## 2AC

### Settler Colonialism K

#### Our offense outweighs racism has become digital – Technohumanism and the unconscious of computational racial capitalism built our modern system of technology, and it is inseparable from racialization and genocide. Every aspect of our lives is intertwined with these systems, and only an analysis that accounts for these complexities can escape this computational subconscious.

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\*language struck through

I would like to conclude this foray into the unthought and the unconscious of computational racial capitalism with a few examples of technohumanist dehumanization, moments that were themselves building blocks of modern computing and ﬁnance. In 1889, Herman Hollerith patented the punch card system and the mechanical tabulator that was used in the 1890 censuses in Germany, England, Italy, Russia, Austria, Canada, France, Norway, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines. A national census, which normally took eight to ten years, now took a single year. The subsequent invention of the plugboard control panel in 1906 allowed for tabulators to perform multiple sorts in whatever sequence was selected without having to be rebuilt—an early form of programming. Hollerith’s Tabulating Machine Company merged with three other companies in 1911 to become the Computing Tabulating Recording Company, which renamed itself IBM in 1924. While the census opens a rich ﬁeld of inquiry that includes questions of statistics, computing, and state power that are increasingly relevant today (particularly taking into account the ever-presence of the NSA), for now I only want to extract two points: 1) humans became the fodder for statistical machines; and 2) as Vicente Rafael (2000) has shown regarding the Philippine census and as Edwin Black (2001) has shown with respect to the Holocaust, the development of this technology was inseparable from racialization and genocide. Rafael shows that, coupled to photographic techniques, the census at once “discerned” and imposed a racializing schema that welded a historical “progress” narrative to ever-whiter waves of colonization in the Philippines, from Malay migration to Spanish colonialism to U.S. imperialism. Racial fantasy meets white mythology meets Manifest Destiny meets world spirit. The census and photography are not only used to tell the story of the progressive whitening of the Philippines; this racist notion of uplift ﬁnds its expression in and as these technologies. Their expressive powers are not just evidence but the occasion for the performative self-evidencing of Philippine ascendance toward sovereign nationhood. The census was not just an exercise in early computing; it used the Philippine socius to encode colonial meaning and colonial aspiration on the bodies of Filipinos. For his part, Edwin Black writes: Only after Jews were identiﬁed—a massive and complex task that Hitler wanted done immediately—could they be targeted for efﬁcient asset conﬁscation, ghettoization, deportation, enslaved labor, and, ultimately, annihilation. It was a cross-tabulation and organizational challenge so monumental, it called for a computer. Of course, in the 1930s no computer existed. But IBM’s Hollerith punch card technology did exist. Aided by the company’s custom-designed and constantly updated Hollerith systems, Hitler was able to automate his persecution of the Jews. Historians have always been amazed at the speed and accuracy with which the Nazis were able to identify and locate European Jewry. Until now, the pieces of this puzzle have never been fully assembled. The fact is, IBM technology was used to organize nearly everything in Germany and then Nazi Europe, from the identiﬁcation of the Jews in censuses, registrations, and ancestral tracing programs to the running of railroads and organizing of concentration camp slave labor. IBM and its German subsidiary custom-designed complex solutions, one by one, anticipating the Reich’s needs. They did not merely sell the machines and walk away. Instead, IBM leased these machines for high fees and became the sole source of the billions of punch cards Hitler needed. (Black 2001). The sorting of populations and individuals—by forms of social difference including “race,” ability, and sexual preference (Jews, Roma, homosexuals, people deemed mentally or physically ~~handicapped~~) for the purposes of sending people who failed to meet Nazi eugenic criteria off to concentration camps to be dispossessed, humiliated, tortured, and killed—means that some aspects of computer technology (here, the search engine) emerged from this particular social necessity of segregation sometimes called Nazism (Black 2001). The Philippine-American War, in which Americans killed between 10 and 16 percent of the population of the Philippines, and the Nazi-administered Holocaust are but two world-historical events that are not just occasions for but part of the meaning of early computational automation. The socius was the substrate. These genocides were the concrete circumstances from which abstract ideas of communication gained form and substance. Humans watched and helped to encode the less-than humans. Computers bear this legacy of imperialism and fascism—it is inscribed in their operating systems. The mechanisms, as well as the social meaning, of computation were reﬁned in its concrete applications. The process of abstraction hid the violence of abstraction—what it took to make people into numbers—even as it integrated the result with economic and political protocols and directly effected certain behaviors. It is well-known that Claude Shannon’s landmark paper, “A Mathematical Theory of Communication” (1948), proposed a general theory of communication that was