipus. She is a latecomer, but also 'late' in the sense of 'the late', 'the lately but no longer living'. She can but return to the family as the late.

Derrida writes (but with no specific reference to the institution of psychoanalysis):

> Like Hegel, we have been fascinated by Antigone, by this unbelievable [brother–sister] relationship … this immense impossible desire that could not live, capable only of overturning, paralyzing, or exceeding any system or history, of interrupting the life of a concept, of cutting off its breath, or better, what comes down to the same thing, of supporting it from outside or underneath a crypt.
>
> Crypt – one would have said, of the transcendental or the repressed, of the unthought or the excluded – that organizes the ground to which it does not belong.
>
> (p. 166)

So, in a paraphrase of this amazing passage, Antigone would be death (would be but death, absolute non-being, or would, if she were allowed, be the threat of death) to Western thought while it is her death or occlusion that enables this system and history of thought.

Lacan, towards the end of his sessions on Antigone says that 'she pushes to the limit the realization of something that might be called the pure and simple desire of death as such. She incarnates it' (p. 283). A little earlier he says of her: 'An illustration of the death instinct is what we find here' (p. 281). And, Žižek confirms this speaking of Antigone's 'persistence in the "death drive".'[20] For Derrida, it is Antigone's desire that is doomed to death, not that she, somehow, desires death.

It is at this point that I would like to suggest that the 'death drive' *as a concept* could be regarded as a defining limit and support of psychoanalytic theory or thought. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud speaks of the death drive in terms of a necessity to preserve his dualistic theory from the Jungian adherence to a monistic libido. However, what Freud's dualism consists of is libidinal instincts, sexual, and what is non-libidinal, the death drive, and so the libido itself remains monistic. In terms of man, or of Freud, the death drive and the pleasure principle seem to be mutually reinforcing: or, beyond the male libido there is nothing beyond the male libido which is its own end, the death drive. Perhaps, in a certain sense, the death drive serves to ward off anything so incredible, mystical, inhuman as to be beyond man and his doubles. While Freud does not seem to be aware of the import of this, Lacan in his Seminar on Ethics (where he rethinks the death drive, and looks at *Antigone*) does seem to be. For instance, less dualistic in his thinking than Freud, the fascinating concept of jouissance is offered by Lacan as that which exceeds the moderation of the pleasure principle and (if persisted in) leads to destruction. While this is a very condensed account, I would risk proposing that Lacan perceives the necessity of Antigone's 'self-sacrifice': something he sees as truly tragic. That is, she serves as necessary proof and defender of the necessity of the death drive.

Lacan expresses a certain admiration for Antigone, something Samuel Weber bases his reading of the Seminar on,[21] and something Žižek bypasses. Antigone is admirable in not 'ceding' her desire. Lacan's use of the verb in the form of: *céder sur* can mean both 'not to give up on' and 'not to give in to'. In this respect, Antigone is admirable in adhering to the very unattainability of her desire, and this would seem to be the proper part of the not-part. However, were she to *attain* it, she would be anything but admirable, as Lacan makes clear when he states: 'Believe me, the day when the martyrs are victorious will be the day of universal conflagration. The play is calculated to demonstrate that fact' (p. 267). It is at this point that Lacan contrasts the inhumanity of the martyrs with the humanity of Creon, of whom he says: 'he is … like all executioners and tyrants at bottom, a human character' (p. 267). What Lacan says here seems to draw on Hegel's reading in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* where it is said: 'Creon is not a tyrant, but actually an ethical power (*eine sittliche Macht*). Creon is not in the wrong.'[22] Furthermore, according to Hegel, both he and Antigone are one-sided

in their ethical powers, and there is both justice and injustice in this one-sidedness. And so Creon, although not in the wrong is still, in his one-sidedness, not a good man in the right, whereby he can be said to learn his lesson from the example of Antigone or through her. Briefly, in Lacanian terms (although not explicitly formulated by him), the lesson of and for a Creon is that it is not the law that produces a restriction on the pleasure principle but jouissance (in its primal form, the desire of the mother). So, Lacan concludes that Antigone, as incarnation of the death drive, leads us to the primal desire of the mother. This mother-desire would seem to be a prime diagnosis, but what of the often supposedly inexistent desire – while the definition of 'desire' would be in question here – between the sister-daughter and brother-father?[23] Certainly, Oedipus and Antigone share (and mourn) the same mother (the father sharing the mother with the child, while both of them are, in a sense, fatherless). This would be to suppose a shared desire, not sexed apart but not, then, without sexes. It would be possible to think of this as an androgynous desire, not purely masculine.

I want now, for the sake of a primal writing scene, to go 'behind the scenes' of these ethical points of psychoanalysis, or swerve to a different locale, to a drama in Lacan's own family (only not quite his family and, besides this, a drama of a stateless other country, and furthermore besides, a drama whose location is in the anecdotal). Elisabeth Roudinesco has drawn attention to the fact that Lacan delivered excerpts of his work on Antigone to his stepdaughter Laurence Bataille when she was in prison for her active involvement in FLN politics in the struggle for Algerian Liberation.[24]

The Seminar on Ethics took place over the years 1959/1960. Basil Davidson records that between 1956 and 1960 the French in Algeria were going all out to destroy support for the liberation war:

> They built electrified fences up and down the Algerian side of the frontier with Tunisia, laid more than a million land-mines along the fencing … learning new military lessons of anti-guerrilla warfare … They combined their very strong forces into hunt-and-destroy units, backed up by helicopters … These had much success.
>
> By 1960 the French had about 700,000 troops in Algeria … and had driven the army of the FLN nearly to defeat. But now the French had to swallow another hard lesson. They found in this kind of warfare a win on the battlefield cannot be decisive, unless it goes together with a win in politics … the FLN still held the loyalty of the people.[25]

Having this as a sort of backdrop allows for a different reading of Lacan's work on *Antigone*, albeit a guerrilla reading (not according to the rules, tactically so). For a start, a context is suggested for some otherwise slightly surprising – only slightly since Lacan is full of surprises – allusions in the discussion of Antigone. For instance, Lacan speaks of 'images of our modern wars' (p. 266) prefigured in *Antigone* (hovering birds like helicopters?), as well as of the need to read her in sensitivity to 'the cruelties of our times' (p. 240); and when he speaks of the

sphere of excess we must not cross into, he launches into a consideration of trances and spirit possession which he says we find in present times should we be: 'willing to go to other regions of the globe' (p. 260). He goes on to speak of spirits of the earth or war believed in in a certain province of Brazil, excusing his exoticism here. Brazil, and why not, and why not spirit beliefs in regions of Africa?[26] Lacan suggests that it is Christianity that replaces this sphere (of these 'gods') but not altogether. What is interesting is that Antigone is being associated with a not quite surpassed animism (whereby this too may be read as a threat to Western thought).

At this juncture, I would like to improvise a little with glancing reference to Derrida's *Glas*. Derrida, with reference to Hegel, writes (or so I paraphrase) of the Holy trinitarian family of Christianity in which the phenomenon of Immaculate Conception serves to maintain a severance of the father (knowledge) from immediacy whereby sexual differences are set up and cancelled in terms of opposition (with the mother on the side of worldly immediacy). Derrida goes on to write: 'Who would say that the phantasm of the IC has not succeeded? Two thousand years at least, of Europe … of all that could be called the imperialism or colonialisms or neocolonialisms of the IC' (p. 224). Would this amount to a history of the dissociation of the father-as-knowledge from worldly immediacy, so that, potential actual fathers aside, any question of a paternal body here would be a question of what originates as a spectre? While *Glas* also importantly engages with what it is to assume or erase analogies between Holy and earthly families, this will not be pursued directly here, except to note: 'To found *or* to destroy religion (the family production) always comes down to wanting to reduce fetishism' (p. 206). So, both the erecting of divine paternal origin and the refusal of it are cases of opposing fetishism, the worship of false gods: either he is a true god against all the false gods, or he is a false god like the other false gods. But might there not yet be a refusal of divine paternal origin – in just its singularity – that might be in favour of increasing, not reducing, fetishism: the many true gods?

The actual father of Laurence Bataille was Georges (the politically engaged thinker, novelist, poet, mystic, famed for his philosophy of extreme expenditure). In *Antigone*, the Chorus say: 'like father, like daughter'. (Is it not more usually, like father, like son?) In *Oedipus at Colonus* (the last-written play of the *The Theban Trilogy*),[27] we have Oedipus and Antigone in the same play. Oedipus (here father-brother-in-the flesh and not son) is closely allied with Antigone, both alike, both dispossessed exiles (outside of a proper family or state), finding sanctuary by the sacred grove (or haunted woods) of the Furies.[28] In this play, so concerned with a hospitality beyond calculation and with what it means to receive, Oedipus is simultaneously accursed, a polluted, untouchable being ('You touch me? … a man stained to the core of his existence!', lines 1285–6) and a sacred being (coming as 'someone sacred … bearing a great gift for all your people', lines 312–14), who, in 'death' crosses the threshold between the human and divine or supernatural. There is a far-flung resemblance then between this Oedipus, who can neither be reassimilated nor sent back, and Derrida's 'Marx – *Das*

Unheimliche', that sacred and accursed, unfamilial immigrant. In suggesting this, what is then conjured up, uncontrollably so, is the further suggestion of a clandestine, no doubt illegitimate, unreadable or yet to be read, affiliation between a certain Marx and a certain Antigone, or between their legends[29] (between the not-part and the not-part, each sexed but not yet sexed apart, arresting the move to transcendence).

Oedipus: … Where? / How – what are you saying?

(l. 1243–4)

In Lacan's pages on Antigone, there is no naming of Laurence or Bataille or Algeria (although Bataille is mentioned in earlier discussions of jouissance). Nonetheless, the revolutionary or outlaw daughter was a captive addressee of the text. Lacan ostensibly addressing his professional colleagues states:

> [T]here is a form of resistance to the things I am trying to express, and it consists of making sympathetic comments that are more or less ambiguous in kind on what has come to be known as my learning or, as it is also said, my cultural background. I don't like it. But you will recognise that my existence began a little before yours.
>
> (p. 286)

Does that not sound like a father reproaching a child? It could be heard as: Don't make snide remarks about my cultural background; and, besides, I'm older, I know more than you. The ambiguities and ironies of the scene of address allow too for different readings. For a start, it would seem that what Lacan's colleagues fail to hear or are at least not fully cognisant of is that it is not they themselves who are being addressed but the daughter, which could be to re-implicate her as the closer, more originary, more intimate collaborator of psychoanalysis. Indeed, what is interesting about this biographical anecdote is *not* that it serves as a gossipy snippet of truth which could be used to expose the professional face of psychoanalysis, but that it could be said to repeat or re-cover the origins of psychoanalysis. In this respect, it would have the status of a Lacanian correlative to Derrida's reading of the 'fort/da' anecdote in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. That is, it could be read as a primal scene of institutional inscription-transmission for psychoanalysis, this constituting, thus positioned, a story that inscribes the 'autobiography' of psychoanalysis. While in the 'fort/da' story, the daughter, Sophie, is silent or would seem to act as but passive corroborating witness in the Lacan–Laurence Bataille episode, the daughter would seem to be more of a secret sharer, perhaps writing-partner, as well as clandestine resister. Having said this much, the episode cannot be made interior to the story of psychoanalysis, since it precisely problematises the inside/outside division. However, the question of a primal scene of writing is raised because it may well concern a father and a daughter.

How would Laurence Bataille have heard it all? Would she have heard her

political activism, commitment and ideals being explained to her as displaced by or subsumed under the attribution of purely and simply (Lacan's terminology) a death drive? Certainly this is a possible hearing, but at the same time, this 'death drive' could be covering for something not to be known, and could perhaps even be, for psychoanalysis, psychoanalysis's needed internal adversary.

Lest there be any confusion, it needs be said that I would not want to, and could not, comment on the psyches of revolutionaries, terrorists or freedom fighters (to psychoanalyse crudely the political), and nor would I suggest that psychoanalysis ought to 'adopt' political themes or causes (to politicise crudely the psychoanalytic). And, I do think that Lacanian psychoanalysis has important things to say about 'intolerable excess' through its concepts of jouissance and the death drive, and that it would be dangerous to ignore the lessons Lacan draws from the reading of *Antigone*, lessons that I would here, in passing but so as not to by-pass, reformulate in terms of the dangers and violences of conflations of the spiritual and the political. (It is not a question of what is correct or incorrect *within* a theoretical encirclement. Furthermore, what subtends this would be palimpsestic set-ups of rival brothers, and whether impartiality, negotiation, non-involved involvement, involved non-involvement, may or may not be possible.)[30] Yes, psychoanalysis has its limits: its own justifiable and serviceable ideas of 'the limit'. But this limit or these limits, don't they have their limits? Such a question is prompted, in part, by Joan Copjec's arguments for the contemporary relevance of psychoanalysis on the basis of its promotion of a neo-Kantian 'cosmopolitical subject'.[31] Briefly, such a cosmopolitical subject could yet mean the outlawing of other subjects, or, the perception of only anarchy and terrorism at the expense of the ethical and political agendas of others. That is, this cosmopolitics could just be another name for global capitalism.

In Lacan's *Antigone* there might be said to be an invisible deadlock between psychoanalysis and … ? And what? Undomesticated daughters and their criminal brothers? Political subjects? Whatever may be impossibly beyond the beyond … ? Occult phenomena? Outlaws? Those without representation?

In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Antigone – as far as Creon is concerned – breaks the law. Antigone acknowledges her guilt in terms of these laws – laws for law and order which she does not contest as such. But she also says that these laws of men do not really concern her – hers are 'unwritten laws', lawless laws. And Lacan states: 'Involved here is an invocation of something that is, in effect of the order of law, but which is not developed in any signifying chain' (p. 278). Yet, she serves to signify this unsignified: she signifies it. While for Lacan the emphasis would fall on the fact that Antigone is the *bearer* or vehicle, one would still need to hesitate over the fact that *she* is the bearer.

Lacan, himself, considers a series of terms and translations for Antigone, some taken from the play and others not. While she is not exactly the 'monstrous, raw, cannibalistic' (that the Chorus, associating her with the contaminated Oedipus, say she is), she is still the guardian of such atrocious misfortune or criminality (p. 283); moreover, she is: image of our mortality (p. 284); she is potentially a pitiless, destructive martyr (p. 267); she is explicitly 'victim and

holocaust' in spite of herself (p. 282); she is or is caught up in the anamorphosis of the illusion of beautiful woman superimposed on 'something decomposed and disgusting' (p. 273). Žižek, after Lacan, compares her with Sade's Juliette the a-pathetic rake, pursuing enjoyment to extremes, and (in the same breath) von Trotta's Gudrun, the 'terrorist' of ' "senseless" acts'.[32]

Reading as a woman, you might want to laugh at times at the over-the-top invective (see, for example, Swinburne's poem 'Faustine'; or Yeats on political women; or the mimicry of Plath's 'Lady Lazarus': 'Oh my enemy, do I terrify?'). Why are they so afraid? Rhetorically speaking, giving Lacan's 'anamorphosis' another spin, cracking it up, we could say: 'look, you hallucinate a rotting thing, and its not that she's/it's really a stunningly beautiful woman, but, look again, beyond her being a symptom of man, you just might see, a mere unarmed woman although, it's true, she sometimes carries her brother's gun'. And yet there would be a need to hesitate here, for the horror and the terror are real, indeed, even of 'the real'. Nonetheless, the problem remains one of what, with, say, the ethical limit or failure of Man, posits the 'impossibility' of woman, and thus rebounds on 'impossible' women.

It would be a mistake to reduce everything to an individualistic/universalistic battle between the sexes. Creon says: 'Never let some woman triumph over us.' However, it is not a struggle of this sort – of woman wanting the power that men have (as Lacan knew). Antigone cannot be made representative of woman (in terms of the sexual opposition for or against woman), but nor should she be figured as the genderless representation of the inhuman limit of the human. It is not simply the *corpse* of Polynices that Antigone guards (limit of the human), and not beyond this only his right to be human/human rights that she guards (a humanism), since the humanistic case of funeral rites is also a case of hauntology. I will pause or hesitate here, on the brink of the animistic and, for the moment, stay with the assertion that, contra-Hegel, Antigone is not part of the family – the family of Man, his proper family – nor to be kept within the circle of oppositions in which the family is situated: domestic sphere/public sphere; family ethics/city-state politics, etc. Hegel, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, makes – actually remakes – Antigone representative of an ethics or law of the family, although it is more complicated than this, as will be returned to in the next chapter.[33] Among what is at stake would be 'another politics'. Françoise Duroux makes the point that Antigone incarnates not only Ethics, but another politics.[34] In my argument, the question of 'another politics' refers both to political agendas that are given no legitimation, no recognition, as to what is allowed entry into the spheres of politics, and to a politics not recognised (not seen or understood) as such.

It may be necessary, for the sake of what exceeds Western systems of thought, to, in Lacan's phrase, 'be willing to go to other regions of the globe'. I will, for a start, move on then to a short story that is politically explicit, that could serve as a political commentary on *Antigone*, while I will also in turn question the needs and problems of such a manoeuvre.

The story is called 'Draupadi' and is by Mahasweta Devi, and it has been

translated and introduced by Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak. It concerns, among other things, a revolutionary subject that cannot ultimately be subdued, assimilated or reappropriated. Spivak, in her introduction to her translation of the story, both documents its historical specificity (the Indian army's crackdown on rebellious sections of the Naxalites around 1971) and she offers a reading of it.[35] In but a paraphrase of her reading, the story's acute gesture or project is to stage an encounter between Senanayak, a Bengali army officer, and Dopdi (Draupadi), a tribal migrant worker, in terms of an intellectual and cultural elite, one which prides itself on an understanding of the other, being confronted with an 'unrecorded or misrecorded objective historical monument' (p. 184). It is an encounter in which the retrievals of theory-practice are made to give way to a paralysing uncertainty: 'an *unreasonable* fear' (p. 185). I wish to further this reading, both to prolong and endorse it and to take it, not without difficulty, beyond itself.

The story begins with an advertisement for the wanted Draupadi or Dopdi and goes on to provide a résumé of past events. Dopdi took part in a revolutionary operation against a landowner who would not allow access to his wells in time of drought. After this she and her husband Dulna went underground in the forest of Jharkhani. Senanayak, 'specialist in combat and extreme-left politics' (p. 188), gets appointed to deal with the opposition because of his comprehensive (theoretical) knowledge of their strategies. His army manages to penetrate 'the impenetrable' forest and kill Dulna. The aim then is to capture Dopdi in the hope that, as a 'trustworthy courier' of the revolutionary army, she may lead the official army to these fugitives. Senanayak, like a canny but not far-sighted student of Creon (while in the text he is likened to Prospero), hopes to use Dulna's unburied corpse as bait to lure Dopdi and/or others out of hiding. Having put Dopdi's past in the picture, the narrative goes on to focus on her in the present. As she is being trailed, we are given her thoughts, among them especially her resolution not to betray the rebel army if she is caught and tortured or 'countered'. She is finally captured and subjected to multiple rape at the instigation of Senanayak. The story ends with a confrontation between Dopdi and Senanayak, and it is the ending I want to concentrate on.

After a night of brutalisation, Dopdi is summoned into the presence of Senanayak. She refuses to clothe herself and presents Senanayak with her naked, wounded body and challenges him to 'counter' her. The story ends with this: 'Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid'. What is brilliant about this ending is its irreducible clarity: what follows can but be dilution and blur (while I am also aware of the hypocrisy of making what is supposedly evident, evident, of making the story yield evidence). So let me suggest, or project: we see what Draupadi is for Senanayak – an intolerable limit; at the same time that we see her being beyond what he can see. She confronts him with the finitude of what he represents and, thus, perhaps also with his own mortality (for Lacan, Antigone constitutes a lesson in mortality) but this does not coincide with a complicit will, drive or tendency to self-destruction on her part

(rather the reverse). When she challenges Senanayak to 'counter her', she is not asking to be put to death, but mock-usurping his authority to mock it (which could be 'asking for death' as far as someone in his position is concerned). It is a question of tone: as in 'she asked for it'; 'she's the limit!' Senanayak pushed to the limits of his endurability, where he is also faced with a radical inability to atone for the criminality of the law, meets with a certain laughter: 'Draupadi shakes with an indomitable laughter that Senanayak simply cannot understand.' And she is not the only one to laugh. I am thinking of the laughter in the court-room scene of Marlene Gorris's film *A Question of Silence*, and of the laughter advocated by Woolf in *Three Guineas*, and especially of the laughter referred to in Hélène Cixous' 'Decapitation or Castration' and 'The Laugh of the Medusa'.[36] And, there are the tremors of Foucault's laughter, him saying: 'To all those who still wish to talk about man [etc.] … who refuse to think that it is a man who is thinking, to all these warped and twisted forms of reflection we can answer only with a philosophical laugh – which means, to a certain extent, a silent one.'[37] Then, Derrida joins in, attending to Hegel and attentive to the gender of the laughter, with: 'But the masculine power has a limit … Woman … "internal enemy", can always burst out laughing at the last moment.'[38] As Dopdi does. More specifically, Derrida associates this laughter with Antigone (and in Sophocles' play, Antigone's laughter is particularly outrageous to Creon). Derrida's reading is an elaboration of what Hegel states in the following: '[A]n internal enemy – womankind in general. Womankind – the everlasting irony [in the life] of the community – changes by intrigue the universal end of government into a private end … Woman in this way turns to ridicule the earnest wisdom of mature age.'[39]

While this laughter is no mere laughing matter, are we reduced to laughter then? Is she reduced to laughter? Is she but his internal enemy; his disquiet of conscience; his amused philosophical silence? What is at stake is whether we would be confronting an ironic consciousness – say, private and anti-social – or another community spirit: 'internal enemy' or external, cross-community, friend? Derrida's reformulation of Hegel's reading marks a hesitation: 'If God is (probably) a man in speculative dialectics, the godness of God – the irony that divides him and makes him come off his hinges – the infinite disquiet of his essence is (if possible) woman(ly).'[40] That is, the feminine may but be a self-questioning, self-doubting attribute of man – a 'womanly' aspect of him – or may be a 'woman' alongside man as opposed to subsumed by him. The hesitation is: 'woman(ly)'.

Spivak, advocating uncertainty of access to the historical materiality of the third – or fourth – world says that, 'in one reading', then 'we would share the textual effect of "Draupadi" (the story) with Senanayak' (p. 185). Yes, certainly or hopefully we would attend to that caution, but I would wish to enquire might we not also be able to share, with some uncertainty, the story's textual effects with the character Draupadi? In other words, here she would not only be 'the unrecorded' but that which records itself in such a way so as to block appropriation but not transmission. This would be my translation of the possible signature effect in Spivak's reference to Draupadi's song: 'Dopdi's song, incomprehensible

yet trivial (it is in fact about beans of different colours), and ex-orbitant to the story, marks the place of that other that can be neither excluded nor recuperated' (p. 180). While I would like to retain the lesson of what is given in what is marked as 'one reading', any further reading risks precisely the failure of that lesson. In a later reconsideration of Mahasweta Devi's writing, Spivak, in calling for an attentiveness to the specificity of the political situation of the tribal, and for a receptivity to the sense of the sacred, directs us to a consideration of Mahasweta Devi's work in terms of an 'impossible justice', such being, indeed, the appeal of impossible Antigones. While a further reading (beyond the limits of a Senanayak) is risky, it would seem, nonetheless, important to attempt (on renewable singular occasions) for the sake of possible other ways of reading or receiving the effects of Draupadi/'Draupadi'. Perhaps one trajectory to attempt here would be a move from a falsely legitimate reading to a truly illegitimate one, a matter of entertaining a certain animistic, or occult, script.

While Senanayak's business is to decipher, Draupadi and her outlaw comrades not only resist decipherment but communicate with each other in a language that the official army are blind to. For instance: 'The direction of the next hideout will be *indicated* by the tip of an arrowhead under the stone … The clue will be such that the opposition won't *see* it, won't *understand* even if they do' (p. 194, my emphases). One other instance of this open-secret language (and there are others) is when Dopdi is captured and she turns to the forest and ululates (in a scene, with my head full of *Antigone*, reminiscent of the scene of Antigone's crime and capture, one about which Lacan observantly writes: 'It's a very strange image. And it is even stranger that it should be taken up and repeated by other authors', p. 264). In 'Draupadi', Dopdi's cry is not just a strange cry of battle or defeat as the narrative makes perhaps plain:

> Now Dopdi spreads her arms, raises her face to the sky, turns towards the forest and ululates with the force of her entire being, one, twice, three times. At the third burst the birds in the trees at the outskirts of the forest awake and flap their wings. The echo of the call travels far.
>
> (p. 195)

The echo of the call travels far. That reaches us – that tells 'us' – even perhaps first-world readers – much, as it tells all (although obviously I can only suppose this for the sake of a reading) to the fugitives in the forest. I can risk spelling it out: her forceful cry and the *commotion* it sets up signify to the unseen rebel army her capture, its specific time and place. (And it might not be too far-fetched to talk of a startling telecommunication here, cries from a distance that wake us in our sleep.)

We have this 'scriptless script' or unrecognised script in the final encounter. In this scene, Draupadi's ironic taunt and her deliberately flaunted nakedness can be seen as a strategic self-betrayal or disclosure of herself as a woman. Senanayak had hoped Draupadi would be the sign, the clue which would lead him to the others; Draupadi hopes, indeed promises not only to her comrades

but to the memory or spirit of Dulna, to give nothing away. In reflecting only herself (in all nakedness, 'openness'), she conceals, or she does not give anything away about her criminal others (brothers), just as her heroic namesake in the *Mahābhārata* acts for her 'husband-brothers'. Spivak notes that Dopdi saves 'not herself but her comrades', while her reading goes on to deal with the specificity of 'the women's struggle within the revolution', something that I shall return to. Prolonging this moment then, if we see the final encounter in terms of only a sexual encounter, set apart from the rest of the outlaw movement and the rest of the literary text (while it nonetheless is spaced as such), then this could be to be diverted, or arrested in our tracks, as Senanayak is. That is, it is, in part, Draupadi's triumph, political rather than sexual victory, to confine the encounter to the extremities or limits of a sexual one to thwart Senanayak. I speak of the limits of a sexual encounter since, as Spivak notes, Senanayak is unable to say or know who or what Draupadi is any more. In the very moment that Draupadi presents herself, naked and wounded, the phantasm of sexual difference completely fails or evaporates, this possibly being the significance of her taunt: 'You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?' While she may be brutally unveiled, undone, as a woman, she cannot be re-veiled, re-inscribed, as a woman – gone his sexual difference? What would be uncanny here would be not the famous instance of the *sight* of female genitals, but a sudden inability to see, meaning not so much an anamorphosis of the female figure as a frightening blur or blot spreading over or coating the eye that would see – although Senanayak's silent 'What is this' is open to other interpretations. At least, it may be said that the multiple rape has yet failed to mortify or reduce her into being a woman, in phallic terms, and in the violence of an operation that would forcibly make her into an inert, passive object. Dopdi remains strangely animated or spirited, say, by (a) spirit(s) of resistance. She could be said to be possessed ('what possesses her?' is also what seems to spook and exasperate Senanayak), by, for a start, ancestral allegiances, to her forefathers. And there is also her allegiance to the spirit of Dulna, and to the spirits and voices of her comrades, not forgetting the spirit of her heroic namesake in the *Mahābhārata*. She is this medium then, whose very voice(s) (but, singular or plural, whose?) is (are) as hair-raising and blood-curdling as a ghost: 'Draupadi … says in voice that is terrifying, sky splitting and sharp as her ululation' (p. 196). Her body and her voice would seem to be terrifying since in their very presentation they cannot be reduced to what is merely present, and so it would not just be her materiality that is unintelligible but the fact that it is (seemingly) incomprehensibly 'spirited' or 'animated'.

It is at this point that I will begin to address some of the hesitations and reservations, the possible problems of such a reading, signalled earlier. First, there is the issue of a gendered positioning within the revolutionary struggle, and one question here would include: What is it for the partisan or comrade sister or woman to be given or herself assume a spectral or spirit guardianship? And what bearing does this legacy have on monocultural or national/familial inheritances? While such questions cannot be answered with any adequacy here, and while the

specifities of many histories and cultures would need to be attended to, I will make fleeting reference to pertinent aspects of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, for the sake of an exemplification. During the war years it would be fair, I think, to generalise that rural women of the Shona, in particular, assumed or were given the custodianship of a spirit legacy, which served as inspiration and mobilising impetus for the co-operative struggle of peasants and freedom fighters, while at Independence, with the inheritance of the geopolitical nation, the rural women often claimed that they, despite their multiple contributions (as workers who sustained the struggle and as mothers who lost their children to it), had been subsequently forgotten, unacknowledged and left without material benefit.[41] While I cannot take this further here, but have elsewhere,[42] it concerns, among other things, the place of such women in the new 'developing' nation and the (im)possible politics of the brother and the sister.[43] Another issue that can be but briefly touched on is the absolute inadequacy of talking about differing spirit legacies (it too, then, an inadequate term) in one breath, quite apart from any consideration of spectres.

A second area of hesitation concerns the assumption of a sister–sister relation (where the very term 'sister' is in question), which is something that the Antigone-to-Drapaudi 'transference' serves to dramatise (while I have yet to speak of *Antigone* and *Draupadi*). Here the most awkward, shameful, question would be: what does or would it mean to use the figure of Draupadi to politicise Antigone? Gayatri Spivak has so often and importantly urged us … to question this 'us' … to hesitate over such questions of appropriation and displacement. I would like here to take a watch-phrase that she has used and allowed to resonate, although I am taking it out of its context. The watch-phrase is: 'You make visible what I have been'.[44] Thus, in a crucial respect, there can be no use of Draupadi's struggles and confrontations as a means of illustrating, making visible, the family quarrel of an Antigone. Such a conscription of a Draupadi would be away from her husband-brother-comrades into the cause of a very brotherly 'sister'. Virginia Woolf, in the context of a discussion that draws on the persona of Antigone, famously writes: 'As a woman I have no country. As a woman my country is the whole world'.[45] While this can sound outrageous, falsely triumphant, desperately rhetorical, it occasions also the thought that she too ought not to be repatriated, sent home, for the sake, at least, of registering the missed encounter, the lost opportunity: 'the could have beens' as opposed to the 'could not have beens' (as Aidoo exactly phrases it in *Our Sister Killjoy*, 'She *could have* passed for a soul sister,/ But for her colour/ – and our history' (my emphasis),[46] which is not the same as 'she could *not* have passed for a soul sister because of … ').

And now what of the crossings of *Antigone* and 'Draupadi', those literary texts? It might be objected that they belong to such world-apart histories, cultures, languages (as they do), that they cannot be cross-read, without considerable naivety. But let me tentatively propose here: literature does not-belong to history; it is, perhaps, the not-part of history. For a start, this would imply that *Antigone* might, in a sense, constitute an autobiography of literature or writing,

the story of itself: an account of being a medium for the spirit of another or the spirits of others. It would allow for strange affiliations and recurrences that would occur beyond our control. It would be a matter, too, of questioning the separation of what is seen as the province of the literary and what is seen as the province of the political, which is what would seem to be at stake in such 'cross-eyed', squinting readings, that try not to focus out the blur but try to focus on it, where it might seem oddly fitting to fly in *Our Sister Killjoy: Reflections of a Black-Eyed Squint* (that highly and sharply literary-political text, usually discussed in the context of African literature or African women).

'And now where was she? How did she get here?'[47] How did those words get here? Did you witness me pickpocket them, or did they somehow catch me napping? Suddenly finding those words in mind, I cannot be sure if I called upon them or they called upon me. Sometimes it just happens when you least

She's the one, the thirteen-year-old shepherd girl, the Amrounes' eldest daughter … And now she grieves for her dead brother, in this dawn of a still Summer day; a new Antigone mourning … One prolonged cry has escaped her … Then the voice cautiously takes wing, the voice soars, gaining in strength, what voice? That of the mother who bore the soldiers' torture with never a whimper? That of the cooped-up sisters, too young to understand, but bearing the message of wild -eyed anguish? The voice of the old women of the douar who face the horror of the approaching death-knell

(*L'amour, la fantasia*, pp. 122–3)

There, we saw the girl!
And she cried out a sharp, piercing cry,
like a bird come back to an empty nest
peering into its bed, and all the babies gone
Just so, when she sees the corpse bare
she bursts into a long shattering wail

(*Antigone*)

glas?

expect it. I did not expect it, I was not searching for it; but I did not *not* expect it, I was not unprepared for it. Assia Djebar in her novel, *L'amour, la fantasia* (in English, *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*)[48] writes of, among other things, women who participated in or were caught up in the Algerian war of liberation, and the juxtaposition produced above concerns the scene that Lacan noted as being a strangely recurrent, strangely recurring, one. The cry travels far. In the text, Assia Djebar suggests the homonym 's'écrit, (ses cris)',[49] (writing itself, writes itself, itself writes, their cries). And read the above column (up there, rising-falling-rising), again.

In Sophocles' play, Creon orders Haemon: 'Spit her out' (l.728). And, Žižek paraphrasing and citing Lacan, writes: 'the traumatic real is … the cause of the

subject … the missing link in the chain, that is, the cause as remainder, as "the object that cannot be swallowed, as it were, which remains stuck in the gullet of the signifier".'[50] I cite this, literary-guerrilla-wise for its imagery but imagery which is not merely metaphoric. A..I..E, could we not say or sigh Antigone (among other names)?[51] And, Derrida, in his deconstructive reading of Hegel's reading of the play, writes (and I cut much to isolate the phrasing): 'Fascination by a figure inadmissible in the system … the absolute indigestible … The system's vomit' (pp. 151–62). So, when we deal with Antigone, among other things, we would be dealing with what catches in the throat, what chokes all discourses of would-be assimilation (be they naturalising or rationalising), and would-be expulsion, dealing with the spectropoliticopoetics of a gl'

gl

> falls (to the tomb) as must a pebble in the water- … detached from any gloss … non-vocalizable letters, on some drive base of phonation, a voiceless voice stifling a sob … … or a clot of milk in the throat, the tickled laughter or the glairy vomit of a baby glutton.
>
> (*Glas*, [Gl] pp. 119–20)

> – drop … precipitate congealed in the very body of my former voice, in my frozen larynx; this nameless coagulate is washed away in a trail of identifiable rubble … viscous syrup of rasping gasps, guano of old hiccups and choking sobs, smelling of some corpse rotting within me
>
> (*L'amour, la fantasia* [AF], p. 115)

> 1. Afr. Glas 'ringing noise; clamouring'
>
> (Gl, p. 89)

> tzarl-rit:
>
> – to utter cries of joy while smacking the lips with the hands (of women) … entry in Beaussier …
>
> – shout vociferate (of women when some misfortune befalls them) … entry in Kazimirski …
>
> (AF, p. 221)

> The glas is then dingdong donc – of/for the idiom of the signature.
>
> Of/for the absolute ancestor …
>
> … the mother?
>
> (Gl, p. 150)

> How are the sounds of the past to be met as they emerge from the well of bygone centuries … What love must still be sought, what future planned, despite the call of the dead? And my body reverberates with sounds from the endless landslide of generations from my lineage.
>
> (AF, 46)

And now where … ?

The Mother: Then where is he? In a song?

(Genet, last line of *The Screens*)

But, there remain borderlines, or I would still like to distinguish, for the sake of the least difference, between the 'not quite song' (that which borders on literature but is not literature) and 'the song that is not just a song' (a literature that is not purely a meaningless or mindless echolalia). And, then, the above pulling of strings, that manipulation, could be unfair and confusing, whether the confusion be of ravelling or unravelling, entangling or unentangling. However, the manoeuvre is not pointless either for it concerns the side by side (by side), maybe the flipside, and surely the aside (the heard but only partially received, the open-secret language). It is also a matter of crossed wires: when, on the telephone say, a voice butts in, or when unintentionally, you find yourself butting in.

I am now thinking of an article by Gayatri Spivak entitled 'Ghostwriting', which concludes a reading of *Spectres of Marx* with a consideration of and extracts from Assia Djebar's *Far from Medina*. (I came across this article after having juxtaposed *Glas* with *Fantasia*, but the gesture may well have been prompted by the following through of lines arising from prior cross-readings of the work of Derrida and Spivak). While I cannot offer a reading of the intricate and multi-stranded 'Ghostwriting' here (although what has been said is an indirect engagement with it, and although I hope to return to it in another context), the article importantly addresses, among other things, how the father–son inheritance occludes acknowledgement of contributions from (the work of) other sources. The extracts offered from Djebar's work concern precisely the father–daughter relationship, more precisely, the relationship between Muhammed and Fatima, specifically, at the point of the prophet's death. This relationship, then, is one of the father and daughter *at the origin*, at the institution of a legacy (here, that of Islam), as the father is to die. In the context of this Antigone debate, we are drawn back to the scenes of *Oedipus at Colonus*. After *Specters of Marx*, Derrida refers to Oedipus also as a clandestine immigrant, and yet more recently, in *Monolingualism of the Other*, in speaking of his Franco-Maghrebian identity, writes: '(One day it will be necessary to devote another colloquium to language, nationality, and cultural belonging, *by death* this time around, by sepulture, and to begin with the secret of Oedipus at Colonus: all the power that this "alien" holds over "aliens" in the innermost secret place of the secret of his last resting place)'.[52] That is, Oedipus dies in a foreign land where his secret burial place is to serve to protect his foreign host, specifically from

conquest by Thebes. Furthermore, it seems to me that in death Oedipus is associated with a certain animism in being associated with the 'Earth Goddesses', the Furies, and also in the occult nature of his death in which he suddenly passes into invisibility. In 'death', Oedipus is attended by his grieving daughters, who are yet prevented from knowing the secret of his last resting place. Derrida's statement implies that while a certain identity is ascribed by birth or birthplace, a foreign or another identity may be conferred or confirmed by death or death-place.

As for Antigone, how avoid overhearing her? In the Foreword to *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida writes:

> What happens when, in taking up the case of the sister, the woman is made a sister? And a sister a case of the brother? This could be one of our most insistent questions, even if, having done so elsewhere, we will here avoid convoking Antigone, here again the long line of history's Antigones, docile or not, to this history of brothers that has been told to us for thousands of years.[53]

Avoid (alarm-bell word?) convoking (co-invoking or summoning the many by their various names)? Well, it is the case that she, that one (while it is time to move on to the hardly known or mentioned ones), has been 'done to death', discussed by so many of us, entertained at length, especially in *Glas*. And, how *include* her, and the others, in a history of brothers? And yet the themes that cluster around Antigone/*Antigone* are often in mind or very recurrent: mourning; justice versus the law; the 'impossible' and the possibility of the impossible; the calling into question of the primacy of the patriot/traitor division, that of rival brothers; the 'not part of the family'; the question of another politics; the question of 'inheritances' and the ruins of genealogy. In *The Politics of Friendship*, in a chapter in which Antigone is mentioned briefly again in passing, there is, prior to this reference, mention of the 'no mention' of a sister (here no mention by Schmitt of the sister in a discussion of the partisan). Derrida writes:

> Not even in the theory of the partisan is there the least reference to the role played by women in guerilla warfare, in the wars and the aftermath of wars of national liberation (in Algeria today, for example …) … If the woman does not appear in the theory of the partisan – that is, in the theory of the absolute enemy – if she never leaves a forced clandestinity, such an invisibility, such a blindness, gives food for thought: what if the woman were the absolute partisan?[54]

Without debating this question (relevant as it is to a history of the reception of Antigone), this is, glancingly, for the notice, namely, that the clandestine is named here, but not the name(s) of the clandestine. But, it is not a case of doing the naming, but, shall we say, of shouldering a way through a roomful of brothers, in the hope of catching the sister's name –

'I know they call you Sissie, but what is your name?'
Ama Ata Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy* [*Our Sister Killjoy* (p. 131)].

But the whole text needs to be read for the sheer timing of that. (It is the question posed by a brother at the end of a meeting in which a sister is questioning the loyalties of her migrant brothers; and, in being recounted, the end of an intimate letter to a brother-friend, about to be signed, before our very eyes; and, it is the end of a flight, the plane is about to land, to arrive; and, immediately, it is in our hands, *Our Sister Killjoy*).

In the two plays of Sophocles in which Antigone appears, there is also the theme of, say, partial hearing or impaired listening. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, we have her pleading 'Father, listen to me' (l. 1342) and 'Polynices, listen to me, I beg you' (l.1604), 'Please, dear brother, listen!' (l.1637). They do give her a hearing, as does Creon, but they do not finally attend to her pleas which are rejected. And the reason that she cannot be listened to would seem to be due to a certain – 'Adieu, adieu. Hamlet. Remember me' – 'remember me' effect. How hear it? Do not forget me, do not consign me to oblivion? Remember me, revenge my grievances, so that I may rest in perpetual peace, in oblivion? Be the memory of me so I do not die, bequeathed from generation to generation? Whatever, this 'remember me' is the very countering of an Antigone. (Oedipus will not listen to Antigone because he cannot forget his grievance against Polynices, just as Polynices will not listen to Antigone because he cannot forget his grievances, and Antigone dies in honouring his 'remember me'.)

Remember me. Last words. Very telegraphically, if apartheid needs be, must be racism's last word – as Derrida has said of *apartheid* – then would not the word to follow this be: amnesty?[55] What will be or could have been the chances of this? If Antigone keeps 'asking for it', the one thing she keeps asking for is this: amnesty (OED: general pardon, esp. for political offence; (f.F *amnestie* or f.L f. Gk *amñestia* oblivion)). She asks Oedipus and Polynices that they drop their grievances, give pardon, and she especially asks of Creon that amnesty be given to the criminal brother. While it would be important to engage with the questions of whether amnesty is political, apolitical, anti-political or another possibility for politics, and while its occasions and timings should be taken into account, Antigone is arrested, imprisoned within a logic and system of 'the remembrance of one as the oblivion [amnestia] of the other'. And who is there to mourn her? As she says: 'unmourned by friends' (l.938); 'No one to weep for me, my friends' (l.963), 'Whom to call, what comrades now?' (l.1015) This could be rendered as: 'Oh my friends (my mourned ones), there is no friend (among you yet living) to mourn me.' Problematically, Haemon, Ismene, these true friends, seem not to count. But this is literature. Indeed, Creon's shrewd insight signals it: 'Can't you see?/ If a man could wail his own dirge before he dies, /he'd never finish' (l.969–71). Yes, I see, that's it. The *pre-mortem post-mortem*, that is, literature. Lacan, in another shrewd observation, remarks that Greek tragedies so often seem to begin just as they are about to end, a phenomenon that he calls 'the race is run'. Lacan's emphasis here is on a limit zone, between life and death

(or after life and before death). While it would seem that, for Lacan, it is here that the radiance of art flashes up,[56] a vision that dissolves into the foresight of the reality of death (moment of truth of the death drive), let us pause on what may be highlighted as a particularly *literary* phenomenon. The play, beginning as it is about to end, begins with the writing-up of its story, which is also the writing-up of itself. It begins, urgently, and with endless hesitation, to recapitulate, but for the first time, everything, anamnesis, the *pre-mortem* remembrance. Moreover, it is the *story* of that story. Writing begins here. *S'écrit*, it writes itself, the story writes itself. And it does so so that it will never end. This is Antigone singing the dirge of herself on the brink of death so as not to die; the moment in which Antigone becomes *Antigone*. This would seem to be very precisely not a death drive, but that which seeks to immortalise or resurrect (without transcending) itself or save itself, the literary work that will keep recurring, that is to say, returning-arriving. This is the timing of (other) literary works, of not just Greek tragedies, but of *Our Sister Killjoy* and 'Draupadi'. Indeed, 'Draupadi' begins just as it is about to end, the race is run, and suddenly before capitulation, before oblivion, comes the recapitulation, for the first time, to postpone oblivion interminably. This 'memory' (*before loss*, of what is to be remembered, before it is too late) is to remind us, to cry to us, to alert us. This auto-rescue or auto-reprieve, or silkwormly salvation (of, say, what needs be saved on the side of the living), could be the 'Draupadi-effect' of the story, the her-story's triumph against the mortifying or death-inflicting death fear of man and against the forgetting of her and others like her.

And Sophocles? What remains of that signature? Sophocles, so wise … but the epithet he was given on his death, to be remembered by was 'The Receiver',[57] – and what a host, or hostly guest, he has been! – so much food for thought, thanks to him. But let us think of the others and thank too the other griots and poets, one writing here these lines:[58]

> So
> You, La Guma,
> You Moloise, and
> All You Beautifully Young Deers
> whose lives the real devil daily
> snaps:
>
> don't sleep.
>
> As you join the ancestors
>
> don't sleep.
>
> Stay awake.
>
> Keep alert.
>
> Ama Ata Aidoo, 'Loving the Black Angel'

II

What was that all about?

It was, admittedly, somewhat possessed. It was something of an experiment in the reception of the literary text: an allowance of it that suspends the decisive enforcement of critical rules and regulations. In working on African literature – not only in working on this literature but especially it – it has sometimes seemed worth entertaining the notion of a hypocritical criticism in a double sense. First, there is the critical hypocrisy of the fact that a critic comes to speak, in one way or another, on behalf of a text. There are too many aspects to this issue to address here, but the institutional question obviously concerns the authorisation of knowledge. Nawal El Saadawi, writer and activist, addresses an instance of this authorisation in the following:

> Within Duke University I was treated like other colleagues who were aliens … It was as though US professors alone had knowledge, alone would deal with theory, alone had higher thoughts. There were a few exceptions of course, but Africans or Arabs like me were of inferior intelligence and standing. And if we had thoughts, or theories, or contributions to make they were necessarily limited, localized, one-sided. The higher, holistic, global thinking was the realm of the American … He or she could speak of Africa with authority, deal with so-called Third World culture better than I could.[59]

Second, a hypocritical criticism is a criticism that is under-*hypo*-critical, a matter of a lowering of the *self-defences* of criticism and allowing for something other than criticism even if it 'passes' as such. Something other – such as? Such as the reversibility or invertibility of 'receptivity' and 'creativity'. The creative act, the ability to conceive, itself relies on an ability to receive, a receptive capacity.[60] Then, too, the act of reading, as an act of receptivity, partakes of the dynamics of creative composition.[61] Some of the common ground of writing and reading in this creative-receptive respect could include the following: suggestibility; hypnosis; entrancement; possession; inspiration; telepathy; transference; affective identification; repetition compulsions and the so-called 'death drive'. These are the kinds of things that criticism usually tries to ward off or else control, not without reason. However, even the most sceptical criticism can betray the captivating effects of the text that it tries to distance itself from: the compulsion to cite, re-cite, the text; the subtle mimicry of the text's rhythms, tones, mannerisms, turns of phrase; the thought transference of ideas that criticism does not itself originate. The difficulty, although not disadvantage, of an engagement with the interrelationship of creativity and receptivity is that, in this concentration of attention, the emphasis is on the time of reading and the time of writing. This means that there is always yet room for a further critical reflection on that engagement.

Although there will now be an attempt to tease out and work up some of the

strands worked with in the foregoing part of this chapter, it will soon become apparent that it is not possible to separate these strands in favour of the single issue – the 'fils', the son, the only-one heir of Creon's edict. Rather, what is to be considered will concern the entwinings of the more-than-one-inheritance; the mixing of genealogies, genres, races; the fetishising and de-fetishising of hybridity in relation to politics. With reference to what was begun in the first section of the chapter, my interest in Derrida's work in this book relates, in particular, to his declared interest in a general economy of fetishism.[62] There are ways in which this borders on questions of animism even as animism cannot, I believe, then be easily subsumed in such a project. It is perhaps that which cannot be fully domesticated and, therefore, would necessitate the need to try and accommodate a thinking of the economic within a thinking of the ecological. So, there will be the beginnings of a tentative questioning of Derrida's rethinking of fetishism, particularly with reference to a sexualising of the aesthetic and an aestheticisation of sexuality, where the politics of this will also be addressed. Where I wish to resume a questioning of Spivak's work is over, amongst other issues, the question of a certain politicisation that possibly seeks to erect itself against aestheticisation and a fetishism of 'creative sources'.

Non-belonging: the family without origin; the origin without family

In Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, there is one point, one that catches my attention in particular, at which the novel comes to suspend its ongoing narrative to reflect on itself. A thematisation is offered of what the novel is otherwise writing, and this thematisation is the novel's generalisation of itself. In this self-reflexive moment, it generalises to speak of its genre, no less. This fold of the text, a part of it enveloping the whole, is the formulation of a genre, but as we shall see, a genre without genre, or better, a genre of non-belonging. I will need to cite the passage at length:

> For a long while I have believed – this is perhaps my version of Sir Darius Xerxes Cama's belief in a fourth function of *outsideness* – that in every generation there are a few souls, call them lucky or cursed, who are simply *born not belonging*, who come into the world semi-detached, if you like, without strong affiliation to family or location or nation or race; there may even be millions or billions of such souls, as many non-belongers as belongers, perhaps; that, in sum, the phenomenon may be as 'natural' a manifestation of human nature as its opposite, but one that has been mostly frustrated, through human history, by lack of opportunity. And not only by that: for those who value stability, who fear transience, uncertainty, change, have erected a powerful system of stigmas and taboos against rootlessness, that disruptive, anti-social force, so that we mostly conform, we pretend to be motivated by loyalties and solidarities we do not really feel, we hide our secret identities beneath the false skins of those identities which bear the belongers' seal of

> approval. But the truth leaks out in our dreams … we soar, we fly, we flee. And in the waking dreams our societies permit, in our myths, our arts, our songs, we celebrate the non-belongers, the different ones, the outlaws, the freaks. What we forbid ourselves we pay good money to watch … to read about … the rebel, the thief, the mutant, the outcast, the delinquent … if we did not recognize in them our least-fulfilled needs, we would not invent them over and over again, in every place, in every language, in every time.[63]

Ring a bell? The above orchestration of motifs has its resonances, albeit in its own terms, with the way in which certain readings of *Antigone* serve to problematise the institution of the family. In the above, we again touch on: non-belonging, the not-part of the family, migrancy, the clandestine, passing, and the genesis of myths–art–song that may be a matter of a cross-cultural and trans-historical imagination. It can be further pointed out that the impossible love or ideal desire between the protagonists of Rushdie's novel, Vina and Ormus, concerns a brother–sister relationship. Ormus is the twin of a dead brother (that motif again) whilst Vina is adopted into his family, becoming thus his sister. Their relationship is not literally incestuous but it is so on the level of representation. However, this is what incest is, as argued by Deleuze and Guattari and by Derrida.[64] That is, incest only comes into being as such in the symbolic inscription of kinship and the family.

While the Oedipus complex makes mother–son incest *the* primary taboo it does so in order to oblige the recognition of paternal origin, the father as author or lawful parent, and to establish the historical line of affiliation between father and son. My proposition here is that when literary texts remark on themselves as belonging to the family of literature, that is, when they lay down their 'law of genre', they seem to do so especially in terms of either father–daughter incest or brother–sister incest. Derrida, in an essay entitled 'The Law of Genre' reads Blanchot's 'La folie du jour', a symbolic or allegorical rendition of father–daughter incest, in terms of what he calls 'invagination': the text's marking of itself, its genre, in which there is a turning of itself inside out or outside in.[65] In Blanchot's text, the counter-law of the *récit*, the literary story, is that of the daughter rather than that of the father: we could say that the counter-law of the law of belonging and of the family would be one of non-belonging and of incest. Looking at other texts, we would have to say daughter or *sister*, where the potentially problematic difference between a 'daughter' and a 'sister' will remain suspended for the moment. In fact, when there is a case of the father aligned with the daughter this erases the generations so that we can speak of the daughter as the father's sister. The further question, the one to be posed at this stage, is: why should literature 'name' itself in this way? This particular question – of why the literary text should mark itself through father–daughter incest – is not really considered in a more general way in 'The Law of Genre'. This is possibly because Derrida concentrates on one text's auto-designation. However, if Blanchot's text speaks of its particularity as the generality – genre-ality, then what it says of itself we could expect to hold true for other literary texts. And,

roughly speaking, it does. In particular here, what has come to seize my attention is how so many *first* novels written in the context of colonialism or post-colonialism are about father–daughter or brother–sister incest: Bessie Head's *The Cardinals*, Pauline Melville's *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, just for a start, and not to mention the novels of similar preoccupations that are not first novels, such as J.M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*, Camara Laye's *White Genesis*, Yvonne Vera's *Under My Tongue*, and so on. This would certainly need to be looked at more closely, especially with reference to the question of the possible differences between father–daughter and brother–sister configurations. What can at least be pointed out at this stage is that this combined configuration has to do with coming to literature to talk about race, and thus of kinship, families, belongings. It also concerns the question of the desire of the father, the discovery of the paternal body as opposed to paternal law. However, without as yet considering some of the texts in question here, a preliminary speculation on the question of literature and or as 'incest' will be offered.

One way to begin to consider the issue would be through a consideration of literature's relation to history and time. While the Freudian Oedipus complex is about accepting the father's law of time, the literary complex (as this father–daughter, sister–brother love could be called, even though it concerns more than the literary) seems to mark a contestation of this. Indeed, both George Steiner and Lacan in reflecting on *Antigone* puzzle over a similar impression that the play seems to be saying 'something' about writing. Steiner suggests that this play, along with other Greek tragedies, may be an inscription of the birth of writing. Lacan, consulting Lévi-Strauss and relaying his views, comments: 'Antigone with relation to Creon finds herself in the place of synchrony in opposition to diachrony' (p. 285). Creon is only prepared to recognise one brother's claim to legitimate succession: the father's law cannot accept two twin brothers at the same time, which is what Antigone contests. Steiner states: 'There is, I am persuaded, an underlying sense in which "initial" and determinant Greek myths are myths in and of language, and in which, in turn, Greek grammar and rhetoric internalize, formalize, certain mythical configurations.'[66] He goes on to state: 'Indwelling in our semantics, in the fundamental grammar of our perceptions and enunciations, the Antigone–Creon syntax and the myth in which they are manifest are "specific universals" transformative across the ages.'[67] Some attempt at elaborating these points will be made below.

According to the 'unwritten laws' of Antigone, we could be dealing with a law of synchronicity, of the simultaneous, of co-incidence, of sharing, of the both-at-once. It could be said that the unlegitimised law of literature insists on the coincidence of what is supposed to be mutually exclusive: it affirms the compatibility of the contradictory which thus becomes non-contradictory. This is easily misunderstood, given varying and vague uses of terms such as 'hybridity' and 'undecidability', so let us try to tease out what the compatible contradiction might mean.

To begin with, it is not a case of the *literal*-and-*impossible* conjunction of the mutually exclusive, but of the affirmed potential, the potential as *actually* possible. It concerns, for a start, *mutual potential*, *double possibility*: if *this* is possible, *that* becomes also possible, and if *that* is possible then *this* is possible. As Wilde quipped: 'A truth is that whose contrary is also true'. Each possibility comes to affirm the possibility of the other and, in doing so, the possible becomes not just a hypothetical but that which *may be the case*, may be allowed to be. It concerns 'the what could be with' (and apologies for this being a little clumsy). In particular, the term 'possibility' proves troublesome because it arrives in its actualisation or eventualisation. That said, this – that which may be the case – is not a matter of the any-whatever, anything that may be the case, but the braiding of a specific '*this* could be' with what at this instance becomes its twin (twin twine, double helix), an equally specific – 'and, at the same time' – '*this* could be'. In this, literature perhaps has its 'law' – whereby it is not simply lawless or the undoing of laws – a law of twinship, co-possibility, co-incidence. This coincidence is also crucially a matter of timing because the 'possibilities' do not pre-exist each other, they only occur in arriving together. The 'undecidability' of the literary text is really a critical concept: it is the philosopher or critic who finds the literary text undecidable. On the side of the text's composition, it is not an issue of 'it could be this or it could be that', but 'it *has* to be both specifically this and specifically that' – yes, yes. Literature, it's a fertilised egg … (reception–conception) … which has to work out what it has to be.

The conflict between Creon and Antigone could further be considered in terms of different values accorded to writing. On the side of Creon, there would be writing conceived of in terms of man-made laws and thus a legitimation of writing, say, the formalisation of a grammar, as well as writing as a form of legitimation and verifiability. On the side of Antigone, writing could be said to perpetuate an oral poetics, say, of beseechment, supplication, homage.[68] In *Antigone*, what is thematised is man's transcendence over nature and an attendant pride in the learning and skills of man. This is most obviously so in the ode of the Chorus that is the famous second stasimon of *Antigone*, where man's conquests of the sea and earth are celebrated, the general tenor of which may also be seen to correlate with Hamlet's more tortured 'What a piece of work is a man' (II.ii.303) speech. When Haemon confronts Creon, it is to juxtapose his father's belief in the correctness of a 'single-minded' rational authority with the silenced voices of the people, 'murmurs in the dark' and 'rumour' – what could be interpreted as a folk wisdom. What Haemon says is: 'Father, only the gods endow a man with reason/ … Far be it from me – I haven't the skill,/ and certainly no desire, to tell you when,/ if ever, you make a slip in speech' (lines 764–8). Saying so, he yet goes on to speak of the emptiness of the man who 'thinks that he alone possesses intelligence,/ the gift of eloquence, he and no one else' (lines 791–2), and to speak of the necessity of learning from others. Later, it is Tiresias who comes to challenge Creon:

> You will learn
> when you listen to the warnings of my craft.
> As I sat on the ancient seat of augury,
> in the sanctuary where every bird I know
> will hover at my hands – suddenly I heard it,
> a strange voice in the wingbeats, unintelligible,
> barbaric, a mad scream!
> (lines 1102–9)

When Creon tries to dismiss the shamanistic Tiresias, Tiresias issues a prophesy, one that is to come true (that Creon, with all his insistence on a singularity of inheritance, will lose his son and heir), beginning: 'Then know this too, learn this by heart!' (l.1181). Taking a leap, 'learning by heart', *apprendre par coeur*, is that which Derrida speaks of to advance a notion of the poetic in relation to the poetics of Celan. Derrida writes:

> *Literally*: you would like to retain by heart an absolutely unique form, an event whose tangible singularity no longer separates the ideality, the ideal meaning as one says from the body of the letter. In the desire of this absolute inseparation, the absolute nonabsolute, you breathe the origin of the poetic.[69]

Timothy Clark, elaborating on what Derrida says here, with reference to William Flesch on Longinus, writes: 'Quotation becomes inwardness, originality of feeling, even as this same passion itself becomes a "sense of quotation" – a dictating dictation – as "you will seek to inspire others with the same passion to quote these things".'[70] If Creon may be aligned with man's aspiration towards 'absolute knowledge', Antigone may be aligned, from this perspective, with the 'absolute nonabsolute' and a 'dictating dictation'. In the inseparability of meaning from its expression, there would be absolutely no absolute knowledge: thus, no reason for the suprematism of philosophy. Hegel, in meditating on *Antigone*, speaks of ethical laws that cannot be reasoned with or tested – they just *are*, Hegel emphasises[71] – for this would then be to call into question that which can only be affirmed or received unquestioningly. Such laws (if they are laws) would be absolute, but where there would be a difference between the positions of Antigone (as the absolute nonabsolute) and Creon (as the pure absolute) that Hegel does not address at this point. While for Creon, man-made laws are to be upheld unquestionably, surely dangerously so, it is the 'unwritten laws' – what is learnt by heart, then – that are the undeniable for an Antigone. Creon's position assumes that only man-made laws or what has been inscribed by man can accord with the sacred, that there is nothing of the sacred beyond this. This would seem to have some relevance for distinctions between 'literate' and 'oral' cultures, as will briefly be touched on below.

Appiah, in speaking of differences between Western and African cultural forms of the transmission of knowledge, speaks of how literacy (in the narrow sense) is that which allows for knowledge to be tested, and encourages abstraction and universalisation, whilst in oral cultures what is relayed is the exactitude of 'what the ancestors said'.[72] Now, it is not the case that knowledge is *not tested* within traditional African cultures, for the evidence is that it is. Rather, what I wish to suggest here in a tentative corroboration and elaboration of what Appiah puts forward, is that the *mode of transmitting* knowledge within oral cultures is more 'poetic' than 'scientific', a question of learning by heart. This is but to touch on, without going into, the anthropological debates concerning whether the discourse of oral cultures is to be treated as but 'symbolic' (in an aesthetic and ritualistic sense) or as of a critically epistemological nature or, broadly speaking, as scientific. The point here is that this division may be artificial – as indeed Appiah indicates in his critique of Horton, where Horton tries to separate the scientific from the aesthetic – in that a poetic and ritualised form of transmission does not thereby mean that it is just a 'poetry', a purely symbolic expression, that is being transmitted. Simply, there would be a case to be made for a transmission of *knowledge*, that is poetic in its form of transmission. Appiah writes of an Akan proverb: 'The message is abstract, but the wording is concrete.'[73] Furthermore, such a transmission would be by means of citation, citing as writing and writing as citing. Interweaving this with Appiah's analysis yet further, it is said: 'For if we speak figuratively, then what we say can be reinterpreted in a new context; the same proverb, precisely because its message is not fixed, can be used again and again.'[74] This would be as with a poetic citation, which in its exact wording is yet open to interpretation on the occasion of its usage. The citation is not merely repeated, as in a mindless incantation, it is endlessly reused in new ways. Here, the 'traditional' is dynamic,

Apart from the absolute nonabsolute, Derrida also speaks of the poetic in terms of the injunction: 'Destroy me'. Surely the poetic no more says 'destroy me' than Antigone says 'destroy me'? Is it not rather that a certain envious or secretly insecure philosophy, from Plato onwards, has sought to destroy the poetic? This would be not only to target the poetic as an enemy form of writing – that which does not maintain the separation of speech and writing (you could say the voice is right there in the writing, the oral is precisely preserved and not left behind) – but to target it as a rival form of wisdom.

While Derrida's discussion of the poetic concerns, in particular, a modernist poetics and a thinking of the poetic at a particular date, turning to *Antigone*, it is possible to argue that if Antigone – along with those who support her case, Haemon, Tiresias – is to be aligned with what we, today, might call the poetic, as opposed to Creon's alignment with the rational and technical mastery of man, in Sophocles's play this is also a matter of another wisdom or other wisdoms. That is, Antigone serves to associate that which is to be learnt by heart with: the 'unwritten laws' of the sacred beyond the laws made by man; the divinations and auguries of Tiresias, (in turn associated with the Furies); what is known by the people and to be learnt of others; in short, another ethics and other wisdoms.

That we – readers – today might consider Antigone-as-writing in terms of the poetic, is a point at which to rejoin Rushdie's text.

