Provisional Commentary on Vusi Beauchamp's *Paradyse of the Damned*

Athi Mongezeleli Joja

I.

I was in Chicago as a research fellow when I first received news of the controversial boys' hoodies advert by the Swedish clothing chain H&M. The advertisement showed two young boy models—one white, wearing a hoodie on which was written "mangrove jungle, survival expert"—and the other, black, togged in one which read "coolest monkey in the jungle." Social media was riotous with outrage. In South Africa, and perhaps elsewhere, the virtual fight did not suffice. People charged into various store branches, caused commotion, and even subjected the management to a tough public trial.[1]

The advert came hot on the heels of a litany of similarly reprehensible racist public utterances and subjection that had also roused the public. In mid-year 2016, a video circulated the internet showing two white farmers shoving a black man, Victor Mlotshwa, alive into a coffin.[2] Just less than a year before, a white South African estate agent, Penny Sparrow, in the wake of the 2016 New Year's Day revelry, came out on Facebook to call Black people swimming at the beach "monkeys."[3] It wasn't too long after this that the Premier of the Western Cape province, Helen Zille, followed up with her public comments defending colonialism.[4] In the Eastern Cape, a video of Linda Steenkamp, a black woman caged inside an animal enclosure at the back of a white farmer's bakkie, similarly caused pandemonium. These incidents, and many others, though less recorded or even ignored by virtue of the over-familiarity, have not disappeared in the "new" South Africa. They have, in variegated guises, been regenerated in both subtle and extroverted ways. Possibly stoked by the current political turn, these incidents created the necessary build-up for the aforementioned explosion that ultimately left some H&M stores in a wreck, and the company's public image tainted.

Rather coincidentally, South Africa's Phala Ookeditse Phala and Tony Miyambo's *KAFKA'S APE,* a theater adaptation of Franz Kafka's *A Report to the Academy*, was showing in Chicago. Tony Miyambo's startling solo performance momentarily rendered my criticality comatose, to the point of inadvertently erasing

the play's racist undercurrents. The dramatic and emotional labour in the play—the prancing, hunching over, and eloquent speech acts —truly conjured the ape in Kafka's story. Yet despite that theatrical brilliance, Miyambo's role elicited a myriad of implied provocations about the extent to which performance and ontology pervaded each other on his body, as well as how the coterminous relationship between blackness and animality reaches symbolic consolidation. That Kafka's ape "coincidentally" hails from the Gold Coast instantiates a prelogical assumption that apes are metonymic signs for Africans, and their captivity/westernization follows natural law. Thinkers like Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, Charles Mills, Kobena Mercer, *et al.,* have alluded to how these associative mythological urges permeate pre-anthropological constructs of alterity, and that their current representational exaggerations remain enunciative practices of an ongoing tradition.[5] Their recursive circulation subtends much of civil society's agendas and the ocularcentric logics of anti-black racism pervading aesthetic and moral questions.

Considering the timing of aforementioned events, or their coincidental, although ominous, eruption with the "decolonial turn," it is hardly unpredictable. Even though these acts tend to be commonplace and even autogenetic in a racist society, recently their concurrency with ongoing protests made them seem reactive. Less familiar is how the moral reach of a black public outcry—though it might intermittently drive these attitudes underground—does not hold enough power to conjure, let alone eviscerate them. Instead, it registers as a sublime clamor in the jungle, an infinite renewal of its own bestial inferiority. Voices that are not necessarily silenced, but are more frequently transmuted and undermined. Simianization, therefore, not only regenerates myths about blacks, it assuages white culpability. And more appropriately, like U.S. lynchings and the attendant paraphernalia dispersed for the scopic pleasure and collective identification that those meetings induced, images of blacks as buffoons, simian, and infantile aim at fomenting similar affectations. This might explain the libidinal continuities between whites flaunting bananas during the #SaveSA march, and the repeated symbolic assaults against student protesters. Recall that it was not—and is not—uncommon to refer to student protests in zoological phrases, just as it was not—and is not—disconcerting to publicly refer to black politicians, like former president Jacob Zuma, as monkeys. These utterances are usually from different ideological camps—one relatively left-liberal, and the other straight out right-wing—yet their spontaneous affinity and use of similar negrophobic tropes shows racial signification as an itinerant, elastic, and common ersatz within reach for various racial interests and groups. As if without restrictions, these tropes mediate between hard boundaries of every social strata, ideology, and other discursive enterprises including in the visual arts. As Mills has noted, "even when literal identity is ostentatiously denied, it hovers as a semiotic aura over what are claimed to be just innocent satirical comparisons."[6]

II.

[Fig. 3] Vusi Beauchamp, *Mambo Jambo*, 2018. Mixed media on canvas, 1.8m x 2m.