content-indifferent. This seminal work created a statistical, mathematical model of communication while simultaneously consigning any and all speciﬁc content to irrelevance as regards the transmission method itself. Like use-value under the management of the commodity-form, the message became only a supplement to the exchange-value of the code. In Message I wrote about the fact that some of the statistical information Shannon derived about letter frequency in English used as its ur-text Jefferson The Virginian (1948), the ﬁrst volume of Dumas Malone’s monumental six-volume study of Jefferson. This work was famously interrogated by Annette Gordon-Reed in her Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy (1998) for its suppression of information regarding Jefferson’s relation to slavery (see also Beller 2016a, 2017b). My point here is that the rules for content indifference were themselves derived from a particular content, as well as a particular form of indifference, and that the language used as a standard referent was a culturally speciﬁc deployment of language. The representative linguistic sample did not represent the whole of language, but language that belongs to a particular mode of sociality and racialized enfranchisement—an “American grammar” (Spillers 1987). Shannon’s deprivileging of the referent of the logos as referent, and his attention only to signiﬁers, was an intensiﬁcation of the slippage of signiﬁer from signiﬁed (“We, the people …”) already noted in linguistics and functionally operative in the elision of slavery in Jefferson’s biography—to say nothing of the same text’s elision of slave narrative and African-American speech. Shannon brilliantly and successfully developed a reconceptualization of language as code (sign system) and now as mathematical code (numerical system) that no doubt found another of its logical (and material) conclusions (at least with respect to metaphysics) in poststructuralist theory and deconstruction, with the placing of the referent under erasure. This recession of the real (of being, the subject, and experience—in short, the signiﬁed) from codiﬁcation allowed Shannon’s mathematical abstraction of rules for the transmission of any message whatsoever to become the industry standard even as they also meant, quite literally, the dehumanization of communication—its severance from a people’s history. A people’s history haunts the mathematical theory of communication—another meaning of the computational unconscious. In a 1987 interview, Shannon was quoted as saying, “I can visualize a time in the future when we will be to robots as dogs are to humans.… I’m rooting for the machines!” (1987: 61). If humans are to be the robot’s companion species, they (or is it we?), like the dogs who went before us, need a manifesto. The difﬁculty is that the labor of our “being”—such that it is or was—is encrypted in their machine function. And “we” have never been “one.” But we see what readers of Haraway already know: that a companion species manifesto for whatever remains is necessarily a trans-cyborg manifesto. In the context of the machinic absorption of forms of human being and human exploitation, Tara McPherson (2012) has brilliantly argued that the modularity achieved in the development of UNIX has its analog in racial segregation. Modularity and encapsulation, necessary to the writing of the UNIX code that still underpins contemporary operating systems, were emergent, general sociotechnical forms, what we might call technologies, abstract machines, or real abstractions. “I am not arguing that programmers creating UNIX at Bell Labs and at Berkeley were consciously encoding new modes of racism and racial understanding into digital systems,” McPherson argues. “The emergence of covert racism and its rhetoric of colorblindness are not so much intentional as systemic. Computation is a primary delivery method of these new systems and it seems at best naïve to imagine that cultural and computational operating systems don’t mutually infect one another” (30–31). This is the computational unconscious at work—the dialectical inscription and reinscription of sociality and machine architecture that then becomes the substrate for the next generation of consciousness, ad inﬁnitum. In an unpublished paper entitled “The Lorem Ipsum Project,” Alana Ramjit (2014) examines industry standards for the now-digital imaging of speech and graphic images. These include Kodak’s “Shirley cards” for standard skin tone (white), the Harvard Sentences for standard audio (white), the “Indian Head Test Pattern” for standard broadcast image (white fetishism), and “Lenna,” an image of Lena Soderberg taken from Playboy magazine (white patriarchal unconscious) that has become the reference standard image for the development of graphics processing. Each of these examples testiﬁes to an absorption of the sociohistorical at every step of mediological and computational reﬁnement (Roth 2009). More recently, as Chris Vitale (2015) brought out in a powerful presentation on machine learning and neural networks given at Pratt Institute in 2015, Facebook’s machine has produced “DeepFace,” an image of the minimally recognizable human face. However, this ur-human face, purported to be the minimally recognizable form of the human face, unsurprisingly turns out to be a white guy. This is a case in point of the extension of colonial relations into machine function. Given the racialization of poverty in the system of global apartheid (Federici 2012), we have on our hands (or rather, in our machines) a new modality of automated genocide. Fascism and genocide have new mediations and have not just adapted to new media but have merged. Of course, the terms and names of genocidal regimes change, but the consequences persist. Just