Rushdie's text then offers us a generalisation of the aesthetic (an aesthetic generalisation of itself), even as there would be its sibling genres, but it is yet, of course, possible to historicise what his narrator says about the aesthetic. Historically speaking, albeit still somewhat generally, we are being offered an understanding of the place and status of art within capitalist societies, where rebellion/alienation is glamorised and fantasised in an aesthetic displacement of politics. The excerpt from *The Ground Beneath her Feet*, cited above, has a few resonances with Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, where the belongers may loosely be translated into the Oedipally fixed or fixated 'paranoiac, reactionary, and fascising pole' pole of society and the non-belongers into the nomadic schizo-revolutionaries of an alternative pole, of which it is written:

> a schizorevolutionary type or pole that follows the *lines of escape* of desire; breaches the wall and causes flows to move … preceding in an inverse fashion from that of the other pole: I am not your kind, I belong eternally to the inferior race, I am a beast, a black [je ne suis pas des vôtres, je suis éternellement de la race inférieure, je suis une bête, un nègre] … The revolutionary knows that escape is revolutionary – *withdrawal*, *freaks*.[75]

And in the passage from Rushdie we have: 'we fly, we flee … we freaks'. However, the comparison is somewhat superficial without a consideration of family histories. Rushdie's narrator, speaks of a line of flight from middle-class Bombay families, the families of the characters Ormus and Rai, to an American culture industry, especially one of pop music and photo-journalism, and so what was experienced as alienation and desire in India is experienced – through its displaced return – as nostalgia in America. Ato Quayson has proposed with respect to histories of colonialism that there is a desire for a future that is 'shaped almost like a nostalgia, but … for a past that has never been one's own in the first place'.[76] This is distinguished from the desire for modernity as a desire to belong in the forms of citizenship and national identity, and Quayson states:

> I am not talking here of Enlightenment discourses of rationality, the nation and citizenship … I am talking of the phenomenon of the totally mediatised nostalgia for commodities and modes of being which produce the desire for what has never been lost, a sense of incompletion that is a figment of desire to prop up the dominance of western modes of cultural consumption.[77]

In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, American popular culture does seem to be very much invested with an immense nostalgia for a past that is not that of the immigrant protagonists even as it might represent a former affect of non-belonging. In this sense, certain American images, and more broadly Western images, have the status of memories, memories always already interiorised and lacking

external referents. Indeed, Ormus 'repeats' Elvis's music without having first heard it. Moreover, one of the major motifs of the text as well as a mode of its composition is a particular and compulsive theft of images. For instance, the narrator, Rai, is a photo-journalist who not only 'steals' images of the experiences of others, but also steals used film from another photographer in order to pass the developed photographs off as his own. And not only that, the whole scene of this theft is written through Rushdie amusingly ripping off James Joyce, as he makes the famous ending of Molly Bloom's monologue describe the narrator's thoughts (p. 244). Throughout the text, cultural icons, especially American ones, are plagiarised, so to speak, in a kind of loving envy.

This question of a nostalgia without a past, as raised by Quayson, is suggestive of an amnesiac postmodernist culture of pastiche, as defined by Jameson,[78] which is indeed a matter of the complicity that Quayson rightly addresses. Interestingly, American culture – especially that of the culture industry – can itself be seen in terms of a nostalgia for a history it feels itself not to have. What happens here, however, is that there is, arguably, the construction of a mythic history in images that sign themselves 'America' – that is, they testify to America as historical origin and are fetishised in that they are 'original' historical or cultural images without origin, like commodities that seem to appear from nowhere.

When Rushdie's narrator, Rai, imagines that all movie-going audiences fall in love with the glamorised images of the outlaws or outsiders they are not, it seems to me, doubtful that this would necessarily be the case of mainstream American-American audiences. Do they not rather identify with the images – lone cowboy, gangster, rebel without a cause – and go: 'that's me, that's us, that's *my* culture'? In fact, what is interesting and complex about this is how American culture represents itself through images, phantasms of freedom – lone cowboy, etcetera – a possible exercise in persuading yourself that you have the freedom that you do not have. Towards the end of this chapter, I will return to this issue in addressing a problematic of, what may be termed, 'infantilisation', a matter of a dream of freedom without freedom. As regards the immigrants that Rushdie describes, American cultural narcissism becomes for them a question of a relation to a narcissism not of one's own. Thus, Rai could be said to fall in love with the way America falls in love with itself, this being the loving envy that I spoke of above. This love of the other's narcissism is admirably generous, but it is not a generosity that is necessarily reciprocated. For instance, when Ormus and Vina become stars because of their musical genius, they are America's stars, made in America. Interestingly, while Ormus, Vina and Rai might start off as, vaguely speaking, schizo-revolutionary nomads in anti-Oedipal flight, when the three come to America they can be seen to constitute a completely phantasmatic Oedipal family. What is acted out, with America as one huge theatrical stage, is a kind of Oedipus complex without memory: Ormus is big Daddy, Vina the adored mother, and Rai is the son who wants to have Vina all to himself and get rid of Ormus. Thus, the quasi-Antigone configuration of twin brothers, an incestuous brother–sister relationship, and anti-Oedipal flight, is eclipsed in the

fantasy of an imaginary family, a family without origins. America becomes the site for a hope of *a family without origins*.

When Deleuze and Guattari speak of a situation in which the objective Oedipal family disappears – that is, in its social form – they maintain that this can prepare for its private and subjective neo-idealisation. What they write of this is similar to Rushdie's account of the publicised private (or privatised public) theatre of images in the passage first cited from the novel. Deleuze and Guattari write:

> We have repudiated and lost all our beliefs that proceeded by way of objective representations. The earth is dead, the desert is growing: the old father is dead, the territorial father … We are alone with our bad conscience and our boredom, our life where nothing happens; nothing left but images that revolve within the infinite subjective representation … We are all Archie Bunker at the theater, shouting out before Oedipus: there's my kind of guy, there's my kind of guy! Everything, the myth of the earth, the tragedy of the despot, is taken up again as shadows projected on a stage.
>
> (p. 308)

I am not proposing the above as a thoroughgoing critical reading of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, but have been making use of a strategically selective use of the text. Although Rushdie dramatises theft and envy, the 'demonic' tricksterish laughter of the text is that it has an endlessly inventive energy of its own beyond a mere postmodernist recycling of images, where accompanying its amnesiac citationality there is also something of the citational passion of 'myth, art, song'. While there would be that to entertain, aspects of the novel are here being brought into a relation with Deleuze's and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* to problematise a thinking of migrancy with respect to questions of a de-politicising aestheticisation of migrancy and, too, of a de-aestheticising politicisation of it that are to receive further treatment. In the earlier citation from *Anti-Oedipus* (p. 277), Deleuze and Guattari pretend to be Rimbaud, queer poet who took himself off to North Africa, when they take on his voice to say 'I am a beast, I am a nigger', Rimbaud writing: 'Oui, j'ai les yeux fermés à votre lumière. Je suis un bête, un nègre.'[79] Rimbaud's gesture could be seen in terms of what became the strategy of queer politics (originally, not the homosexual and lesbian politics it has often been institutionalised as, but an anti-identity street politics), namely, the application to oneself of terms created to stigmatise, to other through stigmatising, so that the phobic abuses lose their power to police identity. The fact that Deleuze and Guattari want to use Rimbaud's words as illustrative of the schizo-revolutionary changes their 'aim' somewhat. It shows that, for them, the schizo-revolutionary is implicitly understood to be a European – 'white' – rebel, where the generalising context makes use of a sort of 'going native' or nativisation in order to polarise European society in terms of its oppressing and repressing 'civilising' formations and the reality of its drives or libidinal flows.

In 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Gayatri Spivak takes Deleuze and Guattari

(along with Foucault) to task for 'an unquestioned valorization of the oppressed as subject', where the oppressed are not only qualified to speak on the basis of 'concrete experience' but seen as capable of giving an 'undeceived' account of it.[80] While the question of the other as subject will be returned to, Spivak's point, at this juncture, concerns how this appeal to the concrete experience of the oppressed allows for the transparency of the intellectual in which the theorists of 'power and desire' may yet be offering *their* valorisation of concrete experience as the *experience of the other*. This question of the experience of the other can be taken in two contrary directions. That is, there may be a projection of experience onto or even, invasively, into the other: an experience forced on the other. And there may, alternatively, be some experience of the other through the means of introjection, a capacity to experience, not just imagine, the experience of another. I take it that Spivak is working with the former, and this does seem of pertinence to the early work of Deleuze and Guattari with respect to colonisations, as will now be explored.

At the end of *Colonial Desire*, Robert Young draws on Deleuze and Guattari to suggest that instead of attributing colonialism to an intending European subject, we should consider its drive in terms of desiring machines: 'the inscription of the flows of desire upon the surface or body of the earth'.[81] I would like to draw out the implications of this by now making use of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The figure of Kurtz in Africa serves well to illustrate the quasi-mad schizo-revolutionary who decodes the codes of his Oedipal civilisation and comes to live for pleasure-consumption in the intensities of libidinal flows. This is his nativisation, his going native. Achebe's response to this is well known; it is along the lines of: get your polymorphously perverse primitivisms off us, off Africa, for we have our own codings, cultures, civilisations. But let us look at what Achebe actually says: 'Africa is to Europe as the picture is to Dorian Gray – a carrier on to whom he unloads his physical and moral deformities so that he may go forward, erect and immaculate.'[82] Achebe could have referred to Jekyll and Hyde (perhaps generally better known as a figure of the double), but it is Wilde's Dorian Gray that he mentions. In our times, the thought of 'Wilde' and the name of 'Dorian Gray' are almost bound to trigger the association of, oh, we know, '*homosexuality*'. It is worth pausing here to consider this issue.

First, it is possible that there is some homophobia in Achebe's response to Conrad, and Conrad's text can be read as 'unspeakably' homoerotic. That aside, given that it is often said that the colonised male subject is deprived of his manhood in relation to the coloniser, the attempt to counter this could produce a homophobia: 'I am not a homosexual, I am a real man'. Indeed, the homophobia of some neocolonial enclaves of African post-colonial societies could partly be understood in these terms particularly when it is claimed, for instance by the Zimbabwean Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, that homosexuality is purely European in origin, even as there is a certain sense in which this is correct. That is, following Foucault, 'the homosexual' is a nineteenth-century European invention, where Foucault's insights are not irrelevant to an African setting.[83] Beyond this, Achebe does have a point in mentioning Dorian Gray.

Looked at in a certain way, the portrait in *Dorian Gray* – Dorian Gray's double – could be said to symbolise not Dorian's perversities so much as standing for the Oedipal father. It is the inverting wit of Wilde to lock the repressive father – the portrait – in the attic, usually the madwoman's plight. Furthermore, it is the father who is put into the closet, so to speak, whereby Dorian is able to enjoy himself like an untramelled desiring machine. In this anarchic hedonism he could be compared to a Kurtz, who could then also be fleeing his ghostly paternal double.

Robert Young suggests we could regard colonialism as a matter of desiring machines on the basis of his study of the obsessive fascination with racial hybridity on the part of European men. If so, colonialism might present itself as an operation of men driven to flee their repressive Oedipal families, be they socially external or psychologically internalised. It is a consideration that could be borne out by a number of literary texts. For instance, in Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy*, there is a scene in which Sissie comes to realise what colonialism is all about. Sissie is in the 'heart of lightness', that is, in the bedroom of a house in Berlin with her German friend. The friend, who lacks any warmth in her life, having a husband who is never around, tries to seduce Sissie. Sissie then has the realisation that colonialism, as an adventuring drive away from home, could be seen as the product of the frigidity of lonely lives in isolated nuclear families, and thus, be understood in terms of a desire to come alive again.[84]

This understanding of colonialism as flight to unfreeze the libidinal flows is not the whole story, of course. There is also colonialism as an economic managerial-bureaucratic machine, symbolised by figures such as the Accountant and the Manager of Conrad's tale. Bringing together these machines, the one of managerial operation and the desiring one, if the latter is a double then there remains something of the paternal ideal to address. Where Said has difficulties with applying Foucault's understanding of power to a colonial context is over Foucault's dismissal of the authorial subject, that imperial subject. Young's use of Deleuze and Guattari, themselves Foucauldian, is as a challenge to Said's *Orientalism* in taking a different tack from it whereby a consideration of the colonial – economic and desiring – machines displaces an intending subject of colonialism, a colonising subject, but it still seems that this subject cannot be done away with. We know that he or it returns. This one that comes back on being killed off is a ghostly ideal, a Derridian spectre. This is also what Kurtz is, a ghost – 'the shade of Mr. Kurtz'[85] – and not just a desiring machine. In *Orientalism*, the coloniser does seem to be a Kurtz-like figure – both learned and immensely eloquent as well as deceitful and power-mad – except without the spectrality of Kurtz. The point being made here relates to the one made in the introduction to the book, namely, that the coloniser retrospectively establishes himself as origin and, thereby, as an ideal origin and origin of ideals. It is furthermore a matter of trying to salvage the good original intentions – the untested ideals of what is *only* an ideal – from the violence of an absolute insistence on the enforced realisation of the ideal. What Kurtz represents is what is first an ideal that is untried and not yet proven, a naive civilising mission that

does not know what it really is or intends to begin with: it is merely a vague, sentimental good intention that does not know the truth of the civilisation that it destines. Kurtz then moves to a rejection – negation, in Hegelian terms – of the naive, empty idealism of the ideal, but where this does not, in fact, lead to the abandonment of the ideal but rather to its absolute enforcement in the all-too-real where Kurtz acts out a becoming-God. The violence of this reality of the paternal ideal, as a will-to-power, needs then be denied in turn – negation of the negation, in Hegelian terms – and thus the original empty ideal re-emerges as a true and necessary civilising ideal that has arrived at a full knowledge of its pure intention. This dialectical outcome is what Conrad shows when he has Marlow tell the Intended, Kurtz's fiancée, that Kurtz's last words were her name: 'the horror' (what his dying phrase actually was), as 'the intended' (her name). This cryptic condensation could be elaborated as follows: looking back, I intended the horror of all this but even though I am the ghostly origin of it all I am not, *myself*, the horror, because that is what I now, at last, understand to be *her* name (the intended), I mean, Female Nature (the horror).

With the above, we have in contradistinction to the desire for a family without origin, explored via Rushdie, what could be called a desire for *origin without family*. Indeed, that is how Deleuze and Guattari present their schizos, citing Artaud: ' "*got no papamummy*" ' (p. 14). This is virtually tantamount to claiming that the self is everything, that it is all of nature, all that there is, or that nature is forced to become a god-self. Thus, the supposed dissolution of the self can become a monstrous arrogance. This is Freud's thoroughly Western and retrogressive understanding of animism as an 'omnipotence of thought', an omnipotence of thought that would pertain only to Western man, one way or another.

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud proposes that there is a principle of an omnipotence of thought in animism, before man surrenders his powers to religious dominion and then to the humility of science. The irony of Freud's formulation is that he accuses the primitive mind of universalising itself as he employs a universalising thought, a Western omnipotence of thought. That is, drawing on Tylor and Frazer, Freud proposes that there are three world pictures: the animistic, the religious and the scientific. However, the scientific world picture is not just a world picture amongst world pictures for it also is what frames and comprehends all three world pictures. Thus, the animistic world picture is included *within* the colonising universalism of rational Enlightenment thought, the framework for understanding everything. In *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz does not really go native but is only thought to do so. He does not live amongst the people of the Congo learning their language, their culture, their history, and, in doing so, learning to live in an African way. In becoming an *origin without family*, he is said to become a god, the god of nature with all its creatures and resources at his disposal. This understanding of a primitivism is arrived at by working back from and within an assumed scientific framework so that animism is thus produced as this regressive arrogation of the powers of nature to the self, as opposed to the arrogation of the powers of nature to God or science. As far as animism goes, it would be more accurate to speak of a recognition of the powers of nature as indeed the

powers of nature, of which man is a part rather than set apart from. Labouring the point, Freud's understanding of animism *in other cultures* is limited to the *going native* of a Kurtz figure.

Freud in speaking of animism is drawing on the anthropological research of James Frazer – in particular, his conception of magical, religious and scientific ways of understanding the world, these categories still being operative today in anthropology and the history of science, albeit with considerable refinements. While Freud is very much drawing on Frazer, he over-simplifies and significantly distorts what Frazer actually proposes. For Frazer, the animistic world picture shares with the scientific one a fundamental endorsement of natural law that the religious world picture is lacking. As Horton summarises Frazer's understanding:

> Thus, magic, the initial stage, is oblivious to empirical data but gets one good mark for entertaining the concept of natural law. Religion, though supposedly one up in the sequence, gets no mark, since it neither takes any notice of empirical data nor entertains a concept of natural law. Finally, science, the culmination of the sequence, gets two good marks … So, instead of a steady process of intellectual development, we have first one step backwards then two steps forward.[86]

Horton immediately goes on to state: 'Frazer offers no justification of this odd feature of his *evolutionary* schema' (my emphasis). That is, if Frazer is proposing an *evolution*, it does not work in a progressive fashion. Moreover, Horton points out that for Frazer the present-day hypotheses of science are not conclusive but bound to be superseded, where Frazer is seen to be open to non-Western thought as, in Mudimbe's phrase, a *gnosis*, some of whose insights may well be recovered at a future date. In Horton's consideration of Frazer as of 'white skin, brown heart', he shows that the assumed political correctness of anti-Frazerians may be deconstructed by attending to their implicit ethnocentricisms, while Frazer's explicit evolutionary ethnocentrism may be deconstructed by the open-mindedness implicit in what he says.

Returning to Freud's use of Frazer, the fact is that Freud elides Frazer's clear assertion that animism and science share a principle of natural law, and for Freud there is no understanding of anything that could properly be conceived of as law within animism. It is this elision that enables him to produce a progressive continuum of intellectual and psychological development (as lacking in Frazer), and thus also a regressive continuum. In addition, it also shows that, for him, Freud, science is, in a certain sense, closer to religion than it is to animism or magic. What is really significant here is that for Freud there is no such thing as recognition of natural law before the then *religiously conceived law* of the father. And this is an assumption deeply inscribed within Western culture, where in complex ways the law is awesomely aligned with paternal divinity to the exclusion of any other sense of the sacred. The law of the father is the first possible true recognition of the law, which implies that Freud unconsciously

assumes nature to be fundamentally chaotic, an assumption that cannot be traced more widely here (but it would relate to his notion of a polymorphously perverse libido that stands in need of Oedipal organisation). Only once this law of laws, the law of the father, has been established can there then be a scientific recognition of natural law. It may seem strange to 'go back' to 'old-fashioned' accounts of animism, but I think it may be that the nature of the assumption involved in Freud's simplifying misreading of animism remains part of the unconscious of some thought in the theoretical humanities, at least, and I also think that contemporary science can continue to speak of itself and conceptualise itself in implicitly theological terms, as Donna Haraway has strikingly shown with respect to biotechnology. Haraway writes:

> After the wounding, after the disaster comes the fulfilment, at least for the elect; God's scapegoat has promised as much. I think contemporary technoscience in the United States is deeply engaged in producing such stories, slightly modified to fit the convention of secular realism.[87]

This deployment of science in complicity with a monotheistic religious logic is part of the ongoing legacy of the second enlightenment. However, the revolutions in scientific thought of the last century have also opened up the possibility, at least, of another enlightenment. As regards the theoretical humanities, there is often a *priority* given to a law of God/the Father/Man/the Human over natural law, which is then too simply and sometimes derogatively just equated with the 'mere empiricism' of science. In the philosophical–theoretical hostility towards science, there seems to be a puzzling ignorance of it (for 'mere empiricism' shows this ignorance) or else an unwillingness to confront the implications of the scientific research of the last century, a desire to retain a certain possession of the truth. These questions, which would need to engage with science studies, are beyond the scope of this work, whilst there will be some moves towards the perspectives of a history of science. The point here is that Frazer at least draws attention to a shared scientific and animistic recognition of natural law, as distinguished from modern scientific empiricism.

What is also to be observed with reference to Freud's schema is that religion is used to separate animism from science. Thus, while a supposedly *scientific* understanding implicitly frames the three world pictures, *religion* is yet accorded a definitive centre function, one that serves precisely to oppose science, on the one hand, and animism or magic, on the other. According to this decidedly non-Frazerian regrouping, animism and religion would share a superstitious belief in mystical powers, whereas religion and science would share a logocentric belief in the law. As such, in Freudian terms, scientific thinking serves to demystify the law of religion and establish the religiously conceived law as a matter of scientific fact. Crudely speaking, this is what Freud's science tries to do, together with the anxious attempts to preserve its decisive separation from anything too occult, shamanistic, magical. What I think Freud's great metapsychological works, 'The Uncanny' and 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', share is a troubled and obsessive

attempt to ward off precisely animism. We will return to aspects of what Freud's thinking of the death drive wards off at the end of this chapter.

The celebration by Deleuze and Guattari of the schizo-revolutionary is a little disturbing in the haste of its enthusiasm and, as others have observed, somewhat claustrophobic: becoming woman, becoming native, becoming other, as a not letting the other be. However, the sources that Deleuze and Guattari draw upon – anti-psychiatry, literature, ethnology – are productively combined and something of an anti-heterosexist discourse is advanced as developed by Guy Hocquenghem in *Homosexual Desire*.[88] All that I wish to suggest with reference to these sources at this point is that their concept of the desiring machine, as an alternative to a thinking of the subject, the very one, may owe something of itself to an African source, apart from the influence of Foucault (although Foucault is brilliantly critical of the supposed liberation of an all-pervasive sexualisation). With respect to a possible African source, it may be that Deleuze and Guattari are inspired by the Dogon philosophy of being as a matter of vital force. They look at Marcel Griaule's study of the Dogon, the aim of which is precisely to present Dogon thought as a serious philosophy and not just as 'primitive belief'. Griaule connects his own work to that of Placide Tempels introducing *Bantu Philosophy* in *Présence Africaine* (1949), as follows:

> Ten years ago [G. Dieterlen's *Les Ames de Dogon* (1941); S. de Ganay's *Les Devises* (1941) and my own *Les Masques* (1938)] had already drawn attention to new facts concerning the 'vital force' … They have shown the primary importance of the notion of the person and his relations with society, with the universe, and with the divine. Thus Dogon ontology has opened new vistas for ethnologists … More recently … the Rev. Fr. Tempels presented an analysis of conception of this kind, and raised the question of whether 'Bantu thought should not be regarded as a system of philosophy'.[89]

However, Deleuze and Guattari only discuss the Dogon with respect to non-Oedipal kinship structures and say nothing about the philosophy of vital force, which could be a little strange given their preoccupation with libidinal flows – or not. That is, in their sexual materialism, which despite all the denunciations of Freud is a privileging of sexual desire much owed to Freud, they may wish to avoid any questions of spirit(s). Their use of research on the Dogon ostensibly interests them as a means of refuting the assumed necessity of Oedipal codings, while the question of how Dogon *philosophy* (the very point of Griaule's work being that it is such) might relate to their philosophy is bypassed. Sometimes I get the impression that certain French thought – and much more generally, Western thought – struggles to reinvent a forgotten Africa, an Africa-less Africa, where the interplay of forces, and so on, are put forward as 'new' ideas. What Deleuze and Guattari conclude from their psycho-ethnological study is:

> Desiring machines function within social machines, as though they maintained their own régime in the molar aggregates that they form at the level

> of large numbers. Symbols and fetishes are manifestations of desiring-machines. Sexuality is by no means a molar determination that is representable in a familial whole: it is the molecular undetermination functioning within social and secondarily familial aggregates.
>
> (p. 183)

That symbols and fetishes are manifestations of desiring-machines in African societies is an ungrounded assumption. This privileging of sexual desire in *Anti-Oedipus* is to be tested further on, while for the moment it brings us back to a Dorian Gray as desiring machine.

With respect to Achebe's statement, the difference between a Kurtz and a Dorian Gray is that the latter character does not go pseudo-native. It may be this that makes Wilde's text able to communicate, telepathically speaking, much better with African literature than a *Heart of Darkness*. This enigmatic statement needs wait for a future reading, while some indication of what is meant can be given. Jean Genet, in fact. He is one to be pointed out. The point is that Genet was in fact homosexual; whatever we may want to think homosexuality is, he managed to live this. This queerness was not merely something hidden inside heterosexuality to bind it together, nor was it merely an undoing or decoding of heterosexuality. Genet – homosexual, orphan, thief, outlaw, outsider, nomad – who would seem to be not part of the family, this anti-Oedipal non-belonger, was yet able to create codes by which he could live. In this, a *subjectification* of non-belonging, there would seem to be less danger of a subject-displacement that leads to a usurpation of others. As regards Achebe's concerns, what *is* projected onto Africa is the *repressed* homosexuality of the strongly father-identified Western heterosexual subject. The dreaming up of a perverse Africa as the effect of a Western male heterosexual imaginary will be confronted in the next chapter.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Genet is, surprisingly, not mentioned (unless his work is anonymously deployed in ways that I have missed). But then Deleuze and Guattari are more interested in the decoding operations of madness for which Artaud and Schreber serve as the prime examples: Schreber is the most cited name in the text after Freud, Marx and Nietzsche. In Freud's astute reading of Schreber's case, his paranoia is seen to be induced through a disavowed homosexuality. Deleuze and Guattari are against a re-Oedipalising reading of Schreber inasmuch as he is seen to be an escapee from all that. However, if we fail to see Schreber as 'part of the family', then what are we to do with his fantasy of having been chosen by God to perpetuate a new race? For Bessie Head this becomes a matter of the politics of madness and the madness of politics. Briefly, ridiculously so, Head leads us to consider that it is a question of not excluding anyone from the family, where the emphasis is on the belonging of those said not to belong, against *all* the stigmatising labellings, including even that of 'fascist'. In addition, what Head leads us to consider, also an insight of psychoanalysis, is how we tend to run into the very things we try to flee. It is with this in mind that I wish to use *A Question of Power* to comment on *Anti-Oedipus*.

Deleuze and Guattari, advancing their notion of the 'schizo' as *Homo natura* write:

> Not man as king of creation, but rather as the being in intimate contact with the profound life of all forms or all types of beings, who is responsible for even the stars and animal life, and who ceaselessly plugs an organ-machine into an energy-machine, a tree into his body, a breast into his mouth, the sun into his asshole: the eternal custodian of the machines of the universe. (p. 4)

What would nature think of this? Odd question, perhaps, but this is what Head writes:

> It was one thing to adopt generous attitudes, at a distance. It was another to have a supreme pervert thrust his soul into your living body. It was like taking a walk on slime; slithering, skidding and cringing with a deep shame. It was like no longer having a digestive system, a marvellous body, filled with a network of blood vessels – it was simply having a mouth and an alimentary tract; food was shit and piss; the sky, the stars, the earth, people, animals were also shit and piss.[90]

For Deleuze and Guattari, being at one with nature is presented in terms of an auto-erotic self-penetration. What was man's sole-soul-being – kingliness – re-enters nature, which means that at the very same time that man enters nature he becomes what he enters: he enters himself. What Head writes is almost a response to this but given, a little bit, as if she or her protagonist were nature's ghost or spirit or voice. That is, if man becomes the nature that he enters then his body takes the place of all nature, as if he were only god's body, the body of the father preoccupied only with its eternal self-enjoyment. In fact, Schreber is applauded in *Anti-Oedipus* for discovering that God is the eternal enjoyment of himself. This seems to be what Head's text protests against as if nature itself could cry out against this use of itself as the body of god. In truth, Head gives the very body a voice, what is termed the '*living* body' beyond just the sexual body, so that it can speak out against its obscene (claustrophobic) colonisation by the desiring subject who cannot be assumed to be (at) one with the entire body in all its intricate computations and workings to keep life going. Head's text points out that the body is a complex biological system – 'a marvellous body, filled with a network of blood vessels' – that cannot simply be reduced to only a desiring principle. Or, rephrasing this slightly, in the above extract, the objection is to consider the entirety of the life of the body in terms of only one or two of its organs, those associated with appetite. Moreover, it is not just a question of a reductive thinking of the body, but of reducing the entirety of nature to a body, thinking of nature as but a body. Here, what regulates pleasure is not a law of the father, nor is it a death drive, but a respect for life. I imagine that Head would perhaps have complained of Deleuze and Guattari's statement something

along the lines of: what kind of custodian of nature plugs the sun into his asshole, pleasurable as this might be? Head's text could more generally be said to be offering a critique of 'immaculate conception', or of Man as sole origin.

Some of the issues for consideration can now be summarised. While in Rushdie's novel non-belonging is aestheticised, in *Anti-Oedipus* it is naturalised. Moreover, the different attempts to flee the family, to migrate, seem to lead us to different cases of fetishism. In Rushdie's case, we are dealing with a universalisation of commodity fetishism and the worship of images generated by the culture industry. In the text, society becomes a baroque theatre of phantasms: all the world's a stage, where you can play at Oedipus or Orpheus or Hamlet or whatever phantasmatic allegory of lost origins and family fantasies. However, this is only a partial reading, as I have tried to indicate, for the text also implosively folds into this theatre apocalyptic images of outsideness, the inassimilable, as if this stage world could be violently cracked by the blasting into the present of denied other worlds. Thus, the novel's multi-cultural 'progressive hybridity' is rendered precarious by that of which it has no memory. In particular, there is an emphasis on the uncontrollable force of nature, given in the earthquakes of the story and linked with the death of Vina, maternal figure of mixed race or dual origin. In short, the fantasy of the family without origin is menaced by that which its absolute universalisation would leave absolutely no room for. In what has been looked at from *Anti-Oedipus*, we have rather, what may be termed, a 'regressive hybridity' which leads to a Western-style imagining of 'omnipotent animism', an origin prior to family, which is not so much animism – of which Head's text speaks – as an anti-cultural sexualising of nature as perverse jouissance (a sexual excess that, for a Lacan or a Conrad, necessitates the curbing of the pleasure principle). Both 'the family without origin' and 'the origin without family' push against the constraints of the family. Resisting both the universalisation of the family and the abolishment of the family, we could start to think again of the extended family. The sense of the outside in Rushdie's text and the interest in Dogon kinship structures in *Anti-Oedipus* could point us in such a direction.

I have not been trying to target this early work of Deleuze and Guattari to discredit them more generally, for there is much to be said for the way in which they challenge the disconnections of analyses of family normalisation and of social production, whilst their concepts of decoding and recoding, and deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation are useful. This critique is just to show what it means to work with a logic of regression taken from Freud, even as the attempt is made to revalue and generalise 'regression' and 'madness' in a positive way. There is a kind of youthful avant-garde impulse in the text in which there may be some desire to 'scandalise' conventional society. Rimbaud's 'I am a nigger' is not a sensationalist statement, for in his defiant poem he goes on to speak of being of an 'oppressed race' (a possible reference to his homosexuality, and a possible statement of common cause amongst the oppressed), and he goes on to remind those who use this term 'nigger' of their barbaric history in the torture of slaves. *Anti-Oedipus* in trying to endorse the polarised extreme of the Oedipal

father ends up only re-finding a paternal god in the real of schizophrenia, and any chance of political revolutionary resistance is then lost. The text, at times, seems even to echo the futurist Manifestos of Marinetti, and a proto-fascist futurism in general, with its emphasis on the machine and the anti-capitalist celebration of desire. The problem with *Anti-Oedipus*, for all its exuberant anti-fascist revolutionary impulse, is that it fails to pause over how and why it is that fascism and psychosis come to recapitulate each other in being opposed. Before this can be broached more fully, there is more to be worked through. But the question to bear in mind is whether this is a matter of the extremes of a rejection of fetishism.

Fetishism and a politics of the other

I would like now to come back to *Glas* in order to treat it in a less improvisational way than earlier. In *Glas*, Derrida examines Hegel's thinking of the family: he looks at Hegel's family alongside Hegel's discussions of the family, and considers not only the concept of the family in Hegel but how conceptuality may be a familial means of thinking in Hegel's system. This is arranged in one column while another column is erected to display fragments from the writings of Genet. What Derrida could be said to be doing is juxtaposing a thinking of the family and family-thinking alongside the need to rethink fetishism, as that which possibly remains both inassimilable as well as unsurpassable in a thinking of the family. Since *Glas* works a lot by pastiche and fragments of cut-off commentary, it could be said to resist a unified, comprehensive account of fetishism. Perhaps it mimics or just partakes of (inasmuch as fetishism is already a form of mimicry) the fetishistic attention to the fascinating bit, the (split-off) fragment itself, the very piece that captivates and mesmerises. The text stresses the *this* and the *that*, the *ça*, of the non-substitutable substitute or the substitute that is no substitute but, itself, 'the very thing' you want it to be. That said, fetishism is given as a bit more than 'a remains' to be thought, and a remains-to-be-thought, for there is also a commentary offered. Much later, in *Specters of Marx*, Derrida speaks of resuming the project begun in *Glas*, namely, the attempt to propose a general economy of fetishism. While this work will not be able to include a reading of *Specters of Marx*, merely for reasons of length, I will begin here to expound on and to question a little what this general economy might signify.

First, if we are dealing with a generalised economy, a fetishism-in-general, this would presumably be to assume a genre-ality of fetishism. While *Glas*, as already mentioned, resists a unified picture – say, a world picture – of fetishism, the question of what would constitute this genre-ality of fetishism remains to be thought, perhaps always, given, for instance, the problems of framing and the idiosyncratic or idiomatic attachments to the fetish. Nonetheless, speaking generally, what would be the overall genre of fetishism? Well, let us break this question up. Among fetishisms, we speak, for example and not exclusively, of sexual fetishism, commodity fetishism, and the fetishism of certain religious idolatries or magical practices, for instance in African and other cultures. If there is a

fetishism-in-general, this would be to assume that such fetishisms are related or capable of being related: they would belong to the family 'fetishism'. As in the question of Freud's three world pictures, where the scientific one frames all three, would one kind of fetishism serve as both frame of the whole and part of the whole? What would be the law of this genre, or what would be the part that envelopes the whole? The envelope, does it have a sex, do you think? In 'The Law of Genre', it is christened 'invagination' and maybe invagination is a transexual operation, the magical or mystical or technological making woman of man.

Returning to *Glas*, there is a section towards the end that moves from a selective consideration of Marx on religion and humanism – The Holy Family and holy families – to selected aspects of Hegel's discussion of fetishism in African cultures to a rethinking of fetishism in terms of Freud and alongside comments on splices of Genet. I want now to select further from these selections.

Apropos the brief consideration of Marx, Derrida writes:

> To found *or* to destroy religion (the family production) always comes to wanting to reduce fetishism. Fetishism, to form against itself the unanimity of founders and destroyers, must indeed somewhere constitute the opposing unity: the unveiling of the column, the erection of the thing itself, the rejection of the substitute … for or against religion, for or against the family – will the economy of metaphysics, the philosophy-of-religion, ever have been tampered with?
>
> (pp. 206–7)

Thus, fetishism, in that it unites those 'for' and those 'against': '*must* constitute the opposing unity'. It is given as an effect of the law of opposition, in which may be found its law. This opposing unity is the opposite of those who oppose fetishism and also, it could therefore be assumed, a composite of the opposites that are opposed. A little further on, this 'opposing unity' comes to be reformulated as a 'singular heterogeneity'. So much seems to hinge on how this term may be elaborated. Derrida goes on to give us excerpts from Hegel on Africa, and although Derrida does not go into the implications of what Hegel is saying here at any length, we may see that for Hegel there is nothing 'proper' about African fetishism for, it would seem, it lacks an economy. Here, anything goes as far as the fetish goes – fetish objects can be substituted for other fetish objects – and what the fetish signifies has no constant meaning either. Hegel's account of African fetishism begs the question of whether what he speaks of can be called fetishism. In a contradiction that is typical of Hegel on Africa, we are given an excess of fetishism that is not even 'proper' fetishism (if there is such a thing): even the supposed falsity of fetishism is a false falsity. For Hegel, Africans have no concept of the sacred (so he arbitrates), and therefore their worship, their religion cannot count as such. It is not even a case of worshipping false divinities, for it is the worship itself that is said to be not truly worship at all. This is because for Hegel there has to be a particular understanding of Spirit (one that

he, himself, can understand) before there can be any worship. It would be possible to suggest that Spirit has to be familiar to Hegel, he who professes to be so familiar with Spirit. Moreover, Hegel believes that you can only worship something that you hold superior to yourself. In short, it seems preposterous to Hegel that man might worship spirits in nature, something so 'unfamilial' and 'inferior' to man.

This surely gives some pause for thought. Here, we might think the economy of metaphysics, the 'philosophy of religion' has been tampered with: 'will the economy of metaphysics, the philosophy-of-religion ever have been tampered with?' Animism? African religions? Buddhism? Aspects of Hinduism? What is the family of religion? Judaism–Christianity–Islam, the family religion of religions of the family? What of their mystical self-tamperings? What of that which remains unfamilial, strangely unfamilial in their teachings?

Derrida's comment, following Hegel's remarks, is:

> What is it to speculate concerning the fetish? For such a question, the headless head [*le cap sans cap*] is undecidability. Despite all the variations to which it can be submitted, the concept fetish includes an invariant predicate: it is a substitute for the thing itself as center and source of being, the principle, the archon, what occupies the centre function in a system, for example the phallus in a certain phantasmatic organisation.
>
> (p. 209)

Derrida thus gives us what is invariable in the usual thinking of fetishism, given almost as a dictionary definition, no mean feat. However, what is strange about the giving of this definition is that it does not really reflect back on what Hegel has just been offered as saying about Africa. It would appear that some pausing here would raise the question of whether the African fetishism Hegel describes is not 'fetishism proper' inasmuch as it may not be governed by the *invariance* of a centre function, of a single and central source of being, not governed phantasmatically, for example, by the phallus. This 'invariance' would seem to concern a desire for the absolutely static, that which would 'be' but a resistance to change. We will return to this at various points and meanwhile keep following Derrida's leads.

Derrida goes on to propose that against the usual opposition of the fetish to the non-fetish, the genuine thing, within a space of truth which is that of good sense, we might find just enough in Freud's thinking of fetishism to construct a new concept of fetishism that would no longer depend on the opposition of the false and the true. Here, we would not be working with contradictions, but with the 'single heterogeneity' of decidable and undecidable statements that may be related to each other. Derrida, commenting on cases of fetishism that Freud says concern both at once an affirmation and denial of castration, writes: 'This at-once constitutes an economy of the undecidable … The at-once puts itself in the service of a general economy whose field must then be opened' (p. 210). So, here we have it: the general economy of fetishism. Let us take stock.

First, this 'at-once' interests me, given what I was trying to say earlier about the synchronicity at stake in the 'law' of literature. However, where I have some difficulties with this is that the 'at once' seems to concern only the binding of the presence of something with its own absence. That is, something which is binds with 'that which it is not', where this which it is not is not any other but merely its own negation, or better, negative inversion (invagination) of itself. It is possibly this which ensures that heterogeneity remains yet singular, a differing of the same. Derrida seems concerned to maintain a certain unified fetishism – as opposed, let us say, to the all over the place 'fetishism', one seemingly without an economy, of Hegel's Africans (which is to say nothing of African cultures). The fetishism that Derrida wants to propose is by way of Freud, which is to say that it is by way of a thinking of *sexual* fetishism, even as Derrida says its 'field must then be opened', or opened up. That is, this general economy derives from a sexual economy even as this is to be generalised beyond sexuality. The unity of this fetishism becomes a matter of binding contraries against their opposibility, so that we would get 'the undecidable mobility of the fetish, its power of excess in relation to the opposition (true/nontrue, substitute/nonsubstitute, denial/affirmation, and so on)' (p. 211). (What I want to know is how this mobility would relate to the invariant.) Derrida goes on to say: 'The argument of the girdle, the sheath *organises* the headless head of this discourse' (p. 211). Derrida is referring here to Freud's example of the man who, by means of an athletic support girdle (that Derrida wants to speak of a 'sheath' suggests a logic of invagination), could entirely hide his genitals which allowed for the supposition that women may be both castrated and not castrated and that men may be castrated too, without their being castrated. What this example shows is that undecidability is secured through rendering the phallus invisible, and it is only hidden, not lost. Or, as Derrida touches on, it is a pretending to lose the phallus, a faking of castration. First, this trick means that the pretence of losing the phallus will be precisely the means of not losing it at all, or at least its all. This quasi-castration, the pretence of being a woman, and the hiding or rendering invisible of the phallus in order to keep it enigmatically or to keep its enigma could be said to be fairly general preoccupations of deconstruction. In *Glas*, Derrida moves on from Freud on fetishism to talk about Kant, for whom God is hidden and unknown, as is the God of Judaism. Here we begin to have an opening of the field of the general yet sexual economy, where it may be that the religiously conceived law of a single origin already determines the science of sexuality. This coinciding repetition of the sexual and the theological may be glossed in a provisional reading: God/the phallus is invisible but not non-existent and thus we can continue to believe in that which we may doubt both the presence and the absence of. Perhaps, the references to the headless head in the above are references to circumcision as a kind of feigned or semi-castration. If so, the hidden God/phallus might be said to effect a sacrifice that allows what is threatened to be maintained. I will speak a little of the implications of this particular take on a general economy further on. So far, I have just been trying to point out that Derrida's attempt to rethink fetishism gives a seeming priority

to a sexual discourse as frame of reference (a question of what it might mean to privilege this, as has so often been the case) and that this sexual frame of reference is aligned with a particularly Kantian–Judaic appreciation of religion. This is not to suggest that Derrida is 'wrong' in his attempt to propose a *general* economy of fetishism, but to alert us to the fact that the limits of this generality could invite further specification as well as speculation. What might be emerging is some thought of a God that pretends to be a woman. As for further speculation, this general economy would seem to be a capitalist one where this ought to leave room for what this work is slowly trying to re-introduce the possibility of, a certain communism of fetishism.

Now, this 'invisibility' that allows for undecidability is thought according to a logic of absence and presence, as the Freudian discourse shows. There is another kind of invisibility that I wish to try to address, as that which the *critical* subject-plus-unconscious, cannot see. The logic of this invisibility is that of what I will call 'the blindspot'. However, in order to manoeuvre a position for revealing this, it is necessary to consider the undecidability of presence and absence further.

In amongst the passages on fetishism that have been considered above, Derrida issues the following imperative: 'Regard the holes, if you can' (p. 210). If I can, what would I see? Something missing? … Something amiss … a Miss Genet … a miscegeny? Sorry to get carried away; what I really wanted to say is that I-me-I would see a my-Genet. But, first, let us insist on it, regard the *holes*. When Derrida asks this of us, he is asking, I believe, not that we simply register that any text is selective and partial so that we would need to be aware that other things have been cut off and left out. That would be a reasonably obvious point, and besides, we would still just have the whole text full of holes without *seeing* the holes, as opposed to surmising them. When Derrida says 'if you can', he indicates that what is at stake is the near impossible seeing of a hole, an absence. That is, how *see* what is not there? Surely, Derrida is then asking us to see ghosts. The injunction is to see the invisible, this invisibility. See a ghost, if you can. Since the way of broaching this is via Freud's theory of castration, the issue will be developed or staged roughly in these terms.

Let us say, castration is nothing more than a *trompe l'oeil*, a trick of the eye. Lacan's concept of anamorphosis is quite close to such a proposition. In summary, what is seen to begin with is a narcissistic image of perfect completeness – say, a beautiful woman or the self's narcissistic reflection – and then, in the moment of anamorphosis, in a sudden shift of perspective or blink of an eye – this narcissistic effect collapses and the image dissolves in front of the subject's eyes. He, in likelihood a 'he', sees 'castration' or 'the flaw' as loss of idealised self-image, a sudden death, complete being as not-being as non-being. I want to stress what is, from a subject-centred perspective, overlooked in this. First, man seeing himself sees himself as a 'complete woman' or else he sees woman as he sees himself, as complete. Or, more truly, as Elizabeth Cowie argues, this would concern the archaic production of the ideal ego for both sexes, whilst I am following a masculine trajectory here as well as that which strategically departs from a psychoanalytic account.[91] Then, on registering that the image that he

sees is not a perfect or ideal reflection, in noticing that something is amiss, he is unable to acknowledge that what it is that he sees might be the *actuality of another being*: one that may well resemble him but is other than him. All 'man' can see is the absence of himself or lack in the other. What gets lost here is the moment between narcissistic reflection and the thought of 'not me' which is the moment in which the surprise or shock of there being another there may be registered: being as incomplete and not completed, in that there are other living beings. Thus, woman or, far more generally, other-living-being becomes merely the empty signifier of mortality or a death threat. As far as a classical psychoanalytic understanding goes, the perception of lack would introduce the realisation that neither self nor other is complete or flawless, where fetishism could work to restore an idealisation. Elizabeth Cowie offers a finely non-reductive psychoanalytic understanding of a sexual economy of fetishism in *Representing Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis*, whereas this work is not seeking to disavow a recognition of lack but to de-emphasise its significance as a means of preparing for an African inscription of fetishism, as will unfold.

Now, as regards such a scenario, it seems to me that what might be proposed with respect to 'seeing the holes' is that we focus the gaze on the morphosising moment between complete presence and complete absence. However, what is seen here is not another living being, as such, in that it could be assumed that the question of being is addressed in terms of self-presence and absence. I would say, then, that *the spectre is a blur* or that the seeing of ghosts could be regarded as a question of blurred vision. Or, staying with the Freudian discourse, it is a matter of the going and coming back of the phallus: it fades and comes back and fades again (which could also be thought of in terms of erection and loss of erection). Just as in the manner of a ghost, it fades and comes again. It is a bit like the magic trick of a disappearing act in which something is conjured away, but not really, for it has just been hidden by a sleight of hand and can be brought back. What this implies is that when we see the other being we do not see other living being but just the ghosts of ourselves (the other as my ghost?) or the ghostliness of what we took to be the self. While this is certainly much better than aligning other-living-being with death, and while I am not sure of the reading attempted, I think we are probably still dealing with the persistent situation of man and his double. Indeed, the double is just an uncanny and ghostly other self that is emphatically not another 'self'.[92] Moreover, if the phallus, for example, is the invariant, how could it come and go; what would make it move? That is, the invariant would seem to be time without movement, a sheer endurance, and what is mysterious about ghosts is a question of energy or, in Head's phrase, a question of power.

This question of seeing neither being as full presence nor then non-being, but ghosts, and maybe ghosts swarming all around us, constantly besetting us as we move about the world, could take us in the direction of some African literature, but where ghosts are considered rather as spirits. As John Mbiti writes: 'The spiritual world of African peoples is very densely populated with spiritual beings, spirits and the living dead.'[93] However, when we look into it, we may find that

there is some disagreement as to what is meant by a ghost. One consideration to raise here is that the ghost is perhaps what was a complete(d) being: an after-effect. Spirits stay amongst the living. What follows will be a brief distraction from what is being looked at in *Glas* for the sake of a possible offsetting by which a blindspot may be seen. See a blindspot, if you can.

Amos Tutuola in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* writes: 'These ghosts were so old and so weary that it is hard to believe that they were living creatures.'[94] There, in a sentence, you have it. These ghosts, hard as it is to believe, are living creatures. Interestingly, it becomes almost a point of translation. Imagining a mock-anthropological encounter, the Western anthropologist might say: 'Where you see and speak of other "living creatures" or "spirits" as other beings, even other *subjects*, so to speak, we sometimes speak of "non-being" or "ghosts".' While the African anthropologist (not native informant) might say: 'Where you talk of "non-being" or "ghosts", we speak of spirits or the actuality of other being, of subjects, so to speak, beyond your the one-and-only subject.' But, of course, I am staging this simply to try and dislodge the ethnocentric perspective. Let us return to Tutuola. Tutuola, in his first novel, *The Palm Wine Drinkard*, is engaged in a certain exercise in translation in that he assigns himself the project of telling certain Yoruba 'tales', if that is only what they are, in English. While in this novel strange creatures are encountered, Tutuola does not write of ghosts. He speaks, rather, of spirits. *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* is his second novel and it may be that the use of the term 'ghost' is a result of European responses to his acclaimed and widely talked about first novel, or it may be that the spirits of the first novel are something other than the ghosts of the second. In both novels, the creatures are presented in a similar manner but the bush of ghosts represents a different topography from the countryside in general, being a taboo area of possibly the most dangerous spirits (the novel concerns a child learning to understand the nature of hatred and evil), and possibly also an area in which the dead are buried. At any rate, it is a zone set off from the usual social zones. Still, the ghosts encountered are not ghostly in the Western sense. There are many kinds of ghosts and ghostesses, smelling-ghosts, disgusting-ghosts, homeless-ghosts, 'spider-eating' ghosts, short ghosts, and so on, who have their own different personalities, customs and towns. In short, there are living cultures of ghosts. As one reviewer puts it: 'This is a self-consistent world complete with towns, currency, wars, husbandry, its own Directorate of Medical Services and a special branch of the Methodist Church. There are some ex-human ghosts, but most are non-human *living creatures* [my emphasis], not always immortal.'[95] In *The Palm Wine Drinkard*, the one thing that distinguishes the dead (who are neither absent nor ghostly) from the living is not that they have ceased 'to be' but that they have different customs, say, a different way of *carrying on*, from the living. In particular, interestingly, they are considered to be retrospective in relation to the living. This raises the question of a different ontological understanding of being, one which is not opposed to non-being.

In *The Palm Wine Drinkard*, the hero sets off on a journey in search of his palm wine tapster who has died, and many strange beings are encountered on this

journey, be they people, beasts or other kinds of being. A number of Western critics have read this text as describing a journey into the underworld or as some form of surreal fantasy, tacitly assuming that we are either dealing with the mystical-religious or the repressed-unconscious. However, it could be proposed that such assumptions are far too hasty and overlook what the text shows us in a far more empirical way. If I can try to match this perspective, then I would suggest that the narrator is like an amateur ethnologist and natural philosopher who, in traversing a worldly but unfamiliar terrain, comes across peoples, species, events and stories that he encounters in a startling manner for the first time. In other words, he encounters other beings and ways of life in the world that are foreign to him. In these encounters no presuppositions are entertained and the hero does not project his own cultural beliefs onto what he encounters, although the text is also a self-reflective one as regards the higher knowledge, including an ethical consciousness, as well as the survival tactics gained from the encounters. As regards the empirical nature of the text, the bizarre – the alien – is presented to us in a factual way with, also, very frequent factual references to the co-ordinates of time, space, size, speed, and so on. In addition, when Tutuola was interviewed about a seemingly arbitrary sequence in the visiting of towns in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, his reply was that: 'That is the order in which I came to them.'[96] Any explorer asked to justify his or her sequence of discoveries on a journey might say the same thing, a matter of affirming what happens to you rather than what you intend. The point to be made is that Tutuola's writings show an alert receptiveness or openness to an encounter with other forms of life. In aesthetic terms, the technique used could be considered in terms of defamiliarisation, although we could also speak of the attempt to capture something in its unfamiliarity which is often, rather, a matter of a capacity to be captivated than of capturing. Indeed, Tutuola's heroes move from one literal captivation by a creature or a spirit to another. It could be said that a creative empathy is combined with a scientific curiosity, together with reflections of an ethico-philosophical nature. At any rate, the text could not be adequately accounted for in terms of the conventional psychoanalytic concepts of repression, fantasy, wish fulfilment, and so on.

Something that is striking in Tutuola criticism is that a certain 'blurring effect' is testified to. Kingsley Amis, whilst praising Tutuola lavishly, also states:

> Mr Tutuola's book is a severe test of our originality as readers, of our ability to throw all our preferences and preconceptions out of the window when the need arises. It will probably only go to show that I can't do this if I say that my interest flags when I read something that so rarely evokes *life as I know it*, and if I anticipate a possible objection by pleading that even misery, pain and the rest cannot be universal and become *blurred* in a strange context.[97]

Testifying, with honesty, to the sceptic's inability to read or receive the other, he sees then just a blur, a ghost, instead of the other as another subject. An anonymous newspaper correspondent, in an article on Tutuola, writes:

> The essential difference between them [Tutuola and 'the imaginative child' that he is being compared with] is that the average child's creative powers are dulled by the *impact* of adultness: the vision is *blurred*, then lost for ever. Tutuola, by chance or genius, has preserved the vision.[98]

Rejecting the colonial infantilising move, we could say that Tutuola is seen as seeing what the Western subject – after the impact (castration-death threat) of adulthood – can only see as a blur or else completely fail to see. Whereas Western critics tend to emphasise and praise what they see as Tutuola's fertile imagination and the fantastic or surreal aspects of his text – in other words, correlate the text with what for them is the unconscious as an effect of repression – African critics have responded by saying that Tutuola's texts are not primarily works of the imagination (without denying that they have imaginative elements) but based on a common Yoruba cultural fund. Babasola Johnson, objecting to a reviewer's praise of Tutuola's first novel (clearly afraid of Tutuola being used to typify a certain African semi-literacy, as well as possibly a cultural in-betweenness) concludes his criticisms with this enjoinder and pointer: 'Perhaps your reviewers will try to be more factual.'[99] While the context of the statement has it refer to an acknowledgement of Tutuola's indebtedness to a wider Yoruba culture, of which he is claimed to be an insufficiently faithful translator, the wider implication is that the material covered by Tutuola cannot be reduced to the world of the imaginary. That is, what may be begged is the question of how the stories may be read for what they say factually, be this of content or mode of presentation.

One of the tales that Tutuola retells in *The Palm Wine Drinkard* is that of 'The Complete Gentleman' who becomes a skull, a story that seems to be fairly widely disseminated, with variations, in a West African context. I want to draw on this story as a counterpoint to the anamorphosis from 'being' to 'non-being' in Western lore. In this story, a perfectly beautiful gentleman comes to town. He is perfect because he is complete, as in the narcissistic images of completion referred to earlier: 'He was a beautiful "complete" gentleman, he dressed with the finest and most costly clothes, all the parts of his body were completed, he was a tall man but stout.'[100] A young woman falls in love with him and elopes with him. It transpires, however, that the beautiful complete gentleman is not complete at all, and as he takes the woman to his home he discards pieces of his body until he becomes just a skull, and so the woman finds it is 'death' she has married. Different kinds of interpretations can and have been attached to this cautionary tale. In the light of the previous discussion, we could see the story as offering a slow motion version of anamorphosis, the *trompe l'oeil*. The in-vain narcissistic image gives way to a vision of death. However, forcing a psychoanalytic reading of 'castration' on to this would be quite hard. Well, we might perhaps say that the woman sees in the complete gentleman a fantasy of her own perfect completion only to learn that she is castrated, lacking and mortal. Except for the fact that the story does not quite work that way for it is only the beauty of man that is called into question for concealing the process by which it

is made and can be unmade and, significantly, remade in that the skull is able to resume the form of a gentleman. The 'image' of incompletion/undoing/death is a quite literal one – a skull – which is to say that lack or death is not projected onto the woman. In addition, the anamorphosis is not some amazingly swift 'eye-blink' or sudden flash but a gradual process in which we can see the gentleman gradually relinquish his acquired-borrowed form, as well as re-create it. Furthermore, in the story, the Skull is not simply 'death' as absence – the gentleman as skull remains an animated captor of the woman – and the movement between 'Skull' and 'Complete Gentleman' is not a blur but this closely observed process of the combining and dismantling of body parts: 'When he reached where he hired the left foot, he pulled it out, he gave it to the owner and paid him, and they kept going; when they reached the place where he hired the right foot, he pulled it out and gave it to the owner and paid for the rentage' (p. 20). And so on. What I wish to suggest is that we might just see here a shuttling between living and dying where death is not the *final* form. Rather, out of a minimal form of existence new life is woven in an increasing combination of forms or body parts until a final or complete form is attained. Once this has been attained, this final stage of a life form, there can only be a process of de-composition towards re-composition because at no point can there be a cessation of life which is a necessarily ongoing process. Here, this process of de-composition and potential re-composition is closely *observed* and thus the vital stages of it. As an aside, Hegel's discussion of 'Observing Reason' pivots around a discussion of the observation of skull-bones, whereby we are able to see spirit as embodied in a thing, the skull. When you try to picture perfection, completed being, you end up with a skull. Hegel goes on to dismiss a merely pictorial form of grasping this embodiment of spirit, differentiating between a high and low form of thinking as that which makes for the dismissal, as follows: 'Nature naively expresses [this distinction] when it combines the organ of its [its?] highest fulfilment, the organ of generation [the?], with the organ of urination [the?].'[101] So, Hegel choses *this* bodily organ to *illustrate* the erection of the conceptual over the pictorial: he thinks with his phallus at its most 'complete'? (No wonder he gets so irritable – thinking with such a bursting bladder!) As for me, I like this lowly wee p-thinking, this pthought, whereby the pictorial or the literary may work to un-do and re-do the conceptual. Concepts may be said to try and fix the truth for a purely mental understanding where the truth is too mobile for the conceptual.

Perhaps the silliness of Nature is that (s)he has no idea that the penis should be strictly, rigidly, invariant. With respect to a phallic consciousness, the Hegelian dialectic does seem to be that which keeps straining to relieve itself of unbearable tensions in a manner that corresponds with what Freud says of the male drive. So, all those reliefs – signified by this word 'Aufhebung', said to be hard to translate – could be mental orgasms.

Returning to the discussion of Tutuola's passage, it could be said that when the woman falls in love with the gentleman, it is with the magic, beauty and wonder of life beyond the merely personal life. What she is then exposed to is that life in its totality is composed of temporarily leased forms. In addition, what

is shown is that life is a matter of the appropriation of life forms and that life is thus not only beautiful but predatory. However, what is really significant is what can be seen in this very appropriation, namely, the fact that life cannot be owned. Life can only be temporarily leased, as in the manner of the Skull/Gentleman, in that it can be no one's private property. Hegel's idea of all-colonising Spirit stops short of such a perception as if Tutuola's tale were able to see through the bluff of this all-colonising Spirit. Life cannot be owned, and in that it is no one's private property there can be no enslavement of one being by another: with this the hero rescues the woman from enslavement and she becomes a wife to him (not 'his wife') on the basis of the recognition that she cannot be owned. Aidoo's play *Anowa* offers a reworking of this 'beautiful unknown gentleman' story where the message is politicised as the woman loses her ideal view of existence when her husband (the deadly gentleman) comes to buy and sell slaves to live off.[102]

Although the story in its various deployments has its moral messages, the hero of Tutuola's story, whose task is to rescue the captured woman, is not judgmental. For him, it is natural that anyone could be captivated by a beautiful appearance – he says that he, too, like the woman, may have got carried away – and he also could also be said to understand that it is in the very nature of the gentleman/skull to behave as he does. This accepting attitude is given as follows: 'I could not blame the lady for following the Skull as a complete gentleman to his house at all … when I remembered he was only a Skull I thanked God that He had created me without beauty, so I went back to him in the market, but I was still attracted by his beauty' (p. 25). Perfection is deadly, and *the will-to-perfection is a death drive* (it is, that is just what it turns out to be), and so it is paradoxically much better not to be Best, yes, thank God we have our flaws. Here the hero may be said to understand that the gentleman represents something beyond personal narcissisms, and that he represents something beyond the individual life of man (and, in a reference to God, rare in Tutuola's work, the syntax serves to conflate Him with him, the gentleman-Skull). It is even: thank God for 'being' the one and only flawlessly dead one – the one being utterly without being – so that the many imperfect, incomplete beings can share a life without end. It could be said that it is seen that life has both its moment of splendid ripening and its painful processes of decay, but these processes of life go on beyond the individual, for one of the concerns of the story is precisely of the acceptance of mortality as part of life: the painful fact of mortality is accepted for the sake of the sharing of life as the only means of its perpetuation. This seems very removed from the

> There's nothing, nothing, nothing, not a breath beyond:
> O give up every hope of it, we'll wake no more.
> We are the world and it will end with us.
>
> Sacheverell Sitwell, 'Agamemnon's Tomb'[103]

Man

Seeing his mirrored morning face, no more can find
The masks he wore (through centuries)
Of faith and hope.
Edith Sitwell, 'Out of School'[104]

Western masculine perspective, in which the death of the narcissistic self allows for no glimpse of other being.

One critic commenting on the Skull episode in Tutuola's novel, compares the hero's rescue of the woman from the Skull to a descent into the underworld but adds: 'It differs from other descents into the Underworld in that the hero acquires a wife and they continue as a couple.'[105] Indeed, it differs from the myth of Orpheus (invoked by others in relation to the novel) for Orpheus cannot gaze on his woman without killing her. This unintended and painful compulsion becomes for Freud a death drive. For instance, one example he gives of the unpleasurable repetition compulsion of the death drive is that of Tasso's hero in *Gerusalemme Liberata* who repeatedly cannot help slaying the woman he loves as she takes on various different forms of being (enemy warrior, magic tree).[106] In Tutuola's story the relationship between the man and his wife is that of co-travellers who share adventures and where each partner acts as the helper and protector of the other, for just as the man first saves the woman she later comes to save him with her wisdom. This kind of relationship, a brotherly–sisterly one where each is the other's 'guardian angel', each on the lookout for what the other might not be able to see, is also to be found in Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*. One of the significances of this partnership, each one protecting the other, is that it serves to call into question what Freud understands by 'life instincts' characterised in terms of a drive for *self*-preservation and aligned with an active masculine libido. Weird as this may sound – and hear it in different ways – for a Western reader at least, *Mhudi* and *The Palm Wine Drinkard* could be read as a writing in the feminine.

I would now like to return to the consideration of Derrida's Genet and this 'my Genet' in *Glas* whilst, of course, Genet is not the property of either of us. To begin with, it ought to be noticed that Genet charms us. Just as it is often stressed of Antigone that she *fascinates*, he fascinates. While some enjoy coming under Genet's spell, and I would say that Derrida is one of these, certainly much more than Sartre with his rather prudish and squeamish treatment of Genet in *Saint Genet*, there are others who would like to ward off any influence that Genet may have. Derrida shows how Bataille, puzzlingly given what he writes of elsewhere, adopts the distance of a moralising, policing 'sententious academicism' towards Genet. Derrida perceptively writes of Bataille's attempt to repulse Genet: '"Genet's Failure". What a title. A magical, animistic, scared denunciation' (p. 219).

Derrida's Genet reminds me a little of another Dorian Gray, not quite the sketchy Dorian Gray that I was drawing upon earlier. This is Dorian Gray as narcissist, 'homosexual' and beautiful work of art. It would help to give a fuller picture of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Dorian Gray falls in love with a portrait of

himself that reveals to him his beauty, and he wishes to exchange places with it so that he may never age. The exchange happens and Dorian becomes the flawless and self-pleasing work of art, while the portrait, as conscience, is hidden away in the attic. As suggested earlier, the portrait could be aligned with the symbolic father or superego, or what was earlier spoken of by Derrida as the centre function of an economy, God or the phallus. Thus, the portrait, symbolic father/phallus is hidden but not destroyed. It is just invisible. Dorian, meanwhile, embarks on a life of amoral pleasures, fetishistic obsessions, drug-taking, licensed sexual ambivalence and what is hinted at as being homosexual sex. In *Glas*, the excerpts from Genet's work show us a certain homosexual and transvestite narcissism and the pleasure drives of an unrepressed homosexuality, and also draw attention to Genet's art and aesthetic. Genet could be said to be used in the deployment of the aesthetic as queer and the queer as aesthetic. What, though, on Genet's ethics or his politics? Dorian Gray has no concerns of this nature, although the portrait, his conscience, is his ineluctable double: in trying to stab the painting, he comes fatally to stab himself. That is, you cannot kill the idealisation of Man and continue to idealise yourself as a man. It is likely that Genet is being offered as Hegel's double, with the doubling figured in the two columns, necessarily separate in an economy of doubling. Hegel is the one who is being discussed in terms of ethics, family and the law, and so this might mean that Hegel, or what he insists on, would represent the disowned conscience of a Genet or a 'queer aesthetic'. What remains of the ethics or the politics of a Genet? Or, does he but represent a self-pleasing narcissism, one that pictures the ideal of Man?

While the aestheticisms and aestheticisations of homosexuality are more or less socially acceptable, there is also the question of homosexual oppression.

> Mr Wilde has brains, and art, and style; but if he can write for none but outlawed nobleman and perverted telegraph boys, the sooner he takes to tailoring (or some other decent trade) the better for his own reputation and public morals.
>
> *Scots Observer*, 5 July 1890[107]

Let me say, that I think that *Glas* works well to challenge homophobia, the fear of a certain feminisation, the pretence of the feminine, even if it poses this challenge in a bit of a vacuum, that is, without reference to the political struggles against homophobia in the social world. Truly, *Glas* should be welcomed in its anti-homophobic respect together with its more general de-stigmatising, de-abjectifying moves. (I dislike what I have read of Sartre's 'Genet' approach for it treats homosexuality as something abject.) And I would add that I like Derrida's fetishistically undecidable Genet. But, what is missing, for me, in *Glas* is attention to Genet's own politics which seem to me to be something other than what would owe itself to a Hegelian form of conscience or sense of historical struggle. *Glas* does not give an emphasis to the aspects of Genet's writings that deal with racial issues, a politics of the dispossessed, the anti-colonial war in Algeria, and

so on, nor does it discuss Genet's involvement with the Panthers, whilst Genet's involvement with the Palestinians was only beginning at the time of *Glas*' composition, and is noted in passing in *Glas* (p. 36). Genet's politics, it can be observed, were not a politics of the self but of the other, in the form of willingly responding to the requests made of him by others, offering allegiance, bearing witness, and so on. Moreover, Genet's allegiance is to those who are outside of the family, in fact, only to the outsiders, since he believed that once those involved in revolutionary struggles came to power they would find themselves inhabiting the kind of structures they fought against and becoming potential oppressors in turn. Towards the end of his life, as expressed in *Prisoner of Love* and as explored more widely by Edmund White in his biography of Genet, Genet became particularly interested in the struggles of Arab women and in the points of view expressed by his Arab women friends. The femininity 'of' Genet does go beyond a feminisation of the masculine where it is not simply *his*. Furthermore, this Genet could be seen as having the non-literal bisexuality of a shaman which exists beyond an economy of (Western, male) narcissism.