Let's return to the story! Months later, I'm back home and about to leave visual artist Vusi Beauchamp's exhibition *Paradyse of the Damned* at Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) when questions that had nagged me about the incidents I mentioned earlier returned with a vengeance. Why are anti-black tropes so endemic in our public space such that even critical interventions cannot help but rehash or rely on them for legibility or creative reinvention? Is anti-blackness so pervasive that it can stage an autocritique, or hybridize itself into obscurity? These questions help me maneuver the labyrinth that the discourse of stereotypes engenders; or, at best, think around how Beauchamp's art works might co-activate or blur the prefixes "anti-/non-" that are the general theme of this volume. With the hope of better clarifying my response to Beauchamp's work, I will proceed first by peripatetically sketching the behavioral patterns, assumptions, and historical unfolding of black-face iconicity in the South African cultural plain, before finally teasing the work. This plan is not to perpetuate a kind of theory vs practice hierarchy, but to cognitively map the theoretical terrains from which I am thinking and reading Beauchamp's work.[7] I will speak of stereotypes specifically as a language (in Roland Barthes' sense) that mobilizes archetypical tropes historically linked to blackness and its recurrent subjection. Although largely disparate and dissimilarly characterized, racial significatory practices in the end always seem to pervade each other more regularly, placing emphasis on the inferiority, sexual ambiguities, and exotic

curiosities of the black, from burlesque shows to public "tribal" jigs. As Cedric J. Robinson has observed, blackface minstrelsy always "survive[s] its [timely] demise[s] only by an act of migration" and finding "a new home."[8] If a century and a half ago "this language was aimed at a racial structure whose ideological and psychological instability required its boundaries continually to be staged, and which regularly exceeded the dominant culture's capacity to fix such boundaries"[9] how are these boundaries negotiated or brokered today? If racism remains intact, what are the "new homes" for racist tropes to take refuge or renew colonial subjectivities? As Sianne Ngai correctly argues, racism is "beyond" the stereotypes it produces.[10] I contend that it cannot sufficiently hold sway without recurrently manipulating the gap these stereotypes offer, and thus always reaches unto the social screen memory to reconstitute racial boundaries.

The spatio-temporal afterlives of racial stereotypes always seem contingent on the perpetual non-events of freedom, aporias of redress, and endless rebirths of Capital. Since neoliberalism has accelerated privatization, it has also symbolically disaggregated "race"—as its definitive agent—from state politics but without dissolving the conditions that give rise to racism and its practices. Instead, racial tropes appear denuded of their historical profanities, and reinvented as capacious forms floating innocently in the visual field. But this shouldn't surprise us, it might seem, because we have historically witnessed how the temporality of anti-blackness is entangled with alterity. Thus, its obscenities can be invoked, inflected or recuperated, yet simultaneously denied or diffused into the fabrics of the norm.[11] Equally, racial stereotypes can be about anything except what they truly (and have always) represent(ed): the denial of black humanity. Our bombardment, or their recurrent appearances, always annotated with circumlocutive explanatory airbrushes, leave trails important for study. Consider how in contemporary film practices, whites often blacken up to play black characters, and how the inverse is quickly dismissed as absurd.[12] Or consider how profanities in the H&M advert, and even in revisions of King Kong, simianization strategically acquires a desacralized stature.[13] Thus, whether those boundaries are social or aesthetical, references to blackface minstrelsy, simianization, or forms of racist tropes have acquired an institutional posture, to be uninhibitedly used and circulated as creative metaphors. However, the shadow of the appropriative impulse of racial types "remains grounded in the *originating metaphors* of captivity and mutilation…over and over again by the passions of a bloodless and anonymous archaism, showing itself in endless disguise."[14]

For Homi Bhabha, the stereotype, under ambivalence, must reproduce itself always in *excess*, and therefore beyond what can be proved empirically and logically. Ambivalence, he argues, is what gives it this repeatability and disguise as it is predicated on the coarticulation of repulsion and pleasure, or what Eric Lott has dubbed "love and theft." Thus, normative stances of dismissing stereotypes are not viable for Bhabha, instead he suggests, we 'displace' them. Since to "dismiss" signals

an oblivion towards the ambivalent nature of the stereotypes; that is, its upswings, multivalences, or even internal contradictions of colonial mimicry.[15] But to displace it on the other, suggests differently: to reorient, redirect, and eventually empty them; a certain level of ontological resistance latently provided within the schema of difference. I find neither positions helpful since the black ego is submerged within the facilitative power of the racial imago; though it rejects and resists it, it cannot be anything else in the eyes of the world. Thus, blackness stands differently from, which is to say outside of, Bhabha's "colonial subjects," as suffering that isn't only unthought and derelict, but as an onto-corporeal "deathliness that cannot be…brought into meaning."[16] And if the 'converse' (to name and shame) is denied *a priori*—for "*the black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man,*"[17] and other non-blacks—we need not to ask if they/our stereotypes of non-blacks exist, and even if they do, they don't matter. Put another way, if the black and white relation is that between subject (humans) and object (non-beings), then stereotyping as performance of structural power is unidirectional.