yesterday it was called neoliberal democracy. Today it’s called the end of neoliberalism. The current worldwide crisis in migration is one of the symptoms of the genocidal tendencies of the most recent coalescence of the “practically” automated logistics of race, nation, and class. Today racism is at once a symptom of the computational unconscious, an operation of nonconscious cognition, and still just the garden variety self-serving murderous willed ~~stupidity~~ that is the legacy of slavery, settler colonialism, and colonialism. Thus we may observe that the statistical methods utilized by IBM to ﬁnd Jews, [Romani] Gypsies, and queers in the shtetl are operative in Wiener’s antiaircraft cybernetics as well as in Israel’s Iron Dome missile defense system. The prevailing view, even if it is not one of pure mathematical abstraction, in which computational process has its essence without reference to any concrete whatever, can be found in what follows. As an article entitled “Traces of Israel’s Iron Dome Can Be Found in Tech Startups” for Bloomberg News almost giddily reports: “The Israeli-engineered Iron Dome is a complex tapestry of machinery, software and computer algorithms capable of intercepting and destroying rockets midair. An offshoot of the missile-defense technology can also be used to sell you furniture” (Coppola, 2013). Not only, it seems, is war good computer business, it’s good for computerized business. It is ironic that the Iron Dome is likened to a tapestry and now used to sell textiles—almost as if it were haunted by Lisa Nakamura’s (2014) recent ﬁndings regarding the (forgotten) role played by Navajo women weavers in the making of early transistors for Fairchild, the eerily named company of Silicon Valley legend and founding father—as well as infamous eugenicist—William Shockley. The article goes on to confess that the latest consumer spin-offs, which facilitate the real-time imaging of couches in your living room and drive sales on the domestic front, exist thanks to the U.S. ﬁnancial support for Zionism and its militarized settler colonialism in Palestine. “We have American-backed apartheid and genocide to thank for being able to visualize a green moderne couch in our very own living room before we click ‘Buy now.’ ” (Okay, this is not really a quotation, but it expresses the essence of the article.) Census, statistics, informatics, cryptography, war machines, industry standards, markets—all are management techniques for the organization of otherwise unruly humans, subhumans, posthumans, and nonhumans by capitalist society. The ethos of content indifference, along with the encryption of social difference as both mode and means of systemic functionality, is sustainable only so long as derivative human beings are themselves rendered as content providers, body and soul. But it is not only tech spin-offs from the racist war dividends that we should be tracking. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (2004) has shown in utterly convincing ways that the gendered history of the development of computer programming at ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer), in which male mathematicians instructed female “computers” to physically make the electronic connections (and remove any bugs), echoes into the present experiences of sovereignty enjoyed by users who have, in many respects, become programmers (even if most of us have little or no idea how programming works, or even that we are programming). Chun notes that “during World War II almost all computers were young women with some background in mathematics. Not only were women available for work then, they were also considered to be better, more conscientious computers, presumably because they were better at repetitious, clerical tasks”(2004: 33). One could say that programming became programming and software became software when commands shifted from commanding a “girl” to commanding a machine. Clearly this puts the gender not just of the machine but of the commander in question. Chun suggests that the augmentation of our power through the command-control functions of computation is a result of what she calls the “Yes sir” of the feminized operator—that is, of servile labor. Indeed, in the ENIAC and other early machines, the execution of the operator’s order was to be carried out by the “wren” or the “slave.” For the desensitized, this information may seem incidental, a mere development or advance beyond the instrumentum vocale (the speaking tool, i.e., the Roman term for slave) in which even the communicative capacities of the slave are totally subordinated to the master. Here we pose the larger question: What are the implications for this gendered and racialized form of power exercised in the interface? What is its relation to gender oppression, to slavery? Is this mode of command-control over bodies and extended to the machine a universal form of empowerment, one to which all (posthuman) bodies might aspire, or is it a mode of subjectiﬁcation built in the footprint of domination in such a way that it replicates the beliefs, practices, and consequences of “prior” orders of whiteness and masculinity—that is, of male and female and of master and slave—in unconscious but nonetheless murderous ways?12 The question is complex. Recall here that when speaking of automated “mechanical labor,” Wiener said that “any labor that accepts the conditions of competition with slave labor accepts the conditions of slave labor, and is essentially slave labor (1961: 26–27). Is the computer the realization of the power of a transcendental subject? Or of the subject whose transcendence was built upon and is still built upon a historically developed version of racial masculinity based upon slavery and gender violence that was then automated?