The above is one reason – not the only one – why, earlier on, there was some splicing of Assia Djebar's writings, given Genet's political interests, together with *Glas*. It is also that Djebar's *Fantasia* shares, albeit differently, a few of *Glas*' preoccupations where in *Glas* these are much more removed from a given Algerian history. Some of the shared preoccupations include: the 'glas', the death-knell, the clamouring of the bell, ululations, funeral rites, mourning and maternal ancestry, veilings, the poetic text. But it may be that it is especially Genet who makes for the crossing-points, particularly given Genet's partisan politics and Djebar's treatment of the women involved in the Algerian war. In aligning Djebar with *Glas*, there is also the question of the women writers – in addition to the writing of the illegitimate son – and also, what may be termed, 'the-name-of-the-sister', as briefly touched on in the reading offered earlier.

At this point, I will make a confession. Occasionally, I approach certain texts of Derrida on the lookout for traces of an 'Algeria'. In fact, I came to *Glas*, in working on *Antigone*, on the prowling lookout for whatever might turn up of an Antigone–Algeria connection. I could not really seem to find one beyond what I have offered as potential cryptic effects in or of the text, although it is quite possible that I have been insufficiently attentive. Just when I thought that I could glimpse something of Algeria, I found something else, but not just anything else. Here, for instance:

> In Algeria … ; In Algeria, in a middle of a mosque … ; In Algeria, in a *middle* of a mosque the colonists would have *transformed into a synagogue*, the Torah, brought forth *from behind the curtains*, is promenaded in the arms of a man or a child, and kissed or caressed by the faithful along the way. (The faithful as you know are *enveloped in a veil* … The dead man is enveloped in his taleth – that is the name of the veil – after the washing of the body and the closing all its orifices.)
>
> (p. 240, my emphases)

This memory comes after a citation from *Our Lady of the Flowers* in which Genet pictures the unrolling of the Torah in terms of a 'totem pole' with its 'sacred' and barbaric' signs, likened to tattooing. Whilst Genet 'primitivises' or makes animistic the scene of the Torah, Derrida remembers the curtains and the veiling, signs but not revelations of the invisible. Where Genet speaks of the skin-operation of tattooing with its needles, this possibly triggers thoughts of circumcision for Derrida (as *Circumfessions* would lend support to). As Derrida indicates of Genet at one point: 'That's *him*.' It is written: 'I am not going to surprise his text with a toothed object. He only writes, only describes that: toothed matrix. It is *his* object' (p. 205). That's it, for him. And as he says of himself in *Circumfessions*, that's me: 'I am and will always be me and not another … where I am no longer a case.'[108] This, very definitely, has to be acknowledged and allowed, and more than that, *welcomed*. This 'that's me' (or him or her) is not reducible to self-expression for it concerns the unique relation to inheritance(s). 'That's him' may also be read as 'that is what possesses him', as opposed to being a matter of self-possession.

In *Jacques Derrida*, Geoffrey Bennington wagers against Derrida that he can produce a generalised account of deconstruction, which he does with great accomplishment. Derrida's counter-ploy deployed below Bennington's account is to speak of circumcision, in particular, of his own: that's me. If the work is in part an effect of the cut or wound that happens only to a 'me', or to *you*, then it cannot be institutionalised as that which will have the same impersonal relevance for everyone, even as that does not make the work confessional and personal. Rather, it is a matter, in simplified terms, of working with both intellectual legacies and affective inheritances. Beyond this, the wound or the cut, etcetera, can be the basis of sympathetic even empathetic cross-readings: for example, a certain experience of being Jewish may, but not necessarily, afford a capacity to relate to and understand the work of a Genet. That said, 'the wound' here does not belong to a logic of castration even as it could accommodate a thinking of castration, as will be argued further on. In fact, this other thinking of the wound derives from Genet, it is his philosophy. He writes: 'There is no other origin of beauty than the wound, singular, different for each person, hidden or visible, which every man keeps inside him, which he preserves and where he withdraws when he wants to leave the world for a profound solitude.'[109] The wound, in order to avoid confusion, is better thought of as a trauma, a blow, a collision, a contusion, a bruise, a bleeding, the knitting together of new tissue, a scar – not just a hole.

Glas seems to propose a simultaneity of believing and disbelieving or doubting at the same time. However, if we were only to go along with its believings and doubtings, we would be thoroughly agreeing with it. Beyond this there is, for me, still a doubting or a questioning that would come from a beside or alongside.

Fetishism, as put forward by both Derrida and Cowie, crucially concerns two knowledges: one that would cancel out the other but may be yet simultaneously entertained. As regards Derrida's thinking of fetishism, what perhaps remains uncertain – even in it – is the question of a singularity of origin, a capitalising

principle. In sexual and religious terms this constitutes an idealisation of paternity and may presume immaculate conceptions. This, then, would call for deconstruction whereby the idea and ideal of origin is rendered ghostly: the ghost constituting not a complete or ideal being but, in Tutuola's phrase, that which is 'half-bodied' – that which is between 'complete gentleman', ideal spirit, and skull, bare bone (spirit is a bone, according to Hegel)[110] – and not an origin. The ghost is not an origin in that it originates in returning, whereas in Tutuola's text the complete gentleman has no original form in that he leases but does not own his bodily form. However, Tutuola's ideal and monstrous spirit of narcissism, so to speak, is but the starting point to the discovery of a multitude of spirits, those of other peoples and other creatures, where it may be that a disinvestment from narcissistic captivation is a necessary prelude to this. Or, once perfect being is seen as an illusion, it becomes possible to see many kinds of admirable and awesome beings.

When it comes to Derrida's interest in a generalisation of fetishism many undecidables arise. Could a thinking of fetishism itself yet concern two knowledges of fetishism, say, for the purposes of debate, a Western one and an African one? Or is the West and its centre function to remain central, which would mean the centrality of a Western concept of spirituality, or of religions of the Book, loosely, a monotheism? What does it mean to generalise a *sexual* economy of fetishism when Western knowledge so often generalises on the basis of a sexual differential? Why always this as the starting-point? Is there a way in which spirits might be primary, prior to a thinking of 'man'? How appropriate could it be to consider African fetishism through a framework derived from psychoanalysis? Róheim, in *Animism, Magic and the Divine King*, tried to apply a Freudian understanding to an anthropological study of animism, obsessively Oedipalising and phallicising the cultures concerned in a way that overdeterminedly misreads 'spirits' as sexual symbols, as a coding of sexuality, a decoding into sexuality, a conjuring away of spirits, along with all the cultural projections of Western familiarity.[111] Earlier, I touched on Hegel saying with reference to unquestionable ethical laws, let us say unwritten laws, that these just *are*. That would be one way to speak of spirits. They *are*, before the determinants of the racial and sexual differentials of the family of Man. And the ghost comes after.

Although I speak of a plurality of spirits what these would yet have in common is spirit. Outside of Western culture, albeit sometimes within it too, spirit is often thought of in terms of a dynamic composite unity as opposed to a pure singularity. Where Derrida speaks of a 'singular heterogeneity', it might be possible to turn this round into a 'heterogeneous singularity'. The former could imply a singular spirit that may be found in many whereas the latter signifies a spirit that would be at least dual in its nature. This is a matter of creativity, and Wilde's *Dorian Gray* may be used, yet again, to picture this.

While Dorian is the model for the portrait, he is not its origin in that the somewhat maternal Basil Hallward paints it while the androgynous and shamanistic Lord Henry serves as an inspirational source, Basil and Henry being

receptive to the beauty they can see in Dorian. Dorian comes to worship beauty only in his own form, the one fixed form of male perfection. While Dorian is but this beauty in the form of a man, his makers, Basil and Henry are androgynous. Thus, the feminine and masculine creative powers are something other than the portrait, which is only the phantasm and ghost of a pure masculinity. Moreover, Dorian's 'homosexual narcissism' is shown not only to be uncreative but destructive. In particular, he comes to spurn an actress tellingly called Sybil Vane, causing her death. Here Wilde shows that there may be a magical feminine form of narcissism where Sybil Vane is given to us as a beauty capable of taking many forms. I think that Wilde's *Dorian Gray* has puzzled queer critics for in the figure of Dorian he may be seen as condemning a certain homosexuality. As an androgynous artist, he could be seen as condemning a homosexuality – for there are homosexualities – based on man admiring only man (showing this to be complicit with the ethical ideal or paternal superego). Beyond this, he affirms a feminine queerness (associated in different ways with Basil, Henry and Sybil) in which beauty may be seen in many forms. Moreover, he associates this with a brother–sister ideal (for Sybil Vane has a brother who champions her and is the enemy of Dorian), where this ideal is held up against the father ideal. With respect to another politics and another ethics, without considering the vascillations of Wilde, Wilde's socialism was a socialism of the soul.

The pre-post-colonial and the abiku

I would now like to resume the negotiations begun earlier, in the first half of this chapter, with the work of Spivak. What in part brought me to the re-reading of Mahasweta Devi's story, *Draupadi*, was the fact that Spivak uses the story to critique the 'aesthete intellectual', as represented by Senanyak, but where I have also taken it that aspects of deconstruction may be at stake, with the question of its reluctance – or whatever the word would be – to engage with history in its objective formations. I agree, somewhat, with this reading; for instance, it would concern some of what *Glas* may be said to overlook of Genet's own political engagements. Moreover, what could be added to the above is that Genet's fetishistic attitude may be not primarily a sexual one but an animistic one. For instance, Genet states:

> During my expeditions (my thefts, my scouting trips, my getaways) objects were animate. Thinking of the night it was with a capital N. [Tutuola often capitalises in this way.] The stones, the pebbles on the road had a consciousness that could recognise me. The trees were astonished to see me. My fear bore the name of Panic. It freed the spirit of each object which was only waiting for my trembling to move. Around me the world was shivering sweetly. I could even chat with the rain.[112]

However, I have been trying to propose that this – the question of *this* fetishism – may not just be a matter of aestheticism, but of a certain blindspot as regards a

Western – particularly Hegelian – philosophical tradition. Or, it is not exactly about a rift between 'the literary' and the politics of objective histories, but has to do both with a material creativity and with the politics of the aesthetic which, strictly speaking, would entail the acknowledgement of the writing subject in ways to receive further attention. *Glas* does treat of these, but hopefully it can be taken further. While there is much that I admire in Spivak's work, as there will unfortunately not be time to address fully in this work which is but preliminary to addressing a Marxist engagement with deconstruction and the other way round, the one aspect of it that tends to trouble me is how its politicising moves seem sometimes to be achieved through a dismissal of a certain creativity aligned with the aesthetic. At any rate, that is the query to be explored. Amongst a number of possible terms to choose from in order to further the debate, I will speak at this stage of a creative subject as opposed to the critical or philosophical subject.

Some fleeting indication can, in a moment, be given of this recurrent dismissal of the 'creative subject' in Spivak's work, a dismissal which has, of course, been *widely* upheld within the institution of literary criticism, pretty much whenever it attempts to theorise itself with a few exceptions. Thus my engagement is actually with the legacies of literary theory. If I single Spivak out here, it is not simply because of her prominence as a post-colonial critic but because her work addresses, more than most, the way in which would be 'post-colonial' readings remain complicit with the ongoing colonialisms and imperialisms of the West. While this is the case, what detains me here is that one of the ongoing legacies of both structuralism and post-structuralism has been what Barthes announced as the death of the author, an announcement accompanied by the replacement of the author by the critic. A reading of post-colonial literatures, inadequate as that term is, may be said to throw up in stark form the very question of the authority of the critic in relation to the text, as touched on earlier. What I wish to argue is that while there is not an author that precedes the literary text, no author unless a text, there is also obviously no authorless text, and that the text is throughout the weaving of the being of an author (in more than one sense). What this means is while there may be no intending author before the text, the text is yet expressive of a writing being. When Barthes erects the critic in the place of the writer, this need not cancel out the writer but could serve to bring together writer and critic alongside each other. Indeed, Barthes is generally an advocate of a criticism that can be itself creative and thus it is ironic that his essay is used so widely to justify the supremacy of critical authority over the text. At the same time that critic may be aligned with author, the process of literary composition, as expounded on by writers, puts the writer in the position of an audience, of being their own audience.[113] It could be said that at each moment of being produced the writing is that which is responding to itself so that writing is also a reading process. In that case, a piece of writing has a reading within it, and the writing process is often a process of working out what it is you want to say. The 'death of the author' could be reconfigured to mean reader-as-writer and writer-as-reader. Writing, as mediumship, is also more widely a receptive capacity.

Spivak concludes her reading of *To the Lighthouse*, after a careful account of its treatment of the womb as a place of production, with this partial rejection: 'To conclude, then, *To the Lighthouse* reminds me that the womb is not an emptiness or a mystery, it is a place of production … I am not sure if this ennobling of art as an alternative [to 'the contemptible text of hysteria'] is a view of things I can fully accept.'[114] Moving on, Spivak's reading of 'Breast Giver' sets itself the difficult task of advancing itself against Mahasweta Devi's own explanation of her text. This critical act is surely permissible, given, at least, the delay between the time of writing and the time of a critical reading and the occasions for different kinds of reading; however, what is of interest is what this critical moment pivots on in this particular case. Mahasweta Devi is set aside as author of the text over the subject of maternity. While Mahasweta Devi may be said to raise the question of the mother as subject and as citizen against the ideological construction of a 'Mother India', Spivak counters this through an insistence on the sexualisation of the very body of the mother, approached through Lacan's association of jouissance with the real. Is this: how can the mother be thought of as a subject, and recognised as a productive or creative source, if she has the *body* of a woman? (Quite literally, the mother or surrogate mother is the bearer of another subject.) However, to raise the question of jouissance in this context is indeed interesting because theories of jouissance could be understood in terms of a sexual approach towards undoing the spirit/nature opposition. Thus, it may be a way of configuring a spirited maternal body. More recently, Spivak reconsiders the question of, say, creative sources with reference to Coetzee's *Foe* where *Foe* is given the benefit of the doubt in these terms: 'We could fault Coetzee for not letting a woman have free access to both authorship and motherhood. We could praise him for not presuming to speak a completed text on motherhood. I would rather save the book, call it the mark of *aporia* in the centre.'[115] So now, the question of authorship as something other than a capitalisation of the masculine – I say 'something other than' for I do not think it is ultimately a question of *female* authorship, seeing it as more an issue of androgyny, while the question will be impossible to develop without reference to the feminine, given history and histories of thought – is that which is said to constitute an impasse. There is thus a self-conscious marking of the impossible as regards the originality of the non-paternal other; however, it could be argued that this aporia remains and is to be maintained, or as is said, saved, as the blindspot of the colonising subject. In the next chapter, there will be an attempt to demonstrate both the centrality and the possible decentrings of this blindspot with reference to Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

Let us now turn to some of the arguments put forward in Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. This puts me in a slightly strange position for I think that, in a few places, the book may well be offering something of a clandestine response to 'Clandestine Antigones', the material of the first half of this chapter. That is, I think that it is possible that aspects of 'Clandestine Antigones' might resonate with Spivak's text, in passing, but without the piece being named, where – if so – this would be but an inescapable aspect of the academic profession. For me, it is

hard not to hear a certain echo-effect in the repetition that threads its way through Spivak's 'Philosophy' chapter of a certain *set* (it's the very combination) of words, terms and names: foreclosure; (im)possible; the clandestine; the migrant, the hybrid, the migrant hybrid; Marx as migrant; the crypt; Lacan, Kant, Hegel, and ethics; Kant and the cosmopolitan; Derrida and *Glas*, with respect to personal and intellectual histories, spoken of as 'bio-graphy'; and more besides as we will come to. Well, this may be in the nature of that piece of hypnopoetic witchery, or it may be that I am just hearing things, that set of terms may well just be in the air. At any rate, I cannot help but ask: What is going on? It is with such a bafflement that certain aspects of Spivak's argument will necessarily be approached.

Spivak, in the first chapter of her book, puts forward a diagnosis of the foreclosure of the native informant in the philosophies of Kant and Hegel. Before attempting to show how this foreclosure may be seen as a symptom in Hegel's work, the following swerve is performed: 'The reading I am going to offer is considerably less complicated than, say, the celebrated reading of *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology* and requires no more knowledge of the "Indian background" than Hegel himself professed to possess' (p. 47). Why, say? What is odd about this swerve is that it would be highly unlikely to expect anyone to turn to *Antigone*, of all texts, and Hegel's reading of it, in order to trace a foreclosure of *the native informant*. Hegel does not read *Antigone* in this way (although more will be said about this in the next chapter), nor does Derrida – this being what I looked for but could not quite find. And I have not yet found any other philosophical or critical essays on a 'nativised Antigone', so to speak, amongst the mass of material on Antigone. It is only with Lacan that we find that there is a completely hidden subtext – that of colonial Algeria – to his reading of *Antigone*. So why presume that *Antigone*, of all texts, and specifically Hegel's reading of it, might have anything to say about the foreclosure of 'the native informant'? Whatever, for Spivak, it is designatedly *not* to be *Antigone*. The reason not is perhaps marked by a parallel instance of negation, which is given as follows: 'When the Woman is put outside of Philosophy by the Master Subject, she is argued into that dismissal, not foreclosed as a casual rhetorical gesture. The ruses against the racial other are different' (p. 30).

As I said, I am not sure what is going on here. What seems to underpin this is the assumption that for the philosophical subject the sexual differential and the racial differential are not co-implicated but separate, an issue to be returned to. Whereas earlier I spoke of the foreclosure of sister and outlaw brother and a plurality of inheritances (as well as touching on the denial of the paternal body), I would see that foreclosure affects whatever at a determined instance would be disavowed as another origin – any *other origin* – where it is usually man that is set up as singularly privileged, especially in the West, but not only in the West. However, for Spivak it is to be, as we will see, the foreclosure of what she designates as 'the name of Man' (her capitalisation), and not Woman.

Spivak proposes the unified category of 'the native informant', and she announces that she 'borrows' the concept of foreclosure from Lacan. First, I will

offer a quick résumé of what I understand as being Lacan's general position on foreclosure, and then zone in on Spivak's use of Lacan. Lacan may be said to propose his concept of foreclosure as part of an attempt to explain paranoia. Lacan argues that psychosis may come about through the *rejection* (this is the word he tends to use to speak of foreclosure) of the name-of-the-father, the signifier by means of which the inner world of the subject is enforced as separate from the outer world. For Lacan, the origination of the subject is *not* foreclosure; for him, there would be no foreclosure at the origin (for this would necessitate admitting to other possible origins); foreclosure would rather be the reverse of this, the *rejection* of the paternal signifier and the failure to secure the self-defences of the subject, a failure of origination. I have used the term 'foreclosure' in a politically counter-analytic sense to suggest, deconstructively, that the name-of-the-father also serves to foreclose.

Spivak, considering how the rejection of foreclosure also entails the rejection of the affect of what is foreclosed, writes: 'The idea of the rejection of an affect can direct us into the dis-locating of psychoanalytic speculation from special science (for which specialized training is recommended) to ethical responsibility (a burden of being human)' (p. 4). This could be read, but not necessarily, as indicating that to be human is to reject a certain affective identification with other being – rejection of affect, beyond the specialised location of the theory, leads us to the condition of human being – of which more will be said later. Spivak immediately goes on to state: 'It is also useful to remember that it was the history of the Wolf-Man analysis that led Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok into the thinking of cryptonomy, the encrypting of a name' (p. 5). Spivak wishes to talk about the encryptment of the name of Man, but it might be further useful to remember that, in the intricate attempt to decipher the Wolf Man's crypt, Abraham and Torok reach the conclusion that what is encrypted is *the name of the sister*, the Wolf Man's sister, together with, *not the good name of the father*, but the trauma of her incestuous seduction by the father. 'The sister and the incestuous father', as discovered here, could also recall 'Antigone'. Referring to Derrida on *Antigone* again, Antigone is said to be: *crypt* of the transcendental. Furthermore, Derrida, in his introduction to *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, draws attention to the encryptment not only of father–daughter incest but brother–sister incest, the desire between brother and sister.[116] Perhaps the Wolf Man proved so famously resistant to analysis because his crypt is not just his – where the crypt may be the reception of the unconscious of an other – but that of a certain psychoanalytic and philosophical tradition; crypt of an analysis of mind?

What so interests Deleuze and Guattari about the Dogon – to be fairer to them – is that the Dogon, according to Griaule or his informant, culturally encode the repression of brother–sister incest. A generalising way in which this can be read is that a brother–sister ideal or law represses and sublimes brother–sister incest, as opposed to idealisation of the father and repression of homosexual desire for the father (maternal desire as this). With reference to the Dogon, what Deleuze and Guattari write is:

> It is through the prohibition of incest with the sister that the lateral alliance is sealed; it is through the prohibition of incest with the mother that the filiation becomes extended. There we find no repression of the father, no foreclosure of the name of the father.
>
> (p. 159)

It might be possible then to say (although Deleuze and Guattari do not quite take it in this direction) that alliances between families are in the name of brother-and-sister, whilst generational succession depends on the prohibition against maternal incest. Whether it would be possible to claim this or not, Deleuze and Guattari indicate that an absence of a paternal repressive agency does not necessarily mean a foreclosure of the patronym, for there are other means of organising the socio-symbolic.

Having referred to Abraham and Torok's work on the crypt, what Spivak then proceeds to state of *Glas* is: 'Derrida … mimes the encrypting of the patronymic and the search for an impossible matronymic in a text of mourning for his father' (p. 5). Nothing, then, about encrypting the name of the sister. And, as for the 'encrypting of a patronymic' associated with a mourning of the father, does not the crypt signify rather a refusal or inability to mourn, to introject, where mourning would entail *remembrance of the patronym*? (And if the name-of-the-father is encrypted in *Glas*, this would take us over to the Genet column of *Glas* as quasi-psychotic, where there Derrida aptly plays with the creative signature of Jean Genet.) What then follows is: 'In this chapter, I shall docket the encrypting of the name of the "native informant" *as the name of Man* – a name that carries the inaugurating effect of being human' (Spivak's emphasis). This, indeed, is to be Spivak's emphasis: *the name of Man*, whilst I am not sure if I understand.

If, according to Lacan's concept of foreclosure, the name-of-the-father is foreclosed, this would issue in psychosis. If this foreclosure were applied to the inauguration of civilised man, then civilisation would be mad. But, as Spivak quickly says: '*We* cannot diagnose a psychosis here.' Thus, should we perhaps assume that, for Spivak, it is that the name-of-the-father that comes to foreclose or reject the name of Man? If so, this would be a non-Lacanian understanding of foreclosure? What I am failing to grasp here is: if we are dealing with Lacan's theory, then 'the name of Man' that Spivak proposes would be another name for the name-of-the-father, and if not, then the name of Man and the name-of-the-father would be distinct and opposed. If the latter, this would presumably be to go against the idea that the erection of the name-of-the-father *is* the very glorification of the name of Man, in accordance with the worship of Man as sole origin. At any rate, it seems that in the case of 'the native informant' we would have the case of human beings who have already differentiated themselves from nature according to a law or name of Man, where the question of what this assumes is the tricky question. For instance, does this then mean that, for Spivak, these cultures are necessarily humanist and proto-patriarchal in their origins? In order to consider this further a selective and compressed reading of Spivak's

given examples of foreclosure, that she derives from detailed and elaborate readings of Kant and Hegel (you would need to read all this for yourself for the summaries will be hasty), will be offered.

The foreclosure that Spivak notes with respect to Kant is that of the proper names of aboriginal peoples. In Spivak's probing reading of Kant on the sublime, she notices how he makes aboriginal peoples represent natural man, 'raw man', in a mockery of their proper proper names. Spivak writes: 'The point is, however, that the New Hollander or the man from Tierro del Fuego *cannot* be the subject of speech or judgment in the world of the Critique' (p. 26). This would border on the question of animistic cultures, and thus raise a host of anthropological questions concerning the status of these cultures – for example, as to whether they are or are not patriarchal (the endless kinship studies), are or are not Oedipal in their taboos, are or are not believers in a God in their religions, and so on. In fact there is much evidence for non-Oedipal societies as well as some for matriarchal cultures, and the centrality of a Christian concept of God as Supreme Being has also been disputed. Nonetheless, the recurrent ethnocentric anthropological question has been: Are these ancestral 'father' cultures of which Western culture is the 'son', or are these pre-Oedipal 'son'/child cultures which have yet to attain the patriarchal determinations of Western culture? Since Spivak is at pains to point out that the privileging of the name of Man is not a question of sexual differentiation, it seems that we are then, with Kant, dealing with a differentiation of 'Man', man as father and man as son, possibly. This temporal distinction would then be spatialised, as in some anthropology it is. Indeed, Spivak states: 'The subject as such in Kant is geopolitically differentiated' (pp. 26–7). While Spivak states that her reading is an anthropological one, she does not go into the debates on the differentiation of Man as a father/son one, or adult/child one, as for instance Mudimbe's research serves to highlight. But it is the case that Spivak does indicate that the Aboriginal is considered as the 'in-fans' (p. 30), say then, infant-son, and she considers that Kant may be working according to a logic of individual maturation into manhood.

If Spivak is tackling this father/son anthropological paradigm, it may be towards off-setting it with a brotherhood of man. Or, we may not be dealing with father and son so much as a Western patriarchal brotherhood and a lost or displaced primal culture of father and brothers, and since Spivak refers to a supplementation of Freud on the civilising mission, it might be worth a brief mention of Freud's fable of the primal horde in *Totem and Taboo* as something to place alongside the Kantian considerations.

In short, in this myth of origin, a despotic father with a monopoly on all the women is overthrown and killed by a primal horde of brothers who, in the process of this, serve to establish a social contract and come to idealise, out of guilt, the father they have slain. Patriarchy is thus first assumed as a semi-natural given (the primal horde seem to be in between culture and nature) but without a law, a lawless given (but then given by nature which might necessitate recognition of some natural *law* prior to a sense of the law). Well, Freud skirts this question of a law of nature whilst implying that a 'horde' close to nature might be

somehow patriarchally predisposed. A society of brothers then serves to eradicate the unlegitimated rule of the father and to utterly forget his sexual body of unrestrained desires, including presumably incestuous ones. What is preserved of the father is his good name. In fact, what remains of the father is *only the name* as sanction of the paternal prerogatives, legalised and democratised: universal right to ownership of women. This anthropological fable of Freud's has been carefully explored by Marguerite Nolan with incisive reference to the writing and reception of Sally Morgan's *My Place*, where it is precisely the fact of the incestuous desire of the colonising father that cannot be admitted.[117]

What I want to say is foreclosed or disavowed as regards the above, with reference to what has been said earlier in the discussion of *Antigone*, is the *paternal body*, the lawlessly desiring body of the father. A correlation could be made here with the incestuous father (the Wolf Man's crypt), and the foreclosure of the incestuously abusive father, in the setting up of the Oedipus complex, the foreclosure of this paternal incest being something which has certainly haunted psychoanalysis. It is this violent and abusive body of the father that is utterly disowned and is, strangely, forgotten in the idealised commemoration of the father, the ghost father without body. Somewhat awkwardly, the despotic and natural father could thus be said to be deprived of a name in the idealisation name of the father. However, logically speaking, it is the same name where it refers only to the ghost or divine memory of the father and no longer to either his brutal past nor to the mortal remains. Significantly, in Freud's folk tale, these remains are not merely buried but cannibalised, which suggests the desire to eradicate even the remains, not even a burial mound to remind us of the fallen mortality of the father. The raising up of the name of the father would make it more than a name, it would remain a name (the name as precisely the only remains) but it would have a halo around it, a divine ring to it. If Spivak's concerns were brought into this scenario, one not too many miles away from the Kantian one addressed, where might the name of Man come in, or be shut out? In fact, the real question might be: *When* might this name arise?

Colonially speaking, taking the context that Spivak addresses into account, there would be two of him: Western man encountering another man, each claiming their own name of Man, making their own claim to an origin. Then, would this not be again a case of potentially rivalrous brothers? That *Antigone* scenario, the denial of the name of the other brother in that there can only be one father or leader …. The foreclosure would be of the outlaw brother together with the sister.

As regards Freud's scenario of the murder of a father not a brother, what perhaps happens is that with the subliming of the paternal name and rejection of the paternal body this body actually comes to be *given the names* of 'the native informant'. For example, Hegel keeps raising the name, the proper name, of the King of the Dahomey in order to attach accusations of barbarity to it. And, this is what Spivak points out with respect to Kant's mockery of the names of the native informant. It is this that Achebe objects to in coming to write his first novels in the attempt to clear the besmirched name of Africa. Interestingly, in

the process of doing so, Achebe is widely seen as resurrecting the good name of the African father, which some critics and writers, especially women writers, have objected to.[118] However, Obiechina has also shown that in tandem with the image built up of a good-and-proper patriarchal society, a counterpart to the Western one, there is a much more complex exposition of African values and ethics going on in the texts, where we would find much less of a Western humanist perspective and much less masculinism too (Achebe's reading of Igbo philosophy will be addressed in the next chapter).[119] It might help, at this stage, to consider some of the paradoxes of Freud's tale.

First, what Freud does not really make clear is whether the primal horde constitutes a social formation or not. It seems vaguely social since Freud can talk about a *father* in a position of power over brothers: that is, there is some recognition of family relations and the power of the father, but it is also one that has yet to truly institute itself as a proper society. Second, Freud is speaking of an event that supposedly occurs at the outset of the history of mankind, ignoring the history of thought on the history of the social contract. This would thus mean that aboriginal culture (and Freud has the Aborigines of Australia in mind) is able to discover for itself the necessity of a father ideal and establish itself as a fairly proto-Western democratic society regulated by law. However, elsewhere in *Totem and Taboo*, in considering animistic cultures, Freud sees them as not having progressed to the father-idealising stage. So we have this paradox of 'primitive' cultures seen as both not properly social and as properly social; or the paradox of primitive cultures seen as both patriarchal and pre-patriarchal. This concerns a double bind that comes up frequently. On the one hand, there is a desire to assert that there has been patriarchy from the beginning, it is ancestral this paternal legacy, and in this way patriarchy can be justified as universal and culturally 'natural'. Or, put another way, it reassures Western patriarchal society to find precedents for itself and, by means of this, patriarchy does not appear as a violent displacement of other, non-patriarchal, or non-father-centred, fully functional societies. On the other hand, Western civilisation in presenting itself as the very civilised ideal according to a logic of progress needs to infantilise other cultures, as Mudimbe widely shows regarding the invention of Africa. However, if *these* cultures, are to be accorded an humanity in the very name of Man, whilst an inclusive assumption of a common humanity is crucial, this could be yet to foreclose epistemic, social, ethical and spiritual aspects of these cultures that may not privilege Man as the centre function or that do not at all decisively oppose Man to Nature.

I have been teasing this out at length to see where the dilemmas might lie. Spivak's name of Man, unless I have misunderstood, refers – in accordance with aspects of Freud's thought that are being evoked – to a concept of being Human that defines itself against natural origin. 'Man' is defined not against woman but against nature, this constituting a common humanity (which allows for a possible development of this into the patriarchal Man of sexual definition). Spivak does apply a supplemental logic to Kant in speaking of how Western man comes to replicate and displace the other: this would imply that patriarchy replicates and

displaces the setting up of man, which might imply that 'man' may concern earlier forms of patriarchy or contain the unrealised idea of it. One of the basic issues here would concern the questioning of the man/nature and man/animal and spirit/nature divides. Here, we could place Derrida's readings of Heidegger's humanism, together with Simon Glendinning's critique of Heidegger's decisive splitting of the human from the animal.[120] There would also be the empirical anthropological case material and related material to consider concerning fully functional non-Oedipal cultures, matriarchal cultures, and animist cultures. Here is just a tiny fragment, archival morsel:

> He [the Manamotapan King] hath many women, and the principall, which is most respected, called Mazarira, is his entire sister a great friend of the Portugalls, to whom when they give the king his Curura, they give a present of clothes.
>
> João dos Santos, *Ethiopia Oriental* (1609)[121]

Spivak turns to Hegel's reading of Krishna (*Bhagavad Gita* 7. iv) in his treatment of Indian poetry in the *Aesthetics*. She states that the reading offered will be a 'mistaken' one, while I have a somewhat different understanding of Hegel here, as will unfold. Since Hegel considers the glorification of Krishna in the *Gita* to constitute a certain monotony, Hegel is seen to be producing a static India, one without historical force. He is seen as trying to 'prove that Indians cannot move history' (p. 48). Spivak goes on to show that the excerpt in question testifies to a dialectical moment within Indian history of the erection of the law: 'I have attempted to show that "Hegel" and the "*Gita*" can be read as two rather different versions of the manipulation of the question of history in a political interest, for the apparent disclosure of the Law' (p. 58). What Spivak advances as an argument against Hegel, constitutes what I believe Hegel would have been more-or-less happy to endorse. My rivalrous advantage here, if I am right, is that I had been working on how, for Hegel, India is truly historical and a nation as opposed to ahistorical Africa (although Spivak is of course aware of this), before coming across Spivak's account, this difference between Orientalism and Africanism being a concern of the next chapter. Here, however, with respect to the excerpt in question, Hegel can be seen to single out this particular passage so as to confirm, at least in passing, that India *is* properly a part of history. Part of what I see Hegel as attempting to argue is that Hindu India is not mired in a tribal pantheism, or an animism, but has 'progressed' to a monotheistic principle, the sublime excellence of Krishna being exactly the case in point. And this is what Spivak argues: 'The proper name of caste stands as a mark to cover over the transition from a tribal society of lineage … to something more like a state where one's loyalties are to abstracter categories for self-reference' (p. 58). Hegel does seem to want to say of the passage roughly what Spivak says of it in greater detail and with a more subtle understanding of it. Furthermore, there is a way in which his reading of *Antigone* may be seen to indicate the rejection of the values of a tribal kinship or extended family, as will be explained in the next chapter.

What seems to be at stake for Hegel is his understanding of the universality of spirit where, arguably, spirit and nature are opposed for the sake of man's reconciliation with the divine. In order to address this in slightly more detail, Hegel's elaboration of his reading of the *Gitā* in his defence of 'Absolute Spirit' in the *Philosophy of Mind* will be turned to.

In this context, Hegel uses his reading of Krishna to defend philosophy, presumably his own, from an accusation of pantheism that he considers to be the wrong understanding of a supposed pantheism. He celebrates the example of Krishna as offering a correct understanding of 'so-called' pantheism (a term in use in Orientalist discourse), for Hegel is working on the meanings attached to this word. He states: 'If we want to take so-called pantheism in its most poetical, most sublime, or if you will, its grossest shape, we must, as is well known, consult the oriental poets.'[122] It is Hegel who finds this oriental poetry 'most sublime', whereas it is his 'anti-pantheistic' critics to whom he states 'or if you will, its grossest shape'. He goes on to cite Krishna, as follows, but at greater length (for all his complaints about monotony, he loves to cite at length from the *Gitā*):

> I am the self, seated in the heart of all beings. I am the beginning and the middle and the end also of all beings … I am mind amongst the senses: I am consciousness in living beings … I am also that which is the seed of all things: there is nothing movable or immovable that can exist without me.
>
> (p. 329)

Hegel goes on to comment:

> This 'All' which Krishna calls himself, is not … the Everything. This, everything, rather, the infinitely manifold sensuous manifold of the finite is in all these pictures … having its truth in the substance, the One which … is alone the divine and God.
>
> (p. 330)

Thus the 'so-called pantheism' of Krishna is considered to be more closely a monotheism, and Hegel agrees with Colebrooke and 'many others' that 'the Hindu religion is at bottom a Monotheism' (p. 331). Hegel's interest is in proving history to be the fulfilment of spirit, of spirit revealed in the world, where Krishna's statements prove useful to him. If there is a colonising move in this to be identified, it could be said to be in the questionable conscription of Hinduism to the cause of a basically or eventually Christian monotheism. Here, to really push a point, Hegel may even be aligned with a certain 'so-called pantheism' against a certain 'Jewish Kant' (as outlined in *Glas*) with respect to arguing the case for 'revealed religion' and the possibility of absolute knowledge.

Hegel defends his philosophy, concerning the revelation of God in the world, not only from accusations of pantheism but from those of atheism. Here he states:

> The indeterminate God is to be found in all religions; every kind of piety – that of the Hindu to asses, cows or to dalai-lamas; that of the Egyptians to the ox – is always adoration of an object which, with all its absurdities, also contains the generic abstract, God in General.
>
> (p. 328)

While Hegel seems to find it absurd to see spirit in animals, he sees that it is spirit that is being worshipped and not an object: that is, what is being worshipped, Hegel believes, is not the spirits of the animals but a projection of an idea of superior being onto animals. However, the idea of a plurality of spirits or of gods seems to madden him and he accuses India – for all that it understands via what is said by Krishna – of the 'maddest of polytheisms'. For Hegel, there needs be – as arguably expressed by Krishna – a pure singularity of origin, sole paternity of the One, immaculate conception: what Derrida speaks of as the phantasm of immaculate conception in the thought of Hegel, this immensely colonising thought. Spivak's reading draws attention to this logic of immaculate conception, although not quite in those terms. As regards the question of a monotheistic India, I understand that this has been the issue of a long-standing debate not only amongst Orientalists but amongst Indian scholars, as Spivak's chapter goes on to give some versions of. There is also this debate in relation to African religions, where some (usually theologians such as Tempels and Mbiti) argue that they affirm a Supreme Being, and others, usually of a more anthropological or scientific orientation (such as Horton) call this into question for its Judeo–Christian monotheistic biases. Some of what this pivots around is the desire to find confirmation of one's own beliefs in the beliefs of others or to use the beliefs of others to confirm one's own (simply put, but not a simple issue), where this is of relevance to Hegel's readings of Oriental poetry. The question of a father ideal within Hindu culture has also been a perplexed issue in the history of Indian psychoanalysis.[123] Branching out, Fanon has maintained that the Oedipus complex only comes with colonisation.

On the basis of the above, I do not think that Hegel's reading of Krishna can serve as an example of foreclosure (and Spivak both speaks of it as such and comes to modify this), in a repetition of Kant's erasure of the aboriginal from history. Why, though, does Hegel call the passage he loves to cite monotonous? Literally, it is because Krishna furnishes many examples to make the same point, as does Hegel himself. However, it may be said that for Hegel *any* religion that is not Christianity or revealed religion constitutes an impasse to be surpassed. More specifically, Hegel's objection to the monotony that he criticises concerns a fixation on the generic abstraction. For he follows up this example, both in the *Aesthetics* and in the *Philosophy of Mind*, with a discussion of 'Mohammedan Poetry', where Jalal ad-Din ar-Rimi 'is to be praised above all' for the beauty of his work.[124] Over this poetry, Hegel is rapturous: 'in the excellent Jelaleddin-Rumi [*sic*] in particular, we find the unity of the soul with the One.'[125] However, Hegel repeatedly objects that what is yet to be fully self-consciously realised is that the Absolute is not only substance but subject. As regards Judaism, for

Hegel, this constitutes a 'getting stuck' with a despairing unrequitedness in relation to a hidden God. Basically, God is excellent or excellence in all these religions but they are all at an *impasse* in the non-reconciliation of man with the divine. Or, as Hegel puts it: 'The fault of *all* these modes of thought and systems is that they *stop short* of defining substance as subject and mind' (my emphases).[126]

Hegel's view of history could be regarded in terms of the perpetual, ongoing need to overcome deadlocks in danger of arresting dialectical progress: the 'static' is thus a potential problem at any phase in history. However, as touched on earlier, the static could be seen in terms of a resolution of an earlier state of tension that becomes the source of another state of tension. Perhaps what Hegel cannot understand with respect to the Indian society that he speaks of is how, given that it can be said to have a concept of Supreme Being, it is not striving to unite itself with this perfection, appearing to prefer the daily rhythms and energies of life as it is lived. Interestingly, what Hegel finds in the earliest Oriental history that he speaks of, that of the Far East, is that the one thing that holds this history back is that there is *too much movement*: 'all this restless movement results in an unhistorical history.'[127] At this point he moves from the Far East to the historical history of central Asia, but he finds that there is yet too much of 'a boisterous and turbulent manner'. So, what Hegel considers to be **static** is *movement*. According to the temporal imperative of history, this movement and the enjoyment of it would presumably be undesirable. Movement is strangely static for Time, but surely a Time constantly depriving itself of movement would end up being a paralysis. Well, I think that is where Hegel's will-to-progress most ironically takes us.

At the end of *Glas*, Derrida shows that Hegel's ideal of the divine as man and man as the divine sets itself up against a Dionysian enjoyment that would remain exterior to it. *Glas* ends open-endedly (one of the things I love about it is its incompl-) with this impasse as if the time had run out in which it could be resolved. So, there is all this capitalising-colonising striving, and when you get to the end of it all, the last-minute revelation comes too late: there has been no time for the enjoyment of life that is movement. *Urgency*, speed, would seem to be the drive: getting to the destination as quickly as possible, no getting into the enjoyment of the 'monotonous' journey itself for that would seem to bore a Hegel keen to get back home from his world trip. (For a Homer and a Joyce, this is a matter of an exilic desire for reunion with the female partner, a Penelope, as opposed to divine father. Yet again, a matter of the difference between creative and philosophical visions.)

Hegel can also be highly scathing of his European contemporaries – over their atheism or over their static Romantic pantheism – for failing to share his understanding of spirit where the beauty of an Oriental 'so-called pantheism' is used to denounce the pantheism of his day described as 'shallow'. Where I would strongly agree with Spivak is that Hegel speaks of static cultures or periods in world history when it is he who may be said to be doing the arresting, in order to hasten on, spatialising his history as does Kant. It is almost comic the way he announces the travel itinerary of history – 'history passes over to central

Asia' – as if it would be impossible to observe history taking place in more than one region of the globe at once. While Hegel spatialises history, he could also be said to historicise geographic variability. Moreover, his hypersensitivity to accusations of pantheism betrays a possible anxiety. Very generally speaking, the notion of the dynamic spirit world in this world rather than beyond it, may be claimed to be an African perception, at least, where for Hegel first and last are united in the cosmic process. And, or yet, Hegel's will to the divinisation of Western man, crudely speaking, has him set up Africa as an absolute enemy. Indeed, Hegel's concept of spirit could be considered to be a massive inversion – a forceful turning inside out – of the understanding of spirit in other cultures: African ones to begin with, then Far Eastern ones, and so on. Moreover, he draws on a gnostic Christian tradition in order to invert it as well. This inversion is like an attempt at absolute conversion.

Looking at Hegel's readings of Oriental poetry with a psychoanalytic eye, it is possible to discern a repressed or unavowed homoeroticism. It is this that shows Derrida's decision to pair Hegel with Genet in *Glas* to be an astute poetic justice. As regards Krishna, he could be said to constitute for Hegel a phallic principle, but where this phallicism is loftily reserved for the divine ('boringly', 'monotonously') so that mere mortals are but 'castrated' or 'feminine' in unconsummated relation to it. Earlier, I cited Spivak as follows: 'When the Woman is put outside of Philosophy by the Master Subject, she is argued into that dismissal, not foreclosed as a casual rhetorical gesture. The ruses against the racial other are different' (p. 30). Using this logic, but also going against this assertion, what I wish to suggest is that India is dismissively argued into history *as Woman*. And, Spivak's recurrent insistence on 'not Woman' could, arguably, be heard as an inexplicit objection to this. At any rate, this may be what is at stake in the reclamation of the name of Man for the 'native informant'. Ashis Nandy, in *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, has made the case for an obsessive Orientalist feminisation of India and Indians. Said, reflecting on *Orientalism*, came to see his project as akin to Western feminism.[128] What this implies, or actually confesses, is that if the Oriental (male or female) is thought of in terms of (Western) Woman, then Western feminist analyses and strategies are of relevance to the analysis of the powerful encodings of colonial discourse that Said advances. Moreover, although this cannot be developed here, somewhat implicit in Homi Bhabha's Lacanian theorisation of the colonised is an understanding of the colonised as feminised inasmuch as his analyses of mimicry and fetishism could co-implicate a phantasmatic femininity: 'woman' as performance; 'woman' as fetishistic representation of the phallus, and so on. Spivak's work – the specific occasions of which should be taken into account for a more rigorous analysis – has tended to resist an identification with Western feminism. Where I agree with Spivak, and where I have benefited from her critiques, is over this feminism as itself colonising and compromised by its own blindspots. With reference to this particular debate, there could be said to be a double complicity. There is the complicity with Western feminism that Said refers to, whilst there would also be the danger of Western feminism serving to reinforce

the Western masculinist identification of the Oriental and the feminine, where a compensatory erasure of the feminine would be equally problematic. Furthermore, that Western scholars have feminised the Oriental, according to their understanding of sexual difference, should not become the fault of Western Woman: both as site of blame and as a repeated failing. With regard to Spivak's 'Man not Woman', so to speak, it could be produced more specifically as a retort to a feminising of the Orient. At any rate, what this is trying to clarify is how it is that the Aboriginal and the Oriental are significantly different inventions (which Spivak is indeed aware of and draws attention to but without going into an analysis of this in accordance with her interest in proposing repeated encryptments). In brief, the former may be said to be foreclosed – said not to be a part of history – whilst the latter may be said to be dismissively argued into history.

With reference to the above, Spivak, in a footnote (p. 52), notes that Hegel's strategy is not one of foreclosure as regards India, but one of transvaluation, which I would see as an accurate assessment. As regards my readings of the readings given of Kant and Hegel, a certain sketchy triplet of these old 'world pictures' may be said to emerge. For just the sake of a loose paradigm of historical progression, as framed by Western thought, they could be set out as: animistic cultures; non-Western patriarchal culture; Western patriarchal culture. Regarding these, the animistic culture is seen as being barely a culture at all (by either Kant or Hegel), and as an infancy of humanity to be *entirely* left behind. As for the next stage or staging, this would concern the recognition of a paternal or divine principle but where this is oppressive in some way to those under its sway. This would correlate loosely with elevated figures of singular omnipotence, a too powerful God. Hegel also considers Oriental culture as under despotic rule, typical of Orientalist views. Furthermore, alongside the 'despotic' character given of the Oriental culture, there is an emphasis on its extreme spirituality too. With relation to this sketch, the first move concerns what I would see as a foreclosure of nature and animism – spirit in nature – in the setting up of Man in his lord-of-creation glory. While this is given as constituting the rescue of man from his natural state, the next step would be the supposed rescuing of those subjected to this despotic kingly principle, one which is not ahistorical or outside of culture since man's dominance has been asserted over nature. What this phase would be comprised of is a usurpation of the despot in favour of a more democratic law, a law of the father based only on retaining the good memory of him and on a brotherhood being bound by an identification with this ideal. Here would be a possible version of what Spivak has spoken of in another context: a case of would-be chivalrous white men rescuing brown women from the dominance of brown men.[129] What foreclosure seems to ensure is a repetitive-successive history of man usurping man. This very rough outline (which cannot accommodate the specifics of the various debates with sufficient consistency) is yet of use inasmuch as it shows that there are differing issues at stake in what is foreclosed of the 'native informant'. As will be shown in the next chapter, *all* of fetishistic Africa needs be foreclosed as regards Hegelian thought. In respect of Orientalism, what seems to be at stake is a differentiation between good and bad ruler figures, with

the Western imperialist as a redeemer figure defined against too dictatorial rulers elsewhere. Whilst Africa is lawlessly both 'infant' and 'paternal body', the Oriental is hyper-feminised in relation to the law.

Hegel actually uses an ontogenic model of individual maturation to describe world history. In this, the Oriental is positioned as a young girl-like boy, while the Greek is given as the adolescent who now wants his freedom. Christian Western Man would be the one who finally attains maturity in that he would realise that instead of opposing the father or being opposed by him, he himself can now be the father. Kant, Hegel, Freud, they tend to take the psycho-sexual-social development of a certain European male self to represent history.

While Spivak can be seen as using 'the name of Man' to separate a racial differential from a sexual differential, the name of Man is also that which is used to legislate against fetishisms. Thus, it might be that a certain Marxist reading is being advanced – this is offered tentatively – against the deconstruction of 'Man', as elaborated through a thinking of fetishism in *Glas* and *Specters of Marx* as, possibly, a means of resisting too sweeping a 'spectralisation'. If so, I may share some concerns with Spivak over unresolved issues that seem to be at stake in the conception of what may be termed the 'ghostliness of labour'. However, my trajectory in approaching this differs to that of Spivak, where this difference of route may entail both divergences and possible, eventual reconvergences.

So far, in my own view, the name of Man is akin to the father ideal, where Marxism remains an heir to Hegelian idealism, as shown at length in *Specters of Marx* and where what is also shown is that this capitalising principal principle need not be identified with the male sex, although such an identification has been its history, but instead with a ghostly mechanism. Beyond this, my argument is that both the name of the Father and the name of Man would serve to foreclose the name of the other origin.

With respect to Marxism, I find Marx's repeated attempts to differentiate Man from Nature problematic (something that Haraway also claims to have difficulty with). The following is but one example of this problem. Marx writes:

> When man engages in production, he can only proceed as nature does herself, i.e. he can only change the form of the materials. Furthermore, even in this work of modification he is constantly helped by natural forces. Labour is therefore not the only source of material wealth, i.e. of the use-values it produces. As William Petty says, labour is the father of material wealth, the earth is its mother.[130]

How does that resolve the distinction attempted? That is, Marx begins by positing that there is no difference between man and nature in that both do not create out of nothing but create through processes of transformation. Then, in order to produce the critical distinction with respect to these creativities, he draws on another authority to decide that labour – man – is father and earth is mother. If the 'As William Petty says' is erased, the arbitrariness of the distinction is all the more obvious: 'labour is the father of material wealth'. This wraps

the matter up here, but calling labour 'father' and earth 'mother' does not really explain anything, or it assumes that the distinction between 'mother' and 'father' is automatically understood. Mother–nature and father–labour are both creative sources without being pure origins, but there is some mysterious difference in this. What could it mean to be 'father' of material wealth here? It does not originate with man, but he claims it in his name, he privatises it, colonises the origin? The transformative energies of a father are accorded – but by what law or measure? – a superior value? Marx undercuts his argument of a creative materialism by appealing to a common understanding of paternity, such as: true origin, proper origin, higher power, the active force, superior being, the one to whom all things are ultimately owed. If not this typical logic, then what? At any rate, it seems to me that as soon as you bring in this man/nature, father/mother, set of distinctions you bring back all the metaphysical determinants, including spirit/matter.

In a footnote, Marx refers to the universal laws of physics concerning the transformation of matter – matter constantly transforming itself. What is involved here with respect to the physics of Marx's day is a distinction between energy and matter in which the activity of the former transforms the passivity of the latter (as Marx speaks of man using forces to transform matter). Contemporary physics breaks with this basic distinction between energy and matter. The shift in perception that I am trying to introduce, for the sake of making a transition, is that the material world stressed in Marx's science is no longer the physical world of his time and his Time. All sorts of possible shifts could follow on from this, but such issues are way beyond the scope of this work. What I do want to say is that I think that Marx was right to want to turn Hegel on his head in order to address communism but that his understanding of materialism, that of his day, is both too 'old-fashioned' and not 'old' enough for such a task. If you really want to turn Hegel on his head, you need to go back to African philosophies in which spirit and nature are not opposed in ways that Hegel could not or refused to comprehend. However, this does take us beyond a thinking of the economy. But that, perhaps, is what is necessary with the respect to the whole question of value: the chance of a way of apprehending value outside of time. It is not easy, but it can be done.

In order to further the question of animism, that which remains to be thought here, let us now turn to the reading of Mahasweta Devi's 'Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha' offered in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. What Spivak says of this story is this: 'The heart [of the story], then: a story of funeral rites, and through it the initiation of Puran, the interventionist journalist, into a subaltern responsibility that is at odds … with the fight for rights' (p. 144). Then, further: 'This mourning is not anthropological but ethico-political' (p. 145). And, finally: 'The funeral lament, the unreal elegy that must accompany all beginnings, is placed at the end of the narrative … and the postscript signed by the author begins' (p. 146). Funeral rights, the ethico-political, the funeral lament or elegy, beginning at the end and bearing the signature of the author … clandestine Antigones?

What happens at the end of the reading of the story is that Mahasweta Devi suddenly becomes strangely Europeanised at this point and paired with Jean Rhys, and this culminates in or points towards the later dismissal of Benita Parry for failing to notice – in her objection that Spivak, along with others, does not let the native speak – that Spivak, along with others, is herself a native (p. 190, although what Parry might have been gesturing towards, given her desire to redeploy Fanon, is the question of the Asian as representing the African).[131] What this seems to revolve around is the question of a certain legislation of border-crossings. This is what Spivak writes:

> In my estimation and in spite of strong critical objections, *The Wide Sargasso Sea* is necessarily bound by the reach of the European novel. So is 'Pterodactyl'. It too invokes aboriginal narrativity, as Rhys does obeah. We have no choice but to allow the literary imagination its promiscuities. But if, as critics, we wish to reopen the epistemic fracture of imperialism without succumbing to the nostalgia for lost origins, we must turn to the archives of imperialist governance.
>
> (p. 146)

What constitutes a transgression, albeit just pardonable, is a crossing over onto the native side of the border, pardonable perhaps insofar as this is seen as purely an imaginative gesture, promiscuously leading to mixings. And so, as a possible preventive against a straying too far, this writing is *bound* to be European, which is where 'the Jamaican white Rhys' and Mahasweta Devi find themselves on the desired same side of a boundary: 'bound by the reach of the European novel'. The import of this is that if there is to be any question of hybridity here (signalled by 'promiscuities') it can only be on the Western shore. Whose idea is this 'European novel'? Plato's? That is, there would seem to be this idea or form of 'the European novel' from which only copies could be generated. In order to set things up in this idealist way, Plato had to exile the materiality of the creative process, a spiritual materiality, which could at least be a transformation of forms into other forms.

The statement cited above can be related to another statement in the chapter on 'Literature'. Referring to the work of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Spivak states: 'The battle for female individualism plays itself out within the larger theater of the establishment of meritocratic individualism, indexed in the aesthetic field by the ideology of "the creative imagination"' (p. 119). Creative imagination is given within citation marks or scare quotes which could mean that it is a widely used term and/or that it is a matter of the so-called 'creative imagination'. The creative imagination is allied with Western feminine bourgeois individualism, which begs the question of the creative imagination of writers from other cultures, but as Spivak's remarks on Mahasweta Devi seem to indicate, when a writer outside of the West is being imaginative, this is to be regarded as merely a matter of Western-style feminine individualism. In this scenario, it is implied that it is the male subject who is the true author, a philosopher or critic, say, while the female subject can but wish-fulfil herself a self in narcissistic or romantic fictions.

The problem here is with this very term 'creative imagination', as given in Fox-Genovese's version, because creativity is not something that can simply be conflated with the imagination as a kind of wishful image-production. When it is, this tends to give us the idea that literature is merely day-dreaming and wish-fulfilment, hallucinatory compensation for a lack. This is Freud's rather reductive reading of creative writing and it is a rather weak reading, one often found to be disappointing; weak, because this thing called creativity is Freud's admitted blindspot, brilliant and inventive as he still is. For instance, Freud spoke to Binswanger and Lou Andreas-Salomé of the fact that one day artists might come to supplement psychoanalysis with what he himself was unable to appreciate, but a day he seemed to wish to postpone.[132]

For the sake of a quick distinction, let us say that the imagination is concerned with a picturing of images based on lack, loss or absence. What creativity might be in relation to this is a regenerative drive, an energy that works to repair the wound; creation as originally re-creation. This drive would be in its weaving of tissue or text, would it not, and in so being not just constitute something phantasmatic. More broadly, creativity concerns our survival instincts in terms of an interplay of forces. And 'Pterodactyl' may be said to have to do with *this* side of creativity, as will now be briefly touched on.

Spivak says that at the heart of this story, we find a story of funeral rites. That could well be the case from certain perspectives within the story, and for a particular reading of it. However, in the reading that I need to advance to make my case, the story could be seen as being also about melancholia: the very inability to mourn. It depends from where you read it, while the story itself seems to vacillate over the need or refusal to mourn. The story concerns a tribal group (symbolic of all the 'tribal' or Adivasi people in India) whose living culture and way of life is completely imperilled within a modern and modernising India. Taking the perspective of the people in the story, for this perspective is made available by the story which reflects on the dilemma it presents from a number of different perspectives, they are in the impossible – unfortunately, that word again – position of facing a demand for the mourning of that which is, *for them*, *not dead* but still yet living. Most radically, how do you mourn yourself, in the usual sense, when this is a case of the being of your being? When I first read the story some time ago, I thought for a moment that the story might be about a death drive, given that the intensely dejected people in the story seem, at face value, not to want to survive, seem not to want to fight the physical battle for life, and seem unable to co-operate with the outsiders who are trying, with limited resources, to work for and ensure their physical survival. One of the characters in the story states: 'I cannot accept that an entire area will die of a death-wish.'[133] The fact that it looked like a death drive gave me pause for thought … where I thought that it could well be that my persistent attempts to call into question Freud's proposition of the death drive might have been too hasty. However, having thought more about this, I would still affirm that what may look like a 'death drive' is better understood in other terms, or in much less displaced terms, as will be indicated.

The group in the story are being met with a powerful and traumatic complex of social, historical and economic forces that demand their extinction as a culture. This is not a matter of literal death (for there are those trying to keep the people bodily alive), it is a matter of the death of their spirit. Or, their material predicament concerns the survival of a certain spirit. It is this certain spirit that is not being allowed to live on, a question of the sacredness of both life and inheritance. This threatening of the spirit also has to do with an understanding of freedom that differs from, defers from, the Enlightenment concept of what freedom means. The supposed freedoms of modernisation would seem certainly to clash with another understanding of freedom held by those concerned. Thus, they are perhaps being offered a merely material existence on condition that they give up what for them most matters in existing. It is this, the demand for a mourning of what cannot be mourned in that it constitutes what makes for the very desire to live, that makes for the impasse and is why the story may be said to offer us a sense of deeply melancholic sacrilege. The story presents this through 'pterodacytl' as the embodiment of the ancestral soul, and Puran, the journalist, delivers a 'wordsoundless' address to the pterodactyl: 'He [Bikhia] is a tribal, an aboriginal, you are much more ancient, more originary than his experience, both your existences are greatly endangered' (p. 156). This may be what Spivak wants to have cordoned off as merely a Europeanised female nostalgia for lost origins. It needs be given more consideration.

The story concerns an animism, yes, but this does not have to be regarded in the usual primitivist terms. For instance, the question of a creative drive in terms of survival is worth considering as a universal issue. Mahasweta Devi has the brainwave of representing the ancestral spirit as a pterodactyl. For the Western scientific mind this prehistoric bird is long dead and gone, extinct. So there is no chance whatsoever of another pterodactyl. And yet the journalist in the story bears witness to Bikhia's bearing witness to the fact of a yet living pterodactyl, as represented in an image that Bikhia is said to carve or engrave on a wall. It, or a living memory of it, has survived all along only to be threatened now, today, with its final extinction. The story allows for the possibility that some might want to read the bird as a symbol for the threatened tribal group, which it could well be seen as, but it is – more than that – a literal symbol. The point is that it exists *beyond the imagination* as a living reality. It is best to say that what it is is an undeniable fact: 'for Bikhia the ancestral soul is a fact' (p. 161). That Mahasweta Devi presents the soul or spirit in terms of a bird, a bird that has been about from the earliest of times, is interesting because such a creature-creation is the very one often chosen by artists across the world and throughout the centuries to convey the actuality of creativity. In work I have done elsewhere on an elaboration of the significance of 'weaving' in the work of numerous writers, what came up in the literature concerned was the recurrent literal image of a bird-shuttle, a bird as the weaver's shuttle, birds themselves as weavers.[134] This shuttle could be conceived of in terms of what weaves being into creation, which is why it is not just an image. And, if you believe in this creative energy and movement, then you can believe in the pterodactyl of the story. Moreover, pterodactyl is

associated with the creativity of Bikhia, as, arguably, an assertion against the 'death-wish'.

Spivak's perspective in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* sees that there is only 'lost origin' as regards this. That is, where I see something like 'creative or animating spirit', and the cultural outlooks that would accredit such, she sees 'lost origin'. What is 'lost origin' other than the extinct? From an Enlightenment perspective, nature is basically, and oddly thought of, as 'dead', inert and static matter. From an animist perspective, nature is seen as alive or lively, animate matter. This has been explored by Carolyn Merchant in the aptly titled, *The Death of Nature*, and by Vandana Shiva, in the aptly titled *Staying Alive*.[135] In fact, Shiva's work is pertinent in this context since it concerns how in development work in India, the developmental project encourages a view of nature as exploitable dead matter where this is at odds with the subaltern sciences that treat nature as living and that are thus concerned with sustaining nature in ecological ways. In the story the pterodactyl would seem to concern the difference between an animist concept of being and Western or Westernised outlooks. This, however, accords with Spivak's reading of the story in *Imaginary Maps*, which strikes quite a different note:

> What follows is not a romanticisation of the tribal … In order to mobilize for nonviolence, for example, one relies, however remotely, on building up a conviction of the 'sacredness' of human life. 'Sacred' here need not have a religious sanction, but simply a sanction that cannot be contained within the principle of reason alone. Nature is no longer sacred in this sense for civilisations based on the control of Nature. The result is global devastation due to the failure of ecology.
>
> (p. 199)

Here a treatment of the values of the tribal people – which are presented as animistic as regards the sacredness of life and nature – is seen not to be a romanticism. Why, in the later reading, does a treatment of this translate into a European nostalgia for lost origins?

Where does this frequent talk of 'nostalgia for lost origins' come from? How is that cultures living alongside us today, today as I write, can be spoken of in terms of (our) lost origins? They are contemporaneous, so not some distant origin, and in being contemporaneous they have moved on from their origins in cultures which are dynamic and change over time. In Mahasweta Devi's story, Bakhia is credited with having created a new myth that yet serves to perpetuate or redeploy cultural traditions. Furthermore, the story contains within it a critique of the critique of a nostalgia for lost origins:

> How can he [Shankar, a literate villager] abandon the past? They don't know if that past is legend or history, and no researcher comes to separate the two. And who is going to tell us what is legend and what is history from the perspectives of these totally rejected tribals? Where is the boundary

> between history and story? If we can get so much history out of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabarata*, what is the problem with Shankar's nostalgia? (p. 146)

This could be read as saying, amongst other things, that what is criticised as nostalgia for lost origins may be otherwise read as a desire to retain and draw on histories, past stories, stories of the past, where literacy does not necessarily constitute a break with the histories of oral cultures. 'Nostalgia for lost origins' is itself something of a European myth that serves to produce other cultures as the lost origins of the West. They are neither 'our' – Western – nor lost, nor stuck at the origin. At the same time, what is at stake concerns all human beings with respect to what it is that may be valued cross-culturally. A positing of lost origins as a conceptual category is to be found in the evolutionary schema of nineteenth-century anthropology – the choice of 'pterodactyl' ironically evokes a Darwinian discourse of 'survival of the fittest' – and is also inscribed in a psychoanalytic thinking of maternal origins. While generally speaking there are lost origins, the conceptual category is often used to ensure a singularity of origin. A generativity of nature, a creativity of the feminine and the transmission of other lines of inheritance are thus produced as mere nostalgia. It is here that female authorship is conflated with an animism, the latter emerging as the merely imagined or imaginary of the former. In speaking of animism, I would thus be put in that position with the task then of saying it is not what I or we merely imagine. If not, it may be a matter of living realities. One way in which 'Pterodactyl' can be read is as dramatising the problematic discriminations of what is seen as myths of the past or a mythic past from what is accorded a living historicity.