The computational unconscious also implicates the unconscious processes at the interface. Andrew Norman Wilson’s scandalizing ﬁlm Workers Leaving the Googleplex (2011), the making of which got him ﬁred from Google, depicts poor workers, mostly people of color, leaving Google’s Mountain View campus during off-hours. These workers are the book scanners, and they shared neither the spaces nor the perks of white-collar workers, had different parking lots and entrances, and drove a different class of vehicles. They were the repressed and indeed the unconscious of the digital scan. Wilson has also curated and developed a set of images that show the condom-clad ﬁngers (black, brown, female) of workers next to partially scanned book pages. He considers these mis-scans a new form of documentary evidence. While digitization and computation may seem to have transcended certain humanistic questions, it is imperative that we understand that its posthumanism is also radically untranscendent, grounded as it is on the living legacies of oppression and, in the last instance, on the radical dispossession of billions. These billions are disappeared, literally utilized as a surface of inscription for everyday transmissions. The dispossessed are in fact the disavowed substrate of the codiﬁcation process by the sovereign operators commanding their screens and waging their data visualizations. The digitized, rewritable screen pixels are just the visible top side (virtualized surface) of bodies dispossessed by capital’s digital algorithms on the bottom side, where, arguably, other metaphysics still pertain. Not Hegel’s world spirit—whether in the form of Ray Kurzweil’s singularity or Tegmark’s computronium—but, rather, Marx’s imperative toward a ruthless critique of everything existing can begin to explain how and why the current computational ecosystem is cofunctional with the unprecedented dispossession wrought by racial computational capitalism and its system of global apartheid. Racial capitalism’s programs continue to function on the backs of those consigned to servitude. Data visualization, whether in the form of selﬁe, global map, digitized classic, or downloadable sound of the Big Bang, is powered by this elision. It is, shall we say, inescapably local to planet Earth, fundamentally historical in relation to species emergence, inexorably complicit with the deferral of justice. The Global South, with its now worldwide distribution, is endemic to the geopolitics of computational racial capital—it is one of the extraordinary products of the world computer. The computronics that organize the ﬂow of capital through planetary materials and signs also organize the consciousness of capital and with it the cosmological erasure of the Global South. Computers organize the whips and chains while humans watch and help. Thus the computational unconscious names a vast aspect of global function that requires analysis, protest, activism, and revolution. Here we sneak up on the two principle meanings of the concept of the computational unconscious. On the one hand, we have the problematic residue of amortized consciousness (and the praxis thereof/remaindered life) that has gone into the making of contemporary infrastructure—the structural repression and forgetting that is endemic to the very essence of our technological build-out as stolen, dead labor. On the other hand, we have the organization of everyday life taking place on the basis of this amortization, that is, on the basis of a dehistoricized, deracinated abstract relation to machines that function by virtue of the fact that intelligible history has been shorn off of them and the legibility of stolen, dead labor purged from their operating systems. Put simply, we have the forgetting—the radical disappearance and expunging from memory—of the historical and technical conditions of possibility of what is. As a consequence, we have the organization of social practice and futurity (or lack thereof) on the basis of this materially encoded, functionalized absence. The capture of the general intellect by such machines means also the management of the general antagonism and the general rendering unconscious of the lived price of complicity with computation. Never has it been truer that memory requires forgetting—the exponential growth in memory storage means also an exponential growth in systematic forgetting—and the withering away of the analog, of history, of tradition, of feeling. As a thought experiment, one might imagine a vast and empty vestibule, a James Ingo Freed global Holocaust memorial of unprecedented scale, containing all the oceans and lands, real and virtual, and dedicated to all the forgotten names of the colonized, the enslaved, the encamped, the statisticized, the read, written, and rendered in the history of computational calculus—of computer memory. These too, and the Anthropocene itself (the “billion Black Anthropocenes”), are the sedimented traces that remain among the constituents of the computational unconscious.