Spivak points us in the direction of the 'archives of imperialist governance', where this indicates that we are to regard a proper study here as consisting of the colonial records of data of people considered to be past history. Such sources are useful and important, especially in a situation of the scarcity of recordings. And, Mahasweta Devi's story does not treat the question of cultural and spiritual beliefs with an anthropological specificity, where this would seem not to be its agenda. The story deliberately generalises where this is to raise the general question of the interfaces between cultural self-perceptions and the perceptions of other cultures. That is, the story self-reflexively accords priority to addressing a 'how to represent' rather than offering specific empirical data, where the literary text calls into question the privilege accorded to official historicisms, to the legislation of the legitimately historical. As indicated earlier, the text poses the question of what for whom counts as fact, history or myth, and its message may even be that to posit that which is yet living as 'lost origin' is what threatens to effect the loss in actuality. This is a question of the reality of a metaphysical violence and of discourse as power. It is perhaps especially a literary discourse that can do this questioning of the stakes of knowledge in that it is not invested in defending a specialist discipline of knowledge.

Switching to an African context that I am more familiar with, what is widespread in Africa is the ability to maintain Western and African-animist

cultural and intellectual traditions alongside each other, as discussed by Appiah. Appiah writes:

> What is left to us now includes our modern identities as citizens of new states, a taste for Michael Jackson and Jim Reeves as well as for Fela Kute or King Sonny Ade, respect for Aspirin as for juju, for Methodism or Catholicism or Shia Islam as well as respect for ancestors. African intellectuals (Christian priests, academics, teachers, novelists) are not less African than African peasant farmers; even if, as some of us think, the former show an unjustified contempt for the latter. Grounding oneself in Africa, in short, is grounding oneself in the present, not the past.[136]

Of course there is epistemic violence too, but, as regards Africa at least, it is inappropriate to assume that this epistemic violence has eradicated other forms of knowledge, where this knowledge is also a dynamic, self-revising contemporary form of knowledge, as well as source of values, as argued by Appiah, Achebe, and many other African writers and intellectuals. The epistemic violence that Spivak addresses may – this is but a speculation – have to do with the question of the transvaluation that she also raises, in which Indian culture is approximated to the West, whilst in Africa the Western historical disavowal of the entirety of Africa's cultural values or the value of its cultures is an impossibility: the attempt to render an African culture impossible as itself an impossibility for there just *is* this culture in all its diversity. This ongoing intellectual and cultural legacy is not only to be archivally located, where art, including literature, serves as a means, one amongst others, of its transmission and where the grid of Western epistemic formations comes to be called into question.

Apart from the above, it could be proposed that the literary text itself is a special kind of archive, or rather critique of the archive, a crypt. As an archive, it is *an archive of those yet living*: strange as it sounds. Literature, now, it's a time capsule … for spirits. A particularly literal instance of this is given by the South African writer Miriam Tlali in an interview with Rosemary Jolly, who comments: 'You buried books in the ground [to hide them from the security forces]!?'[137] The anecdote concerns the burial of books in the ground, given the censorships of apartheid, to save them for recovery in the future. The question of the funeral lament brought up in relation to *Antigone* and 'Draupadi', concerns not the usual funeral lament. As 'pre-mortem post-mortem', it saves what is threatened with death from death as if there could be no death: it is in the striking manner of Oedipus' 'death' in which he merely crosses a threshold from the social sphere into the zone of the Furies. Royle's reading of cryptaesthesia in *Telepathy and Literature* shows well how that which is saved from death – the crypt is a safe, a keeping safe – is a case of crossing thresholds. (Moreover, Royle's reading of cryptaesthesia is aptly, through a reading of *Wuthering Heights*, a text that may be said to encrypt an African–Indian outlaw brother along with an incestuous love between brother and sister.)[138] If this is mystical it is in ways very often not

understood, or it would necessitate a new reading of the uncanny, as literature, some texts in particular, can show. It might be presumed that in writing 'Pterodactyl', Mahasweta Devi wished to preserve and transmit something, at least, of the spirit or spirits of those she writes of. As a journalist, she could write a sociohistorical account, with an ethical and political slant, of the displacement and possible destruction of the cultures concerned. However, if she chooses to compose a literary text, it is perhaps because this kind of text is the one needed if you hope to transmit something of spirit or spirits. Then, even if a culture were to be rendered extinct, there would be something of its living spirit in the text. Living? Yes, living is the word that I would choose since it is a matter of what lives on, what does not die, with the text created for such a purpose. Within the story, this is reflected by Bakhia's cryptic carving, together with other drawings and cultural inscriptions of the tribal group.

A literary text may serve to remind us of what of the past has never been past. In this, it may not be just a crypt but an abiku and, as such, a way of rethinking the relation between past and future. Literature may be both crypt and abiku in that, in a Benjaminian sense, it preserves what the past cannot assimilate, introject, historicise, for a possible but by no means certain future. In Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, there is a particular conception of the abiku of relevance here. First, broadly speaking, the abiku is a spirit child that – in a cycle of births and deaths – is said to be born to aggravate its parents in some way. Soyinka provides this definition in his poem entitled 'Abiku': 'Wanderer child. It is the same child who dies and returns again and again to plague the mother – Yoruba belief.'[139] The spirit child may be said to make enigmatic or excessive demands on its parents. This child can be one that, in dying young, troubles its parents with a certain refusal to remain with them, whilst its returns signify a repeatedly unmet demand. West African writers from the colonial period onwards have deployed the abiku figure in literature in differing ways. Ben Okri gives this spirit child a particular political and ethical post-colonial significance in his novel *The Famished Road*. In the novel, the abiku child is one in touch with the spirit world – where this cannot be separated from nature – who in being born is sensitive to all the injustices in the human world not fully severing his/her ties with the spirit world and its values. The main spirit child in the novel, Azaro, keeps trying to 'die' –that is, return to the spirit world because of the cruelty, poverty and corruption he witnesses in Nigerian society on the brink of its independence. It is then claimed towards the end of the novel that Nigeria can be seen as an abiku nation, one that keeps struggling to be given a life, but that keeps failing to attain this, as Ade, another abiku, says: 'Our country is an abiku country. Like the spirit-child, it keeps coming and going. One day it will decide to remain. It will become strong.'[140] What the text seems to propose through Azaro is that in order for the spirit child to stay amongst the living, human beings have to work at building the kind of world (the road of the title) that would be not just hospitable but really liveable in. That the abiku keeps trying to be born into a livable existence reminds us to work harder for the chances of this arrival. It is said:

> Things that are not ready, not willing to be born or to become, things for which inadequate preparations have not been to sustain their momentous births, things that are not resolved, things bound up with failure and fear of being, they all keep recurring, keep coming back, and in themselves partake of the spirit child's condition.[141]

There are possible ways in which a philosophy of the abiku slightly touches on and serves to critique postmodernist thinking of 'the event', 'messianism' and 'the arrivant', as will not be gone into here, except to say that Okri's abiku concerns a teaching of what needs be done to ensure its coming and staying. In the text, the points at which Azaro tries to die, and the point at which another spirit child Ade does 'die' or return to the spirit world for a future birth, alert us to what, in particular, human society should try to change in order that the abiku not be consigned to the impossibility of its future. This differs from an empty messianism in that it concerns not merely a waiting for the unpredictable but an addressing of 'inadequate preparations'. There is a point in 'Pterodactyl' where something of this abiku logic is to be found in the thoughts of one of the onlookers bearing witness to the destruction of the tribal culture:

> Looking at Bikhia's tawny matted hair, freshly shaven face, he understood that they were being defeated as they were searching in this world for a reason for the ruthless unconcern of government and administration. It was then that the shadow of that bird with its wings spread came back as *myth* and analysis.
>
> This is a new *myth*. For the soul of those long dead will return hundreds of years later in the form of an unknown tired bird. Such a thing is probably not there even in their *oral tradition*.
>
> But from now on they will wait in their suffering and in evil times for that shadow, otherwise this deception cannot be humanly explained.
>
> (p. 193)

This possibly concerns what is encrypted for the hope of its return. I will not discuss this here, but I will let it serve as a bookmark for that is what it is: the bookmark marking on a certain date the place to return to and resume a suspended reading at a later date, a matter of reminders. This bookmark is one that, among other things, will mark the place at which I hope to rejoin Spivak's Marxist critique of deconstruction.

Since the deployment of this abiku figure has been raised, it is interesting that the abiku does not only turn up in West African writing and thought. In Dickens' *Dombey and Son*, it would be possible to see young Paul Dombey as a kind of spirit child. He is in touch with a spirit-nature world and wishes to leave the human world as a protest against his father's values, his father being a rampant capitalist intent on forcing his son to be his capitalist heir. Sándor Ferenczi's pieces, 'The Wise Baby' and 'The Unwelcome Child and his Death Drive', present us with psychoanalytic material that could be cross-referenced with ideas of the significance

of the abiku. In the former, Ferenczi draws attention to the frequent occurrence in narrations of dreams, myths, traditional religious histories, tales and, even, paintings of wise children who are able to: 'treat one to deep sayings or carry on intelligent conversations, give learned explanations, and so on'.[142] He considers this as an ironic reversal of the analyst–analysand relationship, calling the expert knowledge of the former into question, and where also a denied site of knowledge is reconfigured as the return of a repressed knowledge with respect to both what was better known or returns to be better known. This has significance for the 'pre-post-colonial', in ways that would subvert a colonial positing of the 'primitive' as 'ignorant child', and where a thinking of 'the wise baby' is to be found in the cultures of both Africa and the West. In speaking of the unwelcome child, Ferenczi writes: 'I only wished to point to the probability that children who are received in a harsh and unloving way die easily' (p. 271). This death wish is not simply a desire to die, but the inability of what Ferenczi calls the 'life-force' to maintain itself against the hostility of its inhospitable environment. In other words, the death wish does not originate with the child, but comes from the desire within the parental culture for the child not to live, a rejection that the child is without the force or resources to resist. Alternatively, if the children survive into adulthood, it is as '*unwelcome guests of the family*' (emphasis in text, p. 270), which may produce 'cosmological speculation, with a strain of pessimism'. What Ferenczi remarks of one particular patient has some resonances – suspending the very different contexts – with a line of thought in 'Pterodactyl'. He writes:

> Her broodings about the origins of all living things were only, as it were, the continuance of the question that had remained unanswered, why she had been brought into the world at all if those who did so were unable to receive her with love.
>
> (p. 271)

Ferenczi's material is clinical, and so based on an analysis of neurotic or disturbed individual patients, but there is scope for extending it to social and cultural analyses. In 'Pterodactyl', the tribal people are posited as, in a sense, 'unwelcome guests of the family', family become nation, where this being deprived of value in a position of vulnerability could relate to the seeming 'death wish' described. Okri's abiku is welcome within his immediate family but finds the wider social world of a corrupt Nigeria, with its violent effects on the family, an unwelcoming environment. However, there remains scope for variant interpretations, necessarily so, given the range of ways in which the figure of the abiku is deployed and, indeed, reinterpreted in different myths and texts. Tutuola's spirit child, not quite an abiku, in *The Palm Wine Drinkard* is precocious in its development and is one who asks too much of his parents, where this could be either a matter of his over-demanding nature or a testing of the parents' 'welcoming' limits.

It has been suggested that the ghost/spirit child of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is

drawn from the African notions of the abiku. There is something of the abiku in the figure of Beloved, but it can be argued that, compared with Okri's *The Famished Road*, we are dealing with an abiku that eventually *must not* return, as opposed to an abiku that cannot die and eventually *must* return. A brief reading of *Beloved* may serve to refocus the question of 'lost origins'.

Beloved is initially given to us in Morrison's text as a poltergeist, being the ghost of a young girl murdered by her mother, Sethe, a former slave. The child is killed in order to save her from undergoing the dehumanising traumas of slavery. A friend from Sethe's slave past visits the haunted house and his arrival serves to begin to undo Sethe's crypt for, depressively, she has not yet been able to mourn her traumatic past. With this beginning of a move to confront the past, the ghost of Beloved materialises. She is like a conventional ghost of Western literature in that she is the revenant who returns in seeking revenge or restitution out of a grievance. However, she also returns as an abiku – although not one who is born again through a mother – she rematerialises in the flesh and not in 'blurred' ghostly form. As abiku, she possibly represents the Africans of the Middle Passage (as given in the novel) and stands as an accusation of the violent theft of human beings from their own culture of origin. Beloved, in the text, can be seen as representing the demand for an impossible justice because there can be no undoing of the traumatic past and no unleashing of a murderous vengeance. Thus associated with Beloved is a mourning process, a reconfronting of the past in order not to be melancholically haunted by it, but to internalise it in the form of an historical memory. This also constitutes an exorcism of the ghost-abiku that is Beloved. Problematically, this exorcism of Beloved concerns not only the past of slavery but the African past. Beloved, as abiku, as African spirit child, could be said to represent the spiritual African past of the African-American.

The novel ends with the repeated assertion: 'This was not a story to pass on'; 'This is not a story to pass on'.[143] The repetition of this as a refrain allows different meanings to resonate. *This was/is not a story to pass on*: the horrific history of slavery must never recur. *This was/is not a story to pass on*: the abiku-story, the African past, is not of the order of stories that can be passed on in contemporary American society. While Beloved very much wants to resume in the present the life denied her, it is not possible to give her life again. *This is not a story to pass on*: it is too terrible, too traumatising to read, to pass on to others. As such, this would be an injunction against the literary impulse. It is too destructive a narrative to pass on for it stirs up an immense hatred for the barbarity of white people and a justifiable sense of intolerable grievance. And, yet, the text, even as it would swallow itself up in forbidding its being passed on, is being passed on. What is not to be passed on: is being passed on, which would mean reconsidering what is and is not to be passed on of it. I think one, just one, of the messages of the text is that African-American people, whilst remembering their past, are being cautioned against a possible nostalgia for lost origin, for lost Africa. This, from the shores of America, might well be seen as constituting a desire to go back to or remain in a state of childhood – Beloved's state – and beyond that it might be seen as a desire to return to a moment of loss and death, as if a death drive. This

is a perspective that also emerges in Morrison's *Song of Solomon* where the African-American man's, Milkman's, quest for cultural roots is intertwined with questions of maturing into masculine adulthood and with the question of an ambiguous death drive, regarding the suicide at the start of the novel and the leap into the air at the end, which could be either flight (fleeing Oedipal America) or death-drive suicide (compulsion to return to original death). There is some suggestion in these texts of Morrison that survival in modern America necessitates a partial letting go of the African past and its spirituality, and sustaining a sense of grievance, revenge, or a desire to *get even* (as represented by Guitar who, with his spirit of revenge, becomes the avenging angel for whom the sacrifice of Africa-bound Milkman could be said to be a sad necessity), this given a white society that has not really learnt to atone for its past abuses and continues to maximise the fierce and competitive survival instincts of the self and its own. And, reading from the African perspective of a writer such as Bessie Head, all that is not a story to pass on.

The point of the above reading is that there is clearly a sense in which Africa does realistically constitute a lost origin for African-American people, and therefore can perhaps only return in magical form. Indeed, the magic or magical realist tradition, not the same as animism, within which Morrison writes, is, in my own view, truly about the *loss* of other cultural origins with their then inexplicable or counter-rational phantasmatic returns. However, for writers such as Ben Okri and Bessie Head, Africa – traditional and modern – is not, obviously, a lost origin but, in its living reality, a source for vital and urgent attempts to try and forge an ethical and political vision that would serve as an African critique of, and mode of, resisting neocolonialism and neo-imperialism. In particular, for both writers, Head and Okri, albeit in very different ways, an animism serves as precisely the means of criticising a patriarchal capitalism in favour of an African politics that could be seen as having some affiliations with a specifically African tradition of socialism, its chances and its vicissitudes. The socialism of Nyerere and Senghor, for example, attempts to hybridise Marxism through an insistence on the spirituality or spiritedness of African cultures. Head's writings are reasonably close to this emphasis, whilst a text such as *The Famished Road* has Western Romantic and postmodernist aspects that serve to inscribe a certain distance from Africa that is self-consciously marked in the novel, especially in its ending. Nonetheless, Okri's text, strongly inspired by earlier writers such as Tutuola, seeks to retransmit some of the vision and values of an animist culture as of ongoing relevance in the struggles against neocolonialism, as Ato Quayson's reading of the text brings out.[144] With respect to not making colonialism central to his novel, Okri comments:

> there's been too much *attribution of power* to the effect of colonialism on our consciousness. Too much has been given to it … There are certain areas of the African consciousness that will remain inviolate. Because the world view *it is* makes a people *survive* (my emphases).[145]

Responding to this interview, Brenda Cooper states:

> This is the language of Tutuola, of myth and conservation, of pure and inviolate ways of seeing the world; it is diametrically opposed to the hybrid, to change and it is this that drives the area of the novel that is steeped in histories of universal greed and suffering, lifted out of historical consciousness.[146]

Cooper approximates *The Famished Road* to a magic realist genre, but her reading indicates that she regards the text as yet insufficiently magic realist, in that it is regarded as being culturally conservative, resistant to hybridity and change. I wish to question this judgement below.

First, Okri can be seen as stating that too much credit has been given to an epistemic violence within an African context, as Appiah's well-supported arguments in *In My Father's House* would endorse. Furthermore, Okri may be seen to be objecting that an over-insistence on colonial erasures serves to reinforce and produce this erasure: too much power is given to this 'myth', which may then be considered as having a censoring effect. Cooper's attribution to the language of Tutuola of 'pure and inviolate ways of seeing the world' is surely too hasty a reading. Tutuola's texts are notoriously *hybrid*, as insisted upon by Lewis Nkosi and as seen as constituting an infidelity complained about by some African critics.[147] The texts may be said to be accommodative of colonial culture *within the frameworks of African culture*, rather than the other way around, where what is of importance is how it often is that 'this other way around' becomes a certain impossibility of comprehension for a sceptical Western reader. As for a way of seeing the world, my earlier reading tried to show that part of what is at stake in this is a curious observation of the world. It is a matter of trying to grasp the being of the other which cannot be reduced to a desire to preserve a cultural purity of vision for it is much more broadly a matter of a will-to-truth or a will-to-knowledge. Just as regards art in the West, there would be a vast discourse to draw on regarding the desire to see something as it is, to grasp the actuality of an object or an other, where this is not attributed to a Western defence of its cultural purity of vision. (This would sound absurd, where turning the question around could yet be of possible interest.) Moreover, in Tutuola's texts there are constant encounters with strangers, with other cultures within the cultures of Africa. Here, we may be aware of the fact of ethnic diversity within African culture where Africa is hybrid within itself and not only through contact with the West (while also there is a long history of cultural contact with the West, as Basil Davidson's work shows, whereby it is a myth to think of African cultures as 'pure' prior to colonialism). In short, Tutuola's constantly dramatised fascination with the other, the *stranger*, makes it difficult to charge his work with a cultural conservatism. Cooper attributes to Okri and Tutuola a 'mythic' consciousness, as opposed to a historical consciousness, in their alignment with an African consciousness, where this contains sweeping assumptions. This produces African thought as myth, a gesture which can lead us to certain anthropological

ambushes or traps: African thought as merely myth (which the intellectualist approach of Horton argues against), and worse, the Hegelian and Lévy-Bruhlian construction of an Africa that does not think, is pre-logical. Okri insists that an African consciousness *is*, that it survives and makes for survival (in relation to a text all about the survival of an abiku). This should certainly not be thought of as a *racial* consciousness any more than Western consciousness is a racially inherited one – that illusion of race that Appiah addresses – for it is a matter of African experiences, histories, cultural and intellectual inheritances that inform ways of reading and understanding the world. Cooper's critique of Okri's deployment of 'myth' is that this makes his text moralising, but this in itself is moralising where the moral is an affirmation of (one kind of) 'hybridity' and 'change'. Change? This coupling of 'hybridity' with a need for change suggests that there is only a 'progressive hybridity' of obligatory Westernisation to be discussed further on. Quayson's reading of Okri moves away from a critique of Okri's mythopoeia to conclude with an affirmation that: 'The rationality of indigenous belief systems has a part to play in the understanding of the African condition.'[148]

Possibly I Africanise Mahasweta Devi in my readings of her work, and would readily accept correction on this, for there are certainly differences between the threatened culture she depicts and traditional cultures of Africa. However, the basic argument is that her work seems closer to an African literature of a certain socialist or communist inclination, than to an African-American literature of lost origins which would take us in the direction of magic realism. With regard to the supposed infancy of African cultures, I will make a polemical case, the first of two polemics in this book.

Polemical case 1. The Western view of tribal or animist cultures has been, and continues to be, overwhelmingly a progressivist view of these cultures as trapped in a state of infancy from which they need to be freed by being Westernised. Mudimbe's work has shown how incessantly such cultures in Africa are posited in terms of 'the child' in relation to the Western adult. Yet, the West does not pause to consider how its 'adult' culture might look from another side, another shore. Here, an anecdote concerning a remark made by Wittgenstein is pertinent. When a woman remarked to him that for all the barbarities of the century, she would still prefer Western civilisation to anything else, he replied: 'of course you would, but would "the savage"?'. The real insights of this are perhaps not immediately obvious. Forget 'the savage' or 'primitive' for the moment. Postmodernist American culture is often looked at and perceives itself to be the future, where we are all heading. From my and other relatively 'old-fashioned' perspectives, looking at America from the outside, it appears to us to be a culture that massively infantilises itself, and would like to export this self-infantilisation. America infantilises and celebrates infantilisation. At least there is this tendency to create in its adult population the dream of an arrested childhood in which the world is safe from the harsh realities of life, where all will be provided for and looked after, and where the adult-child is encouraged to comply with daily

routine surveillance, but where the compensations for this are fun and games, endless new entertaining distractions, new toys, new pastimes to explore. The Oedipal family is the whole of society. There are a few fatherly figures of symbolic authority whose guarantees are a national family security, national protection, for a permanently childlike populace, perpetually defended from harsh reality in the world beyond, including third worlds in the first world. This is what Thatcher could be said to have tried to import (much admiring the American model), with a certain amount of success, into Britain, although it is more widely a question of the 'maturations' of capitalism. American culture, looked at from the outside, seems entranced with child-world images that are aimed at adults and constitute adult entertainments and aspirations – for instance, amongst a wealth of material, the current obsession with school movies as the space of cultural self-reflection. Returning to Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, a phantasmatic Oedipus is everywhere. You cannot step out of the Oedipal family unit without stepping straight back into it in the wider society. The freedom of this is the freedom to be a child forever where the images of freedom – cowboy, lone rebel, etcetera – are taken as the symbols of this free society. Thinking of Wittgenstein's remark, those who are inside this world may fail to grasp how it might be that there are those who might prefer not to have the privileges if the obligation is a pervasive compulsory and compulsive infantilisation, to say nothing of the barbarities of the civilisation concerned, whilst this is not thereby to propose a rejection of modernisation. For, in spite of confusions and in spite of obvious interdependency, science is not reducible to capitalist modernity. The point of this polemic is that a 'mature' Western society that regards other cultures as immature and 'developing' ironically remains unaware of its own immaturity and fantasies of a permanent childhood. And, there are different understandings of 'freedom' at stake. Now less polemic, and more analysis.

In *A Question of Power*, Head writes, via her protagonist, in a different context to be sure but where her words have many sites of applicability: 'there are forces that make a mockery of our preferences'.[149] These words are cited in favour of the fact that Spivak works with the realities of power, indispensably so, where her analyses of the workings and effects of transnational capitalism are crucial to attend to, even as this rather preliminary work has failed to engage explicitly or sufficiently with these analyses. In fact, I love the way that her work dis-tracts the distracted so we can act. Without letting go of this at all, not at all, the question is of how this may be yoked with certain other visions of liberation. That is the difficulty of the task. While both Bessie Head and Ama Ata Aidoo are writers that persistently engage with the realities of power, they have each respectively also characterised the writer, the poet or storyteller as a dreamer. What is meant by 'dreamer' here concerns less personal fantasies than political and social visions that go beyond a given reality and maintain a certain oppositional idealism, an idealism used to resist the dominant idealism of the West or of Man. Spivak, in her chapter on 'Literature' argues for critique as a defence against oppositional political readings. What I want to say is that we need to

keep yoked together critique and opposition and, liking hyphens too, we could say oppositional-critique. Spivak, herself, surely does something of this in bringing together Marxism and deconstruction. The problem is that when complicity is put forward as an obligation, when there is a law of complicity, this complicity becomes identical with the law of identity.

Towards the end of *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak brings up the question of animism as an old–new alternative vision in ways that I would be very happy to link up with. She writes:

> Having seen the powerful and risky rôle played by Christian liberation theology, some of us have dreamed of animist liberation theologies to girdle the perhaps impossible vision of an ecologically just world. Indeed, the name theology is alien to this thinking.
>
> (p. 382)

She goes on to write:

> I have no doubt that we must learn to learn from the original practical ecological philosophies of the world. Again, I am not romanticizing … We are talking about using the strongest mobilising discourse in the world in a certain way, for the globe, not merely for Fourth World uplift.
>
> (p. 383)

Yes, yes. There are immense possibilities here. With respect to this, what I am trying to help to clarify is not only how the philosophies and ideologies of the West are set against these other philosophies, resistant to them not only because of traditional Western mindsets but for reasons of power, but how these other philosophies serve to constitute a serious challenge to the hegemony of ongoing second enlightenment thought and attitudes. While, as Spivak aptly notes, we are not necessarily dealing with a philosophy of the transcendental, the philosophies concerned are yet capable of their universals and there is scope for forging new connections between many sites of knowledge with respect to the global discourse that Spivak refers to above.

The fact that this discourse exists outside of the dominant tradition of European philosophy is exciting. For while that tradition would exclude this other knowledge, this other form of understanding is far more accommodative in what it is able to comprehend. This could be to accommodate the apparently contradictory towards entertaining compatible contradictions. Idealist philosophy seems to aim for the perfection of a self-consistency; the truth as the elimination of self-contradiction: and, that is perhaps in its nature. If contradictions arise in Spivak's work, this may be an effect of struggling for other truths. Self-consistency may be admirable, but risking contradictions is life-affirming. Furthermore, what might subtend the issues debated so far are disciplinary differences between philosophical and literary studies, on the one hand, and cultural studies, on the other (for I find the chapters on 'Culture' and 'History' in

A Critique of Postcolonial Reason not only very convincing but able to address questions of historical narrative that are beyond the scope of what this chapter has concentrated on).

As regards the persistent question of 'can the subaltern speak?'– yes and no. The other may be received as a subject. This is not simply some kind of Western allowance, for it relates to the accommodative nature of African intellectual cultures and to a tendency within traditional cultures towards a subjectification as opposed to objectication in reading the other. Mudimbe, following Kagame, where this also could be aligned with what is argued by Mbiti, has maintained that Tempels' breakthrough was not in *what* he argued of Bantu philosophy – a limited exposition open to critique – but in his approach, where he broke with a previous tradition of anthropology in treating the other not so much as an object of knowledge but a subject to be engaged with as such and learnt from. What Tempels 'discovers', Africans already know and know with more refinement, but his contribution is in instituting something of a change in intellectual cross-cultural relations through his experiment in an empathetic approach that Mudimbe draws attention to in *The Invention of Africa*. And yet, Spivak's critique remains crucial in its identification of a widespread condition within a Western intellectual culture, with its construction of the thinking subject, in which the subaltern *is* forced into a position of invisibility, unseen and unheard even when seen and heard, to be scrutinised in subsequent chapters in support of leads offered by the work of Spivak.

The question of a regressive hybridity

It might or not might not help to begin this section with a few words about the question of woman as subject, in addition to the question of a creative subject, where the problematic of 'woman does not exist' has a long history. The difficulty for women intellectuals working within the psychoanalytic and philosophical legacies of the metaphysical tradition is that they – in ascribing to 'the only one subject' – face the danger of denying rather than affirming the questioning of man by the feminine (Antigone being given such a significance). With this, the capacity of the feminine to question the masculine flies out of the window. That is to say, if men speculate and propose that 'woman does not exist' (she is but castration, absence, death, or other such masculine fictions) and then women come along and strongly affirm this, they confirm it absolutely, beyond any doubt, without any question, and then she flies out of the window.

I am not sure about how to advance this, but here goes: woman is a being in the world that questions Man. The uncertainty of the formulation is that it can be heard – well, indeed, if it can be heard – in various ways. Woman is: a-being-in-the-world that questions Man, that transcendental subject. And, a woman is a being in the world, a being besides others, who is capable of a feminine questioning of male thought and the thinking man. It often makes women laugh out loud but, as Cixous shows in her 'Laugh of the Medusa', this laughter in the world-out-there of women upsets a male vanity and, it could be added,

interrupts the man's thought processes and concentration, which causes anger. But are there some men who see the humour, albeit quite often more darkly or grimly: Samuel Beckett.

Now, to say that woman is a being in the world that questions man {and as I write this I am conscious of swinging between two poles of absurdity], is not an essentialism for it does not properly say what woman 'is' – after all, she *is questioning* the thought of man – other than to affirm that *she* is questioning, she too, no doubt about that. {The two poles of absurdity, by the way, concern, on the one hand, knowing the absurdity of speaking of 'Woman' and, on the other hand, thinking how absurd it is even to have to argue this case for a questioning woman: knowing and thinking too how there will be those who will want to say 'absurd, absurd', one way or another, to what is being said. Agreement might be: it is absurd, one way or another, whilst this remains yet serious.] What is at stake is clarification.

This section of the chapter will treat issues raised by *Passing*, Nella Larsen's text, that is, as well as Judith Butler's reading of the text. Again, use will be made of a literary text in order to further an argument. Butler's reading of the text is one that carefully explores, with reference to earlier critical readings of the story and to a psychoanalytic theorisation of desire, the nature of the dilemmas being posed by the story. I more or less agree with Butler's reading in its own terms, but in considering the reading in accordance with the terms that have been in circulation in this chapter it might be possible to specify further the issues at stake concerning 'another ethics and another politics' beyond the imperatives of Westernisation. That said, there are statements offered in the course of Butler's reading that I am keen to affirm. This gives cause for hope for it means that there may be scope for alliance across differing discursive sites.

Passing, then, concerns among other things: the subject of mixed race, regressive and progressive hybridities, the clandestine and, again, the 'impossible woman'. It also concerns 'animism', to an extent, and the question of freedom. My reading will therefore try to tug the terms of the debate towards a discursive Africanisation of the issues against the powers and forces of Oedipal Westernisation.

In the story it is a character called Clare that is the impossible woman, the one that must be 're-foreclosed' and that the law-of-the-father legislates against with absolute certainty to the point of Clare's death. She is the one around whom all the interpretations circulate, both within the text and as regards readings of it. As philosophers claim of Antigone, she is the one who fascinates us. So, the intrigue is that, if she represents 'the impossible', in speaking of what she represents, we are given the chance of identifying and analysing what the said-to-be impossible might be. A brief synopsis of the story will now be given.

The story concerns two women, Irene and Clare, who are both of mixed race origin, and both light skinned enough to pass as white. The story is ostensibly told from the perspective of Irene: ostensibly, because it is ironically layered, and thus the reader is enabled an awareness beyond the conscious awareness of the character Irene. The narrative concerns the return into Irene's life of a friend

she had lost touch with, Clare. It transpires that Clare has married a white man, Bellew, clandestinely insinuating herself into white society, while Irene, also capable of passing for white, is very much a part of and committed to a black community of the Harlem Renaissance, one that could be seen as trying to affirm a black cultural identity. In the course of the story we are able to see that Irene is both fascinated by Clare as well as resentfully or jealously troubled by her. She fears that her husband, Brian, is attracted to Clare while, as discussed by Butler, we can see that this might be a case of the displacement of her own disavowed sexual desire. As for Clare, she is increasingly drawn both to and into the culture of the Harlem Renaissance, to the point of wishing to abandon her racist husband, and possibly their child, in order to re-enter the black community. It is at this point that Irene betrays Clare to her husband, enabling or forcing him to discover the fact of his wife's racial origin. The story ends with Irene and Bellew converging on Clare, and Clare plunging to her death through a window. This is given to us in such a way that we do not know if this is a suicidal leap, or the result of the force of Bellew's approach, or if Irene – intervening – actually conspires to push Clare to her death. Suicidal leap or murderous shove, that is the irreducible question, one that comes up time and again.

What is at stake in Butler's reading could be said to be a challenge to the privileging of a sexual differential over questions of race. Thus, the reading aims to show that determinants of both race and sexuality are co-implied in the allure and danger posed by Clare. What 'Clare' represents in Butler's reading is, basically, the split off sexuality of the black woman. It is a freedom of sexuality that Irene, in conforming or submitting to both the dominant racial and sexual norms and laws of the racist, patriarchal society has felt compelled to renounce and repress, and thus both desires and resents in Clare. Butler writes: 'Clare embodies a certain kind of sexual daring that Irene defends herself against.'[150] She also writes of both Larsen's *Passing* and her novella, *Quicksand*: 'both stories resolve on the impossibility of sexual freedom for black women' (p. 178). While Butler does manage to skilfully interweave the co-articulation of race and sexuality, it still seems to me that the reading gives the emphasis to the embodiment of a transgressive *sexuality*. At any rate, the 'impossible' is specified: 'the impossibility of sexual freedom for black women'. In this, Clare could represent 'sexual freedom', and Irene, the 'black woman', since the formulation is of the impossibility of Clare for Irene. What remains to be argued is that Clare might represent something *other* than a *sexual* freedom. This would also be a more-than-sexual-embodiment, without leaving sexuality behind.

Beginning this line of approach, Clare could be seen as Art, in terms of both the aesthetic and the creative. She is continually given to us in terms of radiant beauty and, in addition, she is seductively enigmatic, thoroughly undecidable; this being the queerness of the aesthetic, as Derrida could be said to look at in *Glas* – all that undecidability. Furthermore, as mentioned at the outset of the chapter, for Baudelaire art could be figured in terms of either the (promiscuous) prostitute or the (narcissistic) lesbian. This is exactly how Clare comes across to

Irene for there is both the question of Irene's being troubled by homoerotic desire for Clare and troubled by the thought that Clare is dangerously willing to sleep with any man. Butler notices how Clare, in being associated with passion, is imaged in terms of flame, citing: 'One moment Clare had been there, a vital glowing thing, like a flame of red and gold. The next she was gone' (p. 172), There is passion there, but animistically speaking it is, more than this, a question of creative force. The starkness of the contrast in the two sentences cited is between something vibrantly alive – 'vital' – and the nothingness beside this that intensifies the sense of Clare's aliveness. Here things are starting to turn a little.

Clare is flame, that double helix of red and gold, the colours used to symbolise spiritual forces and creativity in certain cultures and religions – for instance, the maroon and saffron of Tibetan Buddhism. Clare is flame: light (clarity) is flame, is the sun, is the source of all living energies (scientifically so, as well as in terms of the heliocentrisms of religion). If it seems that too much is being made of the spiritual aspects of flame here, then let us move on to breath. It is thanks to Butler's reading that we can notice that much is made of breath in the novel. Butler notices that Irene chokes on her admiration for Clare (a choking effect that I tried to trace in readings of *Antigone*), stating: 'the exclamation is choked, deprived of air' (p. 169), which is similar to Derrida's remark that Antigone takes our breath away. Butler suggests that the name of Clare's husband, Bellew, suggests 'bellows' and that he acts to fan her flame. I am not sure if he does, but he certainly may be said to huff and puff like a pair of bellows, maybe as if the provocation of Clare causes a certain hyperventilation. Whereas the father ideal is supposed to represent the origin of all, Clare represents something of a threat to that in that she represents a spirit, a flame, a breath, beyond this. Just as flame has the significance of spirit, so does breath, of course – pneuma, ruah. As Robin Horton explains, breath has the same significance in African beliefs as in Greek philosophy, and as in religions such as Judaism.

Thus, so far, Clare, the impossible, represents a spirit, a creativity beyond that of Man. This energy would certainly not exclude sexuality; sexuality would be a part of it, but this creative force of life would not be reducible to sexuality. Clare's luminosity and radiance, much emphasised in the text, has something of spirit to it where this is not at all divorced from sexuality (as it would be in Judeo-Christian terms). While the text does very much concern the desire of Irene, it is also interesting to consider Clare's trajectory. She enters the white world as con artist, magician and trickster, practised in the arts of seduction and mimicry and the creation of captivating illusions. And then, finding the white world too claustrophobic – the patriarchal and racist Bellew gives her no room to breath – she seeks the vitality of bohemian, arty, spirited Harlem. So, for her, it is about freedom but not especially sexual freedom, and it concerns a freedom from the freedoms of comfort and protection offered by privileged white society.

What Clare may represent amongst other things is the impossibility of a feminine and African creative force and its freedom to create. It is perhaps more this than the sexuality of the black woman that is at stake. That is, while the sexuality

of black women is culturally posited by a white society as 'wild' and beyond the confines of the respectable Oedipal family, it is yet that which is hypocritically permitted and even actively sought out – hence the white men in the Harlem bars in the story – rather than being that which constitutes what absolutely *must not be*. It is interesting to consider the precise point at which Clare becomes intolerable in the story for both Irene and Bellew. For Irene, it is when Clare announces to her that she wishes to leave Bellew and re-enter the black community, and for Bellew when he sees his 'white' wife 'go native' before his very eyes. That is, the flare-up point concerns the abandonment of white society. First, then, what may be intolerable for Irene is that Clare should abandon the privileges that she has in the white world, the very privileges that it is made clear to us that Irene wants to obtain. This can be related to sexual desire, as Butler explores. That is, for Irene to be upwardly mobile is possibly to repress her sexual self in accordance with the strivings and expectations of the white society. Beyond that, she has to give up on any freedom of spirit in favour of conventionality. However, it could also be suggested that this is perhaps the very thing she wants; it may be her drive. As suggested, the 'glowing' and golden, undecidable Clare may, like art in general, be the focus of a range of desires. Whilst she may well represent sexual transgression to Irene, she could also be said to represent the glow of gold, money, status, having made it, having everything. Irene describes Clare as 'very having'. Beyond the economic meaning there is the sexual suggestion that she is not castrated, that in more ways in one she may give the impression of having the phallus. First, this could be a matter of her androgynous attraction. Second, it could also imply that she has 'a Bellew', the one invested with white phallic power, of her own. That is, Irene's unconscious erotic fantasy may also be one of living with Bellew amidst luxury, which could be why she finds Clare intolerable when Clare forsakes all this. What is at stake here is the sexiness of money, the erotics of capital and power, and the symbolic capital of the phallus.

This is a somewhat 'Africanised' reading, since I have in mind certain African literary texts that treat of cross-racial sexual fantasies. As explored by Peter Abrahams in *Mine Boy* through the character Eliza, the desire of the black woman can orientate itself towards the white man due to the (al)lure of his power and wealth. In the novel, Eliza has a relationship with the male hero Xuma, but she is insufficiently drawn to him because she wants 'the things white people have' and thus her desire is for more than the African man, a Fanonesque scenario of *Black Skin, White Masks*.[151] Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel, which explicitly makes of Fanon its epigraph, explores how the upwardly mobile daughter worships the white-like father for his accomplishments and status. And so on. Bessie Head in *The Cardinals*, a novel that revolves cross-racial desire through a range of combinations and permutations, almost taxonomically, has her protagonist reflect on the recurrent transgression of the Immorality Act on the part of white men sleeping with black women of a lower social status or black prostitutes. She asks why does this breaking of a law that has even been made into a legal act keep happening. It is implied that black women, poor

women or prostitutes, do it for the money – to alleviate the 'dirt' and poverty of their existences – and so no mystery there. However, the protagonist, Mouse, puzzles over the transgressive desire of the white men, willing to risk family, career, reputation and all, for sex with these poor, 'unwashed' (as is repeatedly stressed) women.[152] The way in which it is put suggests an almost pornographic compulsion on the part of the men for 'dirty sex', beyond their sterile family lives. As Young has explored, this fantasy of cross-racial sex on the part of white men is widely recurrent, even almost obsessive. As Butler considers, Bellew is attracted to Clare through a fantasy of cross-racial sex: as though attracted to her through vague signs of mixed race and where his nickname for her is 'Nig'. He may even, for sake of argument, unconsciously or semi-consciously allow himself to be hoodwinked by her passing for the sake of being able to act out cross-racial erotic fantasies. The point at which Clare becomes impossible for him, as indicated earlier, is when he sees her as having abandoned his white racist world for the black community, so her terrible transgression is not so much that she is mixed race as a *going native*.

What could be said to enrage Bellew is not the mixed race woman so much (she he desires) but the thought of women in the white world leaving it and going over to the black side. When Bellew and Irene seemingly act in concert against Clare, what they could be said to share in this is a deep fear of a 'regressive hybridity'. And it is the case that masculine ideology casts this 'regressive hybridity' in terms of black sexuality, female sexuality, and homosexuality – in short, anything that is not white male heterosexuality. It is interesting that Bellew and Irene come to form an alliance here for it shows that there is ultimately allowance of the combinatory of the white man and the black woman, understood as a progressive hybridity, against the truly dangerous hybridity. It could be said that the law against miscegenation is problematic – and causes the ambivalence that Young explores – because what it *really* applies to is the absolute forbidding of relationships between white women and black men, which may be partly why the imagined pairing between the good-as-white Clare and Brian, the black man, is given as so alarming, indicating the nature of the panic that unites Irene and Bellew. Thus while relationships between black women and white men are secretly tolerable and secretly desired in white patriarchal terms, it is the other miscegenation that is 'impossible'.

Amidst the all the material testifying to the allure of black women for white men that Young considers, what is the true unmentionable would seem to be the reverse relationship. In fact, Young gives evidence that this is what white men would like to believe as being impossible. Speaking of Tschudi's tabulation of mongrelity, he parenthetically comments: 'It is no doubt symptomatic that despite its exhaustive categorizations, Tschudi never raises the possibility of any "Indian" or "negro" father with a white mother: the whole process is theoretically not reversible.'[153] That mongrelisation would not be possible, as constituting something that just cannot and does not happen. Furthermore, in Southern African writing, it is this white-woman-with-black-man miscegenation that is shown to be the greatest taboo, to cause the most intense horror, disgust

and loathing and to provoke the law as wrath and violence. The opening pages of Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* show very strongly the intense disgust and loathing for the murdered transgressive white woman where it is further shown that it is utterly right in the eyes of the men that she should be murdered. From the other side, Stanlake Samkange explores in *The Mourned One* how a black man is accused of rape and sentenced by the law, with considerable hatred, to death for an ambiguous sexual encounter with a white woman. While in this text the supposed rape could well be a seduction, the law court insists it categorically has to be rape for it is convinced that it is impossible for the white woman to have any desire for a black man.

Fanon has explored how one of the deep-rooted unconscious images in the Western psyche of the black man is of him as a rapist. One reason for this could be the law-enforced 'impossibility' of white female desire for black men. The South African writer and journalist, Can Themba, writes of how the flaunting of relationships with white women by black men therefore can become a political strategy against apartheid logic, perhaps as in: you lie, she does desire me. Or, the way Themba formulates it is: 'As for myself, I do not necessarily want to bed a white woman; I merely insist on my right to want her.'[154] His piece goes on to assert of a relationship with a white girl: 'She just wanted to be with me.' This could be heard to assert: she desires me.

As a brief aside, for patriarchal cultures outside of the West, the 'worst' of the taboo against miscegenation could be reversed. For instance, in patriarchal Islamic culture, the West is seen as an alliance of 'pornography' and 'money', the 'prostitute' form of miscegenation that Head explores, from which women have to be rigorously defended. Nawal El Sadaawi touches on the double standard here too, where men may 'mix' a bit but not the women, and she draws attention to the fact that Muslim men are permitted to marry non-Muslim women, whilst by law Muslim women must marry Muslim men.[155] Thus, what subtends all this is a patrilineal law of the family. In *Passing*, Irene tries to argue Clare out of her desire to leave Bellew on the grounds of the law of the family.

Returning to the question of the co-articulation of sexual and racial differentials, the law of the patriarchal Oedipal family could be considered in terms of monolineal inheritance for which only one origin can be permitted. The impossibility that Clare represents is thus the impossibility of the more-than-one origin. I do not think that this can ultimately be seen as a matter of the transgressive sexual *body* of women, for woman-as-sexual-body is very much a matter of what maintains the man-as-sole-author. What is more threatening is the creativity of transgressive women-hybrids. An alliance between Clare and Irene would be a threat to Bellew, or the patriarchal symbolic, for in this mutual support each one would affirm the hybridity of the other as that which actually exists beyond the control of patriarchal heterosexuality and the law of its desire, as well as beyond the scope of what it permits itself to know. This would be something that a Bellew just would not know anything about, a question of the limits of his truth and his capacity to comprehend. The novel marks out two zones of ignorance in this respect, which will now be addressed.

The one zone of ignorance for a Bellew is the world of the Harlem Renaissance. Behind his back, without him knowing, his wife goes there for a kind of pleasure and freedom that he is both unable to provide or know anything about. More generally, for the conservative heterosexual white man, all that this zone represents is basically just a zone of sexual freedom. It is a part of the town he can dip into, now and again, in order to pick up a black woman or a man for some secret sex with no obligations. For him, it is only about transgressive sex. However, what such a man cannot experience and knows nothing about is the creativity, friendship and community of such a world. He is unable to know anything about its *freedom of spirit*, for this freedom of spirit concerns a spirit that is free from his racism, homophobia and misogyny: the things the man tries briefly to relieve himself from in what is for him transgressive sex, but where this sex is driven by the things it is supposed to relieve. This world of freedom of spirit, beyond this just being about sex, even allows the white men in. It is a creative and almost utopian world that allows each one to be who they are: black or white or mixed race, gay or straight or bisexual, for a start. Such a world could well be a matter of experience: if you have not experienced such a world, this does not mean that it does not exist. I want to affirm that there are sometimes these small worlds within worlds, as others could affirm likewise. However, the problem is that such communities flourish in turning their back on the realities of power in the world beyond and, as such, the utopian element can become an irresponsible bohemian hedonism, seductive as this is. In *Passing*, you can tell we are heading for trouble when at the start of the narrative we are told that Clare Kendry shows disdain and scorn in observing the corpse of her (white) father.[156] It drops the clue that she lacks a sense of social or ethical responsibility. In the stark contrast between Clare and Irene, Clare as the 'queer aesthetic' lacks an ethics and a politics, whereas Irene has a sense of the realities of power and a social conscience, albeit a conservative one. It is the question of a depoliticisation of the undecidable aesthetic. If Clare represents the diversity of freedom that we differently aspire to, this cannot be arrived at by pretending that Bellew's world does not exist. In this, Clare's impossibility is that she is ahead of her times. As Judith Butler writes: 'For Clare, it seems, cannot survive, and her death marks the success of a certain symbolic ordering of gender, sexuality and race, as it marks well the sites of potential resistance' (p. 183). Thus, crucially, impossibility may be transformed into the political directives of a 'potential resistance': just as perhaps the Harlem Renaissance period both constituted a spirit of liberation necessary to later campaigns for civil rights as well as a hedonism which the political impetus had to emerge from and out of in order to become a political campaign.

If bohemian Harlem constitutes one zone of ignorance for a Bellew in the novel, there is another marked out, possibly more daringly, in his own home. There is one scene in the novel when Clare invites Irene and another light-skinned mixed race friend into her white home. There, under Bellew's very nose, she entertains the very 'nigs' that he, oblivious, continues to make racist comments about in their presence: 'No Niggers in my family. Never have been and never will be.'[157] So, here again we have shown to us something that the white man – in terms of his world of perception – just cannot see even though it

exists right in front of him. The fact that he upholds racial segregation in his speech whilst simultaneously welcoming women of colour into his own home, shows that, without realising it, he is questioning his own intolerant laws. It shows, deconstruction-wise, that by virtue of the mixed race woman being in what he perceives as his own sphere, he might be given a way to open himself onto doubting himself and his prejudices, that is, symbolically speaking. The 'woman' and 'hybrid' in him – under his roof, roof of man – undermines the truth of his truth. However, Bellew is yet ignorant of what is happening under his very nose. In particular, he assumes that he is in the company of white women because he assumes, he is sure of this, that *he* can tell the difference between white and black: he's the one who proclaims racial difference and sexual difference. While he goes on about difference between white and black, the gazes of the hybrid women around him are able to connect with each other. That is, they are able to affirm each other as mixed race women – this being the affirmation of hybrid women outside of and beyond Man and what he thinks of as Woman, that I have spoken of earlier – and thus, even if Man cannot see that they exist, they, the women can see very well that they do: 'From Gertrude's direction came a queer little suppressed sound, a snort or a giggle … She [Irene] had a leaping desire to shout at the man beside her: "And you are sitting here surrounded by three black devils, drinking tea" .'[158] Moreover, listening to Bellew lecture to them on race, they can see how his talk of segregation and difference is highly questionable. It is only 'questionable' in that there *is* racial segregation in the world, but what renders this, at the same time questionable and not unquestionable, is that there is also not segregation in the world which the women themselves know by being in Bellew's company at the very moment he speaks of segregation, and while he speaks of racial difference, they know this to be questionable because they know that they are mixed race and that they exist. This scene depends on there being more than one hybrid woman (queer, mixed race, and so on) in the room as witness to Bellew. The fact of Clare being in his home would be potentially sufficient to call his truths into question, but we could then be in a position of only seeing how Bellew sees her and not how she sees herself. That is, since she is passing in order to dupe him, only her passing would present itself to him and us. Belabouring this, we would see Man and his truths (Bellew), and we would see either just a white woman (convinced by her passing) or something that is passibly, possibly, a white woman (not convinced by her passing). It is here that some theorists may stop: she only appears to be that woman in accordance with his truth; in truth, that woman does not exist, we confirm what the man has suspected and support him in telling him that she is really false (and she flies out of the window). But when Clare is in the room with other mixed race women, whilst they know they are passing, they can also see each other and affirm in each other's eyes that beyond what he can see – white wife or her falsity, her non-existence – that they, transgressive, hybrid women do indeed exist. This is the case of women affirming themselves as both actually being the case and questioning the truths of man.

The hybrid woman is a border-crossing being in the world that questions

man. That is better. It is just for a Bellew that there is no such thing because of the way in which he believes in the law. As regards the above discussed scene of the novel, the women have to do two things at once. They both have to observe the law – that is, be aware of how Bellew sees them in terms of how he expects them to seem in front of him – and they have to utterly disregard the law, treacherously breaking Bellew's rules in order to take occupation of his zone of ignorance. It would seem, then, that a cross-border politics could depend on knowing how to observe the realities of power and the rules of the game and on knowing how to retain the daring or revolutionary spirit of Clare that finds ways of taking advantage of what the powerful know nothing of. In that way, Clare smuggles 'Harlem' back home. Furthermore, what from the assumption of a 'progressive' perspective is posited as 'regressive', is better spoken of as 'transgressive'.

Judith Butler ends her reading by stating of Larsen's impasses:

> Perhaps the alternative would have meant a turning of that queering rage no longer against herself or Clare, but against the regulatory norms that force such a turn: against both the passionless promise of that bourgeois family and the bellowing of racism in its social and psychic reverberations, most especially, in the deathly rituals it engages.
>
> (p. 185)

I do not see how we can simply identify Larsen with Irene in opposition to Clare in this very veiled text. Nonetheless, in this focussing on the bellowings of racism, homophobia, sexism, there would be common cause. Butler stresses the homonymy of Bellew-bellow in her reading which could be a way of reminding us to stay aware of this as the thing to observe. That needs be, while we also could be said to need, at the same time, to ignore (without forgetting) this name that insists so much on itself, this Bellew, in order to ensure that there can be meetings across the constituencies it would keep apart. The power of Bellew cannot be forgotten, but at the same time, there is scope for ways of disregarding its superegoistic gaze so as to regard something like: B(lack)elle(woman)W(hite); Belle(beautiful)w(woman); Be well; and, We'll Be. So, we will be, Bellew.

In addition, there is also a signature effect in the above with N-*ell*-a *L*arsen, the double L, double elle. So she can sign herself.

There is a statement that Butler makes of the text that I would very much like to affirm:

> [T]he story reoccupies symbolic power to expose that symbolic force in return, and in the course of that exposure began to further a powerful tradition of words, one which promised to sustain the lives and passions of precisely those who could not survive within the story itself.
>
> (p. 185)

I am not quite sure why the tense changes, still, the literary text keeps alive,

'sustains the lives', for the future. Butler notes via Henry Louis Gates that 'passing' has the meaning of death as in 'passing on'. 'Passing on' though is further a matter of relay and transmission, as in Morrison's counter-literary 'This is not a story to pass on'. But *Passing* gives us quite a lot to pass on: both to refuse ('pass on that' in declining something) as well as to transmit.

By means of summary, prior to the co-implicated sexual and racial differentials, there could be this creative spirit, that which is neither sexed nor raced apart. When I speak of woman as a hybrid being, this is to speak of another subject (that is, I am not absurdly saying that only mixed race women are women, amongst other possible over-literalisations). Bessie Head, for instance, frequently speculated over the possibility of transforming the racial classification of 'mixed race' into the philosophical conceptualisation of a universal hybrid subject. Or, with respect to the theory of androgyny that Woolf tried to construct in *A Room of One's Own*, there is no such thing as pure woman, but that does not mean there is no such thing as woman. What Woolf actually writes is: 'It is fatal to be a man or woman pure.'[159] Although not quite elaborated by Woolf in these terms, it is fatal to be a man pure because this is a destructive principle, that which eradicates the feminine. And it is fatal to be a woman pure because no such thing exists: if man pure is the All, woman pure is nothing.

In a certain sense, androgyny could only be a feminine concept. That is, given masculine thought, the 'feminine in man' could but be a ghost-effect of the non-being in him: his sense of incompletion and a source of speculation and doubt. As for the reverse situation, we would have the masculine contained within the feminine. This is all too often (because man thinks of woman as nothing), thought of in terms of the chora or empty receptacle, non-woman containing man. However, if the feminine contains the masculine, it would be both that which contains and part of the content. For example, a fertilised egg: the ovum contains both its own nucleus and DNA and that of the sperm. Not irrelevantly, it brings to mind the symbol for the yin and yang of Buddhism, the masculine and feminine intercoiled within a circle. At any rate, no conception without reception. And this reception is not the supposed empty passivity of the feminine but something active. It has to be, for a passive reception would be no reception at all; a passive welcome or passive embrace would be no welcome or embrace at all. Moreover, it could be a case of a double approach.

The performativity of gender that Butler has addressed at length sometimes sounds to me like a death drive: the mechanical, deadly repetition compulsion produced in accordance with the force of a deadly or ghostly masculinity. It is the masculine-in-the-feminine of the empty receptacle (a death drive but not of 'her own' in that 'she' does not exist). But there is beyond this an animated, feminine, transgressive performance, that of the creative subject.[160] Or, if the performative is a mechanism (the technical performativity of capitalism), it is still possible to make a case for performativity not subsumed by this.

On the basis of what has been discussed in this lengthy chapter, it would be possible to bring things together somewhat according to two poles, two columns. Deleuze and Guattari are astute in positing two social and psychic poles – the

fascist-paranoid one and the schizo-revolutionary one – although, as was argued earlier, in going so extremely over to their schizo pole they collapse the two poles into one. That is, the assumption is sometimes that they can flee the paranoid-Oedipal pole entirely, but this is precisely what makes for its resurgence in 'the real'. In *Glas*, Derrida works with two columns, keeping them both going throughout. The fact that there are two could be a graphic refutation of the holy number three: the trinity of religion and the family circle, and the waltzing step of the dialectic that pivots on a certain, successive, one-two-three. And then there are those three world pictures: savage, despotic, civilised; animism, religion, science; third world, second world, first world. We perhaps think in threes in order to tie things up and to include the past as both past and as that which drives forward from behind: motoring on. The advantage of the poles and columns could be that we are working with something other than dialectical progression, which for me (I am not sure whether or not this would be so for Derrida or Deleuze and Guattari) would be a matter of keeping forces in play, a question of animism, rather than folding everything into one all-engulfing 'progressive' force of history. Or to clarify this question of thinking in threes, the dialectic may be said to posit a One that then posits an opposite secondary term that, in the third place, the One tries to include within itself. With respect to what I was trying to say about literature, *at the same time* that One is posited another One is posited and there is thus, immediately, a third consisting of these two Ones coming together. The columns below are provisional and there is material to come that hopefully will make for a better elaboration. But for the sake of a vantage point:

A. Realities of Power	*B. Revolutionary Spirit*
Creon	Antigone
Hegel	Genet
Senanayak	Draupadi
Bellew	Clare
The law	Unwritten laws, question of another ethics and a politics of the other
The family; private property	Non-belonging; the extended family
Freedom as submission to a single ideal of man	Freedom of spirit
The Origin, God, the Phallus	Creative animism
Dangers of fascism	Dangers of being possessed

While Deleuze and Guattari identify their poles as 'fascist' and 'psychotic', this seems, in a sense, logically wrong in that for fascism, there is only one pole, and for psychosis there is only one pole. Each of these poles is where there is a certain convergence in the extremism of trying to reject or flee the other. So, there is a collapse of polarity although there are two forms or phases of this, which could be described as the externalised psychosis or madness of fascism in the social, and the internalised fascism in the real of psychosis. What is at stake

in both these formations might be said to be a powerfully over-insistent literalisation or naturalisation of the law. If fascism is an attempt to deny the real in naturalising the symbolic ideal (only to be taken over by that which it tries to shut out in that the real is real), with psychosis we may be disturbingly given the revelation of a fascist potential of the patriarchal symbolic, what this symbolic tries to deny and disavow as only part of the natural world it seeks to distinguish itself from.

What should be borne in mind is that fascism and psychosis are not represented by the above two columns. Rather, it would possibly be that these extremes are due to the assertion of or submission to a would-be all-conquering force, as opposed to a keeping of the plurality of forces in play. As regards animism, it is, across differing African philosophies and religions – the evidence is overwhelming here – that which entertains a concept of multiple spirits and forces which is why the one thing it really is not is fascism. In addition, animism is certainly not psychosis either. This is because it concerns a negotiation between human laws, natural laws (natural order) and a sense of the sacred, as, for example, is easily seen in the depictions of traditional African culture as offered by Achebe, Diop, Mofolo, Tutuola, Soyinka, and a great many others. It is necessary to state the fact that animism is neither fascism nor psychosis because, for the phobic Western psyche, it is occasionally blindly understood, or rather, seriously misunderstood, in these terms. For instance, Paul Neumarkt, citing Lévy-Bruhl on primitive mentality and Freud on pathology, in 'Emerging African Literature' (1971), reads Tutuola with the scared, phobic denunciation of his work as psychotic – 'serious pathogenic repression', 'disturbed psyche', 'psychic regression', 'paranoid propensity' 'emasculation', 'the gamut of pathogenic disturbances', 'a psychotic i.e. predominantly regressive syndrome' – all due to Tutuola's surmised desire for 'the thrill of the wild blood' of the forefather that supposedly arises in his coming into contact with the coloniser.[161] This disturbing kind of response, or rather projection (due to, probably, the European's repressed desire of/for the father), will be looked into in considering the responses of Hegel and others in the next chapter. It should be added, regarding these two poles that while the side of the law at its most rigid cannot accommodate what Antigone represents, the other side can accommodate the law: Antigone does not reject the laws of man but merely considers that they are not to be aligned and conflated with the sacred. What will now be looked at is the cultural encoding of drives, in particular, the death drive.

The death drive and spirit possession

When Freud tries to establish that there is such a thing as a death drive in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he can be seen, repeatedly, to ward off what may be called a creative drive and questions of animism. He asserts that he is not the author-creator of the death drive and insists that psychoanalysis is a science: the assertion is of the order 'I am not a poet but strictly scientific'. In his attempt to explain the death drive, he is loath to conjure up mystical impressions: 'But this

way of looking at things is very far from being easy to grasp and creates a positively mystical impression' (pp. 327–8). And yet the death drive, characterised by a demonic compulsion to repeat, could easily be seen in terms of some understandings of spirit possession, as will be explained. Freud first came to the hypothesis of the death drive as a means of trying to account for the repetition of experiences of unpleasure or affliction, with particular respect to trauma and war neuroses. However, Freud's concept of the death drive evades anything so 'mystical' as 'spirits' to account for the compulsion to repeat what is traumatic. That said, an argument could be made that Freud's notion of the death drive can, in fact, be read as being much more mystical than a certain take on spirit possession, as will be indicated below.

What *drives* the death drive? If it is not, merely, the cessation or diminution of a will to live or of desire – or what Freud variously speaks of the self-preserving life instincts or the pleasure principle – what animates it? This is perhaps the very question that perplexes Freud and produces his fear of sounding mystical: what animates, gives living force to, a death drive? Freud insists that the death drive does not derive from the life instincts (primarily the masculine sexual drive), that it is independent from those instincts, and so no force from that source. The closest Freud comes to aligning the death drive with the sexual drive is by speaking of it as a primary masochism, but if 'primary' – that is, not derived from sadistic aggression, but just a desire to be destroyed – this is problematically extremely passive and lacking precisely in drive. Although Freud struggles with and evades the question of what the force or energy of this drive would be, he tells us, however, that (what could be termed) the *motivation* of the death drive is the desire to return to an original inanimate, inorganic state of death, an original state of non-existence. But what if we were to affirm: 'The world is all that is the case.' In other words, what I am trying to get at is: if all that there is, is all that there is, then how can we think of something that is *originally non-existent*? This original non-being could well create the mystical impression that Freud wishes to evade. What *on earth* would this original death 'be'? It would just not be; 'being' only a gap or lack without content that could be seen, but only retrospectively, to have strangely anticipated what comes to be in a being for this death. The way in which I tend to read Freud's account of the death drive is that it serves to deny or negate other-being as opposed to non-being at the origin, a question of foreclosure. Or, it negates a being with other being at the origin. Freud wants to maintain a duality of drives against Jung's monism but he maintains a monistic libido with and against the non-libidinal death drive.[162] It is at this point that we can broach a few questions of animism.

It has always struck me – indeed, been something arresting – in reading Freud to find him speaking of the state prior to individual life as inorganic, together with his thinking of death as inorganic. For instance, Freud states:

> If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for *internal* reasons – becomes inorganic once again – then we shall be

> compelled to say that '*the aim of all life is death*' and looking backwards, that '*inanimate things existed before living ones*'.
>
> (pp. 310–11; emphases in text)

It seems, in a way, curiously unscientific. Why not rather assume a life that arises from or with other life – a sperm and ovum, at least, rather than nothingness (although Freud glances at this) – and a death that would not just be stony inertia but a matter, at least, of organic decomposition? More to the point, Freud in positing inorganic material that pre-exists the organic perceives the inorganic to be static, inert (which it is not). With this false assumption, he presumes that organisms wish to return to a state of inertia or a complete state of rest.

While Freud considers the death drive as necessarily coming from within the organism, the case of spirit possession is concerned with forces that enter the subject from the outside or that collide with the subject – for instance, the coming into contact with a startling or traumatic event. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud refers to the fact that in some cultures illness and death are not seen as an inevitability within the organism but as a matter of malign external influences and afflictions. This is often considered to be a matter of mysticism or superstition, but a better understanding of this is probably reached through a consideration of an ontology of energies and forces. Here, it could be proposed that the state of well-being or affliction of a person is a matter of reckoning with forces that may come from the natural environment – say, as land spirits – or from other people or things. Thus, in illness your vital force may be overwhelmed by a stronger force that enters you. Even in Western terms we speak of being 'under the weather', 'dispirited', 'not quite ourselves', and so on. This is rather impressionistic to be sure, but it is an attempt to offer a way of seeing things a little differently. As mentioned in the introduction to this book, African thought is treated as irrationally mystical when it could be understood more scientifically or empirically. The point here is that organisms are affected by beings and forces not of their own being, by viruses, bacteria, foreign bodies, weather conditions, and so on, that cause afflictions. In addition, there are the psychological effects of the interaction of beings. This issue of being afflicted by spirits could be considered in terms of other forms of being having a bad affect on your being, hence it being seen as a matter for doctors, with special knowledge of the environment and psychic skills, capable of diagnosing certain physical and psychological conditions with remedies appropriate to these.

At least here, the so-called death drive could be seen to derive its force from what are, indeed, forces. In a partial reading of Freud's text, it could be said that the death drive derives its energy from a warding off of being possessed by other forces – 'be gone, leave me be' – or, as Freud says, the organism only wants to die in its own fashion and here the death drive is paradoxically characterised by its conservative, life-conserving nature (p. 311). The paradox is that this makes it rather close to, even identical with, what is posited as the self-preserving life instincts.

Freud's thinking of the death drive is mystical – more so than African

philosophies – because it is implicitly derived from a theological frame of reference which is being translated into supposedly scientific terms. In order to point out the mysticism, a crude paraphrase will be given. For Freud, whereas men previously attributed the origin of life to God, this is really, more scientifically, a matter of the Father and not God, and yet more scientifically, it is a matter of the paternal penis and its desire for pleasure. Thus, Freud arrives at the position that 'the pleasure principle' or the masculine sexual drive is the fundamental fact of our existence. With this drive he associates the life-preserving instincts, and so here we have 'life instincts'. Speaking of the 'true life instincts', Freud adds this footnote at a later date: 'it is to them alone that we can attribute an internal impulse towards "progress" and towards higher development!' (p. 313). These instincts are associated with 'change and development' (p. 309). It is the death drive that is called 'primitive' and associated with regression. It is in considering something like states of possession, demonic repetition, or trauma, that Freud thinks there may be a drive that he has overlooked. Since Freud has made the paternal penis and its desires stand for the entirety of the origins of life and its perpetuation, the only other drive he can think of would be a death drive. What this means is that, in effect, at the origin of life there would be a paternal penis and a death-hole and humans would somehow be the product of this, so it is indeed mystical. Freud is ostensibly talking about *the drives* which create and sustain life, in a text that constantly seeks to base itself on biological premises and that fears giving an 'impression of mysticism or sham profundity' (p. 310). Freud, in admitting his failure to establish his argument logically, throwing up his arms so to speak, proclaims eulogistically that one day biology will have the answer. He seems, in particular, mystified by the thought of the conjunction of sperm and ovum:

> But what is the important event in the development of living substance which is being repeated in sexual reproduction, or in its fore-runner, the conjugation of two protista? We cannot say; and we should consequently feel relieved if the whole structure of our argument has turned out to be mistaken.
> (p. 316)

The problem would seem to be for Freud that since 'it is certain that sexuality and the distinction between the sexes did not exist when life began' (p. 313), the life instincts, or what makes for the rejuvenating or life-generating conjugation of two cell bodies cannot necessarily be aligned with a singular sexual drive. The creation or perpetuation of life and an immortal inheritance is what Freud wants to align with a sexual drive, but he also finds himself speaking of the regressive, recapitulative death drive in terms of repeating in the development of an organism all the forms of life necessary to it, which Freud aligns with regenerative processes (p. 309). In brief, it could be proposed that life instincts cannot just be grouped with Freud's basically masculine sexual drive against a basically driveless death drive. Rather, there would be a case for distinguishing between a pleasure-orientated sexually differentiated sexual drive and a more primary creative regenerative source of energies (which for Freud would be but absent as

a creative source). What is probably much more obvious to us today, than to Freud, is how a pleasure-seeking Eros may be at odds with a life-preserving or life-perpetuating drive. In particular, conception no longer depends on the sexual act, whereby the sexual drive emerges as distinguishable from a not necessarily sexually differentiated creative drive.

Ferenczi's work offers much more scope than that of Freud for a potential cross-cultural understanding of phenomena such as trauma and spirit possession and the question of the death drive. Ferenczi, in his early writings before coming to psychoanalysis, is much more interested in a scientific and yet not dismissive rethinking of what he terms 'spiritism', offering 'animism' as a potential alternative term. Ferenczi's attitude to spiritism is much less anxiously self-defensive than that of Freud. He states:

> Indeed, I do believe that at the heart of these phenomena there is a truth, even if it is a subjective rather than objective truth … The spiritists are in possession of alchemical gold, of a hidden treasure; their science has every chance of yielding a rich harvest from a terrain which is, as yet, uncultivated: that of psychology.
>
> (p. 7)

Thus for Ferenczi, these quasi-scientific sciences of spirits and psyches are complementary. These early interests of Ferenczi could be said to remain in his work although filtered through, or better, strained through, the system of Freud's thought. There is much work to be done with barely explored leads in Ferenczi, whilst, also, very interesting work has been done and is being done with his overlooked wealth of insights. All that can be achieved at this point is to direct some attention to a few aspects of Ferenczi's work.

In 'The Problem of Acceptance of Unpleasure (Advances in the Knowledge of the Sense of Reality)', he adds some of his thoughts to Freud's essay on negation and, also, to Freud's concept of the death drive. Although Ferenczi modestly claims only to be responding in a corroborative way to some of Freud's great advancements, the material that he puts forward is of such a nature that it serves radically to call into question a number of Freud's assumptions. To begin with here, Ferenczi aligns himself with Freud's model of three world pictures, magical, religious and scientific, that he has argued have ontogenic significance. He recapitulates:

> In psychoanalytical phraseology, I called the first phase of all, in which the ego alone exists and includes in itself the whole world of experience, the period of introjection; the second phase, in which omnipotence is ascribed to external powers, the period of projection; the last stage of development might be thought of as the stage in which both mechanisms are employed in equal measure or in mutual compensation.
>
> (p. 239)

One of the ways in which this very significantly differs from Freud's three world

pictures is that Freud considers the omnipotence of thought of the first phase to consist of *projecting* affects and mental states onto the surrounding world so that for him 'spirits' are but psychic projections as opposed to real external forces. For Ferenczi, the 'animistic phase' would be aligned with the introjection of reality, a more accurate understanding.

What Ferenzci goes on to develop rather undoes the neat, dialectical stagings of this tripartite diagram. First, as regards the initial phase, Ferenczi comes to suggest that the ego is formed by reckoning with a loss of omnipotence. Thus, the presumed initial state of omnipotence could not be said to be that of the ego, but rather a state in which the organism has yet to experience anything that would seriously disrupt or threaten its co-existence with its world. It is only in having to confront unpleasure – be it the pain of deprivation, wounding, excessive excitation, and so on – that the organism *is forced* to adapt to external reality. Ferenczi speaks, bio-analytically and thus beyond just a psychic understanding of this, of an 'organic recognition of the environment, so to speak'. Improvising with Ferenczi: 'A sudden blow'. That is, suddenly, there may be a forceful disruption, interruption, collision, encounter, that cannot be ignored. Apart from this, Ferenczi speaks also of a recognition of an external environment through a more peaceful process of introjecting the world through sampling it, through, for instance, oral incorporation or sniffing, but where this would not necessarily constitute an objective recognition of it.

Whilst Ferenczi, in ostensible agreement with Freud, claims that a self-destructive instinct is primary, has a priority over the pleasure principle, his theories of ontogenesis show that a self-destructiveness cannot be isolated from an interconnection with other forces in the world and also from a self-creation. It might be more apt to say that this 'self-destructiveness' is a matter of a response to a destructiveness or, better, a *forcefulness* beyond a self that only comes both to form itself and forsake or abandon itself in accordance with such a blow or blows. What is interesting about this is that a self-creative drive would be entwined with a self-destructive drive, and that both forces would constitute a reckoning with other forces in the world; but this is to go beyond Ferenczi's terminology, albeit in a way not necessarily at odds with his logic. What Ferenczi writes is: 'The remarkable thing about this self-destruction is that here (in adaptation, in the recognition of the surrounding world, in the forming of objective judgements), destruction does in actual fact become the "cause of being"' (p. 242). It is possible to see that the death drive is being reworked in the direction of something more creative. Ferenczi states: 'A partial destruction of the ego is tolerated, *but only for the purpose of constructing* out of what remains an ego capable of still greater resistance' (p. 242, my emphasis), This is followed by:

> This is similar to the phenomena noted in the ingenious attempts by Jacob Loeb to stimulate unfertilised eggs to development by the action of chemicals, ie. without fertilisation: the chemicals disorganize the outer layers of the egg, but out of the detritus a protective bladder (sheath) is formed, which puts a stop to further injury.
>
> (p. 242)

Freud also draws attention to this experiment in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, but makes tellingly different use of it. For Freud, the chemical agents stand for *sexual* conjugation, where coalescence creates life, and where he goes on to show that infusoria can also die of their auto-generated metabolic processes as confirmation of the death drive as internal to the organism (p. 321). In contrast, what is important for Ferenczi is that an *external* destructive disturbance – the scientist imposing chemical stimuli – serves to effect a self-creative drive. Ferenczi still broadly associates this self-creative, autoregenerative drive with Eros, but the experiment with unfertilised eggs displaces the question of an originary *sexual* agency. In Ferenzci's summary, a partial destruction that comes from an external environment leads to self-constructing recovery: generation as originally regeneration; origination as creative construction.

In the above, 'destruction' creates self, is the 'cause of being', and thus it would not simply be the self that itself destroys, the self that would be the agent of destruction. The point is that *self*-destruction is an inadequate term. The point is also that self-*destruction* is an inadequate term. The so-called death drive (repeating, compelled originally to re-create) would rather be either a creative partial self-sacrifice for the sake of life or a being mastered by or capitulating to a force or forces stronger than those of the self-preserving organism. Ferenczi's work on trauma makes this clearer, and I will shortly touch on this. Again, let us take stock.

For a start, it could be pointed out that Ferenczi's work has far-reaching consequences for the Freudian concept of the castration threat and the Lacanian one of the law-of-the-father. If we can say that 'in the beginning there is the wound', then subjectification is not effected by the father's threat of castration, although it may be rein*force*d by this. Speaking bio-analytically, it might be possible to suggest that the/a first trauma is that of the collision of sperm cell and ovum. However, Ferenczi, together with Otto Rank, proposed that the original traumatic event, as the loss of a peacefully englobed existence, may be that of birth. Freud rejected this inasmuch as it undermined the authority of the castration threat, and in partial consequence Rank came to be expelled from the inner circle of the psychoanalytic movement. If castration is to be the wound and the threat, this is to arrogate the power of both destruction and creation to the godlike father and to make of adaptation to reality a matter of recognising and adjusting to a patriarchal reality as the obligatory social reality. The natural law of parturition becomes the father's law, so his law is a repetition in his name – a colonisation of the origin – of what is already a recognised law or necessity.

Generalising, it is not the case that the 'impossible' characters in the literary works concerned refuse to accept an originating loss in adjusting to 'reality'. It is rather that they are being asked to forget loss and not reckon with it at all, tantamount to the rejection of a healing process or a creative drive. It concerns the circumstance of when the law reinflicts loss where there has already been a loss, as Lacan disapprovingly analyses of Creon, in stating that Creon inflicts a second death on Polynices, where to *kill the dead* is to both to repeat the destruction and to deny that the dead ever existed. As such, there is the guilt of a phantasmatic

murder that yet produces a real obliteration, the denial of any loss, and the denial of the 'soul' of the other, eradicating even their ghost: dead as beastly dead. The formulation of the 'death drive' then presents itself as a denial or evasion of the denial of the spirit of an other.

That is what the death drive is: the denial of other spirit. It would be possible to elaborate this in depressing ways. The masculine drive of the dialectic – the All of Spirit as the all there is of spirit – turns out to be this death drive. This all-capitalising, all-colonising force compels the sacrifice of all other spirits, but in that there is supposedly only this One spirit the sacrifice can but be understood as a total self-sacrifice, an Hegelian Christianity. It would seem to be a matter of capitulation to an all-conquering and thus destructive force, that which destroys, but where this would not simply issue in death – for it would be a matter of being possessed by this force which maintains itself through denying life. Unable to live, unable to die, for an eternity. Only slightly less uncannily, the drive of a would-be absolute capitalism is also this death drive. It is at once a destructive, all-consuming drive and resigned dispirited apathy. But this 'death drive' cannot be said to be that of the other in that it is that which forcefully denies that there is any other. Samuel Beckett's work astutely serves to reveal, as Adorno recognised, that capitalism is this death drive.

Antigone as bearer of the death drive? No, she is the one who guards the spirit of the other which means that she too has spirit. If they, say the philosophers, want to find a tragic illustration of the death drive, might not Hamlet be the character that would show it more accurately? Why is it so hard to receive the writing as it was written? Could this be because idealist thought gives itself the very project of inverting creative truths? Let's try again. Antigone says that she does not want to die. Hamlet says: 'How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable/ Seem to me all the uses of this world!' (I.ii.133–4). Surely he says he wants to die or, at least, not to live. And the reason that he wants not to live is that his father's spirit is all to him and therefore he has no spirit of his own. He illustrates very well what Freud says of the death drive: he does not have enough will to live and he does not have the will to kill himself, and thus, like Freud's death drive, he is caught within what can only be a paralysis. However, Lacan does have a point in aligning Antigone with the death drive. Thinking of *Hamlet*, the masculine perspective becomes clearer.

Although Antigone does not wish to die, paradoxically she does not struggle for her life. What is frustrating about the character of Antigone is that she fails to negotiate. In this she does become one with Creon, whereby there is nothing to stop his destructiveness. It is as if her position is as follows: 'You think I am asking for death. I am not (for what I am really asking for is justice), but since I have no hope of ever explaining this to you, then just call it a death drive if that is what you think.' In Antigone's total resistance there is also a strange lack of struggle. If you put Hamlet and Antigone side by side, what emerges? Hamlet offers us the case of a complete capitulation to the all-powerful will of the father whilst Antigone offers us a resistance so total that it is also a capitulation. Tragedy: the inability to negotiate.

Dear Freud, it is no sin to limp. I admire Freud's science because of how well it accepts and understands human failings. And as for Ferenczi, he (like Lou Salomé) was able to accommodate Freud's all-too-masculine thinking within a wider creative-scientific framework.

Ruth Leys, in an article which perceptively discusses Ferenczi's theories of trauma together with Kardiner's elaboration of them, offers the following summary: 'The traumatic situation is a situation of unconscious imitation of, or emotional identification with, the traumatic event or person that occurs in a state akin to hypnosis, and it is *independent of a libidinal relation* to an object.'[163] What a study of trauma leads Ferenczi to propose in the *Clinical Diary*, as cited by Leys, is: '*identification of a stage preceding object relations*' (p. 58, Ferenczi's emphasis). That is, the subject of trauma identifies with what it is that traumatises but without the *objectification* of the traumatic event or person. Leys cites Bernfeld, another analyst who worked on trauma and who, along with Ferenczi, influenced Kardiner, as remarking: 'Fascination can easily become hypnosis … One is obedient to the movement of the fascinating object' (p. 57). And, Kardiner is cited as stating:

> The type of infantile reaction we see in infantile fascination persists throughout life, under conditions in which mastery is impossible. One can lose oneself in a given object or act, and thus establish a preliminary phase of identification. In this state one is outside oneself and most ego functions are inhibited, a condition closely related to hypnosis and sleep. One becomes automatic in following the motions of the object; it is a transient substitution of the ego by the object.
>
> (p. 57)

An 'Antigone', a Genet, a 'Clare', they fascinate us as if they might cause a certain loss of mastery, loss of self-defence in being affected by their powers. At the same time, they offer an understanding of creative identification, as a receptivity to the other not as object but as subject: a sort of displacement of a personal narcissism by that of the other, or an accommodation of the other within the narcissism of the self? At any rate, the fascinating fascinate out of their capacity to be fascinated. This could be the enigmatic allure: who are they or whom do they hide? This could be a psychoanalytic theory of the 'clandestine immigrant' or, we could say, 'the subject who passes'. It is indeed a fetishistic question, but one that is here being elaborated not in terms of sexuality – that would still be possible – but more primarily in terms of spirits.

What is of interest in the above is that the so-called 'object' or the other person takes over the ego. Why this is of particular interest in this work is that it could serve as an account of spirit possession. In this form of identification, a person is taken over by the spirit, being, or animation, of another. We could say that it is a case of being moved or affected by another being or thing even to the point of becoming them. The object – the analysts continue to rely on this terminology even as their thought problematises it – then, is not treated or

received as an object but as *another subject*. Or, the subject, unable or unwilling to resist or defend itself against the affective force of another would allow for the other to become it. The self would become vehicle for, in effect, the other self. This can be further refined.

Fritz Kramer, an art historian who, in his book *The Red Fez*, engages with anthropological research, sets himself, in this work, the question of whether African cultures respond to otherness in the same way that Westerners do. He eventually concludes that there are the same mechanisms of response but on this basis: the interpretation of the alien by mimesis. Kramer speaks of what could be understood in psychoanalytic terms as two different forms of mimesis. The first is given as follows: 'Although he [a clansman] is not really identical with his fellow clansmen, during the clan rituals he merges with an ideal – that which he should be and not merely portray.'[164] This would be identification according to a law or logic of the same. It is also possible to read into this the Freudian understanding of identification in terms of group analysis. That is, there is identification with an ego ideal which serves to bind the group in that each member of the group identifies with this ideal: what each should be, or seriously strive or aspire to be as opposed to mimic merely. A second form of identification is set out as follows: 'In mimesis, on the other hand, one conforms with something one is not and should not be' (p. 250). This form of identification, the one used to explain possession, is thus given as a transgressive identification. It is this that would, in a Freudian analysis, be badly misunderstood as re-gressive as opposed to trans-gressive, a transgression which needs be appreciated in a non-moralising way as a threshold-crossing phenomenon. It would seem rather to be a case of what Ferenczi sees as primary identification, the capacity for which we maintain in adulthood, and what I wish to elaborate as a certain identification with the other or alien as 'subject', or we could say 'spirit'. In this transgressive identification, the identification may be not just with a member of the opposite sex, for example, but with limitless beings other than the one you 'should be': foreign being as opposed to sovereign being.

The above could be somewhat deconstructed, although it might be to blur the clarification attempted. For instance, an identification according to a logic of the same, the Freudian model, is yet a mimicry and a performance of the truth of the same – with Kramer's comments in mind, clansmen who are not identical to each other yet ritualistically enact a common identity. In Western terms, the performative injunction of 'what one should be' is given as and by means of an idealisation of 'Western man', hence the fact that feminine and colonised others, in the contortions of being approximated to the same, become the focus of analyses of mimicry and performance, as in the work of Bhabha and Butler. It could also be proposed that it is possible to *become possessed by the ideal* of what 'one should be', when the distance between ego and ideal is not maintained. For instance, Kurtz could be said to become *possessed* by the ideal of Western man: he enters himself and he *is* the arch-spook. It could be thought of as an ironic dialectical 'self-possession' to effect his auto-divinisation: externalising himself in order to enter himself auto-affectively. This could be further considered in

relation to other texts. Furthermore, there would be the question of whether we may be somewhat *traumatised* into identifications with what 'one should be'. As regards transgressive identification, this is what the ethical law in Western culture legislates against to produce a 'what one should not be' as 'that which must not be', the law as an outlawing of fetishism and certain hybrid cross-identifications. Nonetheless, this mimetic identification cannot be legislated against for it affirms the undeniability of an alien spirit or another as subject, which could even constitute counter ideals to the ego ideal, alter ideals. Its ethical and political significance concerns the 'lawless law' of what should not be legislated against.

Kramer explores many different kinds of spirit possession cults in differently structured African societies where, for instance, the nature and role of a cult may be related to whether the political society has a centralised structure or is acephelous. Without being able to treat this sociological diversity in any detail, it can be said some cults may serve a radically democritising or de-hierachising purpose, some may serve as an outlet of expression for what I have spoken of as transgressive identification, and some serve as a political counter-balance to the dominant political forces in order to prevent the latter from becoming too autonomous. The cults can also serve as a means of social adjustment and adaptation, and so on. The point to pursue here is the question of different modes of identification, along the lines suggested by Ferenczi. The general case of spirit possession would seem to confirm Ferenczi's theories concerning a capacity for identification prior to object relations, one that would not be dependent on an Oedipus complex or sexual differentiation. Moreover, whereas Freud, in *Totem and Taboo*, considers spirits to be projections of psychic and emotional states, Kramer's research and argument accord more closely with Ferenczi's counter-category of introjection. Kramer writes:

> Whereas the older anthropology spoke of 'manism' and 'animism', as if they were dealing with ideologies or belief systems, following Fortes and Horton we have discovered projections of psychic complexes: ancestor spirits as parent images, nature spirits as personified drives.
>
> (p. 57)

Kramer argues that this psychological understanding is inadequate – which does not make it entirely irrelevant – in translating a *cosmological* frame of reference into a psychological one. Spirits and deities are rather spoken of in terms of a landscape, with its forces of nature, imprinting itself on the mind. Drawing on Lienhardt, Kramer makes the following distinction: 'What we term *passions* in English no longer accords with the meaning of the term *passiones*, which means the opposite of actions in relation to the human self' (p. 58). Thus, it is proposed that we are not dealing with passions, the drives as the sexual drive, but rather a capacity to be moved by or to be filled with the spirit of that which comes from the environment beyond the self. In other words, it is a receptive and introjective capacity which allows us to be impressed, inspired, and so on. It is possible to think of this in terms of hosting and hospitality. Kramer writes: 'The "other" to

Tonga culture were the wilds; on setting out for and returning from the hunt, hunters danced the figures of the dangerous and fearful animals' (p. 120). This, in the colonial period, becomes a reception of the colonial other into the repertoire. Of the many examples provided by Kramer of 'being in the grip of another culture', here is one:

> One day an aeroplane landed, and while the majority took in this event with calm interest, it *struck* a woman who rushed off into the bush in terrified panic … Over the following days and nights she had visions of aeroplanes, and aeroplanes appeared in her dreams until, finally, she dreamt of a dance, a costume, of songs and drum rhythms. She dressed herself in a black cloth … put on a man's hat; she whirled about like a propeller, alighted from a plane, was brought soap and water, distributed tobacco and held a speech.
>
> (p. 85, emphasis in text)

So, we become what traumatises or fascinates us in a performative repetition compulsion. However, there are versions of this that may be dispiriting – deadly and mechanical – and versions that may be animating and enlivening.

This captivation and intuitive grasping of beings and things can be found in the creative process. Earlier, I cited Genet with respect to the 'wound' as creative genesis and with respect to his animistic sensibility, alive to the spiritedness of his immediate environment. Here, Kramer cites Auerbach on Balzac:

> The motif of the discrete milieu moved him with such a force that the objects and personalities which form a milieu often take on a secondary significance for him which not only differs from that which is grasped rationally, but is also much more fundamental: a significance which can best be described with the adjective 'demonic'.
>
> (p. 254)

Senghor has described this capacity in terms of a capacity to know otherwise, where this is then read as a reactive opposing of 'emotion' to 'reason', which is a misreading of what Senghor is attempting to address, which could be better understood in terms of introjective rather projective forms of understanding the world. Senghor writes: 'In contrast to the classic European, the Negro African does not draw a line between himself and the object … He touches it, feels it, *smells* it.'[165] Ferenczi describes introjection in such terms. Senghor says this is another form of rationality, and uses the pun 'con-nait': the subject 'knows' in a knowledge 'born with' the object or in being 'born with' it.

What I have been trying to do is patch together a theory of trauma with a theory of spirit possession, together with a theorisation of creativity, in order to indicate that there is something of a *general* animistic principle in these states, definable by introjection, mimetic identification, and a subjective reception of other beings or forces. That does not mean that these different states are to be conflated, for they are not the same nor unified in themselves, given the many

different kinds of cases; it is rather that this work revolves around the question of the elaboration of a generalisation of fetishism. There is, however, one difference that it would be useful to clarify: between trauma, on the one hand, and art and spirit possession on the other. That is, there is a difference to be noted between the amnesia of pathological affliction (this affliction, as with much psychoanalytic material, having yet the potential to serve as the basis for understanding the non-pathological) and the consciousness retained in creativity and possession, as well as other forms of 'transgressive identifications'. This will be brought out through returning to Tutuola's writing.

One of the recurrent motifs to be found in the novels of Amos Tutuola is a series of frightening or compelling encounters with strange beings or forces, sometimes spirits, sometimes living people sometimes 'deads', sometimes animal beings, and so on. What happens in these encounters is that the hero is at times transformed into or taken over by what he encounters. A readily accessible example of this is when the hero of *The Palm Wine Drinkard* meets with Song, Dance and Drum, whom we are told were originally just like living people. When Song starts singing, Drum drumming and Dance dancing, all the people, animals and spirits of the bush cannot prevent themselves from dancing, and as long as Dance dances, their motility is dependent on Dance's. Similarly, later, when 'laughter' is encountered, those in 'laughter's' presence cannot stop themselves from laughing as long as 'laughter' laughs. It could be a case of being taken over by the affect, mimetically identifying with what moves us. We do laugh when others laugh, and dance when there is dancing. In *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, the narrator at one point transforms himself into a cow through juju, among other transformations that he goes through, and he is captured by some cow-men and placed amongst their cows. Although the narrator narrates just what it is like to be treated as a cow, he remains aware that he is not a cow:

> I could not eat the grasses because I am not a real cow … As I was unable to explain to these cow-men that I am not really a cow, so I was showing them in my attitude several times that I am a person, because whenever they were roasting yams in the fire and when eating it I would approach them and start to eat the crumbs from the yams which were falling down … they started to flog me with heavy clubs or illtreat me as they were treating wild or stubborn cows.
>
> (p. 44)

Thus, there is a dual consciousness at work, that of the person who does not fade away in magically or empathetically be(com)ing a cow, and that of what is experienced in this being of a cow. Attention has been drawn to this as a means of indicating that affective identification need not entail the loss of the ego to that which takes the self over. Even in cases of actual spirit possession, self-consciousness may be retained. Switching to an anthropological source, in Pat Caplan's dialogue with her informant, a Mafian villager who experiences possession, she asks him to what extent he is taken over. He maintains that he can be both

possessed by a spirit and consciously aware of himself and his state of possession at the same time.[166] While in extreme cases of trauma, such as in the war neuroses studied by Ferenczi, the self may be almost completely shattered (it is claimed, although I have not pursued the debates surrounding this claim), in other cases, we could be dealing with a bedoubled consciousness or altered perspective. I.M. Lewis arguing against a theory of 'soul-loss' states: 'this, for example is the position amongst the Muslim Somali nomads of north-east Africa, where possession is conceived of as "entering" by a spirit without any doctrine that this entails the absence of the person's own soul.'[167] Cross-referencing this, Ferenczi does also speak of a splitting of the ego with respect to trauma, not to be confused with multiple personality, several dissociated 'I's of the 'self', but a splitting between, say, a self-preserving self and what Ferenczi would see as the sacrificed self, but which might also be the self-sacrificing self (as we might think of in more Dionysian cases of willing self-abandon). Indeed, Ruth Leys comes to argue of psychic trauma that a duality may be maintained in the co-existence of defence, preserving identity, and the failure of defence, in which mimetic identification (or, 'possession', as I have been suggesting) occurs. Furthermore, the failure of defence could be understood as itself a defensive move: capitulating to that which would otherwise, without this capitulation, destroy you.

With regard to Ferenczi's three mental stages, aligned with Freud's three world pictures, they are not really three as such, nor evolutionary phases. While the first stage is characterised by introjection and the second by projection, the third is comprised of both of these, surpassing neither of the previous stages. This differs significantly from Hegelian dialectic, where one projects its other in order to contemplate itself and go on to interiorise or introject the projection of itself. With Ferenczi, introjection is accompanied by the recognition of an otherness that comes from without. It would be possible to introject what another projects and to project what has been introjected. This dynamic interaction would be a process of experience and knowledge that need not be determined by a phase-surpassing-phase logic of maturation.

Human beings possess cross-culturally the capacity to introject and project, which Ferenczi maintains we oscillate between in negotiating the relationship between the inner and the outer and in reckoning with the forces in our environment. Although Ferenczi does not claim this as such, his theories displace the primacy that Freud accords to sexuality with an emphasis on what could be called a creative rhythm or drive that is produced as a response to what cannot be ignored or negated and that may itself be self-destructive. Moreover, we may become, to some extent, what 'strikes' us, where 'becoming other' is not a projection but the impression – temporary or lasting – of the other on you. This is surely a widespread phenomenon. What Kramer considers in terms of 'mimetic identification' and Leys in terms of 'affective identification' is not as prevalent in the West as elsewhere for a number of reasons, which would include the effects of the scientific Enlightenment (it is apparently with this that the term *passiones* is dropped in favour of the purely active passions) and the effects of the reception

of the mechanised world as 'familiar'. Nonetheless, this form of identification remains a subjective capacity of each subject, among other things an empathetic and creative capacity, seemingly much more than is recognised or acknowledged. The philosophical concept of the 'one-and-only-subject' is a denial of the fact that there is also a creative subject: that is, a subject capable of accommodating the other or others. Furthermore, it is possible to be possessed by the father ideal, where Western cultures can turn out to be much less rational than they think they are.

Coming back to the cluster of 'Antigonian' texts, it could be said that while the law demands the fixing and defence of unified identities, in the interests of monolineal inheritance, the texts counter-assert other forms of creative and affective identification based on receptive capacities.

Antigone and negotiation

In order to conclude this chapter, I wish to raise the question of negotiation. Emmanuel Obiechina in a reading of *The Palm Wine Drinkard*, with reference to a particular dilemma given within the text, writes:

> People are constantly faced with choices, the making of which may not only be difficult but often tragic. The Kantian differentiation between the absolute and categorical imperatives as the basis of the tragic dilemma has no doubt a universal application, but many of the dilemmas of the African folk-tale have no immediate divine or ethical bases which could help to arbitrate in making a choice or at least point a way to a final resolution. They are not always so clear-cut as (for example) Antigone's choice between a religious duty to a dead brother and her duty to the State. Tutuola asks, which of these wives whose loyalty and affection to their husband have been proved, ought to be sacrificed to the wizard? … Whereas the literary artist attempts to explore the complicated implications of a particular moral dilemma with the purpose of revealing his own individual insight, the duty of the traditional story-teller is to enunciate it in the clearest way possible and to leave each individual to reach his own solution if he can. This is exactly what Tutuola has done.[168]

Leaving aside the possibly questionable distinction between the literary artist and the storyteller, Obiechina is correct in pointing to the distinction between the ethical worlds of an *Antigone* and of *A Palm Wine Drinkard*. In Tutuola's text, there do not seem to be ethical transcendentals and given moral judgements. More narrowly, there is not what we would call a privileged law-of-the-father, whilst there are yet laws. At the same time, the text is one that sets out and defines a range of ethical issues and dilemmas so that they may be considered in terms of how you can see a case from another's legitimate perspective as well as from your own. In particular, the initially hedonistic and lazy drinkard has to learn the limits of a pleasure principle both in relation to mortality and in relation to a

being-with-others. What is maintained is a will to understand the predicament that the other may be in. It is this that is missing from *Antigone* on the sides of both Creon and Antigone. The characters that most interest me in *Antigone* are Haemon, Ismene and Tiresias. They are on the side of Antigone and yet they are prepared to try and work with Creon, holding to the hope that he might be persuaded to see otherwise.

At the outset I cited Mandela's assertion: 'It was Antigone who symbolised our struggle.' It can be added that when the prisoners on Robben Island, decided to put on the play, even though Creon was most definitely the villain in that context, being then symbolic representative of the apartheid state, it was Mandela who volunteered to play Creon. This is indicative of Mandela's capacity to put himself in the position of the other, even or especially when it is a case of truly trying to understand the point of view of the enemy. Moreover, Mandela's strategies, as given in his autobiography, were to look for the humanity in even the worst of his oppressors as well as slowly to work against their prejudices and fears so that his humanity and cause could be recognised. Unlike both the characters of Antigone and Creon, Mandela could move to negotiation the apparently non-negotiable.

On trial in 1962, Mandela, conducting his own defence, offered the following in his idealistic yet valid address to the court:

> The structure and organization of early African societies in this country fascinated me very much and greatly influenced my political outlook. The land, then the main means of production, belonged to the whole tribe, and there was no individual ownership whatsoever. There were no classes, no rich or poor and no exploitation of man by man … The council was so completely democratic that all members of the tribe could participate in its deliberations. Chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, all took part and endeavoured to influence its decisions … There was much in such a society that was primitive and insecure and it could certainly not measure up to the demands of the present epoch. But in such a society are contained the seeds of revolutionary democracy in which none will be held in slavery or servitude, and in which, poverty, want and insecurity shall be no more. This is the inspiration which, even today, inspires me and my colleagues in our political struggle.[169]

One of the reasons why the above is inflected by idealism is that it fails to address the political marginalisation of women within early African societies. This is something that Mandela rectifies in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, while the above comes from his earlier *No Easy Walk to Freedom* and explicitly concerns the political occasion of its address. It is only at this point that it is possible to explain the title of this chapter. Whereas I had at the now remote outset of this the thought of speaking of Post-Colonial Antigones, given the occurrence of Antigone figures in post-colonial writing, this seemed inadequately rhetorical. At the same time, it did not seem appropriate to speak of either

Colonial Antigones, given the oppositional role of an Antigone, or Pre-Colonial Antigones. What needs to be clarified is how it may be that the dilemmas of *Antigone* are those historically bequeathed by colonialism to the post-colonial African state. With the advent of colonialism, what is imported with the settler society is a form of the European nation-state. However, clearly, it is a state from which the colonised are politically excluded with the foreclosure of their historical origins. It is thus that the colonised find themselves in the position occupied by Antigone and it is at this point that there may be an identification with what Antigone represents. That is to say, Antigone serves to represent the pre-post-colonial in two respects. First, she – this figure of the not-part of the family – may signify the resistance towards colonialism that arises with the very institution of the colonial state and in this resistance the aspiration towards a post-coloniality without its attainment. Second, Antigone serves to signify the pre-post-colonial in that in the moment of a resistance to colonialism the values of the pre-colonial society attach themselves to such a figure. That is, her figure – a sister–brother conjunction of a radical democracy – may serve as the bearer, the signifier, of 'traditional' or pre-colonial cultural values and valued cultures that hope to survive colonialism in post-colonialism. And so, the pre-post-colonial concerns precisely an hybridity, the hybridity that this chapter has been trying through elaborations to explain to itself, to put across as a consideration. This hybridity is a matter of how the so-called traditional African culture combines with the revolutionary anti-colonial movement that arises with colonialism. What is produced is, say, a new articulation of ongoing African cultures in accordance with an ethico-political ideal of the brother and the sister, and so on. There may or may not be precedents within particular African societies for the socialist or communist and radically democratic aspirations that arise with the advent of colonialism, but what is carried forward of the past is perhaps crystallised in this form. For example, there are traces of a brother–sister ideal in some aspects of some African societies but, as Basil Davidson notes, within a patriarchally recorded history, often by European or Arab travellers and traders, of what tend to be very much male-dominated histories, there is just a sparsity of material that treats of the relationship between men and women. However, it is worth noting that African women writers from the colonial period have maintained that whilst there is a marginalisation of women – in terms of divisions of labour – within pre-colonial African societies, it is only with the advent of colonialism that a systematic inferiorisation of the feminine occurs along with the inferiorisation along racial lines, although exploring this issue in detail is not the aim of the present study.

Given the above, it is possible to see how Obiechina is able to maintain that the ethical absolutism signified by Creon versus Antigone is not necessarily to be found in Nigerian – or Yoruba – society, whereas Mandela is able to associate the figure of Antigone with the justice of his parent culture and to maintain that: 'It was Antigone who symbolised our struggle.' More widely, it is historically the case that revolutionary anti-colonial struggles do often bring to the fore the equality of men and women in the struggle. More can now be said about how

the dilemmas of *Antigone* may serve to specify and magnify the impossible bequest of colonialism to the post-colonial African nation-state.

Without being able to go into the specificities of different political histories, it can be proposed that an anti-colonial resistance movement can work to mobilise the colonised in terms of a family-nation. For instance, what the guerrilla war in Zimbabwe served to promote, as can be seen in *Mothers of the Revolution*, is the concept of the colonised as a nation that is one family, transcending ethnic divisions and in which all are included. In fact, this is Nyerere's explicitly theorised concept of *Ujamaa*: '"*Ujamaa*", then, or "familyhood", describes our socialism.'[170] What Nyerere attempted to do in Tanzania, much against the odds given the inheritance of colonial political institutions and structures, was actualise the promise of the liberation struggle in instituting *Ujamaa*. Nyerere argued that since the nation was a family (whilst his concept of 'familyhood' was Pan-Africanist and also a new universalism), it needed only one party and one leader, an argument influential in other African countries.

Very broadly, the suggestion is that the newly liberated African country comes into power with the all-part-of-the-family values of an Antigone even as it inherits the political state, with all its machinery together with the neocolonial economic pressures, of a Creon. That is, what could be at stake is a conflict between the communist values of the extended family and the nation-state, one founded on a patriarchal principle of private property. What is problematic here is obviously that the founding father of the new nation comes to replace the colonial 'founding usurper father' at the same time that a different ideology of the family-nation is that which has been fought for. It is perhaps this that contributes to the phenomenon of the authoritarian nature of some African governments. In the position of father, the African leader is immediately somewhat estranged from the 'brothers and sisters' who bring him and his party into power, where the situation is rendered all the more difficult with respect to the pressures of transnational capitalism. Given this, some African leaders could be considered to have tended to act with a divided consciousness. On the one hand, there is both a feared and real insecurity in not having the mandate of the people once in power, an insecurity that manifests itself in authoritarian rule where this is a vicious circle – for the more authoritarian the rule, the more actually estranged are the people. On the other hand, the leader is still able to convince himself that he remains 'father of the nation' in a disavowal of his estrangement from the causes of the people, and sometimes in order to compensate for lack of power and status in the international economic arena. As has been researched, African leaders find themselves in a position of despotism and weakness at once, what could be called, precarious authoritarianism. Moreover, the ruling elite come to treat themselves as the national family in a bizarre reversal: it is as if the extended family (of rulers) were itself the nation. This would accord with the patrimony of the ruling elite. At the same, time the antagonistic values and perspectives of the anti-colonial struggle remain very much alive, except in an often leaderless way – that is, without a focus of unification. With all this, it may be proposed that the nation-state inherited by post-colonial

nations involve the impossible deadlocks at crisis level of what is symbolised by Creon versus what is symbolised by Antigone. What has been proposed here would need to be put to the test of much more stringent analyses of African political history, necessarily taking into account the ongoing wars of neo-imperialism. A useful source of further research and debate is the work of Pal Ahluwalia on the concept and history of the nation-state in Africa.[171]

Related to the above is that one of the most problematic legacies of colonialism is the forcing of a Western concept of 'superior being' onto other cultures. This has been much taken stock of, while its multiple violent effects continue especially since the West continues to inferiorise Africa in accordance with keeping colonialism going. The reason that I mention this here is that *Antigone* serves to dramatise something of an historical split between a concept of superior being, based on the technical and rational mastery of man (as upheld by Creon), and Ancient African values, as may be associated with the Furies, spirits of the earth, and Tiresias, the diviner.

Mandela's assertion of a highly egalitarian sense of justice within early African society makes for an appropriate place at which to begin the next chapter, which will look at Hegel's assumption of an amoral Africa, while this one will be concluded with Tsenay Serequeberhan's apt words on a concept of justice arrived at through post-colonial African philosophy. In a short space it brings together the non-messianic redemption that may be associated with the abiku figure, a challenge to old universalisms and an affirmation of our earthliness:

> This is the 'justice' and 'justness' that originates out of the disappointed possibilities of our past, from whence we project a future. A future in which the unequivocal recognition of the multiverse that constitutes our – thus far denied – historical and cultural specificity (i.e., our humanity) will become the basis for earthly solidarity. Thus, heeding Fanon's insightful words, we leave behind Old Europe, with all its transcendental and empty odes to 'Man', and with Nietzsche we '*remain faithful to the earth*'.[172]

2 From Hegel on Africa towards a reading of African literature

> Diremption is the source of the need for philosophy.
>
> Hegel, *The Difference between the Fichtean and Schellingian Systems of Philosophy*

> Modern philosophical speculation, however, has generated a tendency toward the neglect of truth in regard to many aspects of the foundation of philosophy. This is particularly indicative of the Hegelian idealism, which tended to underestimate African civilisation.
>
> Henry Olela, 'African Foundations of Greek Philosophy'

This begins with a statement made by Derrida in *Glas*: 'The undecidable, isn't it the undeniable.'[1] This statement (for there's no question mark) occurs in the context of a discussion of fetishism, and Derrida has elsewhere spoken of what *Glas* tries to approach is a fetishisation in general.[2] What the previous chapter began to address was that Derrida's attempt to generalise a thinking of fetishism yet, of course, relies on specific genres or traditions of thought, in particular as regards *Glas*, Hegelian philosophy and Freudian psychoanalysis, together with a redeployment of, what may be termed, a queer aesthetic. The question that detains me concerns what it might mean to generalise fetishism or to detect a fetishism in general with reference to a specific European tradition of thought: in particular, one that may be read in terms of an idealisation of (Western) paternity as sole origin, and without much evident reference to the African cultures and philosophies that have been so long identified with fetishism and, more widely, animism. It seems strange to bracket this spirit-zone off, together with the much debated question of the status of African philosophy in relation to Western philosophy, as if Africa were not a source, even the source, for a thinking or rethinking of fetishism(s). If this constitutes a possible omission – and this may not be the right word – on Derrida's part, it would seem to be because he works within a particular intellectual inheritance, following on from, as well as transforming, the workings out of a European philosophical tradition. A certain thinking of Africa could well be at stake in this, but, if so, then it has been somewhat mutedly so as regards African thought and culture. In saying this, what needs to be affirmed is that Derrida has explicitly offered responses to particular African political predicaments, especially those of South Africa. The question

that is being raised here is rather one of an epistemic nature, as will slowly unfold. More generally, what arises is an opportunity to consider the significance of a seemingly recurrent and long-engrooved swerve away from an engagement with African intellectual and cultural legacies, one recurrent within the tradition of so-called Western thought, and an opportunity to keep reintroducing philosophical and literary contributions from African sources. What is to be explored in this chapter is the question of how it is that Africa has to contend with a Western repetition compulsion in which it is that which is overlooked, time and again. This will be done by first returning to Hegel's commentary on Africa in order to show how it constitutes and exemplifies a European Africanist or, more generally, primitivist discourse that in its irrationalism is specifiably different from the logic of Orientalism, as traced by Edward Said. What will be suggested is that Africa is overlooked precisely because it is that which just cannot be seen through the eyeglass of Western philosophy of the metaphysical tradition. This predicament will then be elaborated upon and, also, further illustrated through a reading of J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The chapter will conclude with a juxtaposition of Coetzee's novel with other South African literary texts as a means of bringing the issues at stake into clearer focus.

This chapter began in the form of what was to be a footnote, a footnote on fetishism, with respect to Derrida's 'The undecidable, isn't it the undeniable'. What is enjoyable about this sentence is that it swings both ways. It suggests that undecidability is the very thing that cannot be denied, and it also suggests that what the undecidable turns out to be is the fact or the actuality. A little further on, Derrida writes: 'The undeniable is that castration does not take place' (p. 229). Expanding on this, we could come up with a double directive: the fact that there is no castration of woman in actuality is that which produces sexual difference as undecidable for you cannot specify this difference; and, the thought of the undecidability of sexual difference leads to the certainty that there is a female being who is not castrated. What I wish to make of this is that it is the very fact of there being another being, one apart from the self, that leads to a speculation concerning differences but this speculation can never establish itself as true certainty for it elaborates differences where, in fact, these differences may not actually exist. That is to say, the recognition of the other being as certainly an other would need to be accompanied by the thought that this other may not be a being that is necessarily different – other – in terms of how we think of difference.

Before I begin this section on Hegel on Africa, a few words on his reflections on *Antigone* will be offered. Antigone, the sister, is said to represent the sacred laws of the family, where the brother–sister relationship is given as asexual and somewhat idealised as such (but it seems this is as a sexless ideal of what is nonetheless sexual difference). As Derrida notices in *Glas*, Hegel furthermore takes Antigone's specific family situation as a general model for the family unit. Derrida writes:

> Here Hegel examines the elementary models of kinship. His classification seems limited: he does not justify its historical, sociological, ethnological mode, to wit the Western Greek family. In the family, he considers only a restricted number of elements and relations: husband/wife, parents/children, brother/sister. Not grandparents, neither uncles nor aunts, neither male nor female cousins, not a possible plurality of brothers and sisters – this last relationship always remains singular.
>
> (p. 147)

Thus, if Antigone is to represent the law of the family, it appears to be that of the patriarchal nuclear family, the family of Man, which is problematic given what we could read and has been read as Antigone's resistance to a highly patriarchal Creon. Hegel, however, has Antigone represent the divine law of the family against the human laws of the state, which is to elide the family as determined by the human laws of the father and to make the (patriarchal) family seem primordially natural and sacred, although more is at stake with respect to what is being covered over. When the brother leaves the family, we are told that what happens is that: 'He passes from the divine law, within whose sphere he lived, over to human law. But the sister becomes, or the wife remains, the head of the household and the guardian of divine law.'[3] Head of the household? No matter, what this produces, with a slippage from 'sister' to 'wife' to 'woman' in general, is the private family as the ethical sphere of woman, and the wider ethical and social sphere as that of the man. The 'original family' of brother and sister has become invisibly patriarchalised, sexual difference being something that just magically emerges, just sets itself up by itself, as the brother emerges from the family. In brief, what follows is that the civic community of men has to come to suppress a feminine spirit of individualism, the family-spirit now become a potential anarchy, a suppression which leads to the ruin of the Ethical substance in the destruction of familial piety or an ethical world of custom. The latter is given up for destruction in that *this* ethical world is seen as existing in too close a relation to a natural immediacy. Hegel writes:

> For this immediacy has the contradictory meaning of being the unconscious tranquillity of Nature, and also the self-conscious restless tranquillity of Spirit. On account of this natural aspect, this ethical nation is, in general, an individuality determined by Nature, and therefore limited, and thus it meets its downfall at the hands of another.
>
> (§476, p. 289)

What Hegel is speaking of here could be considered, in order to open this up, in terms of a tribal society that needs to give way to a universal ethical community, one that is yet patriarchal. That is, the 'ethical nation' referred to above could be elaborated as that which would be family as nation – somewhat as in a tribal community – with an ethical spirit based on the sacredness of nature (since Hegel roughly aligns divine laws, the feminine and nature).

Hegel does not put this as such. I am simply attempting to provide a bridging point to cross from the discussion of *Antigone* to his treatment of African society. Hegel's tacit assumption of a Greek Western (to be Christian) family, a patriarchal family, is at odds with his opposition of sacred family laws, on the one hand, and human laws, on the other: there is an undefined contradiction in this in which a patriarchal family may be covering over a prior form of the family (say, an extended one, maybe a matriarchal one, maybe one based on a brother–sister ideal, or where the family is not opposed to the community). Whatever the blurrings here, this form of the ethical nation, one too close to the naturally sacred (or sacredness of nature) cannot work, according to Hegel, because of the contradiction between the 'tranquillity of Nature' and a human spirit given as both tranquil and restless. Hegel thus opposes nature and spirit, the latter furthermore consisting of an opposition between a feminine unconscious tranquillity and a masculine self-conscious striving. This characterisation of a passive, spiritless nature is very much at odds with a more African perception of a dynamic, spirited nature. It could be that while Antigone represents for Hegel an anarchic principle (unconsciously, maybe one of brother*s* and sister*s* in resistance to an over-arching patriarchal principle), a threat of anarchy which needs be eradicated, he also re-positions her as dutiful sister within an implicitly patriarchal family, where there could be a slippage from defending a sacredness of the family or kinship to sanctifying a particular form of the family. This could be to bury Antigone alive in the family, vault of the family, subduing her as, in Derrida's apt phrase, 'eternal sister' (p. 150), as perpetual spinster.[4] This would serve to shut out the threat of anarchy, by walling it up in a family crypt.

If Hegel's reading serves to make Antigone finally represent the sacredness of the patriarchal family, he will have succeeded in turning Sophocles' play inside out, writing Antigone out of *Antigone*. Hegel begins the whole discussion of *Antigone* with the thought of the necessity of private property in mind. The private sphere, ostensibly that belonging to woman, seems rather to be a matter of separating the private sphere from the civic or public realm and establishing the family as the property of man. With this, the sacred would become the father's right to reproduce himself through owning and securing the means to reproduction that he himself does not have. So, the crypt-tomb is to give him a womb.

We will now consider Hegel's reaction to an 'anarchic Africa'.

Hegel on Africa

There is a very useful, telling essay on Hegel's representation of Africa by Robert Bernasconi, 'Hegel at the court of the Ashanti'.[5] What Bernasconi does is to check Hegel's sources on Africa, the historical accounts, based often on travel diaries, that Hegel consulted as evidence for his understanding of Africa. What Bernasconi finds is that Hegel repeatedly distorts his sources, in particular, through hyperbole. I cannot go through all the many instances of this that Bernasconi draws attention to, and will limit myself to but one example here.

Hegel's account of the funeral of the King of Dahomey states (as cited by Bernasconi at greater length): 'When the King dies in Dahomey, a general tumult breaks loose in his palace … and universal carnage begins … On one such occasion, 500 women died in the space of six minutes' (p. 47). For a start, Bernasconi shows that Hegel is mixing together Bowdich's material on the Ashanti with Dalzel's material on the Dahomey. Then, while the latter speaks of an incident in which 285 wives were killed, Bernasconi points out that: 'There is nothing about the slaughter of 500 wives in six minutes in this text' (p. 48). Bernasconi suggests (p. 49) that this claim could be part of a chain of exaggerations – African informants exaggerating the original numbers, European travellers exaggerating them further – and yet the question remains: 'But why did Hegel feel compelled to multiply the numbers?' It could be suggested, as Bernasconi indicates, that Hegel wished to intensify the impression of African barbarity in order to support his thesis and concept of a world history, one which does not include Africa. Here the point would be that Hegel's concept of world history is in itself imperialist. While Hegel believed slavery to be unjust and indefensible within civilised societies, he nonetheless justified the case of a European enslavement of Africans on the grounds that Africans, having no history of their own, would thereby be brought into history, a history of inclusion, a world history. While Hegel may have exaggerated his sources in order to insist on the barbarity of Africa, I think that Hegel's repeated, possibly systematic, distortions constitute and point to a rather overlooked aspect of discourses on Africa. Hegel's sources in themselves could have been used without any embellishment whatsoever to present the case for African savagery. After all, the killing of 285 women surely constitutes an horrific mass slaughter in itself. The fact that Hegel renders this as the killing of *500* wives within the space of *six* minutes has a mind-boggling effect: it is hard to imagine how such an act could be so timed and co-ordinated. It is almost incredible, and that, indeed, is what Hegel thinks Africa is. It's the incredible. He virtually says this. He states: '[Africans'] belief in the worthlessness of man goes to incredible lengths' (p. 182). Earlier, he warns us that we might find Africans rather incomprehensible: 'This [African] character, however, is difficult to comprehend because it is so totally different from our own culture, and so remote and alien in relation to our own mode of consciousness' (p. 176). He says too that the fanaticism of Africans 'surpasses all belief' (p. 188).

Thus, my argument is that, through exaggeration and other means which we will come to, Hegel offers us an Africa that is: mind-boggling; crazy beyond belief; wildly incomprehensible; truly preposterous. Put another way, the philosopher Hegel offers us an Africa that is unthinkable.

While sensationalist hyperbole is one way of achieving this, Hegel also uses irreconcilable antitheses to this end. Commentators such as Derrida and Bernasconi notice that Hegel lapses into self-contradiction when he talks about Africa – each points out in passing two separate instances of such lapses or blatant contradictions. However, Hegel's African discourse is so thoroughly riddled with contradictions that you have to suspect that this is more than a matter of the occasional lapse. Rather, Hegel seems to be building up a picture

of Africans as themselves full of impossible contradictions. I will hastily run through some of these. Hegel maintains that Africans are capable of frenzied outbursts of 'unthinking inhumanity' (p. 176), but that these same Africans are capable of peace and mildness when their rage abates (p. 176). He brings this up again, and again – later: 'for all their good nature, they are capable of transports of frenzy' (p. 188); and, 'Such nations live peacefully … and then suddenly surge up into a complete state of frenzy' (p. 188). He says that the African 'arrogates to himself a power over nature' (p. 179), and then almost immediately that the Africans are dependent on nature for 'its powers fill them with fear'. Africans thus see themselves as both masters and slaves of nature. In fact, Hegel is at pains to emphasise that for Africans: 'the distinction between masters and slaves is a purely arbitrary one' (p. 183). Africans, unlike the Greeks, cannot distinguish between a class of slaves and those who are free (p. 54). For Africans, anyone can be both a slave and a master. Hegel notes: 'the people of Africa are not just slaves, but assert their own will too' (p. 187). Earlier they are said to have both a 'cringing' attitude to authority and an arrogant one, depending on whether or not they are in a position of power (not so irrational, that). Hegel insists, several times, that Africans are completely intractable and he also insists that they are utterly fickle, full of caprice: that is, they are both stubbornly resistant to change and they never stop changing. They have no true ethical consciousness, and yet they will kill themselves out of shame for a misdeed (p. 185). Hegel notes too that African women behave just like African men, or worse, and finds it strange that in Africa women accompany men on expeditions and go to war (p. 189). What this suggests is a bewildering lack of differentiation between the sexes (just as Africans are seen to fail to distinguish properly between self and not self, self and other), where what is also indicated is that Hegel finds a certain equality between the sexes bewildering. In short, Africans would seem to be to be full of unprincipled contradictions for Hegel, antitheses which have no explanatory basis, and that is why Africa and Africans are unthinkable, beyond all efforts of logical comprehension. And, I would maintain that is because they are incomprehensible, that they cannot be included, comprehended, within a thinking of world history. Hegel, it hardly needs saying, is par excellence a thinker who sets out to resolve contradictions. In his account of the phases of world history, Hegel sees that properly polarised antitheses begin to emerge with the beginnings of Oriental history – and the resolution of contradiction is the principle of world history for Hegel. He writes: 'The sole purpose of world history is to create a situation in which these two poles [that of the divine and of the individual subject] are absolutely united and truly reconciled' (p. 198). While in Africa, contradictions do not take the form of binary opposites established according to a principle that would determine them as such, this is what begins to happen with the dawn of Oriental history. In his discussion of Africa, Hegel separates Egypt from what he calls 'Africa proper'. In coming to speak of Egypt as Oriental not African, he states: 'In Egypt we encounter that contradiction of principles which it is the mission of the west to resolve' (p. 201).

I will elaborate briefly. When Hegel turns his back on the dark night of Africa, it

seems to me that it is with some relief that he announces: 'The sun rises in the Orient … in all its majesty' (p. 196). We are now able, precisely, to Orientate ourselves. It is said that 'World history travels from east to west; for Europe is the absolute end of history, just as Asia is the beginning' (p. 197). The sun sets in the west, with man able to reflect on his own accomplishments, having created an 'inner sun', 'the sun of his own consciousness'. This is given, then, as an interiorising of nature in spirit, spirit reflecting on its own creativity, as opposed to what Hegel ignores of African religions with respect to reading spirit(s) in nature.

I would like to put this, sketchily, into a sexual frame of reference, since Hegel's heliocentrism is implicitly phallocentric. The majestic rising sun could be regarded in terms of a phallic principle, especially since Hegel considers Oriental cultures to consist of a feminised, passive submission to theocratic forms of government, and this constitutes a patriarchal relation, as explicitly stated. So basically, Orientals are as women in relation to a despotic, phallic principle. In contradistinction to this, Western history would be, say, a matter of overcoming this feminine or effeminate (if young-boyish) servitude in identification (or reconciliation) with the-law-of-the father. As Hegel says in speaking of the Germanic phase of history: 'the individual mind seeks to be united with that which it is bound to respect' (p. 206). In relation to this sexual frame of reference, while the Oriental is perceived as feminine (albeit not explicitly so, and where Hegel describes differing forms of Oriental cultures), Africa would be confusedly both masculine and feminine, polymorphously perverse. It is this model of maturation, referred to in the previous chapter.

What I wish to propose is that a European Africanist discourse (a phrase I need to use to address a certain vein of thought within Africanist discourses) cannot be thought of in terms of an Orientalist discourse or in terms of the paradigm that Edward Said sets up in *Orientalism*. It seems to me that the paradigm developed by Said is quite frequently transferred to discussions of Africa – that is, in assuming a basic opposition between the European self and the African other – where this assumption needs to be rigorously reconsidered. Or, more broadly, paradigms based on a logic of binary opposition inform a general thinking of imperialism and colonialism. Abiola Irele, in an introduction to Paulin Hountondji's *African Philosophy*, states: '[B]y excluding Africa totally from the historical process through which … the human spirit fulfils itself, Hegel places Africa at the opposite pole to Europe, as its ideal and spiritual antithesis.'[6] While I can see why Irele says this, given that there is a certain positing of Africa as radically other, I have been arguing that Hegel does not exactly set up Africa as *Europe*'s antithesis; it is rather the Orient that is offered as the other to its same. Or, put another way, Africa, being so impossibly contradictory in itself, could not serve as Europe's opposite. Irele goes on to say: 'The logic of Hegel's philosophy of history owes as much to his attachment to the dialectic as to a naïve symbolism suggested by the opposition of the white race to the black.' This concept, that of the Manichean aesthetic, has been very widely upheld in the critique of a colonial discourse on Africa. However, it is worth pausing over this simple opposition between black and white in Hegel. This opposition would only

be produced through the processes of slavery, colonisation, Westernisation, in which a clear distinction between a white master race and a black slave race would be established, in a compulsory racialisation. As already mentioned, Hegel finds that Africans as Africans erase the opposition between master and slave. They are also said by Hegel not to recognise properly the distinction between self and other, whereas it is only in losing their ahistorical African character that they will come to see themselves as the other, and so the other is not the African. Emmanuel Eze, in 'Western Philosophy and African Colonialism', considers a certain accommodation of Enlightenment values put forward by Irele and goes on to emphasise that Africa is what is *sacrificed* in the European achievement of modernity.[7] This question of accommodation is one to be returned to. In my reading of Hegel, the logic of this is that for an African to become 'black', attaining a racial consciousness (that 'illusion of race' in Appiah's phrase),[8] he/she would need to cease being an *African*, race consciousness replacing a cultural and intellectual African consciousness.

Robert Young offers a similar statement to that of Irele's, as cited, claiming:

> Our talk of Manichean allegories of colonizer and colonized, of self and Other, mirrors the way in which today's racial politics work through a relative polarization between black and white. This remorseless Hegelian dialectalisation is characteristic of twentieth-century accounts of race, racial difference and racial identity.[9]

Again, I do see why this is claimed, where yet the black person is only *such* as *Westernised* and thus – within this colonising logic, racialised in and on Western terms – and where there yet remains the question of Hegel's production of an Africa that defies classification. Young immediately goes on to state:

> I want to argue, however, that for an understanding of the historical specificity of the discourse of colonialism, we need to acknowledge that other forms of racial distinction have worked simultaneously alongside this model. Without any understanding of this, we run the risk of imposing our own categories and politics upon the past without noticing its difference, turning the otherness of the past into the sameness of today.

The problem is that a certain received view of Hegel is also part of this forgetting, as will be further indicated with respect to Young's proposition of an alternative to a Hegelian model of 'same-Other'. Young writes:

> racialism operated both according to the same-Other model and through the 'computation of normalities' and 'degrees of deviance' from the white norm, by means of which racial difference became identified with other forms of sexual and social perversity as degeneracy, deformation and embryological development. But none was so demonised as mixed race.
>
> (p. 180)

The demonisation of mixed race is implied somewhat in Hegel's intolerance of a mixed-up, impossibly contradictory and fetishistic Africa, as that which cannot fit into 'same' or 'other'. Yet, there are still further possible distinctions to be made. With Oriental cultures, Hegel establishes an Other to which the West can address itself and use to reflect and reflect upon itself, whilst this is yet accompanied by degrees of approximating various 'Oriental' and 'Far Eastern' cultures to the West in accordance with an attempt to characterise, give specific individual characters to, the different cultures of the East. In Hegel's treatment of Africa, although he mentions different African kingdoms or peoples – the Ashanti, the Dahomey and others – there are no differences to be remarked of their diverse cultures, because they do not qualify as proper cultures. In keeping with the contradictions that Hegel effects, Africa is treated as both an undifferentiated whole *and* as too sensuously fragmented to unify ('purely fragmented sensuous existence', p. 184). Within a Hegelian logic of the same, whilst Oriental culture is 'Other', often monolithically so, there is also a rudimentary global 'multiculturalism' that is introduced in specifying the relative achievements and failures of Indians, Persians, the Chinese, onto Greeks and Romans, and so on, all measured as what is to emerge as a progression towards the modern West, a progressive Westernisation. The particular discourse that Young addresses above, concerning 'degrees of deviancy', seems akin to the nineteenth-century discourse of sexuality that Foucault analyses in *The History of Sexuality*, Volume I, where the obsessive classification of racialities is mirrored in the obsessive classification of proliferating sexualities. With Foucault's analyses in mind, there would be – beyond a thinking of *race* in terms of oppression and exclusion – an incitement to a desired race consciousness with respect to what is desired of race, as Young's research serves to discover. Cross-referencing this European discourse with readings of African literature, what seems to emerge is a subtext of anxiety with respect to how the classifying of hybridity in general – as a general problematic – is fraught by the surreptitious or unspeakable issue of how to differentiate between a desired, acceptable, 'progressive' hybridity and another potentially uncontrollable or 'anarchic' one. In other words, the problem becomes one of how to maintain a *general* logic of hybridity that yet seeks to discriminate one category of hybridity from another category of it. The answer would seem to be that the desired hybridity, say, a plurality of Westernisations, is set up as the only hybridity – hybridity in general – whereby the refused hybridity is then given as a strange non-hybridity. This non-hybridity is constructed both as another purity and as that which must not be. Hegel's discourse on Africa produces an homogenous Africa – the 'unananism' that Hountonji objects to, and where Irele's comments are not wrong – but where this homogeneity paradoxically consists of seemingly limitless hybridities, undecidable antitheses. This hypothesis, concerning the possible strategy of playing off an homogenous and also impermissibly pure Africa against an impossibly hybrid one, will be developed below.