#### The drive to accumulate spawned cybernetics and formalized other forms of violences – it prefigures propertization of land and people

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In this respect, Wiener’s celebration of the “merchant adventurers” of New England, which grounds the human use of human beings in abstract ideals of flexibility and mobility, foreshadows Bernhard Siegert’s claim that the techniques of Iberian colonial expansion turned ships into “cybernetic machines."\* These machines, Siegert suggests, foreshadow the digital operation because they function through a homeostatic mechanism—"a loop comprised of measurement, adjustment [and] commands to the rudder and rigging"—that renders “the elemental space of the sea’ legible and navigable.° The critical difference is that where Siegert’s cybernetic formulation of transatlantic shipping emphasizes technical ‘processes in order to undermine the notion of untrammeled agency that continues to demarcate the conceptual parameters of modern person- hood, Wiener’s installs the process of steering—the feedback loop be- ‘tween entity and environment—as the basis of that agency. The difference ‘might be resolved by observing the process through which the human subject is produced as autonomous by an informatic mechanism that conditions and sets limits on its autonomy. But neither Wiener nor Siegert identifies the informatics of value that precede and condition the cybernetic conceptualization of shipping as a physical procedure for the transmission of abstractions. Consequently, neither can account for the “message” that determines the actual practices of shipping that lie behind their conceptualizations, which is to say, neither includes in their cybernetic diagram of shipping the accumulation drive that animates circulation and the practices of colonial expansion. If the ship is a cybernetic machine, then it is so before the feedback loop of map and shipping route, rudder, and rigging facilitates its triangular movement between Europe, Africa, and the New World. Before the movement of value-bearing bodies and things there is always already the movement of values around the quasi-autonomous space of a network that must constantly expand and increase its granularity. Before the possibility of imagining the ship as a cybernetic machine are the informatics of value.

Wiener’s utopian prescriptions, which elevate a perpetually moving (or adventuring) human actor in an open mesh of possibility, show how the digital inheritor of liberal personhood emerges from linked histories of dispossession and racialized differentiation. By mapping concrete practices of exploration, occupation, and expropriation onto abstract ideals of communicative mobility, he shows how human flourishing is premised on the perpetual renewal of conditions that require transparent humanity's affectable others to be either differentially integrated into networks of communication or rendered literally nothing, as in Wiener’s ‘account of the “empty land” beyond the frontier.

‘This should make it clear that the relationship between form and formlessness is nonlinear. As Wynter observes, the fifteenth-century Portuguese integration of ‘areas of West Africa into a mercantile network and trading system, on the basis of the exchange of their goods for gold or slaves" was a “necessary and indisputable prelude, not only to Columbus: ‘own voyage but also to the specific pattern of relations of which Cerio speaks between Christian Europe and the non-Christian peoples of the world to which Columbus and his crew had newly arrived."\*In this exemplary case, the integration of people into networks of exchange—as merchants and as commodities—requires market-mediated reproduction in West Africa be rendered formless; the resultant accumulation of capital makes possible a subsequent imposition of formlessness onto unpropertized land and non-market-dependent people in the New World; and this imposition of formlessness makes possible the formalization of bodies, land, and resources through their integration into networks of accumulation; and so on. To flourish, Wiener’s human requires the perpetual renewal of this arrangement. Both the informatics of value and the colonial imaginary they inform require the conceptual implementation of elemental spaces (the sea, unconquered land) and bodies (natives, slaves) through and across which the value network can expand and intensify its operations. And this relationship between form and formlessness, as an ‘outcome of that between value-mediation and its externalized preconditions, is recursive. Formlessness is constructed as the outside of formal, value-mediated processes; and the demands of capital accumulation often lead the form that has been allocated through value-mediated processes to be either rescinded through ejection or rendered intermittent through flexibilization. ‘Fanon diagrams this reticulated construction of “empty” space, “affect- able” bodies, and value-informatic personhood when he writes of a “becalmed zone” in which “the sea has a smooth surface, the palm tree stirs gently in the breeze, the waves lap against the pebbles, and raw mate- rials are ceaselessly transported, justifying the presence of the settler.” In this realm of frictionless circulation, Fanon ironically remarks, “the settler makes history” while native populations “form an almost inorganic background for the innovative dynamism of colonial mercantilism.”” This “innovative dynamism’ perfectly describes the development of techniques and technologies for constituting and differentially integrating un- formatted space and bodies. Raw materials and land are the materialized forms of this integration, the measures of the value networks content and reach. And the processes of constitution, integration, and materialization tend to reproduce a double projection through which those spaces and bodies marked as formless simultaneously connote sites of limitless possibility and sources of limitless danger, both of which require the invention and deployment of regulatory techniques.