It could be proposed that Hegel's cordoning off of Africa from the rest of 'world history' serves ultimately to manufacture, with all the paradoxes of this discourse, the myth of a 'pure Africa', a myth that haunts and threatens to sabo-

tage any attempt at an 'African-Africanist' discourse. For instance, time and again, the various attempts to raise the question of an African consciousness – cultural and historical as opposed to racial – are dismissed and stigmatised in terms of a neo-nativist desire for pure cultural origin. While this supposed desire for pure cultural origin may be read as a Western projection, it is the case that that it is also taken up within, very broadly speaking, discourses of negritude and their returns. This is part of the difficulty of speaking back from an already assigned position. Choosing but one example, Senghor has frequently been criticised, with some justification, for embracing a racial essentialism.[10] And yet, what I want to suggest is that this tends to be a selective reading of Senghor (while it is not the only one), strategically so or programmed as such, that overlooks or seeks to ignore precisely the aspects of Senghor's work that strive towards a certain hybridisation, where *this* aspect of his work may be affiliated with the work of numerous other African intellectuals. With the stigmas of 'racial essentialism' and 'cultural purity' serving to effect a rejection, the truly critical tasks of sifting and selecting the threads of a discourse – with a view to recombining and maximising the useful leads – tend to be abandoned. In the case of just Senghor, while he is a champion of negritude, he is *also* a thinker of hybridity. This unfortunately cannot be adequately unfolded here, and so, but one or two examples can serve as some indication in support of this claim. At the outset of 'The African Road to Socialism: Attempt at a Definition', Senghor writes, with his emphases:

> Each of you has found in his folder my Report to the Constitutive Congress of the PFA and an article I wrote in 1948 on Marxism and Humanism. You will also find a selected bibliography – socialist works and criticisms of those works – as well as numerous passages that highlight the essential points of the socialist doctrine, more specifically of its method.
>
> It is not a question today of rejecting that method; we must rethink it *in the light of African realities*. Still more precisely, we must face our *Malian realities* in order to develop a new method that is more appropriate for understanding our realities and transforming them effectively.[11]

Thus, Senghor makes it plain that it is not a case of rejecting Western culture and its intellectual traditions – he goes on to give his reading of Hegel, amongst others – but of determining how these critiques may be accommodated within the framework of an ongoing African inheritance. With this, Western thought is not to be retained in a pure form but transformed – hybridised – in terms of the specificities of African societies, where Africa is not simply homogenised: there are, still more specifically, Malian realities to address. So, the issue is not one of seeking to preserve a cultural purity but one of how to negotiate a Westernisation *within* Africa on its own terms – as opposed to of Africa by the West – where Senghor goes on to address critically the very issue of a reversibility of assimilation or integration: Africa is not simply the 'to be assimilated' (or not to be), but a multinational continent with the right to determine

and the responsibility of confronting its own terms and forms of Westernisation. However, the issue becomes more complicated than one of a mere reversibility for Senghor shows that the accommodative intellectual attitude to be found in Africa may be seen as a form of knowing through a capacity for empathetic identification in which the subject does not merely assimilate the other but allows the other to become the self (p. 73). One of Senghor's apt critiques of the Enlightenment legacy is that it may well not be modern enough with respect to the scientific developments of this century, especially with respect to the discoveries of quantum physics, where Senghor (amongst others) raises the question of an African philosophical perspective as having the potential to accommodate the insights of this scientific revolution. He writes:

> In contrast to the classic European, the Negro African does not draw a line between himself and the object … [In a sensory or immediate encounter with the object in a field of forces] he is moved, going centrifugally from subject to object on the waves of the Other. This is more than a simple metaphor; contemporary physics has discovered universal energy under matter: waves and radiation.
>
> (p. 72)

The significance of this claim could be further explored, but my aim is just to counteract the stereotype of a conservative, backward-looking African-Africanist discourse as some kind of rejection of scientific modernity.

As touched on in the previous chapter, Senghor himself protests against the way he has been so often misread as simply championing 'emotions' over 'reason', where he explains that his attempt has been rather to deconstruct the crude opposition between a purely rational, objective knowledge and the purely emotional:

> Let us understand each other clearly; it is not the *reasoning-eye* of Europe, it is *the reason of the touch*, better still, the *reasoning-embrace*, more closely related to the Greek *logos* than to the Latin *ratio*.
>
> (pp. 73–4)

(I have addressed this question of the 'reason of the touch', opposed to 'eye', with reference to writing and African literature in another context.)[12] Whether or not Senghor succeeds in such a deconstruction might still be debatable, yet the attempt needs be granted so as not merely to impute a pure intentionality to the project, one inappropriate to its critique of pure reason. Again, Senghor appeals to modern scientific thought as itself rethinking its previous suppositions of objectivity, where Senghor lightly touches on a correlation between scientific and creative modes of knowledge (p. 71), a question that does have much scope although it cannot to be explored here. While it is the case that there is some racial essentialism in Senghor's attempt to produce a new discourse of cultural hybridity – the effect, it would seem, of trying to concretise Marxism in terms of

a specifically African humanism, as well as a matter of collapsing racial and cultural categories – he yet tellingly states, having just identified Berbers as 'white Africans': 'the Malian Federation is proud to be a multicultural nation and even prouder to have integrated the cultural contributions of the Berbers and even the Arabs' (p. 76). What is proposed repeatedly in Senghor's work is an Africa capable of accommodating other cultures and traditions within itself, where this has been a matter of its past history and ongoing history. Given this, it is worth questioning why it is that Senghor, together with other African intellectuals associated with versions of negritude, cultural nationalism and Pan-Africanism, are repeatedly read and *constructed as* producing merely a discourse of obsolescent cultural purity, seen as a necessarily surpassed phase of self-affirmation, to the point that this has become a commonplace. The fact that this 'surpassed phase' keeps returning, is pressurised to do so in different ways, points to the obviously unresolved issues at stake. Who is essentialising whom?

This could be far more widely opened up and debated in a rescrutinisation of a history of the production and reception of an African discourse of self-consciousness. The attempt, so far, has just been to offer for debate how it may be that the projections of a stigmatised 'desire for cultural purity' mask attempts to legislate against what may, on further scrutiny, turn out to be a matter of yet other hybridities.

There are many ways in which Senghor may be said to offer us a hybrid discourse, beyond what has been touched on. Apart from the attempt to 'spiritise' Marxism in order to produce a new African socialism (an attempt to be found also in the work of Nyerere and Nkrumah, albeit with considerable differences of approach), one feature of a colonial/post-colonial African intellectual history is that philosophical approaches are combined with poetic and creative ones. For instance, Senghor is both political intellectual and poet, while a text such as Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* is both critique and poem. It may be suggested that the 'poetic' works not as an aestheticising move but as means of approaching certain realities of spirit that a Western philosophical approach 'blacks out', so to speak. Very broadly speaking, Senghor, like Nyerere and Nkrumah, draws on Marx and a Western philosophical legacy with a view to the immensely difficult task of integrating this with African philosophical treatments of spirit. Moreover, as cited earlier, Senghor stresses the necessity of *facing* Malian realities, and the need to rethink in the *light* of African realities, where I have slightly altered the given emphases to show how Senghor's phrasing counter-chimes with Hegel's stagings. For, as already indicated, and as will be elaborated further, Hegel does not wish to *face* African realities (but rather turn his back on them), where there is no possible *light* to be shed on the darkness that is Africa. Africa, said to be 'unconscious' by Hegel, is offered to us as the unconscious of the unconscious, the repression of which cannot return. This then presents a complete forgetting of African realities as a correlative to the imperatives of Westernisation, where this is not simply a question of realities but thinking realities: that is, it is not just Africa as the 'real' that is at stake here (a conflation to be found in European thought), but an African consciousness of the

real. An African political intellectual or intellectual politician, such as Senghor, is surely bound to pose the question of facing unforgettable African social and cultural realities for these realities just are.

One question that arises from this *will* to an oblivion of 'African realities' is whether the truth of Hegel's discourse on Africans is that he fears, albeit unconsciously, that the African may be all too radically the same as the European, rather than radically other: entailing the necessity of admitting that the universality of the human race may be found in the African, as opposed to the universality of humanity being destined to be Western. Before this is addressed more fully, it should be noted that Hegel is far from being alone in the way that he thinks of Africa. In fact, what we have here, I am suggesting, is a specific European Africanist discourse that may be said to persist to this day. Indeed, George Alagiah, the BBC's former Africa Correspondent, recently wrote an article (*Guardian*, Media, 3 May 1999, pp. 4–5) in which he expressed his frustration and sense of failure in not being able to get through to an audience that, however sympathetic, still today continues to find Africa incomprehensible. There is not the time to trace this here, as with much else. However, taking just Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Evelyn Waugh's *Black Mischief*, Joyce Carey's *Mister Johnson*, and certain aspects of William Boyd's *A Good Man in Africa*, and, most recently, Foden's *The Last King of Scotland*, it would be possible to show a paradoxically systematic depiction of Africans as preposterously contradictory. Since *Heart of Darkness* is perhaps the best known of these texts, I will treat it as exemplary for the moment. In this text, Africa is repeatedly given as a place of both perfect stillness and sudden mad frenzy. Africans are savage cannibals and yet they show exemplary civilised restraint. Africans display both gentle innocence and inhuman barbarism. They are friendly and hostile. They are naturally freedom-loving and yet give others godlike authority over them. While Achebe objects to Conrad's treatment of Africans as savages, other critics point out in response to Achebe that Conrad depicts Africans in positive terms. My point is that he does both, like Hegel, producing thus, a highly contradictory, bewildering Africa. In addition, what worries Conrad's Marlow, is the awful suspicion that Africans may not in fact be so 'other' after all, but exist in a relation of 'remote kinship' to the European: 'Well, you know, that was the worst of it – this suspicion of their not being inhuman … the thought of their humanity – like yours … Ugly.'[13] This is what I wish to elaborate in terms of 'radical sameness' where this term has been coined to differentiate it from the positing of the same in relation to an other. That is, radical sameness would exceed the usual logic of the same, whereby the same might coincide with a radical otherness that is an absolutely refused otherness. I will try to indicate this further. But first an attempt to refine what has been argued so far, followed by a polemic.

At the point of going to press, I read Young's essay 'Deconstruction and the Postcolonial'. I wish to make use of it in order to clarify points raised in this section as well as some of the concerns of the book as a whole. In 'Deconstruction and the Postcolonial', I see that Young argues – as I do too – that deconstruction is a case of the postcolonial or, we could say, a decolonising

practice. However, I have some reservations as to the way in which Young sets up his 'deconstruction and the postcolonial'. Addressing Derrida's emphasis on a 'white mythology', he writes:

> That 'thread' which I followed, with such labour, has finally become the explicit subject of some of your recent work. I knew it all along, for you showed it to me in your writings from the first: whereas other philosophers would write of 'philosophy', for you it was always 'Western philosophy'. Whiteness, otherness; margins, decentring: it was obvious to me what you were up to.[14]

This can read a little as: 'you, Derrida, deconstruction – and – me, Young, the postcolonial', something that may not allay the fears of Young's critics. Yet, my objection is not to the personalism of this style which is appropriate in the context of the treatment of personal intellectual histories. It is rather that the essay may be seen to be working in accordance with a logic of a retrospective colonisation of the origin. That is, Young retrospectively lays claim to a certain original knowledge: 'I knew it all along … from the first … ' When this happens, the suspicion is that this is to be accompanied by an occlusion. And here, perhaps, is where it occurs: 'it [deconstruction] represents a strategic alternative to the passivity of dependency theory or the nationalism of the return-to-the-authentic-tradition-untrammelled-by-the-West of fundamentalist parties that respond to the present by seeking to deny the past' (p. 195). While I take the point, there is yet a move by which a retrospective claim to original knowledge is being set up against an origin perceived as false or against a false claim to original knowledge. Or, 'deconstruction and the postcolonial' is being set up against this caricature (even voiced as such): 'return-to-the-authentic-tradition-untrammelled-by-the-West'. The point is that Young seems to require this category of 'false original knowledge' and is thus, at least, complicit in its reproduction and perpetuation. Where does deadlock begin? The claims made for authentic traditions outside of the West have often formulated themselves, strategically and with a consciousness of the difficulties involved, as a reverse discourse (thus, not simply as an original discourse): this, given the institutional dependence in the West on a disavowal of the 'original knowledge' of the other to be found in Hegel, colonial anthropology, and so on.

With respect to an academic context, what is partly at stake is a rivalry between a certain deployment of 'deconstruction and the postcolonial' and the study of colonial and post-colonial literatures that began in the period of decolonisation in both British universities and the universities of former colonies, a study of what used to be termed 'Commonwealth literature' (the work of Bart Moore-Gilbert serving to explore pertinently and more widely the rifts and rivalries in competing approaches to the post-colonial). The area of study termed 'Commonwealth literature' has changed its name, several times, but as Ama Ata Aidoo once remarked at a conference (if I remember correctly), the word 'commonwealth' yet has its appeal, does it not? In a banal but also exciting way,

this study of de-colonisation within the humanities (not just within literature departments) could be said to have got there 'first', and I and others stand indebted to those who got it going (thank you for all the work). As cited, Young mentions that what may have been implicit in Derrida's work 'has finally become the explicit subject' of recent work. Thus, Derrida could be said to be a little belated with respect to the kind of explicit and sustained cross-cultural dialogues that have been going on for some decades in pockets of various academic and para-academic institutions. However, this is no sin, ('no sin to limp'), and besides, it might partially concern a 'differance' between philosophical, or theoretical, and literary routes; the former as retrospective in relation to the literary-creative, and the latter as prospective in relation to the philosophical. As regards philosophy departments, Derrida could be said to be, in many respects, 'way ahead', whilst deconstruction itself resists institutionalisation. Furthermore, if deconstruction concerns a certain working back, this may be precisely towards the diremption – that is the word – that forcibly splits Western philosophy from other philosophies often considered not to be 'philosophy proper'. If so, it may be that the caricatures of 'false original knowledge' are not to be relied upon.

In addressing Said's analysis in *Orientalism* of the positing of ethnic alterity according to a logic of the same, Young comments that:

> Said argues, the Orient as such does not exist … The Orient is like Dorian Gray's mirror – its image made up of everything disavowed by the West. In the same way, patriarchal male identity needs a submissive female identity as part of itself in order to be itself.
>
> (p. 200)

With respect to what was argued in the last chapter, it is interesting to find this correlation between the narcissistic, phantasmatic imaging of the oriental and of female identity (although there would still need to be some clarification of the mechanisms of disavowal and appropriation that are touced on). That said, there remains an eclipsing, by means of Orientalism, of an Africanist discourse. Achebe, he who makes a case for pre-colonial African histories and African philosophies, needs be cited again, as already cited in the previous chapter: 'Africa is to Europe as the picture is to Dorian Gray – a carrier on to whom the master unloads his physical and moral deformities' ('An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*'). It does not particularly matter that Achebe said this originally (although it would show that a neo-nativist Achebe does not preclude an Achebe as theorist of colonial discourse); what matters is the elision of the African enunciation into the logic of Orientalism. That Young speaks of 'mirror' as opposed to 'portrait' or 'picture', although a slip as regards Wilde's text, is nonetheless appropriate to a discourse of Orientalism for (as a diagram at the start of the next section illustrates), the West *faces* itself in the Orient. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the portrait does not represent the feminised other (for that would be Dorian as hyper-cultivated Western man), but, rather, variously: the exteriorisation of his inmost – darkest – self; his disowned conscience and his

perverse criminal secrets; the anamorphotic de-compostion of the composition, or dis-figuration of the figure, whereby the ideal and the aesthetic dissolve into that which is most rotten and corrupt; and, the father ideal or phallus becomes mere flesh. If the portrait here represents Africa, Africa is that which is not faced, confronted or given a face, whereby the vision of the Western subject is inverted: blindly peering into its hidden heart of darkness. Wilde's use of the figure of the double is interesting for he inverts it, just as his wit works by inversion, and this logic of inversion beyond mere opposition is perhaps appropriate to the phobic representations of Africa. That is, not only are oppositions set up against each other but they are inverted: and so, here, Western man ironically takes on feminine attributes in relation to Africa. Is there not this image, amongst others, of the quasi-effete, mild, refined, somewhat helpless European coloniser confronting a bestial and corrupt Africa? Wilde's text, however, shows that Dorian Gray and the portrait are indissociable: the difference between them is shown to be illusory in that whatever Dorian does is instantaneously, synchronously, recorded by the portrait in such a way as to defy any spatial or temporal distance between them. (Voodoo or quantum physics?)

What I should also like to say is that: me, I never have original ideas. I do not think I believe in original knowledge in that respect. Begins with a hunch, of that which we have no idea of and so, therefore, seek to know. The original idea is the singular ideal is the phallus, as is so often the outcome. However, this question of other original knowledges, or original other knowledge, say amongst other things, awareness or consciousness of the real, is yet worth pursuing.

Spivak's essay 'Deconstruction and Cultural Studies: Arguments for a Deconstructive Cultural Studies', in the same volume of essays, traces the institutional beginnings of cultural studies and this essay does ask precisely what cultural studies may be setting itself up against (p. 20). In very broad terms, all institutionalised knowledge sets itself up against what cannot be institutionalised. More specifically and just briefly, what was explored in the last chapter was the consideration that cultural studies as reflected in the work of Spivak (but prior to 'Deconstruction and Cultural Studies') may be seen as set up against, in condensed terms, 'the poetic'. That is, whilst cultural studies necessarily entertains a concern with narrative – testimony, stories, histories, memory, and so on – this may, in certain instances, be defined against 'the poetic' (but by which I mean more than, and even something other than, the imaginary). I do not think that a rivalry between 'narrative' and 'the poetic' is necessarily the case: or is it? Put another way, this book neglects historical analyses, and yet because that may be said to be a weakness of it, it would call for them, welcome them, according to a need for mutual supplementations.

Now, these stories of 'passing' could do with some refining, albeit schematically. There are the cases of, what may be termed, racial hysteria, where you cannot be sure what race you are, as sexual hysterics are said not to know what sex they are. Beyond this racial confusion would be the 'transracial' cases of those who want actually to be the race they are not, as addressed at length by Fanon. Then, further, there would be the cases of those coerced or violently

forced into becoming the race they are not, as addressed by both Fanon and Spivak. The first two cases of case history could be said to be found on both sides of the racial divide or, more historically, coloniser/colonised divide. However, the third category addressed pertains, of course, specifically to not just case histories but histories of the colonised. It may be that Spivak is understandably concerned that the queer or queer-like racial hysteric comes to replace and mask the violence suffered by the colonised. This work has tried (where the attempt may be yet judged as inadequate) to avoid such conflations through various strategic twists and turns: for instance, in addressing the violence of the Algerian war behind the palimpsest of Lacan's reading of Antigone and in juxtaposing Glas with texts that treat of revolutionary struggles, and in revolving questions of 'the besides'. And besides this, there is the consideration of the common predicaments of the coercion or violence of a unidirectional, thus massively reinforced, force that operates against the interplay of forces and choices, thus against undecidability too. Henceforth, Derrida and Foucault?

– All our stories, if possible, thus not only 'ours'.
– More than just the experience of the impossible?
– Yes, that could be it. Yes: the experience of the possible. The experience of *the possible* itself: a creative potentiality that pre-exists what comes to form.
– The Everything, then? Right back to the infinite regression of the Everything, this that the All rejects?
– Maybe, and the actual potentiality of what may be.
– But is this not a big blow to the ego?
– It could well be. And sadly so.
– Now I see. One column for the spirit of mourning, philosophies of the sunset.
– And, one column for the spirit of joy, of ecstacy or bliss, philosophies of the sunrise.
– That would be the rhythm, of mourning and morning.
– And an African philosophy?
– Why not?
– Spirits of the ancestors and spirits of the dance …
– And that is what Achebe says about Chineke in *Morning Yet on Creation Day!* The dual god of the transitons between day and night, night and day.
– *Glas* meets African philosophy?
– It's possible.

Polemic 2. It is a perverse projection of the Western masculine imagination to accord a perversity of sex and violence to Africa. My mention above of Foden's *The Last King of Scotland* is admittedly controversial and needs be explained further.[15] Foden's novel is about how a Scottish doctor comes to be employed by Idi Amin whereby the doctor gets to know Amin intimately. What is played out is the doctor's fascinated and horrified infatuation with Amin. What saves Foden's text from a mere complicity with a perverse European Africanism is that Amin is

marked out as exceptional, in being a deranged dictator, and so certainly not typical of African people. Moreover, the Scottish doctor is shown to be genuinely committed to the health care of his African patients and the novel is careful to depict African characters who contrast strongly with Amin in being intelligent, cultured, sympathetic and sane. That said, a realistic perception of Africa could be said to be juxtaposed with a European fantasy of Africa that is explored in the doctor's strange obsession with Amin. What is played out here does allow us to see something of a Western heterosexual male imaginary. The figure of Amin is presented in very much the same way that Hegel presents Africa in general. He is shown to affect godly omnipotence throughout and yet be completely childlike. He is shown, through a succession of incidents, to be both intractable and capricious. He is full of bewildering contradictions, even in his appearance. He is vast in size (his 'elephantine bulk', p. 196, is made much of) where this is combined with delicacy: his feet are 'monumental' with 'delicate ankles' (p.178); despite his 'enormous bulk' his countenance displays 'a certain delicacy' (p. 300). He is a sadistic tyrant and yet has an air of charming innocence, as seen in his appealing smile: 'He beamed at them – for such a man, he really did have a beautiful smile – and nodded his head, as if trying to convince them that he was doing a kindness; as, no doubt, he genuinely thought he was' (p. 236). On several occasions his 'contradictory spirit' is marked out as what is definitive of him: 'his usual contradictory spirit' (p. 222); 'By such encounters, in those early years, I thought I got to know him. But it was not so. He was too full of contradictions, just as my head is too full of images of him even now' (p. 186). He both fascinates and repels the doctor: the nipples on Amin's body are said to arouse 'an intrigued disgust' (p. 176); Amin's gaze is said to be 'unfathomable – half-fascinating, half-frightening' (p. 117). And so on.

What kind of fantasy is this? It seems when you get a good man in Africa – such as the Scottish doctor or Joyce Carey's colonial administrator – you also get something of a veiled exploration of what is categorised as perverse desire. My assumption is that this may concern the most taboo of desires for the good heterosexual son, the desire of the father. What seems to emerge here is the merging of a desire surrounding the omnipotent father with the polymorphous desires of infancy. The figure of Amin symbolises this well for he is a paternal dictator, calling himself 'Dada' to the doctor (p. 225), and the Scottish doctor is given intimate access to his body, the paternal body. While in some ways the doctor is like a little boy in relation to the huge and powerful body of the father – he feels helpless in relation to the vast Amin and is said to be the dictator's 'favourite son' (p. 166) – the novel also associates an infantilism with Amin. For example, Amin's bedroom is given to us as both the inner sanctum of power and as rather like the bedroom of a little boy, with scattered clothes and records and baseball bat and mitt (p. 175), where the doctor later speaks of reacquainting himself with the 'nursery-like atmosphere of his bedroom. The toys and board-games on the floor' (p. 232). It may be that in some ways the body of Amin represents the forbidden body of the father – where the doctor shows fascination in having voyeuristic access to its private parts, nipples, penis and anus – whilst it

also serves as a focus of polymorphous infantile desires. While Amin boasts of his paternal virility to the doctor, the doctor imagines him as incapable of having truly active adult sex, as follows: 'With a body that size, one imagined that the only pleasure he could get was to lie on his back and let the world spin about him' (p. 194). This passivity is described as 'geriatric', yet the position of lying on his back with women pandering to him suggests also an infantile state. The point is that both an abusive paternal power and infantile boyish perversity are played out in relation to the body of Amin. The doctor's first encounter with Amin lying in his bed is given as follows:

> Through the pink gauze of the bed curtain, I could see a hunchback mound of sheets and quilts, suffused with a mildly genital light. I don't know why I wrote that – *did I just mean gentle?* – but it seems right somehow, because that was the colour, and it was mild. And all around hung an animal smell: fox's earth, badger's set – something, in any case, rank and bolt-holeish.
>
> (p. 175, emphasis in text)

With all the usual contradictions in characterising Amin – here, between the romantically feminine and the earthily animal – this reads as almost explicitly homoerotic. The body of the dictator is surrounded by an aura of pink, 'genital' light, which could suggest a homosexual association, while also the pun on 'gentle' could give rise to the association of a child in its cot surrounded by a maternal ambience. This 'homosexual son' imagery, as it were, is further associated with earthy animal tunnels suggestive of anal imagery. What then comes to be associated with the perverse desire of or for the father is an abusive sado-masochistic violence. In Foden's novel, a door in Amin's bedroom leads to his torture chambers.

Fanon, in 'The Negro and Psychopathology', discusses at length how the Negro is 'phobogenic', a stimulus to anxiety, in being identified with the actual penis, stating that the Negro 'is fixated at the genital'[16] (as above, seen in a 'genital' haze), and claiming that 'He [the Negro] *is* a penis' (p. 170, emphasis in text). With this analysis, Fanon suggests that 'the Negrophobic man is a repressed homosexual' (p. 156). What is between the lines of Fanon's analysis is that the Negro is not merely equated with 'a penis' among penises, but especially with the real-referent-of-the-paternal-phallus, *the* penis, flip side of the patriarchal symbolic. Thus, Fanon emphasises that we are dealing with 'the thing itself', that which is never a symbol in being the thing excluded from symbolisation, hence the emphasis on 'is' in his formulation: 'He *is* a penis'. Put another way, this would concern the disavowal of the biological and desiring paternal body as the effect of an idealisation of the paternal. The Negro thus becomes the site for the projections of anxieties concerning the desires of and for the father. Moreover, Fanon goes on to suggest that the Negro serves as the displaced focus of incestuous paternal desire. In examining Mannoni's assertion that a white father fears acquiring a black son-in-law due to *incest* taboo anxieties (as opposed to anxieties over miscegenation), Fanon indicates that this is because the black man becomes

the literalised or concretised site of the displaced desire of the father (pp. 164–5), where the further implication is that the black man represents the paternal penis. Thus, through this displacement, the father is troubled by the fantasy that the black son-in-law enacts his (the white man's) incestuous desires in sleeping with his daughter.

As regards colonial fiction, African men do seem to provoke bewildered anxieties or disgusted fascination, with respect to inadmissible desires on the part of the good heterosexual son (one especially submissive to the father ideal), in relation to the paternal body.

Openly homosexual men, including those capable of avowing their homosexuality without necessarily practising homosexuality, would be likely to be in a different position (where, for instance, someone like Genet, obviously not homosexually repressed and thus in less danger of phobic projections, is able to be adopted by the macho Black Panthers). What seems to happen in the case of colonial fiction is that there is an anxiety on the part of European men over the reputation of the colonising father and the question of whether the father with his privileged ethical status is, in fact, good. This seems to bring out the need to defend the goodness of European sons in Africa, at the same time that fears about the brutal lusts of the father are often projected onto Africans or associated with them. What for the colonising male subject is unbearable and impossible to confront is the knowledge of the disgraceful behaviour of the father, or of what is done in his name. Thus, instead of admitting that the colonial venture is a matter of the greeds and lusts – in Young's phrase the 'colonial desire' – of European men, it is Africa that is given as wildly perverse and in need of paternalistic civilisation. It is a vicious circle for the deflection of the guilt is precisely that which justifies the desire to do good on the part of European men, and this, it needs be pointed out, is a genuine desire to do good, even if it is based on repressions and evasions. Foden's novel shows this. On the one hand, by showing the grotesque nature of its Amin figure it serves to suggest a justification for the liberal values of the colonial civilising mission. However, I am not saying that that is what the novel is cynically 'about' for it is a complex and multi-faceted work. So, at the same time, we are shown the figure of the Scottish doctor genuinely trying to understand the nature and problems of the society he is in, genuinely trying to reckon with Amin (together with his odd feelings of attraction and repulsion towards him), and genuinely and perplexedly trying to do good in the world in which he finds himself. Moreover, the novel may be saying something about the nature of historical dictators, whether they come from African countries, European countries, wherever they are to be found. Here, it may be the case that the dictator is someone who believes that he is the omnipotent father ideal in the flesh, and who believes that his desire is and should be the law. The phenomenon of the dictator could be considered in terms of a literalisation or naturalisation of the father ideal, which is why there does need to be, along with the efforts of deconstruction, an insistence on its irreducible spectrality. As we will see, the father ideal is just a spook. In addition, other spooks are possible.

The question of the perverse rendering perverse of Africa remains today a serious one. In 1999, a Channel 4 documentary on the genocide in Rwanda was screened, entitled 'Men in Pink'. What was most disturbing about this film was that it redeployed those perverse projections of perversity onto Africa in, what seemed to me, a terribly callous treatment of human genocide. The very title of the film triggers an association of homosexuality with violence and Africa. The film was given that title because the prisoners associated with the killings appeared in slightly pinkish prison garments, but the intention to imply 'homosexuality' in the use of such a title is undeniable. The film gave little of the facts of what happened, opting instead for a theatricalised presentation of very aestheticised images accompanied by a soundtrack of blues-style soulful jazz. Thus, we were offered homoerotically stylised images of African men lounging broodily and moodily, inter-spliced with mystifying shots of beautiful giraffes and big game hunters, interspliced with scenes of the tragedy. The worst of these, and the point at which I could not watch any more of the film, was a lingering shot of a field of human skulls and bones against a backdrop of an awesome pink and gold sunset to the accompaniment of blues music. It seemed that this irresponsible and unthinking aesthetisation and eroticisation of human tragedy was only possible because this was Africa. It may be that I failed to understand the point of the documentary, but it seemed to promote a strong sense of bewilderment in which an incomprehensible Rwanda was given to us in terms of violence, unspeakable desires and homosexuality. In one scene of the film, a group of Rwandan men were fleetingly allowed to comment on the massacre. One of them began to explain to his Western audience that the massacre was completely at odds with the basic principle of African philosophy which is respect for life, but this was cut short. What was cut off here was the question of the erasure of a traditional African ethics – often formulated in terms of 'respect for life' – within colonised societies. A little more specifically, with the colonisation of Rwanda a dominant logic of superior/inferior peoples was imposed at odds with the traditional African ethic of respect for all life.

More recently, the BBC's 'Newsnight', in a programme devoted to the conviction of the British serial killer doctor, Shipman (31 January, 2000), juxtaposed a profile of him with an African doctor convicted of sexual abuses (we were shown a black man who I think was African because of his name). The programme was attempting to explore the issue of the detection of medical malpractice in general terms but, of the records of 285 cases, the case of the African doctor was selected for special treatment. Although one other case was fleetingly singled out, the programme repeatedly imprinted on the mind the images of the face of the white serial killer and the face of the black doctor, guilty of sexual abuse. The blurring effect of this was to equate the serial killing of the British doctor with some kind of unrestrained African sexuality. This did not seem to be in any way deliberate on the part of the producers, seeming rather to be the unthinking effect of a racialised unconscious in its confrontation with the crimes of a European father figure, the family doctor.

Such representations of Africa are, of course, not inevitable. Yet they remain

far too prevalent, where Africa becomes the scapegoat of a Western heterosexual imaginary in the will to maintain the ideal of 'civilised European man'. Fanon also states: 'To suffer from a phobia of Negroes is to be afraid of the biological' (p. 165). In extreme terms, this amounts to a fear of living realities and a contempt for life.

There is also much confusion over the good-man-in-Africa image. While the European man (or woman) may be heroic or pious and dutiful in genuinely trying to be of service, in that this will-to-goodness reflects a certain upholding of the father ideal of European culture, it can come across to the African as a kind of saviour complex. The African is thus supposed to be impressed by this saviour complex in supposedly necessarily sharing the same idea of superior being. The European, who does not see how his piety is seen as a kind of arrogance, is then baffled at being rejected (for his superior attitude, what is seen as a belief in Western superiority and often is just that) when he thinks of himself as humbly trying to do good. There is something of this saviour complex in Peter Godwin's *Mukiwa*, an autobiographical account of growing up in Zimbabwe (and with a name like Godwin it could be difficult to avoid having something of a saviour complex). At the end of the book, Godwin presents a picture of an Africa – Mozambique and Zimbabwe – that is seen as disintegrating into chaos in a perceived rejection of a would-be redemptive European civilisation. However, what is being rejected, at least in the case of Zimbabwe, is not the European – for what does not get media attention is the fact that there are areas of the culture where there has been a very successful integration, significantly with respect to areas in which creative and ecological values are maintained. What does get rejected is the European's persistent sense of his superior being. And this is not to reject the ethical considerations of 'saving', but a matter of seeing that this saving cannot just be a matter of European values.

Returning to Hegel, you cannot help noticing, I think, that the more he says about Africans, the more he starts to resemble the Africans he speaks of. For instance, he is stubbornly certain and repetitive in his statements about Africans – intractable, we might say; and yet in saying now this, now that, about them, he is quite capricious. Indeed, when Hegel says contradictory things about the Africans, it is hard to know if *he* is being contradictory or if it is the Africans that are being depicted as such. In trying to build up an incredible Africa, Hegel himself becomes somewhat incredible: that is, it becomes hard to believe him (and his mendacious use of his sources shows him to be unbelievable). In talking about Hegel as being as preposterous as the Africans he speaks of, I am pretty sure that I will be accused of being preposterous or incomprehensible in turn. So be it – but, crazily or not, Hegel does go 'native', in his very own terms of what this would be, before my eyes as I read him. Most disturbingly, it is especially when Hegel insists that Africans have no respect for each other, are incapable of fellow-feeling and sympathy, and put no value on human life. Could we not say that here Hegel himself shows no respect for Africans, no human sympathy in their regard and considers their lives to be without value, hence the allowance of

slavery? That is, he regards the Africans much as he says they regard themselves and each other – not that that makes him an African – precisely because Hegel disavows a common humanity, as Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze has shown. Eze, drawing on Basil Davidson's historical research, points out that whereas recorded encounters of contacts between Europeans and Africans in the early modern period 'reveal remarkable accounts of relationships among equals', and Davidson's archival research does bring this out, with trade demands shifting from 'raw material to human labour, there was also a shift in the European literary, artistic and philosophical characterisation of Africa'.[17] Eze further states with reference to Hegel's advocation of colonisation as meeting the needs of capitalism for new markets:

> In this articulation of Europe's rush for wealth and for territory in other lands, Hegel does not raise any ethical questions or moral consideration precisely because, in addition to Hume and Kant, Hegel had declared the African sub-human: the African lacked reason and therefore moral and ethical content.[18]

Eze sees the sacrifice of Africa as indissociable from this European modernity.

It might be thought that what I have been working up to is an assertion that Hegel's representation of Africa is but a self-projection, a self-portrait of prejudice. It is that, but it is also worth trying to revolve out of the cycle of demonisations. So, instead, what I want to argue is that much of what Hegel says about Africans, if thoroughly desensationalised and freed from self-righteousness, could be true – true of all people, Europeans and Africans, and Asians, and so on, alike. That is, it is the case that societies – European, African – all have their stretches of peace and their outbursts of violence. Then we human beings like to think we have a mastery over nature until we are hit by hurricanes or earthquakes, when we feel vulnerable in relation to nature again (we are both masters and slaves in relation to nature). And so on. One of Hegel's most racist statements is that Africans differ from humans in being 'man animals'. But, in truth, Hegel was not not-an-animal; I am a human animal; all humans are human animals. What would a human with no animality be exactly? The ethereal or gaseous spirit, produced by a decomposition of the body, that gassy spirit that Hegel disdains? And what of human-animal hybrids from the sphinx to oncomouse, the mouse that Donna Haraway speaks of in *Modest Witness*, who, through the transplant of a human tumour-producing gene, becomes, Haraway suggests, our sibling.

More can be said of the radical sameness Hegel seeks to deny. In the discussion that sees the end of the ethical nation signified by *Antigone*, Hegel, as mentioned accords this necessity to the 'restless tranquillity' of spirit. Here this restless tranquillity is not produced as something savage but as a defining characteristic of spirit, being given as 'self-conscious'. In the discussion of Africa, however, Hegel repeatedly emphasises the contradictory occurrence of restlessness (given as sudden outbursts of activity) and tranquillity. Basically, it would

seem that in Hegelian terms drive or desire is good thing in the European brother (the opposite of which is the submissive passivity of women and Orientals), where it would further seem that drives and desires are only desirable in this form. Derrida, at the end of his commentary on Hegel's discussion of *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology*, provides this astute summation:

> The family devours itself. But let not one go and see in this, precipitantly, the end of phallocentrism, of idealism, of metaphysics. The family's destruction constitutes a stage of *Burgerlichkeit* (civil and bourgeois society) and universal property, proprietorship. A moment of infinite reappropriation … of interiorising idealisation.
>
> (p. 188)

Simplifying, the destruction would thus be of what becomes with this move an archaic family in order for the competitive and proprietorial bourgeois individualism of man to win through. The private bourgeois family would be founded not on sacred 'family values' but on proprietorial ones, and indeed, require the destruction of extended kinship and 'primitive communist' values. In a sense, the destruction of the universal kinship of the family would be for the sake of the universal proprietorship of man. And, with the destruction of the 'archaic' universal family in favour of the family of (properly belonging to) man, Africa is inscribed as the not-part of the family.

Hegel argues for the non-humanity of Africans by rendering himself incapable of reading an African fetishism or an animism. That is, he maintains that Africans have no consciousness of spirit (he does not even allow for an African 'pantheism'), which is crazy or devious given the hyperconsciousness of spirit(s) in African cultures. What Hegel writes is: 'if we turn first of all to the *religion* of the Africans, our own conception of religion tells us that it requires that man should recognise a supreme being' (p. 178). Thus, Hegel makes 'our own' monotheistic conception of a 'supreme being' an obligation for all religion. He goes on to state:

> It [supreme being] can be conceived of as a spirit or a natural power … Alternatively, the fantastic attitude has prevailed whereby men have worshipped the moon, the sun, and the rivers; they have animated these with their own imagination, at the same time as treating them as completely independent agents. Religion begins with the awareness that there is something higher than man.
>
> (p. 178)

This awareness of something higher than man is supposedly what Africans do not have, not even an animism, while Hegel's exposition is rather muddled. First, Hegel understands animism to be a matter of man animating nature, as opposed to a matter of seeing that nature is already animate and generative *in itself*, and to be worshipped as such. This suggests that a living, independent nature of

powerful forces – animated nature – is imagined by Hegel to be that which man imagines (particularly given his characterisation of nature as tranquil). The hypocrisy is this:

1 Man but projects from his own imagination the independent powers of nature, giving life to nature (supposedly) but without realising it is *he* not nature who creates;
2 Man must not take himself as the supreme being or creator in order to have a religious attitude.

According to Hegel, Africans are not religious because they conceive of themselves as superior to nature. Africans differentiate themselves from nature, he affirms, but with 'themselves in the commanding position' (p. 179). It is presumably acceptable for Western man, as opposed to the African, to give himself a commanding position in relation to nature because, supposedly, Western man does not think of himself as a supreme or commanding being, that being accorded to the existence of an independent God? No matter, the point is that Hegel wilfully decides that there is not even animism in African cultures. The reason is that he believes that animism has to conform to an implicit monotheism – is obliged to be a worship of a man-like supreme being that is yet not a projection of man – to count as a religion. That is, there can be properly no worship of spirits, Hegel decides, only a worship of God by those who do not realise that it is 'really' God they are worshipping, 'our own conception of religion'. While Hegel ignores the fact of what soon came to be termed 'animism' in identifying an African religion of spirits, he reads African fetishism as man projecting himself onto nature. Now, this is just how he has defined an animism that Africans supposedly do not have (the worship of forces in nature). But the distinction that Hegel tries to draw, I think, is that while the African may project himself onto nature, he does not see the projections of himself as superior to himself, he does not idealise the objectification of himself. Hegel immediately and unself-consciously goes on to collapse this 'commanding position' in relation to nature by saying that Africans do see an awesome nature whose 'powers fill them with fear' (p. 179).

Many, but not all, African religions have a concept of supreme being. But, as Horton has argued at length in a highly informed discussion of the issue, aptly entitled 'Judaeo-Christian Spectacles', what he calls the 'Devout' school of anthropologists are all too apt to mistranslate this into their own conception of God, God the mysterious Father. Horton points out many instances of this, of which some indication will be given. He writes:

> It is true that, in many African cosmologies, we do find the concept of a supreme being who created the world and sustains it. But the other salient attributes of this being are often very different from its Judaeo-Christian counterpart. It may not, for instance, have the unambiguous association with the morally good that is always attributed to the Judaeo-Christian

> supreme being. Thus John Middleton, in his *Lugbara Religion*, shows us that the Lugbara supreme being is associated as much with evil as he is with good. And it seems to me that other ethnographic monographs suggest something similar. Again, the supreme being may not have the same sex as its Judaeo-Christian counterpart. Among the Ijo-speaking peoples of the Niger Delta, for instance, this being is thought of as a woman and is referred to as 'Our Mother'. One does not have to be a sexual chauvinist to see this as a fundamental difference of concept! Yet again, the aura of mystery and inscrutability with which the 'Devout' tend to clothe the supreme being is remarkable for its absence from many of the more painstaking monographs on the religious thought of particular African cultures.[19]

First, with respect to the above, Hegel, too, with his emphasis on revealed religion, wishes to oppose the mystery and inscrutability of supreme being that may be said to be produced through disassociating spirit from nature. Hegel writes that 'in Africa as a whole, we encounter what has been called the *state of innocence*, in which man supposedly lives in unity with God and nature' (p. 178). It is this state that Hegel needs to cordon off and discredit as too 'immediate' (too soon), as but a 'potential' whose realisation is to be a progressive self-realisation of spirit. He does this by saying that in this state of supposed unity with God and nature there is no consciousness of supreme good because there is no consciousness of evil. Yet, as Horton asserts, there is in some African religions the non-Judaeo-Christian principle of supreme being as both good and evil, a perception to be found also in African literature, in texts such as Mofolo's *Chaka* and Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*. Horton further points out that supreme being in African religions is often not accorded a primacy and a central status, and that this being is often rendered as dual. Speaking of studies of Igbo, Yoruba and Kalabari religious practices, which centre on the worship of 'lesser spirits' considered as autonomous agencies, Horton affirms that supreme being is 'peripheral rather than central to religious life' (p. 171). He also states that there are numerous cases where there is not the positing of a single creator but of two coeval and coequal forces. This is particularly unacceptable to the 'Devout' whose translations of African religions try to deny this. Horton writes: 'In the clearer of these instances of dualism, there can be no justification whatever for picking out one of each pair of forces postulated by indigenous thought and calling it "God" ' (p. 173). Just as Hegel states that religion *ought* to base itself on 'our', or his, conception of supreme being – central, single, paternal – Horton finds that the 'Devout' introduce this strained and frustrated 'ought' into their discourses on African religion. For instance, Idowu is shown to disapprove of spirits being treated as forces in their own right when he feels they really *should* be treated as manifestations of supreme being, while Mbiti is shown to offer the remarkable assertion that God is the recipient of sacrifices 'whether or not the worshippers are aware of that' (p. 171). There is thus the desire to convert competing interpretations of spirit(s) into the self-same.

Hegel at the outset of his diatribe on Africa says that 'we' are unable to recognise ourselves in Africans. Thus, if Africans are essentially unknowable, everything said about them could but be irrational projections. The point that I wish to make here is that Hegel, as Freud is to come to repeat in his account of animism, misreads African fetishism in terms of psychic projections, where the Africans are supposed naïvely to take their projections to be the reality: 'omnipotence of thought'. This confident knowledge of a 'primitive psyche' is in itself, of course, an overwhelming projection, especially since a more informed approach would show that what is so arbitrarily decided to be projections on the part of Africans concerns rather a *receptivity* to the being of others. It is precisely with a rejection of affective identification that Hegel enters into a conceptualisation of Africa, saying we cannot feel what an African, a dog or a pagan Greek feels for 'we can only feel that which is akin to our own feelings' (p. 177). This is tantamount to claiming that the subjectivity of the self is everything, as in: 'Only if the other feels what I myself feel can we have any shared feelings'. A little further on he writes: 'For when I love someone, I am conscious of *myself in the other* person' (pp. 184–5, my emphasis). There could be various ways of reading this, but in one reading it suggests a narcissism in which he loves himself in the other, rather than being receptive to the subjectivity of the other or being able to love their own narcissism or sense of self. Without, at this stage, exploring the possible complexities of this, it suggests an auto-affective identification mediated by the other based on the rejection of affective identification with other subjectivities. The question being pursued is that with the rejection of affective identification with other beings, what remains is the task of bringing the other into an empathetic identification with the subject and its god, a case of obliging the other to be in sympathy with the self and its ideals. A different tack will now be tried.

The 'family' (or a mode of being with others) devours itself (in some kind of death drive imposed on it?), for the sake of an Absolute Cannibalism? African philosophies – Ancient African ones to their survivance in contemporary ones – understand something of this logic, but differently. I am thinking now of the Ouroboros. The full significance of this figure in relation to differing philosophical conceptions cannot be developed here, as I hope to do so elsewhere, but the statement just offered can at least be made a little less enigmatic. The Ouroboros enables us to picture an auto-cannibalising logic in that we are shown a snake swallowing its tail. I wish to conjecture possible differences between an African and a Hegelian way of understanding what is pictured by the Ouroboros. A somewhat dialectical picturing of it would be that the dynamic is of a head increasingly swallowing its body in a progressive interiorisation of an external nature, the snake cancelling itself at the same time that it preserves in itself what it overcomes externally. (This could be the dialectic as memorisation, as suggested by Derrida: the head interiorising the lived life of the body.) At the end of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel writes: 'the self has to penetrate and digest this entire wealth of its substance' (p. 492). Self is an auto-cannibalising snake? Devouring itself, it constantly reappropriates itself. However, the movement of Spirit is twofold. Historically, it externalises itself in Nature; intellectually or as self-

consciousness, it interiorises its exteriorisation in self-contemplation. Hegel also writes: 'Nature, the externalised Spirit, is in its existence nothing but this eternal externalisation of its continuing existence and the movement which reinstates the Subject' (p. 492). Nature, it would seem, would be externalised from some 'head'. It is as if a mind would think itself into being: in the beginning there would be an idea that would project itself in order to attain consciousness of itself.

The dialectic, in origin, is not Hegel's idea although he turns it into that which reflects his own thinking process. That is, Hegel was inspired by a mystical tradition of thought (one that I believe could be traced back to Ancient Africa even as it survives in Africa today). However, although Hegel appropriates this tradition, he betrays it. In fact, he betrays it through appropriation, through capitalising and colonising what cannot and should not be capitalised and colonised. Indeed, that is why Marx found him so provocative. That whole tradition of thought could be seen as a very jealous one: jealousy provoking jealousy (which is why it is so hard to work with, so easy to get provoked). But it is possible to break with the recyclement of jealousy. What I wish to say, simply, is that life is no one's private property (while, as I write, American capitalists are competing to patent the human genome). That is, the powers of creativity, generativity, regenerativity (healing) are what we are given but without ever being able to own. Such powers cannot be anyone's private property.

Meeks and Favard-Meeks, in their study of Ancient Egyptian religion, draw attention to the Ouroboros as the creator-god serpent in whom all other deities come to be subsumed, returning to an initial state. They write:

> [the serpent] was the true form of the uncreated creator god, in whom both chaos and the forces of life were intimately intermingled. Two serpents merged in him: the one who encircled the world and threatened the sun, and the one who lay coiled at the bottom of the cavern out of which the Nile inundation … was thought to pour … This serpent, whose head rested on his tail, ensured the periodic, well-regulated rise and fall of the Nile.[20]

This serpent signifies the source of life with its simultaneously creative and destructive principles (as the floods of the Nile are potentially both destructive and life-creating), and it signifies a constantly self-renewing process of life in which life devours itself in order to create new life. This is the significance, that of a vital generative energy or spirit, that may be given to the eerie river serpent that emerges from its cave in Mofolo's *Chaka*, as cited in the introduction to this book. It would be wrong or retrospectively colonising to attribute a phallic significance to this serpent, for the serpent's iconic significance is surely that of the river with which it is associated: the undulating, rippling, streaming movement (the serpent seen as movement). Roughly speaking, it is more akin to what is spoken of as the 'stream of consciousness', but where here, this is a stream of spirit-energy.

Mofolo's novel was not published for twenty years because his missionary

associates deemed it to be heretical. Jahnheinz Jahn, in *Muntu*, calls Mofolo the 'first great modern African author', and sees that 'he condemned paganism in his novel *Chaka*'.[21] However, I think that what is really condemned in the novel is the imperialism of Chaka (equated at the end of the novel with the coming dominance of the Boer) and where Chaka's self-maximising values are seen to be at odds with other African cultures depicted in the text – in particular, starkly at odds with the brother–sister ideal of Dingiswayo (Mofolo being from Basutoland, with an outsider's appraisal of Zulu culture, albeit an informed one).

Hegel's thought, in some respects, could be read as a colonisation of what is signified by the Ouroboros – in other words, a colonisation of the origin – where the self-consuming, self-renewing energy of life, its generative dynamic, is translated into Christian onto-theological terms and implicitly phallogocentric ones. In this way the vitality or generativity of nature would seem to owe itself somehow to a single fathering Spirit with the self-renewing forces of life reconfigured in terms of the self-immortalisation of Spirit. Womb envy, and the history of philosophy as such? At the end of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, we are told: 'This is the goal of world history: the spirit must create for itself a nature and a world to conform with its own nature, so that the subject may discover its own concept of the spirit in this *second nature*' (p. 208, emphasis in text). While again, this may be read in various ways, it could be read in terms of the enforced empathy, so to speak, that was touched on earlier. The 'second nature' made of nature would but be the objective correlative of the subject's mind and feelings. This could be given a 'sourcy' twist, for it suggests that nature serving as a means of reflecting man's spirit may be given telepathic powers. Like the witches in *Macbeth* who divine and proclaim the ambitious spirit of Macbeth. Or, indeed, as in the scene of the encounter between Chaka and the snake, in which Chaka's lust for self-immortalisation is cannily and strangely voiced or ventriloquised.

> Hail! Hail! This land is yours, child of my compatriot,
> You shall rule over nations and their kings
> You shall rule over peoples of diverse traditions … [22]

And so on. Chaka's desire for universal kingship is thus divined in voices he alone hears. Whilst Chaka goes on to attain his all-colonising desire, this is shown ultimately to be a matter of a solitary immortalisation and a contempt for life. This desire for self-immortalisation is completely at odds with the sacred Covenant of life spoken of in Diop's poem 'Breath' (as discussed in the introduction), for this Covenant concerns the acceptance of death as necessary to the ongoing renewal of life.

As touched on above, the figure of the Ouroboros is of foundational significance in Ancient Egyptian thought. It is also to be found variously in the philosophies of contemporary African cultures. Before more is said of this, a moment in Spivak's reading of Krishna, as depicted in the *Gitā*, could be

brought into relation with the figure of the Ouroboros. Krishna is depicted as eating enemy armies, and Spivak comments: 'Being is being-eaten. The graph of Time is a devouring of time as timing.'[23] With respect to this, what the Ouroboros depicts at once, simultaneously, is the *simultaneous* duality of destruction–creation, being-eaten as being-reborn. Here, the graphic would be one of movement. In fact, when you picture the Ouroboros what you see in an epiphanic manner is ongoing movement. As regards its temporal significance in Egyptian thought, Meeks and Favard-Meeks state that past time is considered as linear, while the time of the future is considered cyclical, in terms of the constant renewal of the world. This suggests that future time, the time of a perpetual becoming, is conceived of in terms of movement and also as an eternal recurrence: a worldly eternity as opposed to an unearthly immortalisation. As discussed in the introduction, Mofolo shows that the would-be self-immortalisation of Chaka is the vampiric devouring of lives, possibly similar to Krishna as (a metaphysical) Time that devours lives or the living. The devouring of time that Spivak refers to could be, specifically, the devouring of the present continuous.

Whilst Mofolo considers the significance of the sacred snake in Zulu culture, in *Mukiwa*, Peter Godwin speaks of *Nyaminyani*, the river god of the Tonga people displaced by the Kariba dam in Zimbabwe. He writes: 'The few Tonga left in Kariba town were reduced to selling carvings of *Nyaminyani* to the tourists. In their carvings they always portrayed the river god as a coiled snake with bared fangs.'[24] This, then, is another version of the coiled snake, associated, in African contexts, with the tide of the river as ongoing, life-giving source. Could it be that Ancient Egypt is the source of the 'continuing existence' of this thought, the Nile considered as the primeval sea of creation? Is Hegelian philosophy a form of dam-building? If so, a word of warning about crypts and live burials. In the construction of the Kariba dam, as narrated by Godwin whilst also a widely known legend, three of its Italian builders together with fourteen African workers fell into the wet concrete of the wall, to be entombed inside it. The Tonga claimed this was the revenge of their river god.

> Aha!
>
> It's beginning to make sense now. Who will own the water?
>
> The Single Authority.
> Who will sell the water? The Single Authority.
> Who will profit from the sales? The Single Authority.[25]

The above is from Arundhati Roy's spirited empirical critique and exposure of the Indian government's Big Dam building project, with its devastation of the lives of the Adivasis, the original inhabitants of a region, displaced without compensation in their millions. Roy's essay should be read in its entirety, but the above was selected with respect to an analysis of the capitalising colonisation of the sources of life.

Yet more needs be said about this question of 'radical sameness'. As opposed to a logic of the Same, in Western cultures, it has been something of a creative queer epiphany. This may be because, for a certain queerness, what is termed 'the mother' and 'the primitive' is that which is not forgotten, does not become the unconscious of the unconscious, and so maintains an awareness of 'the living alongside'. A few instances of this epiphany will be given.

Genet speaks of an epiphany during a train journey when in scrutinising a man sitting opposite him, he suddenly became certain of the fact that there was *no difference* between himself and the stranger:

> What I understood in the train compartment struck me as a revelation: once the accidents of appearance – in this case repellent – were put aside, this man concealed and then let me reveal what made him identical to me. (I wrote that sentence first, but I corrected it with this one, more exact and devastating: I knew I was identical to this man.)[26]

Genet experienced this moment as a depressing draining away of narcissistic investments, a narcissistic destitution. However, according to Edmund White, he was later to re-evaluate the experience through another insight in which he realised that there was a complement to this vision – namely, that whilst we are radically the same, each is yet also a unique and priceless being.[27] This is, in fact, the logic of an Antigone (Genet's favourite classical heroine) in that she both affirms that Polynices is the complete equal of Eteocles and also 'irreplaceable', unique. As with Genet's 'guardian angel', it is the uniqueness of the other that is affirmed.

In Forster's *A Passage to India*, Mrs Moore's epiphany in the caves is surely of this radical sameness. For the Western Mrs Moore, this constitutes a depressing total de-idealisation of her perception of the world. However, the novel indicates more widely that Mrs Moore's sense of destitution is but the point at which a different spiritual conception of the cosmos may be achieved, as in the particular 'pantheist' Hinduism of Godbole. Mrs Moore is shown in the novel to operate with an unconscious understanding of the equality of others and with a receptivity to the being of other beings. She even has telepathic powers. What is delightfully comic in Forster's text is that Mrs Moore is a clandestine immigrant without having any awareness of this herself. That is, whilst to all appearances she is an upper-class English lady, she is, along with this, an Indian. The Englishwoman is an Indian. This, at least, is how she is seen, or rather recognised, by the Indians in the novel, especially when chanting her name at the trial. Mrs Moore does not realise that she has crossed the artificial threshold of race, and thus her sense of meaninglessness is the disaffected and alienated experience of the Western Beckettian absurd (and Forster may be read as a precursor of Beckett). But there is a comic absurdity beyond this in the realisation that Western Man and his doubles do not constitute the All or Nothing that there is.

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault famously writes: 'Calling to one another and answering one another throughout modern thought and throughout its history,

we find a dialectical interplay and an ontology without metaphysics: for modern thought is one that no longer moves towards the never-completed formation of Difference, but towards the ever-to-be-accomplished unveiling of the Same.'[28] Since Foucault makes this statement in the context of a discussion of a logic of the Same, he could just be indicating that the supposed 'Other' may but reveal itself to be a projection of the 'Same'. What is at stake in the epiphany of a radical sameness goes beyond this in that the supposed Other is not *just* seen to be a *phantasm* for that very spectrality – of narcissisms and idealisms – is what 'fails' in being able to be struck by the undeniable living subjectivity of the other: the spirit of the other. It may well be that Foucault is referring to this radical sameness (the call and response of 'an ontology without metaphysics'?); if so, it is just that it is not quite as clear as it is in the writings of Genet and Forster. As for this 'ontology without metaphysics', could Foucault have been influenced by anthropology and African philosophy, the philosophy of the Dogon, for instance, that struck Deleuze and Guattari? For Foucault, too, is a thinker of the microphysics of forces.

This radical sameness is not properly a philosophical concept – certainly not of the idealist tradition – in that it is posited as unthinkable as regards a logic of the Self-same. In Western cultures, it tends to appear as a poetic epiphany of, what Derrida terms with respect just to the poetic, 'the absolute non-absolute' (as discussed in the previous chapter). But this is more a matter of spirits than of spectres. This perception of radical sameness is also to be found in 'queer writing' by women, for instance, in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* and pervasively in the writings of Woolf, although this is not to be explored here. It is also that which Leo Bersani's recent queer criticism, notably influenced by Genet, explores.[29] In Oscar Wilde's anti-Platonic dialogue, 'The Decay of Lying', a case is also made for this radical sameness, with a similar sense of narcissistic destitution to that of Genet: 'It is a humiliating confession, but we are all of us made out of the same stuff … Indeed, as any one who has ever worked amongst the poor knows only too well, the brotherhood of man is no mere poet's dream, it is a most depressing and humiliating reality.'[30] It would be possible to state, in accordance with Derrida's notion of 'différance', that the differences are differences of the same in space and time. It would also be possible to state that 'différance' is an exaggeration. In other writers, such as Bessie Head, this sameness outside of a colonising logic of the Same and its Other is conceived of as liberating.

I would like to conclude this section by reading briefly from a philosophically astute poem, on the colonising narcissism of Western man, by Ama Ata Aidoo, aptly entitled 'Images of Africa at Century's End'. It is dedicated to the memory of Cheikh Anta Diop, the historian who, among other things, argued for Egypt as undeniably African, and argued for the undeniability of an African history. Aidoo writes:

> *Ebusuafo*,
> for years

the Sphinx stood
Massive eternal
riddled with wisdom and all
very thick-lipped
very flat nosed.

We never saw him photographed head-on.

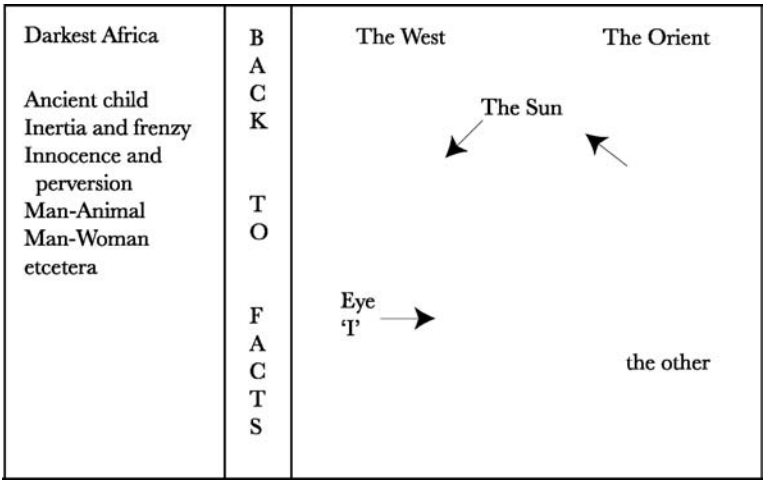
But in the year 2020
The New Sphinx would be unveiled
full visage on view
straight nose raised
thin-lips tight
and, even, maybe blue-eyed:

a perfect image of the men
who vested so much interest
in his changing face.[31]

So, here is the move I wished to make. Africa, the undecidable? Isn't it, Africa, the undeniable.

The narcissistic aesthetic

What has been argued in the previous section could be produced in the form of a basic diagram, possibly a teaching gadget to tinker with.



It is through ignoring the fact and facts of Africa that Hegel is able to Orient himself. Henry Olela argues that 'the historical foundation of the Modern African World-View as well as that of the Greeks and Romans, came from Ancient Africans',[32] where it is further pointed out that this is something that the Greeks themselves are able to confess even as this is something that later Western philosophers turn a blind eye to. Olela shows how this classical use of African sources is the case in giving a range of evidence for the way in which Greek philosophers (eleven are singled out for special consideration) took over from the Ancient Africans mathematical and scientific knowledge as well as fundamental philosophical principles. I wish to zone in on one instance of this. Olela points out: 'Plato believed that the real world is the world of ideas or forms. This borrowing of the sense of Ka is understandable since Plato went to study in Egypt when he was about 27 years old.'[33] Olela speaks of the general significance of Ka in Egyptian thought in terms of a duplication of physical reality, where a specific form of this concerns the double, the image or duplicate of a person or of the self. As regards Western thought, the notion of the Ka could be said to inform a thinking of phantasms or aesthetic copies, as given in Plato's case, as well as an understanding of narcissism in terms of the mirror image. It is also from the Ka that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul might possibly be seen as deriving in that the figure of the double first had the significance of an immortal or spirit self, as discussed and analysed by Otto Rank.[34] Olela angles his explication of the Ka towards a Platonic understanding of it to explain the influence of the idea on Plato's thought. The recent revisionary work by Meeks and Favard-Meeks on Ancient Egypt, a work whose explicit task is to dismantle the ethnocentricism of Egyptology, defines the Egyptian Ka in a way that serves to emphasise its particularly African significance. They write:

> The life-giving prodigality, which made every god into a creative machine … finds its explanation in the fact that all the gods were invested with an energy called the *ka*. The creator-god possessed this energy a million-fold. Thus, in addition to the initial act of creating the universe, he perpetually re-created it as he endlessly recommenced his journey across the sky. The totality of creation accordingly constituted the sum of the creator-god's vital force. This force behaved somewhat the same way divine forms did: it was simultaneously one and infinitely manifold. This explains why the gods could possess a variable number of *ka* … they constituted so many potential 'gifts' the gods could bestow on people or on the world. The cohesion of the totality of all the energies was maintained by the snake Nehebkau, 'he who keeps the energies together'.
>
> (p. 71)

The other snake bears the epithet 'he who destroys the energies'.

We will be now be able to consider a particular possible instance of the ongoing significance of the Ka, be it as phantasmatic copy or as creative force, in

African culture, in corroboration of Olela's point about the survivance of Ancient African thought.

Chinua Achebe in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* explains the Igbo concept of the *chi*. He writes:

> There are two clearly distinct meanings of the word *chi* in Igbo. The first is often translated as god, guardian angel, personal spirit, soul, spirit double etc. The second meaning is day or daylight, but it is most commonly used for those transitional periods between day and night or night and day.[35]

The *chi* is thus the spirit being of a terrestrial person and related to the sun as a source of life, as Achebe's essay makes more explicit. So much for Hegel's sunless Africa. With reference to the chi as a complementary spirit being, Achebe writes: 'It is important to stress what I said earlier: the central place in Igbo thought of the notion of duality. Wherever Something stands, Something Else will stand beside it. Nothing is Absolute' (p. 68). I should like to loosely associate this formulation with the following: the alongside, the spirit double, the guardian angel, the co-traveller, the other subject, dual potential, creativity.

Achebe explains that the sun in both Igbo and Yoruba cosmologies signifies the Supreme Being, as it does in many cosmologies (whilst scientifically solar energy is the source of all energy). Achebe further explains that, in Igbo, the name of the Supreme Being is Chukwu which means literally Great Chi and that the name Chineke is used as an alternative to Chukwu. Achebe states that the arrival of missionaries led to the appropriation of Chineke as the Creator-God of Christianity in accordance with a mistranslation of what the word Chineke means: the mistranslation is *chi who creates*. Showing, with reference to Igbo linguistics, how this constitutes a mistranslation, Achebe then declares:

> Chineke which we have come to interpret as *chi who creates* is nothing of the sort, but rather is a dual deity, chi and eke. The early missionaries by putting the wrong tone on that little word na escorted a two-headed, pagan god into their holy of holies.
>
> (p. 71)

Achebe's account of a dual deity in Igbo religion is confirmed by anthropological research that Horton refers to (p. 173). What is further interesting about this is that Olela explains that for the Ancient Africans divinities were likewise dual or paired. This is further confirmed by the research of Meeks and Favard-Meeks. Complaining against the tradition of Western thought that, until the end of the nineteenth century at least, tried to align Egyptian religion with monotheism, they refer to an androgynous creator and to the paired male and female offspring divinities: Shu (air) and Tefnut (respiration and the rhythm of world order); Geb (the earth) and Nut (the sky). Here could be then a parting of the ways between Western philosophy, with the Western insistence on single-headedness – that Capital ideal – and a particular African philosophical

tradition. Exploring the significance of giving attention to both the chi and the eke within Igbo thought and culture, Achebe concludes:

> From the foregoing it would appear that chi and eke are very closely related deities, perhaps the same god in a twofold manifestation, such as male and female; or the duality may have come into being for the purpose of bringing two dialectical tributaries into liturgical union.
>
> (p. 71)

Now, it is from this source of creation that individual creativity is acquired which is that which is signified by the fact that each person has a *chi* that is unique to them, whilst also, as in the case of the *ka*, what is signified in creation is 'the imparting of distinguishing characteristics and the bestowing of gifts'. Achebe writes:

> The idea of individualism is sometimes traced to the Christian principle that God created all men and consequently every one of them is presumed worthy in his sight. The Igbo do better than that. They postulate the concept of every man as both a unique creation and the work of a unique creator. Which is as far as individualism and uniqueness can go!
>
> (p. 70)

Achebe goes on to speak of how this informs the extremely egalitarian ethic of Igbo society. It is again a question of an ethical law of the 'equal and unique'.

In Western thought what is represented by the chi is denied, in favour of a singularity of original being and a narcissism of the same. What happens here is in the nature of an eclipse. What I have earlier spoken of in terms of foreclosure I would like to indicate further through a conceptual elaboration of eclipsement, should a bit of jargon help to further this. First, a brief aside will be offered.

Possibly, the closest that deconstruction comes to addressing an African fetishism is through the consideration of the pharmakon – both poison and remedy – in the work of Plato and beyond. The bewitching and mysterious pharmakon (akin to the snake) is that which cannot really be included within philosophical idealism, in the same way that African philosophies, pharmacies, therapeutics, creativities are occluded. This pharmakon is a witch or witch doctor. Put another way, it is 'the African philosopher', meaning, the philosopher as African and the African as philosopher. I put it in these terms for it is a case of the other as subject. Pharmakon is not of the Divine, it is: Diviner. Since the pharmakon also signifies writing, it hinges on a Writing Africa, that site of composition as its birthplace. The mystique of the pharmakon is much less misty or pastel, readable in much more knowledgeable detail and vivid clarity in many African philosophies than in Plato. Or, African philosophies may be said to offer an incomparably rich discourse of the so-called pharmakon. What is also understood with respect to African philosophies is that the powers of the pharmakon cannot be owned.

At the end of 'Plato's Pharmacy', Derrida–Plato puzzle over what to do with the pharmakon. The pharmakon cannot be 'Plato's', or included within his philosophy and the philosophy that follows on from it, in that it is precisely that which is not: of Man; Man's. That does not make it 'of Woman' either. It is rather a case of an androgynous duality – as signified in many African religions – that is not the property of either sex. When Man possessively tries to colonise the pharmakon, I believe that this serves to intensify its poisonous capacities at the expense of its healing powers. Thinking of the deaths of Socrates and Shakespeare's King Hamlet – death by poison – it is possible to conjecture that they had become too poisonous in a kind of self-poisoning through rejecting that which is truly hybrid. Mofolo's *Chaka* shows this more explicitly. Chaka is given medicines by Isanusi, the Diviner, to help him achieve his ambitions, but increasingly these drugs turn into a merely destructive all-consuming poison to the nightmarish point where Chaka finds his own being an unbearable condition to experience. Pure 'Man' may be a forceful function, a strong drive, but this is not a creative capacity.

With reference to the diagrammatic reduction of Hegel's philosophy of history, Hegel, turning his back on Africa, eclipses the African sun for the sake of our enlightenment. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad draws throughout on an image and concept repertoire of the sun, light and darkness. At the outset of Marlow's tale, we are told:

> The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that are sometimes made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.
>
> (p. 48)

In this discussion of genre, the genre of the story could be said to be philosophy: the meaning is not in the woven text (the spinning of the yarn) but that which comes to be about, encompass, the text. Taking this line, I will concentrate on the halo effect. Journeying 'back' to the 'origin' of time in Africa, Western man supposedly turns from the light to gaze upon darkness. That is, we could imagine Marlow, in telling his tale, with his back to the Hegelian sun and hence him facing a hole of darkness which is also the shadow cast by his centre, his I, with the sun shining behind him. This sun or 'glow', in Marlow's phrase, would hazily edge or silhouette the darkness of its being eclipsed by the one whose back is to it. The involuted positioning of this means that the 'I' and 'eye' turns back on itself so that Marlow contemplating the darkness of Africa is gazing backwards into the Western self: its eyes in the back of its head. (With respect to the above diagram, imagine the Western eye facing, not its opposite, but into itself and towards what is behind it.) In short, what this delivers is the perception of the

darkness of the centre function of Western man, as is said of Kurtz: 'hollow at the core'. What is to be seen is just this dark howling abyss, which is why there is the desire to turn back again to the glowing ideal of man. The philosophical Marlow may be indeed be juxtaposed with the philosophers on this.

In a reconsideration of *Hamlet*, after *Specters of Marx*, Derrida turns to Nietzsche's reading of the play. For Nietzsche, what is revealed to Hamlet in Act I, scene 5, is not the idealised father but the horror of nothingness: 'Conscious of the truth he has once seen, man now only sees everywhere only the horror or absurdity of existence.'[36] Derrida goes along with this proto-modernist reading, stating: 'This is what one has to know: it is against the background of this disaster, it is only in the gaping and chaotic, howling and famished opening, it is out of the bottomless bottom of this open mouth, from the cry of this *khaein* that the call of justice resonates.'[37] Phew! This would seem to concern the horror that a Kurtz speaks of, whilst Marlow has a recurrent vision of Kurtz as, in Derrida's words, a 'howling and famished opening … bottomless bottom of this open mouth'. In *Heart of Darkness*, it is: 'I had a vision of him on the stretcher, opening his mouth voraciously, as if to devour all the earth with all its mankind' (p. 155). So, when the ideal fails, what is seen is but the anarchy of voracious destructive forces. In some respects, this all-devouring bottomless mouth is like a bleak picture of the Ouroboros, seeing only the all-consuming, destructive forces of life and not the creative energies of renewal, presumably because these latter have been entirely identified with paternity, the dead ideal father. Nietzsche goes on to speak of art, in the feminine, especially a feminine comic art, as the anti-dote to this vision, whereas for Derrida it is rather the call of justice to be set up against an all-devouring chaos. Let us say that the terror depicted concerns a fear of oblivion which possibly dictates a yearning to be oblivious of this oblivion. Yet these two oblivions – the oblivions of mortality and immortality – may yet be forgetting something else, which will come to be spoken of in terms of another terror and a return to life. This, though, will require some setting up.

Actually, I need to pause again. I have such a different vision. In the first draft of this I rushed on, but this vision of Derrida–Nietzsche–Hamlet may be the crux of this discussion as to what is or is not seen. Where the philosophical son sees a howling abyss – a chaotic nothingness? – I see rather the exhilarating and peaceful beauty of life. It weaves itself in swirling patterns. It is a dance of creation. Such a different vision. Derrida is thinking back through forefathers, and Woolf suggests that women think back through foremothers. That is what will be needed to counter-balance Derrida's vision.

Since Nietzsche is a forefather, we could begin with Lou Salomé. Salomé's beliefs and ideas had a considerable influence on Nietzsche's work: this has been often noted but has it been seriously explored? Salomé tried to communicate to Nietzsche a feminine affirmative view of existence, and Nietzsche was fascinated by this even as he seemed only to half-glimpse what she was trying to convey. Nietzsche claimed that he owed *Thus Spake Zarathustra* to Salomé, whilst this takes us to further sources. Salomé was very interested in Eastern religions and philosophies. It would seem that the doctrine of eternal recurrence comes from

these sources, but what Nietzsche does is personalise and masculinise it so that it becomes an eternal recurrence of the selfsame self. With respect to the reading of *Hamlet* by Nietzsche that Derrida draws on, it is proposed that a comic feminine art comes to veil the abyss. However, there is no void in creation, no nothingness. That is, there is just this weaving of life: the fabric is the actuality. The sense of there being a void, a chaotic nothingness, is entirely an effect of a singular ideal. The cloth of *Hamlet* can be cut to show this:

> this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man … the beauty of the world.
>
> (II.ii.300–3)

For Hamlet, the beauty of the world exists only in the form of man.

What is played out between Nietzsche and Salomé, is also played out between Freud and HD. HD wished to work with Freud not merely as a follower but as someone who could convey to him a creative vision of existence. She failed to get through to him, and she dramatises this in her poem, 'The Master'. The poem is conscious of an aged Freud, close to death. It speaks with urgency, therefore, of wishing to give him the gift of a certain vision before it is too late: so that he may see something that he has yet not seen before he dies. The poem goes on to present us with the vision of a feminine cosmic dancer. I think that the poem has been misread or read reductively by feminist critics. That is, the poem tends to be read in terms of a feminine individualism with HD setting up the fiction of a perfect woman against Freud's view of castrated woman and perfect man. What the poem may be seen to dramatise rather is not narcissistic individuality but androgynous creativity, given to everyone, and the dance of creation. In the poem, HD speaks of how long men have been blind: 'how long this thought of the man pulse has tricked them,/ has weakened them'.[38] The poem speaks also of the prophesies of a woman's laughter and a future in which men will be able to see.

Some men can and do see. Fritjof Capra writes: 'Modern physics has thus revealed that every sub-atomic particle not only performs an energy dance, but also *is* an energy dance; a pulsating process of creation and destruction.'[39] He also states: 'The Eastern mystics have a view of the universe similar to that of modern physics, and consequently it is not surprising that they, too, have used the image of the dance to convey their intuition of nature' (p. 269). The dancing god Shiva is singled out with reference to a commentary by Coomaraswamy and it is said: 'The dance of Shiva *is the dancing universe*; the ceaseless flow of energy going through an infinite variety of patterns that melt into one another' (p. 271). Capra endorses Coomaraswamy's statement: 'This is poetry, but none the less science' (p. 270). At any rate, it is not a howling abyss. For the philosophical sons to have such a vision, they must be trying to separate an ideal of 'pure creation' (divine fatherhood) from energies that are then seen as purely destructive: the sheer chaos that Derrida speaks of. At any rate, hopefully it will be seen that

there is this difference between a philosophical-theological vision and a creative-scientific one.

Beyond these visions what we too often see is the destruction of the beauty of the world. And, here, what could be pointed out is that the ghost in *Hamlet* cannot only be aligned with Justice and man at his most noble but also with a certain spirit of racism. What the ghost asks for in Act I, scene 5, is a purging. And, look you now what follows.

> HAMLET: Look you now what follows.
> Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear
> Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
> Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed
> And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes? (III.iv.63–7)

Have you eyes? Purge – the blackamoor.

A foreclosed, ahistorical Africa presents us with what is thereby an irrecoverable anteriority. Brian Dillon has astutely explored and elaborated the significance of such an irrecoverable anteriority with respect to the aesthetics of modernity and with particular reference to allegory and melancholia.[40] As regards *Heart of Darkness*, there is a treatment of Africa as an irretrievable past and thus the reality of a living Africa is utterly forgotten, Africa then serving as the stage set for a possibly baroque theatre. In Lacanian terms, the 'real' is lost forever and there is only the imaginary and symbolic, whereby we have only the phantasms of people and the ghostly ideals of Man. In Conrad's text, the people we meet are a succession of false or inauthentic selves, whose reality is thus a deception. The colonial bureaucrats are false, the African slaves are ghostly and unreal, the Westernised African is absurdly false, the Harlequin boy who loves Kurtz is naïvely ignorant, the Intended is artificial, the people back in Europe are superficial. Apart from these vain and unreal people, there is the truth of Kurtz. If *Heart of Darkness* is allegorical – Hillis Miller, in a thoughtful reading of the text, considers it to be a parable rather than an allegory[41] – yet, if it is allegorical, of what 'outside' does it speak otherwise, the story a foil for a truth outside it? As suggested earlier, I think it could be read as a philosophical allegory: the literary text serving to speak otherwise, beyond its story, of metaphysical truths. As has been touched on in this chapter and the previous one, Conrad's text is very close to Hegelian thought. Paul de Man suggests controversially that Hegel's dialectic is allegory.[42] If so, of what does he speak otherwise? It could be said that he might then be offering us philosophy as a story; that in the guise of philosophy he weaves a story. Hegel's works do read like tightly woven epic narratives of the unfolding of spirit throughout world history, just as if he were narrating a long story. What complicates this is that allegory is a literary mode, thus it would be one thing to speak of literature as allegory and another to speak of philosophy as such. Derrida, in reading de Man, speaks of the dialectic as mourning,[43] rather than allegory, which would imply an interiorisation of the past in its remembrance. Allegory, rather, seems to entail a certain

melancholia and the cryptic. In *Heart of Darkness*, the secret concerns the memory of Kurtz, for in telling his story to the Intended, Marlow lies in order to preserve Kurtz's good name. However, the lie preserves also Kurtz's dark secrets as that of Kurtz which may return to haunt. As Hillis Miller has noted, *Heart of Darkness* is an intensely ironic text. For de Man, irony and allegory are linked. Irony is said to be a synchronic mode, where it could be said, the pastness of the past is totally forgotten. Let us say here that it is the being of and with others that is forgotten in the forging of an ironic self-consciousness, and trace this a little in *Heart of Darkness*.

It could be proposed that, for Marlow, Kurtz has a superior knowledge, even an absolute knowledge, one that Marlow seeks: Kurtz is the one presumed to know and Marlow's philosophical journey is towards knowing what Kurtz knows. This superior knowledge is set up against all those in the text who are shown to have no idea about anything. The ironic self-consciousness is that which itself knows all that others are ignorant of. At the outset of the text, we are told that women are well out of it in knowing nothing about the practices of colonialism and truths of history. The Africans are given to us in a state of blissful innocence and ignorance, being as children. And the colonial adventurers as well as the citizens of Europe are given to us as mindless automatons. The ironic self-consciousness relies on this positing of the ignorance of others, where this ignorance can be heard in two ways: the unknowing mindlessness of others or the ignoring of the being of others. It is a total scepticism, this dismissal of a knowledge of others – this being roughly the philosophical meaning of scepticism – and it is a position that Marlow comes to endorse explicitly: 'It is impossible. We live as we dream – alone' (p. 42).

Given this extreme self-consciousness, the people and the world surrounding Marlow can only serve as reflective surfaces for his own consciousness. This is the narcissistic aesthetic, one that can be more widely understood with reference to the poetics of modernism. The way in which 'Africa' functions in Conrad's text accords with what Eliot says of the objective correlative. Objects or the objective world act as the correlatives of a subject's consciousness. For example, in Eliot's 'Morning at the Window' we have someone gazing down on a street from a window and we are given this line: 'I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids/ Sprouting despondently at area gates.'[44] Whether the housemaids are actually despondent or else having a spirited moan or gossip is irrelevant for their 'damp souls' serve only to inform us of the state of mind of the speaker. It is not their reality but his elevated consciousness that the poem is about. Eliot's theory of the objective correlative is very close to Pound's definition of the image of Imagism: 'An 'Image' is that which presents an emotional and intellectual complex in an instant of time.'[45] Thus, here, the image is not a reflection or picture of something in the world but the use of an object to picture the emotional and intellectual state – the consciousness – of the perceiving 'I'. This imagist aesthetic, this imagism, has been very prevalent, prevailing from the first to the last decades of the twentieth century, at the very least. Aidoo's poem, 'Images of Africa at Century's End' is very aptly titled, with its take on aletheia

as a revelation of cloning: the new sphinx would be unveiled as the perfect image of the men who vested so much interest in his changing face. Just one aspect of Imagism has been singled out for the image may also work in a 'mystical' epiphanic way, as an attempt to convey the direct apprehension of a reality beyond the self (as other statements of Pound would support).

Sceptical as Marlow is, there is a truth that he wishes to make his audience *see*, even as he wrestles throughout with the slim chance of whether he will be able to make others see as he sees: 'Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything? … No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey' (p. 42, my ellipsis). Our work, as intellectuals, is caught up in this drive to make others see what we can see even when this might be about the seeing the impossibility of seeing, as Hillis Miller says of *Heart of Darkness*; 'it is a revelation of the impossibility of revelation'.[46] This also might be said of Coetzee's unapocalyptic *Waiting for the Barbarians*, which we are coming to. Conrad's text does yet make us see a few things, as does Coetzee's, albeit darkly. Literature, too, is concerned with the hopes and doubts of helping its readers to see. The following two passages may be compared:

> And the intimate profundity of that look he gave me when he received his hurt remains to this day in my memory – like a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment.
>
> (p. 119)

> It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror – of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge?
>
> (p. 149)

The first passage refers to the death of Marlow's African helmsman and the second to the death of Kurtz. Each concerns a 'supreme moment' of intimacy and wonder, and the glimpsed revelations of these dying moments are both to remain in Marlow's memory. Moreover, on the death of the helmsman, Marlow remarks of him: 'He had no restraint, no restraint – just like Kurtz – a tree swayed by the wind' (p. 119). Not only that, Marlow says (although it is slightly ambiguously phrased) that he is not prepared to accord Kurtz's life more value than that of his helmsman:

> I am not prepared to affirm the fellow [Kurtz] was exactly worth the life we lost in getting to him. *I missed my late helmsman awfully* … Perhaps you will think it passing strange this regret for a savage … Well, *don't you see*, he had done something, he had steered; for months *I had him at my back* – a help – an instrument. It was a kind of partnership.
>
> (p. 119, my ellipses and emphasis)

Struggling to explain his emotion for this valued 'savage', said to be just like the

other valued savage, Kurtz, we are told he had 'backed' Marlow. In this, there may be some dawning acknowledgement of the European back turned to Africa: 'don't you see … I had him at my back'. Marlow also says that he only became truly aware of this being behind-his-back with the helmsman's death: so an eclipsed living Africa whose life is only acknowledged in the perception of it having absolutely passed away. Moreover, in removing the helmsman's body from the boat it is said: 'his shoulders were pressed to my breast; I hugged him from behind desperately' (pp. 119–20). While there may be homoeroticism in this (conflated with a homoeroticism surrounding Kurtz, he and the African both signifying a desire of the father, perhaps) the image is stranger than that: Marlow walks backwards with the back of a dead African pressed against him. He is now behind or backing the one who was behind him. It is as if they could almost be collapsed into one, or as if each were each other's backs.[47] The weight of this death weighs heavily on Marlow – 'heavy, heavy, heavier than any man on earth' (p. 120) – while Marlow is later to carry Kurtz as if he carried 'half a ton on my back', even though Kurtz was 'not much heavier than a child' (p. 145). In addition, Marlow carries Kurtz into his pilot-house, whilst this is the same place in which he mourned his helmsman: 'I missed him [the helmsman] while his body was still lying in the pilot-house' (p. 119). It is as if the different men collapse into one man, a common humanity perhaps, but one that is hard to share in that one man can only be in the place of another in being the bearer of the other's death. There is no alongside. While the accounts of the helmsman's death and Kurtz's death parallel each other, there is the more frequently noticed parallel between Kurtz's African mistress and the Intended in that each perform the same gesture of throwing their arms back in an ambiguous gesture of mourning or triumph (my edition has the literal of the Intended 'stretching them [her arms] b*l*ack'): 'resembling in this gesture another one, tragic also, and bedecked with charms, stretching bare brown arms over the glitter of the infernal stream' (p. 160). So the Intended stretches back to Africa, where in Conrad's description we see an image of an Africa that is, for once, intensely alive: 'the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul' (p. 136). There is here, arguably, a seeing of another gaze and another narcissism, another spirit. And, in the figure of the African woman, there is the directing of a gaze of her own back against those who gaze at her: 'She looked at us all as if her life had depended on the unswerving steadiness of her glance' (p. 136). He sees she sees and with that perceives her living force. Nonetheless, she remains 'inscrutable'.

These are the opening sentences of Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*: 'I have never seen anything like it: two little discs of glass suspended in front of his eyes in loops of wire. Is he blind?'[48] The Magistrate of an outpost of an Empire is here confronting a delegation of imperial military officials to find that they have invented or acquired sunglasses for themselves, and we are soon to discover that these sinister representatives of the Empire's Third Bureau are not very enlightened men: they are responsible for torture in which hot coals are used to damage eyes. *Waiting for the Barbarians* could be considered to be an allegory, and it can be

and is read as a defamiliarised account of the practice of state torture and racial abuse under the apartheid regime in South Africa. However, as with *Heart of Darkness*, I wish to read it as a literary narrative that writes otherwise of philosophy. Or more simply, it can be maintained that the text offers a philosophical questioning of imperial history. It could be said to share with *Heart of Darkness* the exploration of an ironic self-consciousness in a phantasmatic world, as will be explained. It is also a novel that, in its own way and probably more so than *Heart of Darkness*, concerns the impossibility of seeing.

The story is told in the form of an eye witness account but unlike actual testimonies it is given to us in the present tense, mostly in the simple present – I listen – but occasionally in the present continuous – I am listening. The sustained use of a simple present tense has the effect of blurring the distinction between the particular and the general. For instance, isolating a sentence, we have 'I wake up in the dark' (p. 30) where this could mean: I am waking up in the dark; or, I tend to wake up in the dark. From the context, we can gather that we are here dealing with a specific moment of waking up in the dark. However, a little further on we read: 'I feed her, shelter her, use her body, if that is what I am doing in a foreign way' (p. 30). Here, the present tense is being used to designate a habitual action or an ongoing state of affairs, something that is generally the case rather than something that is happening in the moment of telling. With this we have a disjunction between the actual unfolding of events and the seeming presence of a speaker. As pointed out to me by a student, there is a certain slippage between narrated time and narrative time. What does it mean to be both speaking and being in the act of doing the following: 'I am swinging loose' (p. 120); 'I lose myself in the rhythm of what I am doing' (p. 28)? (I am swinging loose, and I say, 'I am swinging loose'.) The confiding or self-conscious voice of the narrator seems to be at distance from what is said to be happening. If performative speech does what it says, thus actualising an utterance, the speech of Coetzee's text might be said, rather, to say what it does and, in the process serve to de-actualise what it says. That is to say, the effect is of the *saying* of an action. It is composed of 'said actions', which implies the sense of a said-to-be-so. Thus, first, we are made aware of the bringing of a world into seeming-being through the act of saying it to be so: because I say so, it is said to be so. The power of the logos, world-creating word, is both drawn on and ironically undercut: the force of a magisterial 'I say' undermined by a self-dismissive 'but I only say'. Second, as regards the said-to-be-so, it provokes the suspicion that as a kind of testimony, a truth-speaking, it may be a fake testimony. In this, the novel implicitly raises the question of what it means to imagine the truth of what you have not experienced. Moreover, this is one of its explicit and persistent philosophemes, particularly in that the Magistrate both tries to imagine what the tortured Barbarian girl, whom he takes into his care, has been through, and also tries to imagine what it is to be a torturer. What the text may be said to testify to is a failure to imagine such experiences, even as the text does yet imagine what it is to speak out and be tortured for this. That is, in the story, the Magistrate comes to protest the savage actions of the imperialist bullies then to

undergo solitary confinement and physical abuse. And even so, right to the end, he still claims that he cannot quite see what he has failed to understand throughout: 'I think: "There has been something staring me in the face, and still I do not see it" '(p. 155); 'I leave it feeling stupid, like a man who lost his way long ago but presses on along a road that may lead nowhere' (p. 156).

The question of what can or cannot be seen is the one that will now be elaborated upon. With respect to the Magistrate, narrator and character, he could be said to continue to visualise himself in a series of circumstances and to reflect upon himself constantly. It is as if he were dreaming the 'as if' of himself in a given set of predicaments. This dreaming of himself in the situation of a dilemma is moreover reflected in a sequence of recurring dreams that the Magistrate further reflects on. The first of these, although we are not at this stage told it is a dream in the dream-like text, is (in truncated form) as follows:

> I strain to pierce the queer floating gabble of their voices but can make out nothing.
>
> I am aware of my bulk, my shadowiness, therefore I am not surprised that the children melt away on either side as I approach. All but one. Older than the others, perhaps not even a child, she sits in the snow with her hooded back to me working at the door of the castle, her legs splayed, burrowing, patting, moulding. *I stand behind her and watch*. She does not turn. I try to imagine the face between the petals of her peaked hood but cannot.
>
> (p. 10, my emphasis)

He is a dark figure in the centre: perhaps like an 'I' silhouetted against blankness. The child-woman has her back to him, and although he 'knows' that she is a girl and probably not a child, he cannot see her. His 'I', or eye, overshadows her: 'I stand behind her and watch.' There are overtones of the superego as well as of voyeurism, 'her legs splayed'. In the repeated versions of the dream the girl continues to have her back to him, although the Magistrate of the dream does manage to place himself in front of her only to see blank featureless flesh where a face should be. In this, it is as if in finding her face, he yet continues to find her back (while an alternative reading of this will be offered further on). The first encounter between the Magistrate and the Barbarian girl concerns the question of her possible blindness:

> 'They tell me you are blind.'
>
> 'I can see', she says. Her eyes move from my face and settle somewhere behind me to my right.
>
> (p. 26)

This serves to suggest that her gaze is located precisely where he cannot see it. It is both behind his back and potentially to one side of him, if we follow a line of

sight to where her gaze might come from. He cannot see her gaze, especially in that he continues to insist on her blindness. That is, he cannot see that she sees, despite her protestations. The preoccupation with her sight continues with the Magistrate taking the girl into his care: 'I look into the eye. Am I to believe that gazing back at me she sees nothing – my feet perhaps, parts of the room, a hazy circle of light, but at the centre, where I am, only a blur, a blank?' (p. 31). This serves as an amazing glance back at *Heart of Darkness* with Marlow's seeing of misty halos with dark, shadowy centres, as discussed earlier, while it could be added that this is also how Marlow sees the Intended who is imaged in terms of an ashy halo and as a 'whited sepulchre'. With Conrad, these optical effects are due to the subject confronted with an Africa as precisely that which he cannot see, then projecting his shadow and his inner darkness onto Africa and women. In this passage from Coetzee's text, the narrator, instead of seeing eclipsed suns – centres of darkness – himself, tries to see as the girl sees and thus envisions that he, the centre function, may be nothing to her as she sees around him. Placed against the dream sequence, this passage constitutes a complementary reversal in that while the girl in the dream is a blank to him, he dreams or imagines that he now appears as a blank to her. This suggests that because he constitutes the centre function, man identified with the father, he cannot see her and that, for the same reason, she might only be able to see for herself on the condition that she does not observe him. A little further on the Magistrate's wonderings receive some confirmation when the girl speaks of her injury at the hands of her torturers: 'After that I could not see properly any more. There was a blur in the middle of everything I looked at; I could see only around the edges. It is difficult to explain' (p. 41). The extremely logocentric enforcers of a single truth, namely, the torturers, would deprive her of her ability to see otherwise, deprive her of her eyes and her 'I', her very subjectivity. *Waiting for the Barbarians* is a text very much concerned with a thinking of the relationship between 'truth' and 'torture'. Before saying more about the above citation, a brief consideration of the question of the truth of torture will be offered.

The Magistrate realises that there is a certain complicity between himself and the torturers: 'It has not escaped me that an interrogator can wear two masks, speak with two voices, one harsh, one seductive' (p. 7); 'I prowl about her … The difference between myself and her torturers, I realize is negligible; I shudder' (p. 27). It would seem that neither he nor the torturers are able to let the Other be: leave them alone or let them *be*.

It would seem further that the truth of the Other is to be surrendered to the interrogator, although there would be several further issues to be noted in this regard. Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* notices the complicity between knowledge and power in this way: 'Tell us about/ Your people/ Your history/ Your mind.'[49] The obscenity is in the disrespect for the privacy of the other which is a matter of treating the other as an object of the gaze as opposed to another seeing and questioning subject. The Magistrate does pester the girl with his desire to know her truth, and the text shows that this distresses her.

Let be. Maybe that is what is really meant by the logos. That is, there is a

masculine way of reading the logos: the word of the father is instantly acted upon in accordance with his desires and wishes, an omnipotence of thought. And there is a gentler way: not 'I want something to be and there it is', but 'let be, allow to be, and it will be'.

The Magistrate also experiments with empathetic identification where he first makes himself into the girl's servant, while later the text puts him in her position by having him tortured in female clothes and a hood. As regards the former, when the Magistrate assumes the servile feminine role, he experiences both a loss of consciousness and a mystical jouissance. First, the loss of a masculine self-consciousness is experienced as self-obliteration and oblivion, a death: there is either consciousness of the self or oblivion. Second, there is yet a mystical rapture which suggests that when the Magistrate abases himself he is, in effect, worshipping God, as indicated by the fact that the Magistrate ritualistically washes the feet of the girl as if she were Christ (where there are resonances with Patrick White's *Voss*). In worshipping an omnipotent god, the Magistrate is in effect having nothing to do with the girl or woman, which could be why he says he can feel no sexual desire for her and that she seems sexless to him. Put another way, either he assumes a paternal role in which woman is but the unseeing object of his gaze, or else he takes a feminine position whereby he can only gaze up at the place of a godlike father. Thus, the woman as subject is that which he cannot see. When the Magistrate comes to be physically abused by the torturers, he realises that it is not truth that torture seeks to exact: 'They were only interested in demonstrating to me what it meant to live in a body, as a body, a body which can entertain notions of justice only as long as it is whole and well' (p. 115). In this, there is a difference between forcefully extracting truths, and what may be the real aim of torture. The above citation suggests that torture deprives the other of truth in reducing awareness to the extreme sensations of body. For the sake of what is to be argued later, it could be added that torture aims not *just* to insist on the body, as in the citation from Coetzee's text, but to utterly destroy the creative spirit which is the force that would resist the force of another taking total possession of you. Moreover, it could be said to aim, by virtue of this mandatory self-surrender, to bring about the victim's identification with the oppressor so that the values and truths of the oppressor are adopted and upheld. So, finally, it would not be about learning or extracting the other's truths but about the attempt to make the other adhere to a single truth, a conversion to (the) sole consciousness of the torturer. It is a violent perversion of empathetic identification in that the victim, in order to preserve a life force, is only allowed to identify with the all-colonising force of the aggressor. Elaine Scarry's study of pain confirms that the aim of torture is to deprive the other of their creativity where the recovery from torture is precisely through the reassertion of a creative drive.[50] I will return now to the analysis of optical effects begun earlier.

Although the torturers threaten to destroy the girl's eyesight, she retains a peripheral vision. In fact, where the paternal figure of the law should be there is nothing or a blur. So, it may be said that her sense of there being any justice is

destroyed or rendered obscure. She does not to choose to remain with the Magistrate whose behaviour she cannot comprehend, just as he persistently cannot comprehend her. I would like to cite again the words towards the close of the novel: 'I think: "There has been something staring me in the face and still I do not see it" '(p. 155). But can we see it? As the girl says, it is difficult to explain. In speaking of this blank staring him in the face as that which he cannot see, the Magistrate unwittingly recalls the girl's own vision. *His vision is thus like hers*, only *he* cannot quite see this. He cannot see there may be a chance of them sharing something of a vision, standing alongside each other both to register the horror of justice in ruins. The Magistrate seems only to perceive the gaze in the orientating confrontational way of looking at an object and being looked at by an inscrutable other, where there is not a looking with. If he cannot see the girl it may be because he always has his back to her for he is the one to eclipse her. No matter how many turns he performs she would remain behind his back as the eclipsed other subject. As pointed out earlier, in their first meeting the gaze of the girl *may be read* as indicating where she sees from: behind him and to the right. This indicates that the Magistrate would need to *step back* and *step aside*, to allow for a seeing besides him.

Those would be the steps to learn.

Poems carry them
sketches tell small intimate details
long after the last report of the dead politician.[51]

In the dream, the magistrate sees without seeing that the dream girl is making various things. She builds a fortress and she works with a clay oven. In this, *we could see* her as a creator, like the novelist. That is, Coetzee builds his own imaginary fortress, that of the Magistrate's fort in the text. Moreover, the clay oven serves to recall creation myths in which people are considered to be baked out of clay by a potter-god. In reading the text, we may see that the Magistrate in seeing all that he sees is not seeing everything, and so the text also allows us to read alongside and see hopefully more than he can see.

The figure of the magistrate could be said to endorse a scepticism tending towards solipsism, like a Marlow who says, 'we live as we dream, alone'. For the sceptic, if there are other minds, they are inaccessible to us. Simon Glendinning in *On Being with Others*, a philosophical work that puts forward a refutation of scepticism, usefully offers us a construction of how a sceptical argument might unfold. I will single out only a couple of excerpts:

> Through carelessness or oversight, or through misleading evidence, I have fallen into error about what is the case concerning the thoughts, perceptions and feelings of Others. I have found this most commonly when I meet Others from countries other than my own, or Others from a different class than my own, or of a different sex.[52]

> I say I saw my friend crying out in pain and anxiety. But how do I know that it was what I call 'pain' that was making *him* cry out? Can I know that it was the feeling that I call and experience to be 'pain' that *he* felt? And anxiety, that is a very strange state! How can I be certain that what he felt and thought was the same as I have felt and thought when I have been anxious?
> (p. 14–15)

Coetzee's Magistrate could be said to have such doubts, especially as regards the thoughts and feelings of the Barbarian girl as Other. And there are other such inscrutable Others in Coetzee's novels. Glendinning, in his Wittgensteinian refutation of scepticism (that also draws on the work of Derrida), comes to propose a possibility of being with others that I am very much in agreement with and would like to endorse. It is proposed:

> 'Being at home' with 'criteria of the inner' is not to have knowledge of definite rules which are recognised to be satisfied or unsatisfied in particular cases. Rather, it is to be seen in terms of one's familiarity with the *iterable traits* of living things. Thus, on this approach, to 'recall criteria' is not to recall rules of judgement, but, rather, unreflective 'leaps', occasions of 'Yes: same'-sayings. And these, I want to argue, just are: occasions in which the perception of a living thing does not stop short of the perception of a soul.
> (p. 135)

Yes: same. With respect to what was said in the previous chapter on receptivity and creativity, we are able to read the other writing: the text of the other and the writing itself. We are able to read the other writing itself, its self. What needs be clarified, unless it is obvious, is that this writing is not only writing with respect to written texts. It is this matter of the creative spirit of being that I have been trying to address. From Hegel on Africa, we are getting a little closer to reading African writing. Before that, a few more words on solipsism and scepticism.

In the Magistrate's dream, as cited earlier, he dreams that the figure of the girl is surrounded by child companions whose white puffs of breath he notices in the cold. But as he bears down on the group these spirited (breathing) others melt away so there is just him, a man, with his feminine opposite, a girl or a child-woman. In fact, the book could be regarded as Oedipally structured around a triangle of the brutal father, the maternal father or caring man, and the child, amongst other possible permutations of this triangle as the novel revolves and stays within a family circle. We also see moments where the Magistrate registers his being cut off from the vitality of others: 'Passing by the kitchen door on my way out I hear, muffled by the steamy warmth, voices, soft chatter, giggles. I am amused to detect in myself the faintest stab of jealousy' (p. 32). Man's jealousy – an inability to be with others? Thinking of his lonely conscience in his role of what the text calls the 'One Just Man', he wonders for a second how the townspeople might be reacting to the situation: 'If comrades like these exist, what a pity I do not know them!' (p. 104). In short, he is given to us

as solitary in his being and in his role. Furthermore, as indicated, it is as if he cannot conceive of or connect with a consciousness outside of his own. It is as if – no accident that I keep using that phrase – he is utterly imprisoned within his own consciousness where there can only be a consciousness of self and an imaging of the self in its imagined interactions with others. It is as if. And this is how the text reads, as one long dream, or nightmare, rather. It is a nightmare in that it presents the masculine subject, the one who is aligned with a transcendental paternity or authorship, as a state of endless solitary confinement: confinement by the self-defensive, auto-critical self within itself.

Earlier with reference to Derrida and Nietzsche on *Hamlet* and the terror of oblivion, I spoke of another possible terror and a return to life. I was thinking of the terror of solitary confinement, in various forms. There is an episode of solitary confinement in *Waiting for Barbarians*, the Magistrate in prison, which – as with the dreams – could be seen as emblematic of the text. Indeed, the individual scenes of text do fold out into the whole of the text as it engulfs and overruns itself, the particular becoming general and the general particular, where the present moment becomes an *unending* in this non-apocalyptic text. The solitary confinement spoken of could also be thought of in terms of live burial, what Freud spoke of as the worst nightmare: buried alone in the dark, inside your mind, with no one to rescue you. Mandela states in his autobiography that his darkest nightmare was one of being finally released from prison to find no others there: 'I had one recurring nightmare. In the dream, I had just been released from prison … I walked outside the gates into the city and found no one to meet me. In fact, there was no one there at all, no people, no cars, no taxis.'[53] Surely that would be like stepping back into prison with no hope of release. In one dream, the Magistrate watching a little act of creation in the building of a miniature fort wants to say: 'You must put people there!' (p. 53). It could be read as an authorial self-injunction. (And, the ghost in *Hamlet* is a suit of armour, a fortress, a self-imprisonment, for the sake of a live burial, a solitary confinement. The transcendental now becomes a terrible, terrifying crypt, this time of that which can neither die nor be reborn.)

Let be, do not force, and the people will appear. But, since we have only the Magistrate's self-consciousness, we do not get to know very much of the girl, as far as her soul goes. What the text does explore unflinchingly, and with an avowal that is rare, is the taboo subject of the desire of the father: desire for him and the desires of his body. The desire for the father could be said to be enacted in the quasi-religious scenes of mystical jouissance (whilst this is not the only form of jouissance), this almost broaching questions of sado-masochism (the masochism being the paired reverse of the sadistic torture). In the dream sequence, the bulge of flesh where the girl's face should be, but is not, is vaguely phallic: as if it is the phallus that is unveiled instead of her. Then, the Magistrate also explicitly sees himself as being like a father to the girl (p. 80), and here questions of incestuous desire and paedophilia are raised. It is reflected: 'When I was young the mere smell of a woman would arouse me; now it is evidently only the sweetest, the youngest, the newest who have that power. One of these days it will

be little boys'. (p. 46). Apart from this the Magistrate is shown to frequent prostitutes. After one quasi-voyeuristic scene in which he is by accident under a bed whilst two young people make love, he expresses a self-disgust:

> it seems more obscene than ever that this heavy slack foulsmelling old body (how could they have not noticed the smell?) should ever have held her in its arms. What have I been doing all this time, pressing myself upon such flower-like soft-petalled children – not only on her, the other one too.
>
> (p. 97)

In this relentless exposure and dissection of his sexuality, given as the desire of the father, there is none of the mystifying heroics of Kurtz's 'unspeakable rites' and the projection of sexual self-disgust onto women or African/Barbarian others. And yet, what remains disturbing is an instant in which the Magistrate reflects on how the humiliation and torture of the Barbarian girl's own father, enacted in front of her by more powerful men, destroys for her a belief in the protective father ideal. It is said: 'Thereafter she was no longer fully human, sister to all of us. Certain sympathies died' (p. 81). While this may have its point, it deflects, as usual, the 'no longer fully human' or inhumanity of the fathers, who betray their own idealism, onto the girl. Thus, the question of 'certain sympathies' remains a question of 'certain sympathies'. Certain sympathies of the Magistrate also die or rather fail to come to life, and when the Magistrate thinks of the girl as not fully human, not a sister, he is probably at his closest to her torturers, if not at that moment at one with them. Lacan preserves the human integrity of Creon by identifying Antigone with the not fully human, which is what the Africans are for Hegel. Instead of this 'not fully human', better to speak of the 'all too human' of the father.

While Coetzee's work is beautifully written, I tend to find it claustrophobic. If Antigone is found to take breath away – challenging the narcissism of man, so to speak – a narcissistic, father-idealising aesthetic of man, with all its self-irony, can also take breath or breaths away. This is perhaps especially so with *Waiting for the Barbarians* – as the potential subjectivity of the feminine is transmuted into *but* man's disquiet of conscience (his own alone) – but maybe even more so with *In the Heart of the Country*, a novel in which we are trapped within a consciousness of female abjection – the anti-narcissistic complement of masculine narcissism – and its phantasms. After a while, I want to gently scoop aside the folds of such texts, to draw to one side their curtain in order to try to see the realities of others. This is not just an isolated response to Coetzee's work but one that may be contextualised in terms of some of the debates that have been prevalent in South African literary criticism, as will be considered below.

The art of the undeniable

I wish now to turn to a different tradition of South African writing – that of, political poetry and political protest literature. *Waiting for the Barbarians* constitutes

a protest, but it is given as a solitary one of ethical singularity rather than a collectively aligned political one. This is an issue that readings of Coetzee's work have understandably revolved around, although this very division itself could be called into question. In broad terms, South African critical debates have for some time relied on a certain opposition between 'political' writing and the 'literary', as well as on a related opposition between a socio-political realist writing and the aesthetic 'subversions' of modernism and postmodernism. Benita Parry, in 'Speech and silence in the fictions of J.M. Coetzee', argues that Coetzee's writing, for all its literary virtuosity: 'is marked by the further singularity of a textual practice which dissipates the engagement with political conditions it also inscribes'.[54] David Atwell, responding to Parry, defines the critical issue as follows: 'The question arises: is Coetzee's "unrepresentable Africa" the same kind of disorientation that we are familiar with since at least *Heart of Darkness*? Or is it rather the result of contemporary political conditions which are more than usually stressful?'[55] Atwell goes on to indicate that he sees it to be a case of the latter, where the 'literary enterprise' is considered to be threatened or constrained by the 'historical situation' of the Emergency years, an historical situation that may be said to produce a demand for a political literature of protest or resistance.

As regards the above, it is possible to see that Coetzee does write within the inherited tradition of an 'unrepresentable Africa', where this is not merely some kind of literary failure but much more widely and problematically a question of the dominant aesthetic and philosophical traditions of European modernity. Atwell sees that Coetzee's fiction is indebted to an Enlightenment thinking of ethics, particularly Kantian. As regards this, a commitment to an ethical transcendental imperative does not serve to effect a distance from a text such as *Heart of Darkness* but rather to underscore a shared legacy, albeit differently approached. In brief, what may have emerged from my earlier readings is that Coetzee's text offers an even more self-conscious, and thus more precise, less mystifying, awareness of the blindspots it tries to confront. Or, if Conrad's inscrutable Africa is offered in terms of an Africa that is itself bewilderingly contradictory and irrational, the inscrutability of the Other of *Waiting for the Barbarians* is not so hastily given to us as an essential condition of being Other – the pre-logical or illogical Other – but far more carefully as a matter of the limits or failings of the Magistrate's powers of sympathy and comprehension. Nonetheless, the Magistrate does not merely represent one individual position amongst others but, in more philosophical terms, the subject of consciousness, that which is claimed to be *the* Subject. Truncating this far too broad a summary, what is called 'the subject' could also be seen to be the effect of a capitalising and colonising economy in itself (the subject as 'head', as transcendental consciousness, as single origin, and so on).

With the debates identifying Coetzee's fiction as apolitical or de-politicising or as primarily ethical rather than political, the one question that is not really broached is whether this work might be *relatively* politically conservative – that is, relative to a liberationist and anti-colonial politics of the left, say, of socialist or communist sympathies or allegiances and with a radically democratic agenda. In

other words, the predicament of the stressful political situation that Atwell refers to could be seen as one of being faced with the overwhelming demand for a politics of the left where these political positions may not necessarily accord with the political values of the individual writer. It seems to me that the demand for a radical politics of resistance poses no real *aesthetic* dilemmas but exciting aesthetic challenges *if that is where your political commitments do in fact lie* (as I hope to give evidence of). There is possibly a certain liberal anxiety in positing Coetzee as defending a *literary* enterprise – literature's right to be literature – when the aesthetic freedom concerned may be more politically about the right to entertain views, values, ideals that may be at odds with a politics of the left but not thereby simply apolitical nor purely ethical. As a means of indicating this further, the discussion of *Waiting for the Barbarians* will be linked to a brief consideration of the recent *Disgrace*.

I read *Disgrace* after having written the analysis of *Waiting for the Barbarians* offered earlier to experience a certain *déjà vu*. The later novel also concerns the desire of the father – again for (dark-skinned) prostitutes and child-like girls – and it also concerns the father figure's baffled and frustrated attempts to understand a compassion for the Other beyond the world of his own desire or a world brought into sympathy with the self. Some of what was mutedly explored in *Waiting for the Barbarians* – in particular, the Magistrate's vague fears of Barbarian anarchy – is treated in a harshly explicit way in *Disgrace*. In *Disgrace*, we are shown that the father's defence of his values is set up against a fear of what is thought of as a 'regressive hybridity' (in effect, a transgressive one), as explored in the previous chapter. What is striking is that the text self-consciously inscribes a rejection of political correctness in its opening and goes on to indulge itself in the crudest of racist and sexist stereotypes: in particular, the African man as rapist.

The story begins with the father's unrepentant seduction of an unwilling student, whereby he loses his academic job. He then goes to stay with his lesbian daughter in the country, and they become prey to an attack by three African men in which the daughter is multiply raped and the father set on fire. The daughter does not wish to report the rape to the police and, moreover, opts to stay on the smallholding, have the child she is pregnant with as a consequence of being raped, and live with the rapists as potential neighbours. What seems to be at stake in this is a fear of anarchy in the imaginings of 'regressive hybridity' which covers: homosexuality (male and female) as opposed to the feminine *in* man (man questioning Man, questionable by himself alone); the African man–European woman mixing of race (as opposed to the African prostitute or mistress of the European man); a brother–sister bonding as opposed to the father ideal; and more besides concerning ecological values and animistic philosophies. What is doubly reinforced is the 'impossibility' of the European woman's desire for the African man, as the symbolic effect of a patrilineal law of the family: not only is she raped, she is a lesbian, and so she *really, really* cannot desire him – impossible (where the father also endorses the phallicism of the view of lesbianism as asexual). Not only that, we are given a vicious parody of compassion or amnesty with respect to the (unlikely?) behaviour of the daughter. That

is, she could be read as being put into the position of conveying the following message: 'I am so compassionate or forgiving that you can rape me, torch my father, kill my animals, do as you please, and I will raise no complaint – I will even bear your child.' Less sensationally, the point to be made is that the question of compassion for the other seems to be only understood as a form of masochism, even, yet again, as a death drive. It is repeatedly that which is formulated in terms of: Destroy me. Problematically with this, while there may be sympathy for the self-same (as in Hegel's discussion of affect), compassion for the other seems only to be imaginable here as a masochism based on the suspicion that the other feels but hatred for the self. Compassion on these grounds does seem unthinkable: identifying with another's hatred of yourself.

In the stark terms of *Disgrace*, it would seem that the predatory, aggressive, self-maximising, self-perpetuating drive of a masculine libido is seen to be fundamental. The text could be aligned with a Freudian metaphysics here, in which the so-called 'life instincts' are colonised and capitalised in terms of a phallic libido beyond which there can then only be a supposed death drive. This is further naturalised in vaguely Darwinian terms. The father comes to understand his transgression as follows: 'On trial for his way of life. For broadcasting old seed … If the old men hog the young women, what will be the future of the species?'[56] And, he comes to understand the rapists as follows: 'Rapists rather than robbers, Lucy called them … Lucy was wrong. They were not raping, they were mating. It was not the pleasure principle that ran the show but the testicles, sacs bulging with seed aching to perfect itself' (p. 199). In this biological drive would be the 'seeds' of idealism: will-to-self-perfection. What is odd about this is that it decriminalises rape along the lines of the masculinist defence of 'uncontrollable natural male drive'. Or, whilst the father does want the rapists to be identified as criminals, the nature of their crime would seem not to be the *rape of a woman* but the *mating with his daughter*, ostensibly a racial crime more than a sexual one. With respect to the above two citations, sexual harassment and rape are not considered as crimes in terms of women's rights to freedom of choice and freedom from abuse and violation but only in terms of an ethics of *man's* perpetuation of his species or 'race'. The rape of the daughter is given more as a crime against the father than as a crime against the daughter. With respect to the analyses offered by Fanon as discussed earlier, the father's desire for young girls could be seen to raise the anxiety of the taboo against father–daughter incest which then takes the form of a Negrophobia: the unconscious criminal desires of the father are phobically projected onto African men. Negrophobia would also seem to concern the paranoid supposition of 'the Other hates me'.

There used to be some speculation within a feminist psychoanalysis, as to what the castration threat means with respect to women. It would seem, as far as the daughter goes at least, to be a matter of a rape threat: if you do not obey my desires, you will be forced to obey them. In the novel, the rape happens 'off-stage', it is not represented as such. In certain respects it occupies a phantasmatic space, the space of what is not known but is imagined or strongly suspected whereby a kind of paranoia is implied. While the law of the father

could imply this rape threat, it is delivered in paranoid style in the text: if my law is not upheld, *he* will rape you. As for the desire for young girls and prostitutes, this would seem to be because they are counted on to fit in with the man's desire whereby he does not have to negotiate with the desire of the other: rapeless rape or phantasmatic rape (the crime of which the father stands accused).

In short, since I wish to move on, in this limited reading of the text (for justice is not being done to its ambiguities), the story is primarily told from the perspectives of a Creon for whom the ethics of the sister–daughter and outlaw brother are unthinkable and whose alliance is perceived as that which could only be anarchy. Justice, in its entirety, is that of a law of the father: 'I am Lucy's father. I want those men to be caught and brought before the law and punished. Am I wrong? Am I wrong to want justice?' (p. 119). It is interestingly put for it could be condensed to: I am, thus I want, and my wants and desires must be the law. Of course, the desire for justice (supposedly that which the daughter does not have) is not wrong; what is at least questionable is the equation of the universality of justice with the desire of the father, a law based on the sole or supreme legitimacy of the desire of the heterosexual European father. The new South Africa is represented in a play that the father sees, a play whose politics and humour, he confesses, are not to his taste: it shows an unrepressed homosexuality in the context of a multiracial hairdressing salon (p. 23; p. 191). Set up against this 'crude' or earthy egalitarianism, there is the father's self-idealising sense of his own superiority which also undercuts itself and which manifests itself, as usual, in an ironic self-consciousness given a further ironic twist in the novel when the daughter voices her complaint against this eternal paternal irony, an ironic consciousness he (ironically non-ironically) professes ignorance of (p. 200). It may be noted here that the consciousness of the father is not the same as that of the text, which may be said to be somewhat detached from the 'mask' of the father. The consciousness of the text comes across at times as even a demonic-comic one in the 'scandals' it risks or provokes.

Indeed, in such a bleak text it is striking that there is a kind of silent laughter in it. It is a laughter directed not at the daughter or the enemy, but rather at the hypocrisies of liberal evasions. The text seems to laugh at its liberal audience of would-be politically correct defenders: try defend this.

With respect to the position of the father, 'justice' may be read in terms of the paternal identification with, and auto-sublimation of, the sacredness of the renewal and perpetuation of life, so that this becomes a capitalising and colonising immortalisation of the self – or, in other terms, an onto-theology. It is the onto-theological defence against what Fanon sees Negrophobia as symptomatic of, the fear of the biological. Beyond this, it is justice equated with monolineage, begging the question of other inheritances. It is worth recapitulating Mandela's critique of Creon addressed in the previous chapter. Mandela maintains that Creon's concept of justice is flawed in that justice should always be tempered with mercy. The cunning of *Disgrace* is that it serves to defend a justice without mercy against a mercy supposedly without a sense of justice, in that the violent criminality of its mini-African-tribe (extended family) cannot be

sympathised with. Nonetheless, the father is shown to struggle with his prejudices in trying to grasp what are for him the 'elusive' notions of 'mercy' or 'compassion' and to learn something of a new humility.

While there would be much more in the text to work through, the point of the above is to suggest that, politically speaking, Coetzee's writing serves, bravely and honestly, to explore and to question a certain conservatism. Could not *Disgrace* even be seen as confronting the taboo of taboo topics in the context of a liberal or radical South Africa – namely, the desires of or for white heterosexual male supremacy that have not been disentangled from a thinking of justice and where a thinking of justice cannot simply be isolated from an understanding of questions of power? As Derrida points out in 'Racism's Last Word', apartheid is not something that can simply be set apart from the legacies of European culture and thought, which does nothing to excuse it and serves to suggest the need for an analysis (separating out, sifting through) of this rather than an ignorance of it (something that Coetzee's work may be said to engage with). Whilst Coetzee draws on a European philosophical legacy, what is of interest is how this is *pictured* by the *literary* text in a *South African* context. Pictured, the 'father ideal' ('justice') is not just abstract and universal but, in the texts considered, seen as represented by the European heterosexual male. Whilst deconstruction may be said to affirm the fetishism (a kind of homosexuality) of narcissism and ghostliness of the ideal, Coetzee's writing draws attention to the foreclosed paternal body and the desire of the father as part of its approach to a scrutiny of the father ideal. Lacan praises the figure of Antigone in terms of not giving into nor giving up on her desire. This seems to be a question that Coetzee revolves in relation to the desire of the father. *Disgrace* ends with the father sending a dog to be slaughtered, the act phrased in these words: 'Yes, I am giving him up'. This can be read in terms of the father giving up on his own desire, the dog as symbolic of this desire. Or, it could be read in terms of the father reasserting his law in a final disavowal of (his) animal being or feeling for other being. He sacrifices and/or saves himself. With respect to the stark oppositions of *Hamlet* and *Antigone*, the lesson seems to be all round that there be should be neither an absolute desire, nor an absolute sacrifice of desire.

Yet, this question of the desire of the father remains a troubling one. The ending of the text could also suggest the very necessity of a choice. If I were to reply to the questioning ambivalence of the text's ending, I would say that if the father – as symbolic of justice – wishes to enforce a disciplinary law, then he must give up his desire. It is in the conflation of a law-of-the-father with the desire-of-the-father that there would be at least something of fascism. This literalisation of the symbolic phallus seems to be projected onto the criminal thugs of the text, where this serves to deflect the question of state terrorism onto a terrorism associated with the dispossessed and a politics of the left. The nightmare of apartheid was the very coupling of the law with criminality (the law as phallic jouissance), whilst the thugs of the novel are not acting in the name of the law of the state and thus cannot be made to signify or be the scapegoats of a fascist or totalitarian violence. And, it also needs to be stated, of course, that the

politics of the dispossessed and of the left cannot simply be aligned with a thuggish violence and thereby discredited: that would be to go the way of Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. The political context of *Disgrace* would seem to be the criminal attacks on white farmers. While such lawless violence is to be condemned, the grievances against the beliefs and practices of white supremacy, the demands for land redistribution, and so on, still need to be heard and addressed.

The fear of an anarchic South Africa is related to a fear of communism, as will be explored at the end of the chapter in a reading of La Guma's 'A Walk in the Night'.

Whilst Coetzee's fiction is seen as a defence of the freedom of 'literary' expression (yes, but this could be problematically to equate 'literature' with a universally 'straight' self-expression, amongst other things, and to beg the whole question of other aesthetics), a political and protest literature of the left is often denied a literary status, or simply critically ignored, possibly in that it may not reflect a desired narcissism, constructed or deconstructed.[57] And yet, I want to maintain that such writing is often undeniably art and constitutes an art of the undeniable (what is sometimes otherwise said to be insufficiently ambiguous, undecidable) that has its own understandings of irony and uses of undecidability. It also, no doubt, has its narcissisms or versions of narcissism. There is, though, a different relation to the logos, as the creative word of the father. What is at stake here is a writing that is at the service of other voices, as discussed at the outset of Chapter 1 with respect to how the figure of Antigone serves as writing. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, such other voices are given as hard to hear or as muffled: 'I strain to pierce the queer floating gabble of their voices but can make out nothing' (p. 10); 'I hear, muffled by the steamy warmth, voices, soft chatter, giggles' (p. 32). I want now, before considering other texts, to turn to a few poems, beginning with the poetry of Jeremy Cronin. His is a poetry that is much concerned with being the bearer of such other voices, where it has had some recognition for being at once literary and political.[58]

Cronin was a colleague of Coetzee's at the University of Cape Town, Coetzee lecturing in English, as well as writing fiction, and Cronin lecturing in political philosophy. Cronin was also a political activist, and was detained and imprisoned for some years for his political activities in his participation in the African National Congress (then banned). It was in prison that he became a poet. In order to show how his poetry attempts to bear the voice of the other, this brief fragment from a poem entitled 'Lullaby' will be offered:

> But who killed Steve, mama … ?
> Sssssshhh! it's a long walk to the bus.
> Mama … ?
> A brick wall, the magistrate said.
> So *thula*, *thula*, now quiet my child.
>
> But who killed Looksmart, mama … ?
> Sssssssshh! sleep and grow strong.

Who, mama … ?
His own belt, that's what was blamed.
So, *thula*, *thula*, now quiet my child.

But who …
Thula! Thula! Thula![59]

This poem, of which only the last stanzas have been given, concerns the many 'deaths', killings, of prisoners in detention for which prison authorities gave patronising and ridiculous explanations. It makes ironic use of a Xhosa lullaby to show a mother trying to quieten a child where the resonances go beyond this particular scene. Inasmuch as children are those who want to know and do not observe the proprieties of the truth, the voice of the questioning child relates to all the South Africans who want the authorities to tell the truth. The, at first, protective and cajoling voice of the mother is expressive both of a desire to save the child from painful knowledge of adult cruelties and of a need to hush things up. The tension built up in the poem is that while the lies of the South African officials can be seen through, the intimidation is such that the desire to confront them brings the fear of being tortured in turn. There is also the fear on the part of parents for the lives of their potentially more defiant offspring. The tension is built up throughout a number of stanzas as the mother tries repeatedly to quell her child's questions as she also directs his or her attentions to the daily hardships of life and the need to sustain strength and grow up strong. This could carry the meaning of building up a strength of resistance for a morrow of political struggle whilst learning clandestine evasions: 'Ssssssshh! Sleep and grow strong'. The poem relies very much on tone and a subtle interplay of innuendos and pauses to get its layered messages and various emotions across. And, it carefully manages to combine a language of evasion and non-judgementalness with an unambiguous protest against the brutality and lies of apartheid. It documents the lies by listing some of the actual excuses offered for deaths in detention, most famously, 'Only a bar of soap' ('he slipped on a bar of soap'). It combines, too, despair at present helplessness with hope for the future. The final, how hear it – exasperated, desperate, resolute – *Thula*, *Thula*, *Thula*, quiet, quiet, quiet, shows both the intimidating force of imposed censorship while it is anything but quiet and resigned. Even as it cannot make direct accusations, it is not complicit with the disavowals of the state in that it exposes the murders. The poem manages to be testimony, archival record of the facts of deaths in detention, and a rallying cry, all at once. It is also yet a lullaby because it brings the comfort of a voice quietly speaking out against injustice whereby the solitude of silent, censored questionings of the state is relieved. In the poem, the names of those killed reveal different ethnic groups – Johannes, Solomon, Ahmed, Joseph, Steve, Looksmart (where some names of famous activists are echoed, such as that of Steve Biko) – revealing a solidarity in the struggle. The poem also becomes a kind of elegy. While it could be read on the intimate and personal level of a struggling mother trying to put a slightly impossible child to bed, it also allows

for a very wide audience to feel itself addressed by the poem's invocation of a political constituency in support of those who risk their lives in fighting apartheid. Its sympathies could be said to lie with the each and every one struggling against apartheid, including the most solitary, as it affirms the possibility of a shared vision.

While more could be said about the poem, hopefully the above serves to make the point that Cronin's poem is both undeniably art and an art of the undeniable. The desire to write a poetry that carries and makes audible a plurality of the nation's voices is the theme of Cronin's 'To learn how to speak'. The poem needs to be read in its entirety, for its effect is cumulative, and it needs too to be read aloud for it is particularly musical in its effects. I will just cite its conclusion:

> To write a poem with words like:
> I am telling you,
> Stompie, stickfast, golovan,
> Songololo, just boombang, just
> To understand the least inflections,
> To voice without swallowing
> Syllables born in tin shacks, or catch
> The 5.15 ikwata bust fife
> Chwannisberg train, to reach
> The low chant of the mine gang's
> Mineral glow of our people's unbreakable resolve.
>
> To learn how to speak
> With the voices of this land.[60]

The poem is written in English, of course, but apart from bringing in a few non-English words, it breaks the English language up into morsels, syllables, phonemes, as if these could be even further divided and endlessly recombined in the historical and everyday materialism of people's lives. Or, it allows for the parcelling out of the language so it can be remade by a multitude of accents and energies. The fact that it uses clusters of fricative syllables calls for some effort in pronouncing the lines and this effort creates the emphases and stresses of an energetic expenditure. This, together with its other semiotic elements, means that the poem is felt physically, conveying the sense of the body as not just the medium of the voice but as that which is inseparable from the voice. In just the cited section of the poem, there is township street slang and nicknames, the South African English of the urban worker, the song of the mine workers: 'stompie' as cigarette but and nickname; 'golovan' as a mine trolley; 'songololo' as a millipede.[61] The poem works with the semiotics of sounds and rhythms to give precedence to its love of the energetic materiality of the word, and beyond that of the body and being that utters it.[62] The love of language and its possibilities thus extends to a love of the living bodies that shape, mould, chew – Johannesburg

as 'Chwannisberg' – spit, gurgle, groan – lolo, low, glow – rapid fire and slicken it – just, boombang, just – the language of 'this land.'

The poem seems to me to be a love poem, one of an unconditional love for the creative and living energies of the workers and thereby speakers of the land. Furthermore, the poem offers itself as a preparatory sampling of what is yet to come: to learn how to speak.

We will now look at a poem by the political poet and novelist, Sipho Sepamla, entitled 'Measure for Measure'.

> go measure the distance from cape town to pretoria
> and tell me the prescribed area i can work in
>
> count the numbers of days in a year
> and say how many of them i can be contracted around
>
> calculate the size of house you think good for me
> and ensure the shape suits tribal tastes
>
> measure the amount of light into a window
> known to guarantee my tribal ways
>
> count me enough wages to make certain that i
> grovel in the mud for more food
>
> teach me just so much of the world that i
> can only fit into certain types of labour
>
> show me only those kinds of love
> which will make me aware of my place at all times
>
> and when that is done
> let me tell you this
> you'll never know how far i stand from you[63]

Sepamla is playing with the title of Shakespeare's play, *Measure for Measure*, and by giving his own poem this title, he asserts, seriously and mischievously, his right to be taken seriously as a writer. Moreover, Shakespeare's play is very much about themes broached in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, such as the abuse of the law, a state of surveillance, the perverse desires of the father-leader and paternal voyeurisms. However, Sepamla is, of course, speaking from a different place in regards to all this. With 'measure' the poem entertains a concept of the law, and in 'measure for measure' a notion of retaliation. Moreover, the poem is written as a critique both of the racism of the law, with its acts and actions of discrimination, and as a critique of the pseudo-scientific laws of racism in which human beings are measured in order to concoct essential differences: 'measure the

amount of light into a window/ known to guarantee my traditional ways'. This refers to the keystone of apartheid ideology, namely, separate development, which is plainly made absurd in the poem by the amount of interference into and control over a black working force that the state is clearly dependent on and thus unable to separate itself from. The 'measure' of the poem addresses the fact that apartheid paternalism (addressed in the last of the couplets) and its racial measures are really an economic issue, where the capital ideal of the father, the time of the father, is allied with capitalism and the measurement of labour-time: 'count the number of days in a year/ and say how many of them I can be contracted around'. The poem parodies the laying down of the law and the order upon order with its use of imperatives – go, count, measure, and so on – whilst in using imperatives itself it shows that there is an attitude that is not cowered by the bullying. 'Measure for measure' implies a standing up to the oppressor as and in equal measure, this being reinforced by the use of couplets where the lordly imperative of the first line is ironically countered, counter-balanced, or undercut in the second line. The poem also has something of the structural effect of a Shakespearean sonnet in that the final stanza performs the twist to the whole poem that the final couplet of a sonnet does. In summation of all that can be counted, creamed off and administered – 'and when all that is done' – the orders give way to an imperative of allowance of freedom of speech and another authority – 'let me tell you this' – the distance between them will be beyond measure or immeasurable – 'you'll never know how far I stand from you'. The last line is at once conclusive and open in that the incalculable distance could be great or small. It is also the kind of spacing that the law – of the father, time, capital – cannot measure. Beyond that measure, it may concern other laws and other values, those of life itself perhaps and respect for it, a respect that allows space for the other. The last line is also a political statement: 'you'll never know how far I stand from you' (and what you stand for). I do not read this as a claim to being *essentially* inscrutable, to *being* an enigmatic other, for this is just a matter of the oppressor's ignorance. The poem is factual and irreverent in its tone which suggests that the 'inscrutability' in question is a matter of a disavowal of the facts. A few more words could be said about this.