Equiano underscores the quite different opportunity for self-possession that the smooth sea offers the enslaved. “One day, when we had a smooth sea, and moderate wind,” he recounts, “two of my wearied countrymen, who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea... and I believe many more would soon have done the same, if they had not been prevented by the ships crew."\*Yet even this mark of circulation’s violence can be remapped according to the logic of value, appearing as the risk of lost cargo and diminished returns that animate financialized forms of insurance. James Wallace captures the ‘trader's sense of financial risk in his 1795 history of Liverpool, writing that “the African commerce holds forward one constant train of uncertainty, the time of slaving is precarious, the length of the middle passage uncertain, a vessel may be in part, or wholly cut off, mortalities may be great, and various other incidents may arise impossible to be foreseen.” "So the “becalmed zone’ is also that about which there is nothing “automatically propitious.” It is a space in which “one single storm” can turn a shipowner ‘or merchant from “a rich man into a beggar,” and which thus necessitates the constant production of new technologies—from the nets and the readiness of the crew Equiano observes to new navigational techniques and instruments of insurance—to maintain and inflate the notion that values circulate and expand in an autonomous and frictionless manner." In the same way, when measured against modern, legal forms of property (whether as self-ownership or the ownership of external objects), the putatively inorganic background composed of “natives” presents an obstruction to productive land use that is evoked to naturalize and inflate the value that can be “set free” through occupation. This construction gives rise to all manner of “improper” forms of use, which is to say, social practices that appear non- or not-quite-human when measured against the value-informatic parameters of the possessive individual.

#### They mythologize whiteness

Mbembe 2015 (Achille, 9/9/15, “Achille Mbembe on The State of South African Political Life”, Africa is a country, <https://africasacountry.com/2015/09/achille-mbembe-on-the-state-of-south-african-politics/>, accessed 11/27) JA

What we are hearing is that there have not been enough meaningful, decisive, radical change, not only in terms of the life chances of the black poor, but – and this is the novelty – in terms of the future prospects of the black middle class. What is being said is that twenty years after freedom, we have not disrupted enough the structures that maintain and reproduce “white power and supremacy”; that this is the reason why too many amongst us are trapped in a “bad life” that keeps wearing them out and down; that this wearing out and down of black life has been going on for too long and must now be brought to an end by all means necessary (the right to violence?). We are being told that we have not radically overturned the particular sets of interests that are produced and reproduced through white privilege in institutions of public and private life – in law firms, in financial institutions such as banking and insurance, in advertising and industry, in terms of land redistribution, in media, universities, languages and culture in general. “Whiteness”, “white power”, “white supremacy”, “white monopoly capital” is firmly back on the political and cultural agenda and to be white in South Africa now is to face a new-old kind of trial although with new judges – the so-called “born-free”. Politics of impatience But behind whites trial looms a broader indictment of South African social and political order. South Africa is fast approaching its Fanonian moment. A mass of structurally disenfranchised people have the feeling of being treated as “foreigners” on their own land. Convinced that the doors of opportunity are closing, they are asking for firmer demarcations between “citizens” (those who belong) and “foreigners” (those who must be excluded). They are convinced that as the doors of opportunity keep closing, those who won’t be able to “get in” right now might be left out for generations to come – thus the social stampede, the rush to “get in” before it gets too late, the willingness to risk a fight because waiting is no longer a viable option. The old politics of waiting is therefore gradually replaced by a new politics of impatience and, if necessary, of disruption.

Brashness, disruption and a new anti-decorum ethos are meant to bring down the pretence of normality and the logics of normalization in this most “abnormal” society. Steve Biko, Frantz Fanon and a plethora of black feminist, queer, postcolonial, decolonial and critical race theorists are being reloaded in the service of a new form of militancy less accommodationist and more trenchant both in form and content. The age of impatience is an age when a lot is said – all sorts of things we had hardly heard about during the last twenty years; some ugly, outrageous, toxic things, including calls for murder, atrocious things that speak to everything except to the project of freedom, in this age of fantasy and hysteria, when the gap between psychic realities and actual material realities has never been so wide, and the digital world only serves as an amplifier of every single moment, event and accident. The age of urgency is also an age when new wounded bodies erupt and undertake to actually occupy spaces they used to simply haunt. They are now piling up, swearing and cursing, speaking with excrements, asking to be heard. They speak in allegories and analogies – the “colony”, the “plantation”, the “house Negro”, the “field Negro”, blurring all boundaries, embracing confusion, mixing times and spaces, at the risk of anachronism. They are claiming all kinds of rights – the right to violence; the right to disrupt and jam that which is parading as normal; the right to insult, intimidate and bully those who do not agree with them; the right to be angry, enraged; the right to go to war in the hope of recovering what was lost through conquest; the right to hate, to wreak vengeance, to smash something, it doesn’t matter what, as long as it looks “white”. All these new “rights” are supposed to achieve one thing we are told the 1994 “peaceful settlement” did not achieve – decolonization and retributive justice, the only way to restore a modicum of dignity to victims of the injuries of yesterday and today. Demythologizing whiteness And yet, some hard questions must be asked. Why are we invested in turning whiteness, pain and suffering into such erotogenic objects? Could it be that the concentration of our libido on whiteness, pain and suffering is after all typical of the narcissistic investments so privileged by this neoliberal age? To frame the issues in these terms does not mean embracing a position of moral relativism. How could it be? After all, in relation to our history, too many lives were destroyed in the name of whiteness. Furthermore, the structural repetition of past sufferings in the present is beyond any reasonable doubt. Whiteness as a necrophiliac power structure and a primary shaper of a global system of unequal redistribution of life chances will not die a natural death. But to properly engineer its death – and thus the end of the nightmare it has been for a large portion of the humanity – we urgently need to demythologize it. If we fail to properly demythologize whiteness, whiteness – as the machine in which a huge portion of the humanity has become entangled in spite of itself – will end up claiming us. As a result of whiteness having claimed us; as a result of having let ourselves be possessed by it in the manner of an evil spirit, we will inflict upon ourselves injuries of which whiteness, at its most ferocious, would scarcely have been capable. Indeed for whiteness to properly operate as the destructive force it is in the material sphere, it needs to capture its victim’s imagination and turn it into a poison well of hatred. For victims of white racism to hold on to the things that truly matter, they must incessantly fight against the kind of hatred which never fails to destroy, in the first instance, the person ~~man or woman~~ who hates while leaving the structure of whiteness itself intact. As a poisonous fiction that passes for a fact, whiteness seeks to institutionalize itself as an event by any means necessary. This it does by colonizing the entire realms of desire and of the imagination. To demythologize whiteness, it will not be enough to force “bad whites” into silence or into confessing guilt and/or complicity. This is too cheap. To puncture and deflate the fictions of whiteness will require an entirely different regime of desire, new approaches in the constitution of material, aesthetic and symbolic capital, another discourse on value, on what matters and why. The demythologization of whiteness also requires that we develop a more complex understanding of South African versions of whiteness here and now. This is the only country on Earth in which a revolution took place which resulted in not one single former oppressor losing anything. In order to keep its privileges intact in the post-1994 era, South African whiteness has sought to intensify its capacity to invest in what we should call the resources of the offshore. It has attempted to fence itself off, to re-maximize its privileges through self-enclaving and the logics of privatization. These logics of offshoring and self-enclaving are typical of this neoliberal age.