The poem might seem to address the farcical and absurd – 'ensure the shape suits tribal tastes' – but, actually, these are the *facts* of apartheid: the emphasis on ethnic-racial separateness; the prescribed work areas; the restricted education; the exploitation and the slums. So, it is dealing with the 'nonsense' of apartheid by rubbing its nose in the disavowed *facts* of its policies. I love this empirical spirit in South African political poetry, a spirited and witty (as in *esprit*) empiricism that is found in much African poetry and literature. It is the undeniable art of the undeniable. When Hegel and others approach Africa with their back to the facts and to African spirit, then it is an astute measure for measure to get back to facts. It is also a broader issue of post-colonial, anti-colonial strategies. The Indian writer, Cyrus Mistry, in a paper given at the University of Kent, referring to Arunduthai Roy's *The God of Small Things*, made the point that we (some) need the facts more than ever and should make the Basic Facts, capitalised, a slogan.

This factuality in political writing is not dry and unliterary but, as claimed above, witty and astute and spirited. It is also an irony beyond the ironies of self-consciousness. The latter could be said to constitute a Western masculine irony, given that it is of that subject, and to concern the undecidable. It concerns, as discussed with reference to *Glas* on Hegel, the feminine in man provoking doubt, self-questioning, undecidability. The same could be said of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, where the girl serves to prompt the self-doubts of the Magistrate. The daughter in *Disgrace* may be said to serve as a similar impetus. This other irony, an African one, a feminine one, an African-feminine one – as could be shown more widely – could be said to perform an about-face in which questionable laws and truths are made to face, confront, the undeniable. As regards Sepamla's poem, legalised apartheid and all its measures renders the law questionable as law – it is legal but not just – no doubt about this dubiousness, but beyond that there are the law's disavowals. In the poem, facts are not statistics, measurements, as such: these can be manipulated and used to manipulate, as the poem well shows. I want rather to say that *facts are avowals and acknowledgements of what can be known and said to be the case*. Factuality would thus concern the ignorance, the zones of ignorance, of the supposedly one-and-only all-thinking subject. Masculine self-doubt and its aesthetics of undecidability, together with its ethics of a self-questioning idealism, are fine and to be welcomed (given some of the alternatives) as long as we are able to remember when to say, in an artful feminine way, in an African way, perhaps especially in an African-feminine way, Killjoy-wise: what nonsense. Or, as Head writes in *A Question of Power*: 'Admittedly, it had taken her a year of slow, painful thought to say at the end of it: "Phew! What a load of rubbish!" '[64] The undecidable also opens out onto the undeniability of the other as subject.

This reading of African poetry will conclude with a poem by Mafika Gwala. When I titled this chapter, 'From Hegel on Africa Towards a Reading of African Literature', I had in mind 'reading' in the sense of 'poetry readings' or readings from works. That is, in the sense of allowing the writers to step forward, or the writing to come forward and speak for itself. So, I will now just step aside:

In Defence of Poetry

What's poetic
about Defence Bonds and Armscor?
What's poetic
about long term sentences and
deaths in detention
for those who 'threaten state security'?
Tell me,
what's poetic
about shooting defenceless kids
in a Soweto street?
Can there be poetry

In fostering Plural Relations?
Can there be poetry in the Immorality Act?
What's poetic
about deciding other people's lives?
Tell me, brother,
what's poetic
about defending herrenvolkish rights?

As long as
this land, my country
is unpoetic in its doings
it'll be poetic to disagree.

A walk with 'A Walk in the Night'

Although I distinguished above between different ironic strategies, in practice, any writer can deploy either strategy. Similarly, African texts can, of course, treat of the spooky father ideal and narcissistic phantasms, as we will see. This chapter will conclude with an exploration of Alex La Guma's 'A Walk in the Night'. 'A Walk in the Night' has as its epigraph some lines from the ghost's speech in *Hamlet*, including: 'I am thy father's spirit/ doomed for a certain time to walk the night'.

La Guma was a South African writer who also worked as clerk, factory worker and journalist. He was a political activist, imprisoned several times, including as a defendant for the Treason trial. 'A Walk in the Night' is a long short story, or a compact novel, and was first published in 1962. It is set in District Six, a 'Coloured' or mixed race suburb of Cape Town where, further, Africans and a few whites also worked and lived. The District Six of the story presents us with a range of its inhabitants, in particular, its workers, its gangster-style criminals, its tramps and its prostitutes. We are shown a world of poverty, instability and violence experienced by those fighting for daily survival. The story unfolds over a single night and reads as a tightly constructed play or as a film noir-style crime story. The main characters are as follows: Michael Adonis, the lead, an angry and charismatic young man; Willieboy, a youth with a criminal record; Uncle Doughty, an old down-and-out white man, an ex-actor turned alcoholic; Constable Raalt, a sadistic white policeman; and Joe, a young tramp. The story revolves these characters in a way that serves to turn the outlaw world of crime and violence into the very possibility for another ethics and politics. It accomplishes a reconstellation – lovely word that I copy from Spivak's use of it.

The story line is as follows. Michael Adonis, a mixed race youth, is fired from his job for a trivial reason. Nursing his angry resentment he gets drunk in various bars, where some criminals try to persuade him to be their lookout for a job. He goes home to be waylaid by the alcoholic white man who in his self-pity wants some attention. The old man's behaviour annoys the already drunk and angry Adonis, who swinging out at him with a bottle, kills him without intending to.

Adonis leaves the building, while Willieboy comes to look for him and is seen at the building. Inmates of the building, renting separate rooms, discover the dead white man. Outside, whilst they debate what to do, Raalt, on his beat, asks what is up. A man amongst the tenants, Abrahams, turns sell-out in telling Raalt that there has been a murder, and gives a description of Willieboy. Meanwhile, the gangsters have found Adonis and try to persuade him to turn criminal, something that Joe, the homeless boy, tries to persuade Adonis against. The police track down Willieboy and, as he tries to run from them, they shoot him and stuff him, still alive, into the back of the van where he dies through lack of medical attention. Thus, whilst the old white man was the scapegoat for Adonis' anger, Willieboy becomes a scapegoat for the crime, especially since Raalt's violence towards him is due to the fact that he is also seeking someone to deflect his own anger onto because his wife is having an affair. This gives little of the intricately woven texture of the text, but what happens through the interlinked displacements that it sets in motion is that, by the end of the story, a defunct law of the (white) father comes to be displaced by a socialist and life-centred ethics that depends on a textual interlacing of Joe, Grace, an expectant mother who lives in Adonis' building, and the community of District Six. A more detailed analysis will hopefully show how this is so, and what the new or reworked social alliance affirms.

The spectrality invoked by the title and epigraph of the story refers, in part, to the aimless, drifting and burnt out lives of those who cruise the night-time underworld of District Six, with this world's 'foul crimes' – 'the foul crimes done in my days of nature' – of criminal violence and police violence. This may be cross-referenced with Can Themba's depiction of Sophiatown:

> "Not for thee!' Not only the refusal to let us enter so many fields of human experience, but the sheer negation that *our spirits* should ever assume to themselves identity. Crushing.
>
> It is *a crepuscular shadow-life in which we wander as spectres* seeking meaning for ourselves … This is the burden of the whiteman's crime against my personality that negatives all the brilliance of intellect and genuine funds of goodwill so many individuals have. The whole bloody ethos still *asphyxiates* me.[65]

The whiteman, appropriating all of Spirit, is claustrophobic, reducing others to the shadow-life of aimless spectres. This is shown in 'A Walk in the Night', while the 'all of Spirit' is a would-be arch-spectre especially associated with the old white man, an ex-Shakespearean actor, whom Adonis kills. When Adonis spars with him, we have the following exchange:

[The Old Man] Oh, come on man, don't torment your old dad.
[Adonis] You old spook.[66]

The old man represents, in part, what Coetzee's magistrate stands for, the old colonial father ideal. However, there is nothing of a noble King Hamlet here. We are shown, rather, that it is merely a matter of white men play-acting a

former glory. The white man of La Guma's text is whiningly needy for some attention, and proceeds to entertain Adonis, as follows:

> 'I'll tell you what,' the old man whined hopefully. 'I'll recite for you. You should hear me. I used to be something in my days.' He cleared his throat of a knot of phlegm, choked and swallowed. He started: 'I am thy father's spirit; doomed for a certain time to walk the night … ' He lost track, then mustered himself, waving his skeleton arms in dramatic gestures, and started again. 'I am thy father's spirit, doomed for a certain time to walk the night … and … and for the day confined to fast in fires, till the foul crimes done in my days of nature's … nature are burnt and purged away … But … ' He broke off and grinned at Michael Adonis, and then eyed the bottle. 'That's us, us, Michael, my boy. Just ghosts, doomed to walk the night. Shakespeare.'
>
> 'Bull,' Michael Adonis said.
>
> (p. 28)

Thus, the old man seeks to impress Adonis with a paternal wisdom, with the speech of an idealised father, with English culture, even as all this is slipping from his memory somewhat, and he tries to include Adonis in his vision of a universal humanity – 'That's us, us'. For Adonis, this is rubbish for the man, called Doughty, is irrelevant and drunk on white wine. His spirit is alcoholic spirit and he is a white whine, as it is punned in the above, he is a white who whines. His neediness is shown to be a matter of his fears of redundancy and of being forgotten: 'remember me'. As a wider comment on the culture of District Six, we see that 'certain sympathies' for the Old White Father have seemingly died (hard to base a concept of universal humanity on a racial claim to superiority of culture), while a magistrate, such as Coetzee's, could then be seen as regarding the amoral gangsters and aimless drifters of the District as lacking in humanity and sympathy. La Guma, it should be said, treats each of his characters, with all their flaws which are shown to be linked to personal and social troubles, as equally human. When Adonis kills the old man out of carelessness, clumsiness and indifference, this is certainly not condoned by the text which shows this act and the subsequent linking up with the gangsters as a corruption of the soul hardened to the violence of the street, which is depicted with gritty realism. The symbolic importance of the killing of the white man is the death of what he stood for and the ensuing problem is one of how to create human ties and affirm values with the old ethical standard gone. In a series of scenes in the text, it emerges that the loss of belief in this old standard is due to the way that African and Coloured people are shown to have to contend everyday with white men for whom there can be little respect as regards a behaviour that ranges from petty humiliations and bigoted bossiness to extreme brutality. How respect the spectre of superior being when those who maintain it do so with such contempt for others? The fact that there is no respect for the law-enforcers, for the white men and their laws (or the criminality of legalised racism), is what creates the crime and the violence, together with a desire to have something of the luxurious

white-consumer lifestyle brandished in adverts and movies that are shown to create aspirations for the characters of District Six.

The effect of the killing of the old man on Michael Adonis is interestingly that he then feels himself to be above the law and, in this, just like the law: 'The rights and wrongs of the matter did not occur to him then. It [his secret crime] was just something that, to himself, placed him above others, like a poor beggar who found himself heir to vast riches' (p. 66). His transcendental position could be due to the fact that he has got rid of the paternal body, the old man in the flesh, to be heir then to a symbolic capital – he feels like a king, superior to everyone – only he cannot confess the crime that has made him so great. Thus, Adonis recapitulates the very setting up of a law of the father, where the father's 'foul crimes done in his days of nature' must always remain a guarded secret for the father to retain his elevated, superior position. In this, he does become a spook – 'that's us, us', says the old man – where the arch-spectre is neatly defined as that which is 'above others'. The crime of the death of the old man is counterpointed in the murder of Willieboy at the other end of the night. Raalt, acting in the name of the law uses his sanctioned right to judge the criminal, but he murders a man who is secretly innocent. Generally speaking, the guilt of the law is exposed in its inability to confess to its own criminality as well as its inability to recognise the innocence of those it merely assumes or inadequately judges to be criminal.

The story slowly starts to put forward ethical alternatives as it also proceeds with an analysis of the reasons for corruption and violence. First, it shows how the people of District Six exist in a solitary absorption with their own grievances and narcissistic fantasies. We see Adonis admiringly gazing at himself in a mirror, thinking: 'Okay, trouble-shooter. You're a mighty tough hombre' (p. 14). He nurses his resentful humiliation over being fired by imagining himself, cinematically, as a macho cowboy, as if. Of Willieboy it is said: 'He had looked with envy at the flashy desperadoes who quivered across the screen in front of the eightpenny gallery and had dreamed of being transported wherever he wished in great black motorcars and issuing orders for the execution of enemies' (p. 72). Of the old man, it is said: 'bravery gave way to self-pity, like an advert on the screen being replaced by another slide' (p. 21). The text also makes frequent references to the adverts, films, shop signs and other cultural images that surround the characters. The images in the outer world are internalised and the narcissistic phantasms take on a reality of their own as people act out their fantasies. The story shows how a range of differing characters are all isolated from each other in their introjections and projections of imaginary theatres. The story is 'peopled' with spooks, symbolic spectres, and with phantasms of the imaginary. Yet it goes beyond this mere ghostliness, I would argue.

It could be said that we are allowed to glimpse the living soul of each character that we are introduced to, even the brutal Constable Raalt. First, here, we are shown how Raalt and his fellow officer look in the eyes of the people looking at them and wishing to melt away from their policing gaze:

> A few slid quietly away into the shadows beyond the lamp-light, for their was no desire in them to cooperate with these men who wore their guns like appendages of their bodies and whose faces had the hard metallic look, and whose hearts and guts were merely valves and wires which operated robots.
>
> (p. 58)

This is how the Barbarian girl may have seen her torturers. And, she may have seen the magistrate as Adonis sees the old white man: as a self-pitying old soul, in love with a paternal ghost-ideal and scared of being an irrelevant has-been. That is, La Guma shows us in detail how others might see; he does not draw a blank here as happens with the given vision of the Barbarian girl. Moreover, the text also takes us into the consciousness of the two policemen of the story precisely so that we do *not* see them as 'not fully human' but just as 'all too human'. So, while the crowd see the policemen as inhuman automatons, the reader is shown that these men have their human troubles and passions that make them what they are, and we are also shown how different the two policemen are.

First, as regards Raalt, we are shown that throughout the night his bullying and brutal behaviour is the result of the fact that his masculine pride has been injured in his failed relationship with his wife:

> The bitch. He was thinking about his wife and it angered him that she was the cause of such thoughts … He sewed and mended his own clothes and often had to do the housework, too, and that angered him further … he sat in the corner of the van and nursed his anger.
>
> (p. 31)

Thus, we know why this 'torturer' behaves as he does, it is a matter of the anger caused by his humiliation. More generally, it could be said that to analyse the psyche of the right wing Afrikaner in terms of a reaction against humiliation is relevant, given that a case could be made out for apartheid beginning with the British treatment of the Boers. Indeed, Raalt is shown to hate not only Africans but the British in the figure of the old man whose name he mocks. In the above passage that gives us Raalt's consciousness, it is said that even while he hates his wife it is painful to him to have to think hatefully of her, and so this is why he vents his hatred on the black men he meets. Moreover, we are told that he 'nursed' his anger and the very same phase is used for Michael Adonis's emotions: 'nursing the foetus of hatred inside his belly' (p. 23). And Adonis also calls a woman who betrays him 'bitch'. In this, we can see that even as Raalt and Adonis detest each other, there is a way in which they are brothers under the skin, being both proud in spirit and destructive in their anger. The text brings us a vision of radical equality – at times, a radical sameness – amongst people and is not too squeamish to treat a Raalt as a human being because of, rather than in spite of, his sadism. What is also shown is that while the African and Coloured residents of District Six see a Raalt as an emotionless automaton, he, in turn, does not see them as human but as 'baboons'. Thus, we see that 'certain sympa-

thies' are dangerously limited from different angles where this is yet part of our *common* humanity.

As regards the other policeman, who drives the van, we learn how he is not the same as Raalt, whom he thoroughly dislikes and does not wish to be identified with. These are his thoughts:

> and he thought, He is one of those who will disgrace us whites. In his scorn for the hottentots and kaffirs he is exposing the whole race to shame. He will do something violent to one of those black bastards and as a result our superiority will suffer. They ought to post him somewhere, in a white area, where he will have little opportunity of doing anything dishonourable.
>
> (pp. 39–40)

If the old white man, the spook, is one aspect of Coetzee's magistrate, here, in a few deft brushstrokes is his other side, that of the man who resists his identification with the torturer whilst trying to uphold the law. What the text also shows us is that this one good man is concerned with his race maintaining its superiority through living up to its claims of superiority. At the end of the story, he cries out against Raalt's violence in his own attempt to save Willieboy's life. The positions adopted by the two policemen at the moment of the shooting of Willieboy are significant with respect to what was analysed earlier in this chapter: 'The driver had a shocked look on his face and he said, his voice cracking: "What did you want to shoot for? We had him. I could have got him from behind" ' (p. 87). We have one figure of the law oppositionally confronting the supposed criminal. Then we are given the sympathetic figure of the law as at the back of the 'black' man. Although Raalt faces Willieboy, he cannot really see him because for a Raalt the African is that which he always has his back to and, given the structure of the privileged masculine subject, the only way in which He can *see* the African is from behind: the Western subject either has his back to the actuality of the African or he lets the African come forward only to face the back of the African, but at the African's moment of death. This is how the shooting of Willieboy is configured, a positioning discussed in relation to *Heart of Darkness*.

What 'A Walk in the Night' also shows us is that the white man is only able to enter the world of the Other in limited respects. As discussed in the previous chapter, 'the white man' (as such) enters the 'black' 'underworld' in two ways: either as its policeman or as a john looking for prostitutes. As also touched on earlier, Head's *The Cardinals* explicitly ponders the paradox of the white man who makes the laws of morality and who polices the streets as doubled by the white man on the prowl for African prostitutes. In 'A Walk in the Night', the white men who enter District Six are the policemen and also some white Americans who go to a house of prostitutes. This is what is also shown in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, in that the Magistrate has contact with the Other in basically only two ways: in his role as enforcer of the law and in his sleeping with prostitutes. The Other is then only a sexual object or essentially physical being, a body without a soul of its own – or a violent body. However, the world of District Six

exists in a vibrant spirited way that the law and the johns have no idea or experience of: this is the white man's zone of ignorance. La Guma's text is very receptive of the living struggle and struggling aliveness of this world and transmits this undeniable life in all its forms, flows and intensities. It even pays attention to the non-human life of the tenements: 'In the dark corners and unseen crannies, in the fetid heat and slippery dampness the insects and vermin, maggots and slugs, 'roaches in shiny brown armour, spiders like tiny grey monsters carrying death under their minute feet or in the suckers, or rats with dusty black eyes with disease under claws or in the fur, moved mysteriously' (p. 34–5). This could be taken as a metaphor for life in the slums, at the same time that it differentiates human life from other life forms dangerous to it.

What is important to point out is that 'A Walk in the Night' reveals that, beyond the outsiders of johns and the law, the community is really a cosmopolitan one in a specific way, as will be explained. First, in the case of the old white man, the spook, who has left the white community to live in District Six, he fails to fit in because of obsession with his former glory: 'You should hear me. I used to be someone in my days.' The text is not simply dismissive of this in that it shows that any or anyone's belief in 'superior being' is a belief in spooks. When Adonis comes to think of himself as a superior being after having killed the old man, he too becomes spooky. The text also shows what a ghost is. A ghost is a curtain. Let us see:

> The room faced the street and from below the street-light made a pale white glow against the high-window panes and filtered a very little way into the gloom so that the unwashed curtains seemed to hang like ghosts in mid-air. (p. 43)

The description is given in the context of Adonis lying on his bed in the dark, to be disturbed by someone rattling the door handle, at which point Adonis comes to himself with: 'Who the hell is that?' Who? is the question. The room could be seen as representative of the self and its consciousness; it is the shadowy interiority of the self, the obscure centre. The pale white glow could be seen as the halo effect spoken of with reference to *Heart of Darkness*, but without the phobias Conrad attaches to the hollow core. The halo may be seen as both that which marks out and so reveals the self as a self, as remarkable, whilst not illuminating the enigma of what it is to be: we're all unique and inscrutable. Who the hell is that? Such is the unknown that disturbs us from the inside. The curtain-ghost may be that which both marks the separation of the self and the unreality of this self-possession. I wish to juxtapose the above citation with an excerpt from Genet's work cited in *Glas*, that Derrida then comments on.

> For I am so poor, and I have already been accused of so many thefts, that when I leave a room too quietly on tiptoe, holding my breath [souffle], I am not sure, even now that I am not carrying off with me the holes in the curtains or hangings.

> All the examples stand out, are cut out in this way. Regard the holes if you can.
>
> (p. 210)

> [T]he unwashed curtains seem to hang like ghosts in mid-air.

See a ghost, if you can. Alternatively, it suggests a kind of inversion. If you invert 'capital perfect being/worthless non-being' you get: imperfect – incomplete – but not worthless beings.

While the old white man is unable to blend into the world of District Six, being too attached to the spectre of whiteness or English culture – as opposed to the unwashed curtain of Adonis's room – the world we are shown in District Six is peopled with a range of nationalities and ethnicities: mixed race folk, Africans, Indians, Jews, Portuguese, and so on. The name Adonis, suggests that Michael may have a Greek lineage mixed with his African one. La Guma is of mixed race origin and I believe that the surname is a Portuguese one. Here there is the truth: there is no such thing as a 'white' person or a 'black' person. So there can be no such thing as a white person in District Six, even as there may be English people, Jewish people, Greek people living there, with the diverse maintenance of different cultural influences. The text shows us that this mixing is possible but only on condition that there is not race-consciousness. This is similar to Bessie Head's vision in an early story of hers in which she writes: 'If I had to write one day I would just like to say that *people is people*, and not damn White, damn Black.'[67]

La Guma's text also shows that there is more than one spook with respect to sources of value and ideals. One such source is the character, Joe, a homeless youth who keeps himself alive with mussels and fish from the sea. We learn that Joe's father deserted the family whereupon the South African authorities sent his family back to the rural areas. Joe does not agree to be relocated, for his philosophy is that it is important to find ways of confronting 'troubles' rather than comply with the displacement, deflection or relocation of problems. The tragedy of Willieboy's death is shown to be precisely a matter of destructive deflections as a means of not facing up to the real problems. Thus, Adonis takes out his anger on Doughty, as Raalt takes out his anger on Willieboy, amongst the many deflections of force that occur in the story. Destructive anger is shown to be a matter of people being at the mercy of forces stronger than themselves, where the anger builds up until it becomes a force directed at weaker targets. Joe can see this and he tries to act as a guardian angel to Adonis, trying to persuade him against criminality: 'You don't know those boys. They have done bad things. I heard. To girls also' (p. 74). Just before this, Adonis has called him: 'You spook.' Joe is a spook because he reminds Adonis of values, of respect for others. If Doughty tried to be Adonis's Dad, Joe calls himself Adonis's 'brother' and his ordinary philosophy is of the brother and the sister: 'isn't we all people'.

The question of confronting the forces of the system is shown to be a matter of a communist critique of capitalism: '"It's the capitalis' system," the taxi

driver said … "Whites act like that because of the capitalis' system" ' (p. 17). It is indicated that the communism in question is not necessarily a matter of importing what comes from Russia, so to speak, as much as a matter of the working community coming to realise that they themselves are the energies and life source of the capitalist system. The way the text shows this is subtle for it works through its twisting together of its strands to form a certain design.

While we are initially shown a community afraid of the law and where cowered people nurse lonely grievances, the community are brought together in two stages in the story. The first is when a character called Abrahams acts as sell-out or informer: the crowd is drawn together in their disapproval of him being the cringing servile supporter of the 'law and order' that tyrannises over them. The second stage is when Willieboy is shot. At this point, individual identities are lost as the crowd feels the same anger. That is, the lonely private hurts become a collective consciousness of a common source of grievance, namely, that the state holds their lives in such cheap contempt. The crowd becomes here a sea of pooled energies: 'The crowd … wavered for a while and then surged forward, then rolled back, muttering before the cold dark muzzle of the pistol. The muttering remained, the threatening sound of a storm-tossed ocean breaking against a rocky shoreline' (pp. 86–7). This is picked up at the end of the story, an ending which draws together its main strands:

> Somewhere the young man, Joe, made his way towards the sea, walking alone through the starlit darkness. In the morning he would be close to the smell of the ocean … And in the rock pools he would examine the mysterious life of sea things, the transparent beauty of starfish and anemone, and hear the relentless, consistent pounding of the creaming waves against the granite citadels of rock.
>
> Franky Lorenzo slept on his back and snored peacefully. Beside him the woman, Grace, lay awake in the dark, restlessly waiting for the dawn and feeling the knot of life within her.
>
> (p. 96)

Spooky Joe-and-the-sea is linked with the crowd-as-sea and this is linked with the foetus, for we know that Grace is pregnant. Thus, the text enables us to see that it is life that is valuable, in its living creative energies which are collectively and uniquely embodied. Yet this is precarious. The 'knot' of life puns with a 'not' of life, where this refers back to a scene in the novel when Grace's husband was angry at the thought of a new child given their struggling poverty. The knot of life refers back, too, to the destructive knots of anger in the stomachs of some of the story's characters, in particular, to 'the foetus of anger' nursed in Adonis. The task of the story has been to transform that foetus of anger into one of hope and new life. If the story begins with the capital old father ideal, it ends with an affirmation of actual maternity, where this is not made into a godhead, although it is connected with Joe's egalitarian spirit that stresses the value of each life and is juxtaposed with godliness. At the end of the text, the emphasis is

on the foetus, more than the mother and, as a knot which could well imply, our duality of being: the two strands of maternal and paternal inheritances; a double helix; the forces in us that may be creative or destructive. When Willieboy is dying in the back of the police van, he screams out in terror:

> 'Help! Oh, God help me! Oh, mamma, oh, mamma. Oh, Lord Jesus, save me. Save me. I'm dying! I'm dying! Save me. Save me. Oh, Christ, help me. Help me. Help me. Please. Help me. God. Jesus. Mother. Help me! Help me!'
>
> (p. 92)

As he cries out he thinks in his delirium that he is a child again being whipped and beaten by his own father. The redemption he seeks is a maternal protection, that which saves lives on the side of the living. At the same time, it indicates that what may be sought in God may sometimes be the return of the mother: the desire for a gentle and accepting protective power. This is a desire that Nawal El Saadawi works through *The Fall of the Imam*.[68]

I think La Guma's vision is an animist-communist one. That is to say, while it is anti-capitalist, it is not then a mere materialism, as in other articulations of an African socialism. What is striking about the text is how it works and flows with the interactions and deflections of energies and forces. It understands too the need for other spooks, beyond the capital ideal, and it affirms the sacredness of each life, a multiverse of spirits. It shows that beyond the law there may not just be lawless anarchy, as so often feared, but some scope for conceiving another ethics and another politics.

Although La Guma's aesthetic is usually identified as a social realism, it is also poetic and potentially philosophical. There is sometimes the argument that this poetic-realist writing is old-fashioned and naïve with respect to the self-mirrorings of the postmodernist text, but 'A Walk in the Night' is able to include a postmodernist aesthetic of phantasms and phantoms within a broader creative vision. Whilst it offers a detailed observation of the world of District Six, keeping this world alive after its historical demolition, the text also shows us a moving pattern, one which has the capacity to effect or transform concepts. An advantage of working with literary texts is that they offer a juncture at which ideas may be formed and other concepts renegotiated, as opposed to only the application of received philosophical ideas or theories to art. Thus, this book has been trying to work through some of the patterns in the weave of the texts it has looked at for the sake of what they offer to think anew, amongst other things: spirits as animate and animating forces not opposed to nature; the other as subject; the creative subject; mimetic and affective identification; the surreptitious distinction between supposedly 'progressive' and 'regressive' hybridities; radical sameness; the eclipse of the other; spirited empiricism and the ironic consciousness of the other; the not-part of the family; the more than one inheritance; the 'to come' of the abiku; the pre-post-colonial; the brother–sister ideal, and so on. It has been possible to raise these issues on the basis of a limited

range of texts but, of course, much more material could be brought in, be it to correct, refine or corroborate what has been advanced within practical limits.

I would have liked to go on to address *Specters of Marx*, and will conclude with a few words in this direction. With *Specters of Marx*, Derrida may be said to be a little belated in relation to La Guma. *Specters of Marx* is dedicated to the South African communist Chris Hani who was killed for his beliefs, and Derrida makes use of *Hamlet* to speak of Marxism. But La Guma got there 'first', in a way, in that he makes use of *Hamlet* to address spectres in relation to the hopes of a South African communism. This having got there 'first' means little for there are always precedents and reinventions. It only matters in terms of a philosophical legacy in which African culture is posited and eclipsed as the unconscious of the unconscious, an unconsciousness of the consciousness of others, an oblivion of forgetting. 'A Walk in the Night' is too impressive a text to be forgotten, and so I am sure that it will not be.

While *Specters of Marx* and 'A Walk in the Night' are in obvious ways different kinds of text, the former yet approaches a reading of Marx through a literature of the occult with respect to an analysis of fetishism. La Guma's text treats of some of the same spectres that Derrida's work does: the ghostliness of the ideal; the ghostliness of labour; the phantasms of commodity culture and of narcissism. La Guma's text also shows that you cannot kill the spook of superior being in that there *is* no superior being. Thus, killing the old white man solves nothing because you cannot kill a ghost, and that ghost is one that can come to possess *anyone*. Both Mofolo's *Chaka* and Head's *A Question of Power*, together with Tutuola's story of the 'Complete Gentleman', serve to make the point that a being possessed by a desire for superior or perfect or omnipotent being is not something that simply initiates with the arrival of the European. Moreover, this being possessed by that spook is shown to be a potentially poisonous affair and even if a ghost cannot be killed it can, if necessary, be exorcised.

Beyond all these spectres, there is living and there are the living. It is perhaps the question of another inversion. Apart from a spectral living on in death, there is a life that is *for the living* and the living on of many spirits. This would also necessitate considering not just a 'living to work' but a 'working to live'. Since the struggle clearly continues, it is worth citing from Aidoo's 'Loving the Black Angel' again:

> Don't you see
> in teeming celestial camps and
> down amongst the ancestors,
> multitudes of restless impi
> forever fighting
> as our heroes must?
>
> So
>
> You, La Guma,

You Moloise, and
All you Beautifully Young Deers
whose life the real devil daily
snaps:

don't sleep.

As you join the ancestors

don't sleep.

Stay awake.

Keep alert.

For the battle continues.
Ama Ata Aidoo, 'Loving the Black Angel'

This book has been struggling towards an accommodative vision in many ways. This necessitates a decentring of the dominant traditions of Western philosophy together with a bringing to the fore questions of animism where there are many possible interconnected areas of research, amongst them: African philosophies, Eastern philosophies, the mystical traditions, a study of literary creativity, psychoanalysis, modern physics and biology. It is a matter of both deconstruction and reconstellation. There is already a significant paradigm shift under way, and its implications are not just epistemological ones but political ones, concerning the mobilisation of communist and ecological values against the hyper-forces and death drives of capitalism.

Since the book began with a reflection on time and movement, it will end with some appropriate reflections from Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy*:

> Energy. Motion. We are all that. Yes, why not? … A curse on those who for money would ruin the Earth and trade in human miseries.
>
> Time by itself means nothing, no matter how fast it moves. Unless we give it something to carry for us, something we value.

Notes

Introduction

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24 Horton, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West*, p. 123.
25 Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, trans. Colin King (1945; Paris: Présence Africaine, 1969).
26 Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 39.
27 Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Life of Savages and Neurotics* in *The Pelican Freud Library*, 13, ed. Albert Dickson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 148. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Vol. 2, p. 447.
28 J. Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), p. 190. With respect to animism in relation to Woolf's poetics and vision, see also Nicholas Royle, 'A Walk in Kew Gardens' in *Telepathy and Literature*.
29 Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (London: Methuen, 1993), p. 218.
30 Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p. 170.
31 Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p. 195.
32 Erwin Schrödinger, 'The Spirit of Science' in *Spirit and Nature: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), p. 326.
33 Schrödinger, 'The Spirit of Science', p. 332.
34 Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*, introd. Carl Sagan (London: Bantam Press, 1999), p. 19.
35 Schrödinger, 'The Spirit of Science', p. 332.
36 Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p. 206.
37 Head, *A Question of Power*, pp. 82–83.
38 Head, *A Question of Power*, p. 74.
39 V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.186.
40 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), paras 568–9.
41 Hountondji, *African Philosophy*, p. 63.
42 Hountondji, *African Philosophy*, p. 64.
43 Jahnheinz Jahn, *Muntu: An Outline of Neo-African Culture*, trans. Majorie Grene (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), pp. 17–18.
44 *Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 595.
45 Fritz Kramer, *The Red Fez: Art and Spirit Possession in Africa*, trans. Malcolm Green (London: Verso, 1993), p.64.
46 Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, p. 104.
47 Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, p. 148.
48 Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, p. 147.
49 Birago Diop, 'Breath' in *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, ed. E. Chukwudi Eze (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp. 427–48. The same version of the poem, translated by John Reed and Clive Wake, is to be found in *A Book of African Verse*, ed. John Reed and Clive Wake (London: Heinemann, 1964). It is also to be found in 'Animistic Spells' in *Poems of Black Africa*, ed. and introd. Wole Soyinka (London: Heinemann, 1975).
50 Reed and Wake, *A Book of African Verse*, p. 105.
51 Jahn, *Muntu*, p. 109.
52 Kramer, *The Red Fez*, p. 65.
53 Birago Diop, 'Sarzent the Madman' in *Jazz and Palm Wine*, ed. Willfried F. Feuser (Harlow: Longman, 1981).

54 Jean Fisher, 'Other Cartographies' in *Third Text*, 6 (Spring 1989), p. 80.
55 James Clifford, 'The Others: Beyond the "Salvage" Paradigm' in *Third Text*, p. 75.
56 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, foreword by Homi Bhabha, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986) pp. 185–6.
57 Arthur James Balfour, from a speech in the House of Commons (13 June 1910) as cited by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 33.
58 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 21.
59 Nawal El Saadawi, 'Why keep asking me about my identity?' in *The Nawal El Saadawi Reader* (London: Zed Books, 1997), p. 133.
60 El Saadawi, 'Democracy, creativity and African Literature' in *The Nawal El Saadawi Reader*, p. 204.
61 Aijaz Ahmad, 'The Politics of Literary Post-Coloniality' in *Race and Class*, Vol. 36, no. 3 (1995), p. 7.
62 This is too widespread to attribute to individual sources. Adebayo Williams offers an objection to what he sees as India-centric in post-colonial studies in 'The postcolonial *flaneur* and other fellow-travellers: Conceits for a narrative of redemption' in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 18, no. 5 (1997), 821–41. Pal Ahluwalia responds to Williams in *Post-Colonial Predicaments: African Inflections* (forthcoming). My point is not that post-colonial studies are India-centric, which they are not, only that when considered in terms of a supposedly general theoretical framework, a Western orientation tends to Orientate itself in this way.
63 Marx, of course, challenges Hegel's privileging of conceptual labour in favour of physical labour. However, animism resists the splitting of mind from body. In trying to readdress the creative, I think I share some concerns with friends and colleagues, locally speaking, with Julia Borossa, Timothy Clark, Nicholas Royle. However, many others could be brought in here.
64 Wilson Harris, 'The Fabric of the Imagination' in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 12, no. 1 (January 1990), p. 176.

1 Clandestine Antigones and the pre-post-colonial

1 Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 1997), p. 541.
2 Jacques Derrida, 'La Pharmacie de Platon' in *La dissémination* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), pp. 167–68.
3 Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity*, trans. Patrick Camiller, introd. Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 1994), p. 8 ff. Benjamin's 'Central park' and *Passagen-Werk* are drawn on in this analysis. See also, Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: Verso, 19), pp. 90–1, p.171.
4 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. and introd. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 18–26. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 1997), p. 541.
5 Chenjerai Hove, *Bones* (1988; London: Heinemann, 1990); Tsitsi Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions* (London: Women's Press, 1988); Caroline Rooney, 'Inheritance and Independence in Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* in *Essays on African Writing: Contemporary Literature, Volume II*, ed. Abdulrazak Gurnah (London: Heinemann, 1995).
6 *Mothers of the Revolution*, ed. Irene Staunton (Harare: Baobab Books, 1990), p. 25.
7 *Mothers of the Revolution*, p. 267.
8 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (1952; London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1967), p.133.
9 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 135.
10 Tzvetan Todorov, 'The Co-existence of Cultures' in *Oxford Literary Review*, 19 (1997), p. 10.

11 Hélène Cixous, *La jeune née* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions), p. 128.
12 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 174. The dedication of the lecture, to the memory of Chris Hani, echoes, perhaps, the way in which Antigone speaks of the need to remember her brother: as equal to his brother and, at the same time, unique (irreplaceable).
13 Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 174.
14 Derrida, 'A "Madness" Must Watch Over Thinking' in *Points…* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 341–2.
15 Derrida, *Glas,* trans. John P. Leavey Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 166. All further references to this work will appear in the text. Reference to other works by Derrida cited in this chapter appear in the notes.
16 Such silent crossings are also noted in 'Restes en eclats d'une lecture claudicante de *Glas*'. See, Hélène Van Camp, *Chemin faisant avec Jacques Derrida,* La philosophie en commun (Paris and Montréal: L'Harmattan, 1996), especially, pp. 73–83.
17 Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959–1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 247. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
18 Freud, in a letter to Pfister, 27 January 1920, as noticed and cited by Derrida, 'To Speculate – on "Freud"' in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond,* trans. and introd. Alan Bass (University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 329.
19 This would be to propose a phantom communication, one that would perhaps correlate with Kierkegaard's reading of *Antigone,* in which Antigone is the bearer of the secret of her father's incestuous desire.
20 Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 117.
21 Samuel Weber, 'Breaching the Gap: On Lacan's Ethics of Psychoanalysis' in *Politics Theory and Contemporary Culture* ed. Mark Poster (Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 131–58.
22 Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, II.3.a.
23 Derrida draws attention to Hegel's belief in the purity, love without desire, of the brother-sister relationship, in *Glas*, p. 225 (which also serves to draw attention to Hegel's relationship with his sister) and in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. and introd. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 255.
24 Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Généalogies* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), pp. 88–9. I am grateful to Julia Borossa for drawing my attention to this source.
25 Basil Davidson, *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History* (London: Longman, 1983), p. 123.
26 Lacan's readings here can be made to resonate with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, with respect to the 'sphere of excess we must not cross into' and also with respect to the anamorphotic climax of the text in which the radiant 'Intended' of Kurtz is elliptically designated as 'the horror'.
27 Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robert Fagles, introd. Bernard Knox (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982). My own references to *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus* are from this edition.
28 I am thinking of the liminal sacred/taboo woods or forests, on the outskirts of villages or towns, as depicted in African writing, in particular Nigerian literature.
29 In *Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida à répondre: De l'hospitalité* (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1997), Derrida states: 'Étranger en pays étranger, Oedipe se rend donc vers un lieu de clandestinité. *Sorte d'immigré clandestin*, il y sera caché dans la mort: enseveli, inhumé, emporté en secret dans la nuit d'une crypte' (p. 93, my emphasis). This combines terminology, referred to above, of both a discussion of Antigone (encryptment) and of Marx (clandestine immigrancy). With respect to crypts, it could be argued that both the 'deaths' of Oedipus and Antigone could be considered in terms of 'live burial', a question that I will consider in literary terms towards the end of this chapter.

30 More specifically, involving yourself in *Antigone*, you involve yourself in a set-up of rival brothers (Eteocles and Polynices), a set-up that Derrida explicitly explores in his reading of the play, while *Glas* replicates or uses the rivalrous format in setting up two columns: one for the state-honoured brother, Hegel, and one for the criminal bastard brother, Genet. As far as Antigone is concerned, while not involved in her brother's leadership dispute, she nonetheless, arriving on this scene, cannot remain purely uninvolved, and in siding with one brother, she would seem to become the enemy of her brother's enemy, the other brother (as Derrida notes), although, it is still an equality of rites and respect she calls for (*Antigone*, p. 85). If Antigone has a preference for Polynices it would seem to be one she inherits, through the legacies of rivalry, rivalry of legacies, in which she is called upon to support outlawed. It is impossible to go into the questions that arise from this, while the further question would be: what of the inheritance of the daughter/sister?

31 'Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason' in *Supposing the Subject*, ed. and introd. Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1995). An earlier draft of this work engaged more extensively with this issue, here edited for reasons of length. However, I hope that my concerns over a Kantian cosmopolitanism will yet emerge from the paper as a whole. Of further relevance to the question of an outlaw ethics as a critique of a Kantian concept of ethics is Carla Hesse's extremely interesting article, 'Kant, Foucault and *Three Women*' in *Foucault and the Writing of History*, ed. Jan Goldstein (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

32 Žižek, p. 117. While, in our times, an association of Antigone's 'inflexibility' with 'terrorism' is not too surprising, in *Oedipus at Colonus*, especially, she may be regarded as a pacifist – in her pleas against civil war and attempts to reconcile Oedipus and Polynices. See also, Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), p. 161.

33 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 457, trans. A.V. Miller, analysis and foreword J.N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 274–5.

34 Françoise Duroux writes: 'Ce qu'Antigone incarne, c'est non seulement l'Éthique, mais une autre politique'. See, 'Antigone encore. Les femmes et la loi' in *Rue Descartes* no.1–2 (Des Grecs), avril 1991, 179–90.

35 'Draupadi', trans. and introd. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in *In Other Worlds* (London: Methuen, 1987). All further references to this work will appear in the text.

36 For an interesting article on the subject of women's laughter see, Katherine Striep, 'Just a Cérébral': Jean Rhys, Women's Humour, and Resentiment' in *Representations*, no.45 (Winter 1994).

37 Foucault, *The Order of Things* (Tavistock Publications, 1970), pp. 342–3.

38 *Glas*, p. 187. The burst of laughter referred to here interestingly echoes Derrida's reference to Bataille's burst of laughter at Hegelianism/philosophy in 'From Restricted to General Economy' in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 252.

39 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 475, p. 288.

40 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 188.

41 See, *Mothers of the Revolution*, ed. Irene Staunton (Harare: Baobab Books, 1990). See, also, David Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (London: James Currey, 1985).

42 Caroline Rooney, *Mothers of the Revolution*: Zimbabwean Women in the Aftermath of War' in *African Languages and Cultures* 4,1 (1991); 'Re-Possessions', op. cit.

43 In participating in the occasion of an urgent call to civil peace in Algeria in September 1994, Derrida called for particular recognition to be given to Algerian women, for instance: 'Cette guerre civile est pour l'essential une guerre d'hommes… Elle exclut les femmes du champ politique'. He goes on to assert the importance of seeing these and such women as bearers of 'la vie et la raison', life and reason, then, and not death and madness. See, 'Parti pris pour L'Algérie' in *Les temps modernes* no. 580 (janvier/février 1995), p. 241.

44 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Psychonalysis in the Left Field' in *Speculations After Freud: Psychoanalysis, Philosophy and Culture*, ed. Sonu Shamadsani and Michael Munchow (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 43ff.
45 Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1952), p. 197.
46 Ama Ata Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy: Reflections of a Black-Eyed Squint* (London: Longman, 1977), p. 93.
47 Ama Ata Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy*, p. 64.
48 Assia Djebar, *Fantasia: an Algerian Cavalcade*, trans. and introd. Dorothy S. Blair (London: Quartet Books, 1985). All further references to this work will appear in the text.
49 In the text it is '*L'amour, ses cris*', followed by 'my hand as it writes in French makes the pun', p. 214.
50 Slavoj Žižek, 'Is There a Cause of the Subject?' in *Supposing the Subject*, p. 104.
51 See Derrida, *The Post Card*, p. 245.
52 Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 13.
53 Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London and New York: Verso, 1997), p. ix.
54 *The Politics of Friendship*, pp. 156–57.
55 Jacques Derrida, 'Racism's Last Word' in *Art contre Apartheid/Art against Apartheid* (Paris: Association Française d'Action Artistique, 1983). The further reference is to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
56 Luke Thurston in his doctoral thesis, 'Writing the Symptom: Lacan's Joycean Knot' (University of Kent) shows how Lacan's interest in the radiance of Antigone marks a turn in Lacan's thinking of aesthetics. The thesis goes on to elaborate Lacan's preoccupation in his later work with a writing of the real.
57 In his introduction to *Oedipus at Colonus*, Bernard Knox writes of the heroic status accorded to Sophocles on his death: 'This extraordinary honor was paid him not because of his eminence as a dramatist or his services to the city but because he had been the official host of the healing hero Asclepius when his cult was introduced into Athens. Sophocles was accorded heroic worship under the name *Dexion* – The Receiver', pp. 257–8.
58 Ama Ata Aidoo, 'Loving the Black Angel' in *An Angry Letter in January* (Coventry, Sydney and Aarhus: the Dangaroo Press, 1992). I chose these lines, among other possible lines, since they address, in a political elegy and rallying cry, the brothers outlawed by the apartheid state. This, then, with the poem's dedication ('for Ben MoLoise, Alex la Guma and Our Other Fallen Heroes'), can be placed beside the second footnote of this.
59 Nawal El Saadawi, *The Nawal El Saadawi Reader* (London: Zed Books, 1997), p. 124.
60 This is explored by Timothy Clark in *The Theory of Inspiration: Composition as a Crisis of Subjectivity in Romantic and post-Romantic Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).
61 For work that shows how this is so, see Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991). The work of Soshana Felman would also be important in this regard.
62 This is a persistent preoccupation and is referred to in a number of texts by Derrida. Later in this chapter, we will examine a formulation of it in *Glas*.
63 Salman Rushdie, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999). All further references to this work will appear in the text.
64 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, preface by Michel Foucault, introd. Mark Seem, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1994), p. 161. All further references to this work will appear in the text. See, also, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 264.
65 Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre' in *Glyph: Textual Studies*, 7 (1980), 176–232.

66 George Steiner, *Antigones* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1984), p. 135.
67 Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 138.
68 This is treated by Timothy Clark in *The Theory of Inspiration*.
69 Jacques Derrida, 'Che cos'è la poesia?', in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (London and New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 229–31.
70 Timothy Clark, *A Theory of Inspiration*, p. 262.
71 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 437, p. 261–62.
72 Appiah, *In My Father's House*, pp. 210–15. I summarise only one of two points in what is a much more elaborate *argument*.
73 Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p. 213.
74 Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p. 214.
75 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, preface by Michel Foucault, introd. Mark Seem, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1994), p. 277. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
76 Ato Quayson, 'Caribbean Configurations: Characterological Types and the Frames of Hybridity' in *Interventions*, Vol. 1, no. 3 (1999), p. 338.
77 Quayson, 'Caribbean Configurations', p. 338.
78 Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
79 Arthur Rimbaud, *Une saison en enfer et le bateau ivre/A Season in Hell and The Drunken Boat*, parallel text, trans. Louise Varèse (New York: New Directions 1961), pp. 16–18.
80 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. and introd. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 275.
81 Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 169.
82 Chinua Achebe, 'An Image of Africa' in *Hopes and Impediments* (London and New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1990), p. 17.
83 I learnt from the lawyer of the Zimbabwean Gay and Lesbian Society, Derek Matyszak, that the debate in the rural areas is that while there is homosexuality this ought not necessitate the construction of homosexual individuals which could lead to ostracism from the community.
84 Ama Ata Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy: Reflections of a Black-Eyed Squint* (Harlow: Longman, 1997), pp. 65–6.
85 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Dent, 1974), p.117.
86 Robin Horton, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 107.
87 Donna J. Haraway, *Modest Witness@SecondMillenium.Female Man©Meets Oncomouse™: Feminism and Technoscience* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 44.
88 Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire* (Duke University Press, 1993).
89 As cited by V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 141–2.
90 Bessie Head, *A Question of Power* (London: Heinemann,), p. 138.
91 Elizabeth Cowie, *Representing the Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 272.
92 I base this on unpublished work on the figure of the double which I hope to return to.
93 John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), p. 74.
94 Amos Tutuola, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, with a foreword by Geoffrey Parrinder (1954; London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 24.
95 Kingsley Amis, From *The Spectator*, 26 February 1954 in *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1975), p. 25.
96 Parrinder, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, p. 11.

97 Amis, *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, p. 26.
98 From *West Africa*, 1 May 1954 in *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, p. 37.
99 Babasola Johnson, From *West Africa*, 17 April 1954 in *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, p. 32.
100 Amos Tutuola, *The Palm Wine Drinkard* (1952; London: Faber and Faber, 1977), p. 18. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
101 Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 210.
102 Ama Ata Aidoo, *Anowa* (Harlow: Longman, 1970).
103 Sacheverell Sitwell, 'Agamemnon's Tomb' in *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892–1935*, ed. W.B. Yeats (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936).
104 Edith Sitwell, 'Out of School' in *Collected Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1982).
105 Eric Larrabee, From *The Reporter*, 12 May 1953 in *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, p. 12.
106 Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 11 of *The Pelican Freud Library* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 293. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
107 As cited by Stuart Mason, *Oscar Wilde, Art and Morality* (London: Frank Palmer, 1912), p. 76.
108 Jacques Derrida, 'Circumfession' in *Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), p. 71.
109 Jean Genet, 'L'Atelier D'Alberto Giacometti', as cited by Edmund White in *Genet: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p.19.
110 In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel summarising his earlier discussion of 'Observing Reason', writes: 'the *being of the "I" is a thing*' (p. 480, emphasis in text)
111 Géza Róheim, *Animism, Magic and the Divine King* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1930).
112 Jean Genet, *Journal du Voleur*, p. 143, as cited by Edmund White, *Genet*, p.136–7.
113 This is discussed by Timothy Clark in *The Theory of Inspiration*.
114 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, p. 45.
115 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 184. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
116 Jacques Derrida, '*Fors*: The Anglish Words of Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok' in Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonomy*, trans. Nicholas Rand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. xv.
117 Marguerite Nolan, 'Psychoanalyzing Colonialism, Colonizing Psychoanalysis: Re-Reading Aboriginality' (PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 1999).
118 For a discussion of this, see Lyn Innes and Caroline Rooney, 'African Writing and Gender' in *Writing and Africa*, ed. Mpalive-Hangson Msiska and Paul Hyland (Harlow: Longman, 1997), 193–215.
119 I say this with particular reference to a paper given by Emmanuel Obiechina at a conference on 'African Readerships' (Cambridge University, 1999), which may be forthcoming in an anthology of papers from the conference, edited by Lyn Innes and Stephanie Newell.
120 See, in particular, Simon Glendinning, *On Being With Others* (London: Routledge, 1998).
121 João dos Santos, 'South-central Africa in 1590–1600' in *African Civilisation Revisited: From Antiquity to Modern Times* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 1998), p. 193.
122 Hegel, 'Absolute Spirit' in *Hegel: The Essential Writings*, ed. and introd. G. Weiss (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 329. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
123 As Julia Borossa has shown, Freud and the Western psychoanalytic institution determinedly ignored early theories of a non-Oedipal Indian subject, while British psychoanalysis has served to Orientalise the Indian analyst in the figure of Massud

Khan. See, Julia Borossa, 'The Migration of Psychoanalysis and the Analyst as Migrant' in *Oxford Literary Review*, 19 (1997).

124 Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Vol. I, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 368.

125 Hegel, 'Absolute Spirit' in *The Essential Writings*, p. 331.

126 Hegel, 'Absolute Spirit' in *The Essential Writings*, p. 333.

127 Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, p. 199.

128 Edward Said, 'Orientalism Re-Considered' in *Race and Class*, Vol. 27, no. 2 (1985).

129 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', p. 297.

130 Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, introd. Ernest Mandel, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1976). pp. 133–4.

131 Benita Parry, 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse' in *Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 9, Nos. 182, 27–58.

132 See, for example, Mary-Kay Wilmers in the introduction to Lou Andreas-Salomé, *The Freud Journal*, trans. Stanley A. Leavy (London: Quartet Books, 1987), p. 20.

133 Mahasweta Devi, 'Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha' in *Imaginary Maps*, trans. and introd. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 130. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

134 Some of this work is to appear in 'Deconstruction and Weaving' in *Deconstructions*, ed. Nicholas Royle (London: Macmillan, forthcoming). I hope to look at the significance of the weaver bird in African poetry on another occasion.

135 Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row); Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women,* Ecology *and Economic Development* (London: Zed Books, 1988).

136 K. Anthony Appiah, 'Inventing an African Practice in Philosophy: Epistemological Issues' in *The Surreptitious Speech: Présence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness 1947–1987*, ed. V.Y. Mudimbe (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), p. 229.

137 Miriam Tlali, interviewed by Rosemary Jolly in *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid and Democracy, 1970–1995*, ed. Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 145.

138 This cannot be traced through the maze of *Wuthering Heights* here, but some further indication can be given. Nelly Dean calls Heathcliff a 'savage' and speculates over his Indian ancestry. His arrival in the household is based on an incident in the Brontë family history in which the father brought home a gift of toy soldiers which served as the basis for the children composing stories set in Africa. When Heathcliff disappears, it is thought he has gone to be a soldier, and so on. More generally, *Wuthering Heights* is a particularly animistic text, and it offers a different treatment of a colonial subtext to that of *Jane Eyre*.

139 Wole Soyinka, *Idandre and Other Poems* (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 28.

140 Ben Okri, *The Famished Road* (London: Vintage, 1991), p. 478.

141 Okri, *The Famished Road*, p. 487.

142 Sándor Ferenczi, *Selected Writings*, ed. and introd. Julia Borossa (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 221. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

143 Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (London: Picador, 1987), pp. 274–5.

144 Ato Quayson, 'Esoteric Webwork as Nervous System: Reading the Fantastic in Ben Okri's Writing' in *Essays on African Literature*, Volume II, ed. Abdulrazak Gurnah (Oxford: Heinemann, 1995), 144–58.

145 Jane Wilkinson, *Talking with African Writers* (London: James Currey, 1992), p. 86. Cited by Brenda Cooper, *Magical Realism in West African Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 90.

146 Cooper, *Magical Realism in West African Writing*, p. 90.

147 Lewis Nkosi, 'Postmodernism and Black Writing in South Africa' in *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970–1995* eds Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See, too, *Critical*

Perspectives on Amos Tutuola.
148 Quayson, 'Esoteric Webworks', p. 157.
149 Bessie Head, *A Question of Power*, p. 85.
150 Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 169. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
151 Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy* (1946; Oxford: Heinemann, 1989), p. 60.
152 Bessie Head, *The Cardinals: With Meditations and Other Stories*, introd. M.J. Daymond (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1993), p. 110.
153 Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 178.
154 Can Themba, *The Will to Die* (London: Heinemann, 1983), p. 3.
155 *The Nawal El Saadwai Reader*, p. 83.
156 Nella Larsen, *'Passing' and 'Quicksand'*, ed. Deborah E. McDowell (London: Serpent's Tail, 1989), p.144.
157 Larsen, *Passing*, p. 171.
158 Larsen, *Passing*, p. 172.
159 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), p. 157.
160 Anastasia Valassopoulos is currently working on this with reference to performance in the culture and literature of Arab Women.
161 Paul Neumarkt, 'Amos Tutuola: Emerging African Literature' in *American Imago*, 28 (1971) 129–45; reprinted in *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*.
162 As for Jung, whilst I think he is right to question an all-colonising sexuality, I have many difficulties with his thought. In particular, he racialises the unconscious in ways that I find alarming. Andrew Samuels's work offers a very responsible and careful confrontation of the issue of racism in Jung's thought.
163 Ruth Leys, 'Death Masks: Kardiner and Ferenczi on Psychic Trauma' in *Representations*, 53 (Winter 1996), my emphasis, p. 59. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
164 Fritz Kramer, *The Red Fez: Art and Spirit Possession in Africa*, trans. Malcolm Green (London: Verso, 1987), p. 250. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
165 Léopold Senghor, *African Socialism*, trans. and introd. Mercer Cook (London and New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 72.
166 Patricia Caplan, *African Voices, African Lives: Personal Narratives from a Swahili Village* (London: Routledge, 1997).
167 I.M. Lewis, *Ecstactic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 42.
168 Emmanuel Obiechina, *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, p. 139,
169 Nelson Mandela, *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, introd. Oliver Tambo (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), pp. 147–8.
170 Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 170.
171 Pal Ahluwalia, *Post-Colonial Predicaments: African Inflections* (forthcoming).
172 Tsenay Serequeberhan, 'Philosophy and Post-Colonial Africa' in *African Philosophy: An Anthology* ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), emphasis in text, p. 17.

2 From Hegel on Africa towards a reading of African literature

1 Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr., and Richard Rand (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 225. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
2 Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, introd. Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 33, p.194.

3 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 459, p. 275. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
4 Derrida also looks at Hegel's rather strange relationship with his troubled sister, where Hegel's reading of 'Antigone' may have its transferences.
5 Robert Bernasconi, 'Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti' in *Hegel After Derrida*, ed. Stuart Barnett (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). All further references to this work will appear in the text.
6 Abiola Irele, Introduction to Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosphy*, trans. Henri Evans in collaboration with Jonathan Rée (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 11.
7 Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, 'Modern Western Philosophy and African Colonialism' in *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, ed. Emmanuelle Chukwudi Eze (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), p. 218.
8 Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'The Illusions of Race' in *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, 275–90.
9 Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 179. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
10 As addressed in the previous chapter, Fanon paves the way for this critique of negritude in *Black Skins, White Masks*. However, what tends to be overlooked by later commentators is that Fanon problematises the whole issue of an African consciousness as a *phase* to be surpassed. Prominent African critics of negritude in terms of a desire for a pure nativism include: Ezekiel Mphalele, *The African Image* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974); Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). For another discussion of these issues, see Pal Ahluwalia, *Post-Colonial Predicaments: African Inflections*, forthcoming. This latter work served to draw my attention to the work of Sylvia Washington BÂ which, as I do here, also argues against too hastily a stereotypical reading of Senghor.
11 Léopold Sédar Senghor, *On African Socialism*, trans. and introd. Mercer Cook (London and New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 67. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
12 Caroline Rooney, 'Deconstruction and Weaving' in *Deconstructions: A User's Guide*, ed. Nicholas Royle (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2000).
13 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Dent, 1974), p. 96. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
14 Robert J.C. Young, 'Deconstruction and the Postcolonial' in *Deconstructions: A User's Guide*, ed. Nicholas Royle (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 188. All further references to this work will appear in the text. Young treats issues in common with 'Clandestine Antigones' (as not referred to in his essay), while he wishes to stress that this concerns an original knowledge of his own. I would see our common source, addressed by both of us, as Cixous' *La jeune née*.
15 Giles Foden, *The Last King of Scotland* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998). All further references to this work will appear in the text. In novels such as *Black Mischief*, *Mister Johnson* and *A Good Man in Africa*, Africa is treated as a site of farce. In Foden's novel this farcicality is restricted to the figure of Amin.
16 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markham, foreword Homi Bhabha (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1986), p. 165. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
17 Eze, 'Western Philosophy and African Colonialism', p. 214.
18 Eze, 'Western Philosophy and African Colonialism', p. 216.
19 Robin Horton, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1997), p. 169. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

20 Dimitri Meeks and Christine Favard-Meeks, *Daily Life of the Egyptian Gods*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 18–19. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
21 Jahnheinz Jahn, *Muntu: An Outline of Neo-African Culture*, trans. Majorie Grene (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 197.
22 Thomas Mofolo, *Chaka*, trans. Daniel P. Kunene (1931; Oxford: Heinemann, 1981), p. 24.
23 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 55.
24 Peter Godwin, *Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa* (London: Picador, 1996), p. 198.
25 Arundhati Roy, *The Cost of Living* (London: Flamingo, 1999), pp. 91–2.
26 Edmund White, *Genet: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 402.
27 White, *Genet*, p. 627.
28 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. from the French (London: Tavistock Publications, 1982), p. 340.
29 See the special issue of *Oxford Literary Review*, 20 (1998), devoted to Bersani's work.
30 Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying' in *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's*, introd. and ed. Karl Beckson (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1981), p.175.
31 Ama Ata Aidoo, 'Images of Africa at Century's End' in *An Angry Letter in January* (Coventry, Sydney and Aarhus: Dangaroo Press, 1992).
32 Henry Olela, 'The African Foundations of Greek Philosophy' in *African Philosophy*, ed. Eze, p. 43.
33 Olela, 'The African Foundations of Greek Philosophy', p. 48.
34 Otto Rank, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*, trans. and introd. Harry Tucker, Jr. (London: Karnac Books, Maresfield Library, 1989).
35 Chinua Achebe, 'The "Chi" in Igbo Cosmology' in *African Philosophy*, ed. Eze, p. 67.
36 As cited by Jacques Derrida in 'The Time is Out of Joint', trans. Peggy Kamuf, in *Deconstruction is/in America: A New Sense of the Political*, ed. Anselm Haverkamp (New York and London: New York University Press, 1991), p.37.
37 Derrida, 'The Time is Out of Joint', pp.36–7.
38 H.D., 'The Master' in *Collected Poems 1912–1944*, ed. L. Martz (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1984).
39 Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (London: Flamingo, 1991) p. 271. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
40 Brian Dillon, 'The Rhetoric of Temporality: The Spatialisation of Time in Modern Criticism' (PhD, Kent 1999).
41 J. Hillis Miller, '*Heart of Darkness* Revisited' in *Heart of Darkness: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Ross C. Marfin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).
42 Paul de Man, 'Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*' in *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982), p. 775.
43 Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, revised edition, trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler, Eduardo Cadava, and Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 65.
44 T.S. Eliot, 'Morning at the Window' in *Collected Poems 1909–1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974).
45 Ezra Pound, 'A Few Don'ts By An Imagist' in *Imagist Poetry*, ed. and introd. Peter Jones (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 130.
46 Hillis Miller, '*Heart of Darkness* Revisited', p. 215.
47 Nicholas Royle offers a more extensive consideration of 'backing' that would add further considerations to what is being spoken of. See, 'Back' in *Oxford Literary Review*, 18 (1996).
48 J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1980), p. 1. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

49 Ama Ata Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy: Reflections of a Black-Eyed Squint* (Harlow: Longman, 1977), p. 86.
50 Elaine Scarry, *Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
51 Wilma Stockenström, 'On the Suicide of Young Writers', trans. Stephen Gray, in *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*, ed. Stephen Gray (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989).
52 Simon Glendinning, *On Being With Others* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 14. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
53 Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 1997), p. 590.
54 Benita Parry, 'Speech and silence in the fictions of J.M. Coetzee' in *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid and Democracy*, ed. Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 164.
55 David Atwell, "Dialogue' and 'Fulfilment' in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*' in *Writing South Africa*, p. 172.
56 J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1999), p. 190. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
57 It is perhaps Albie Sachs' 'Preparing ourselves for freedom' (1989; reprinted in *Writing South Africa*, 1999) that is best known for speaking out against the aesthetic failings of protest literature, and has certainly generated much debate.
58 Brian Macaskill writes of his 'lyrical politics' in 'Jeremy Cronin's lyrical politics' in *Writing South Africa*, and discusses Cronin's literary reputation.
59 Jeremy Cronin, 'Lullaby' in *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*, ed. Gray.
60 Cronin, 'To learn how to speak' in *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*, ed. Gray.
61 Macaskill's article usefully looks into the linguistic derivations of these words.
62 This is another reason that I admire *Glas*, for Derrida engages with this in the Genet column.
63 Sipho Sepamla, 'Measure for Measure' in *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*, ed. Gray.
64 Bessie Head, *A Question of Power* (London: Heinemann, 1974) p. 13.
63 Can Themba, *The Will to Die*, pp. 8–9, my emphases.
66 Alex La Guma, *'A Walk in the Night' and Other Stories* (London: Heinemann, 1982), p. 28. All further references to this work will appear in the text.
67 Bessie Head, 'Let me tell a story now …' in *Tales of Tenderness and Power*, introd. Gillian Stead Eilersen (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990).
68 Nawal El Saadawi, *The Fall of the Imam* (London: Minerva, 1988).

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