Though it might appear easy to make reference to a catalogue of racial stereotypes prevalent in contemporary South African visual arts practice, as debates on the 1990s have shown,[18] art historically there is very little, if elaborated, study done in this area since the majority of textual inscription has been the relative exclusive domain of the historically oppressive race. I am thinking of the primitivist proclivities of early to midcentury artists such as Irma Stern, Maggie Laubser, Vladimir Tretchikoff, and even the likes of Cecil Skotnes. For example, Stern's elaborate searches for the "perfect native," or even Tretchikoff's famous Watermelon series of black natives with broad smiles carrying chunky slices of watermelon are precursors. These gestures have refused to disappear, at least not completely. Whilst they've continued to show themselves in "endless disguises" in art, throughout the country they have echoed in the tourist industry, workplaces, residencies, and especially in how "tribalism" has been historically constructed.[19] The extemporaneous subjection of black bodies, cultures, and spaces into all kinds of extractive economic and intellectual mechanisms, has inevitably culled its objects from "every corner of our planet, the remotest villages and towns, into the land of contemporaneity."[20]

In the 1990s their discrepant iterations had "exceeded" obvious colonial and apartheid maleficence, by entering into the erudite, and yet market friendly, spaces ridden with all kinds of "posts," the polished stylistics of new media, and the overall buzz this created consonantly with concepts like hybridity and multiculturalism enabling what art historian Sarat Maharaj has dubbed fatal natalities. By this, Maharaj meant how the dominant discourse "identifies those who fall outside 'cultural visibility' sussing out how they might be counted in the arena of representation; how the excluded, 'the excremental other,' might be rendered visible."[21] The surge into new media and digitalization practices in South Africa, Olu Oguibe contended, forced these proclivities to not only intensify "pleasure through the effacement of

the subject" at the crossroads of emerging theories and the excitement brought by a certain, if slow, demise of apartheid so that "the object of the obliterative act now disappears together with the evidence of its own excision, making erasure an act without trace."[22] Racism, as a default position in the South African art world, particularly by its "retrieval of the black figure from the debased image-bank of the former apartheid state" raised in Okwui Enwezor's infamous essay, "Reframing the Black Subject," a piece that remains to polarize the art discourse, informs us of the aporias of representation and "freedom."[23] Central to Enwezor's calling into question white art practitioners' insatiable appetite for turning blacks into "over-aestheticized vessels for pleasurable consumption, untroubled and available," in art, also probed how this gesture represented a "betrayal" of the very terms of the *faux* negotiated settlement essential to nation building. Enwezor drew a clear parallel between these abjective importations of black bodies and seeming reluctance to jettison apartheid-incurred privileges. The notorious cautionary force of that particular essay seems to echo louder and louder these days. The pairing of social transformation and visual representation, since racism lives in the appearances, enables us to bear witness to the full spectrum. That the project of political restoration has remained permanently deferred, delayed or even abrogated, so is the heightening of social anxiety and historical antagonism. This coexistence between politics and culture has been the stimulant for the ongoing public altercations pertaining to how black corporeal integrity is perpetually debased, deflated, and abashed. In the last couple of years, images of black public servants as subhuman creatures with insatiable sexual appetites, arguably have reached beyond the normative film industry's characterizations. Yet in South African art critical and historical discourse, the preponderance of these images and attendant performative showoffs, have attracted no critical explanatory interest beyond the valorization.

In the diaspora, however, black art historians and cultural thinkers have shown more than inquisitive interest on these matters over the years. They have pondered, albeit divergently, not only on their impacts in the U.S. racial imaginary and realities but also about black vernacular strategies responsive to the "perpetual returns" of those significatory gestures in the visual field.[24] The repurposing of older concepts or inventing newer ones— ambivalence, signifying, humor, pornotropes, afrotropes, afrokitsch, racial kitsch, negrophilia, black grotesquerie and so on— have engendered dialogical exchanges across the Atlantic; informing, influencing, and deepening a discourse on representational logics of anti-black racism.[25] Of course, there are divergences, overlaps, disjunctures, and connections between these ideas—which I clearly cannot exhaust here. My interest here, albeit briefly, lies in the interrogative interventions around the subversive potentialities or lack thereof, in vernacular signifying practices. For example, Mercer's reading of the works of the post 1960s artists like Betye Saar, Robert Colescott, et al., reproducing critical images of blackface, argues that the "turn to laughter [w]as a key resource in strategies of counter-appropriation that were brought into artistic circulation as

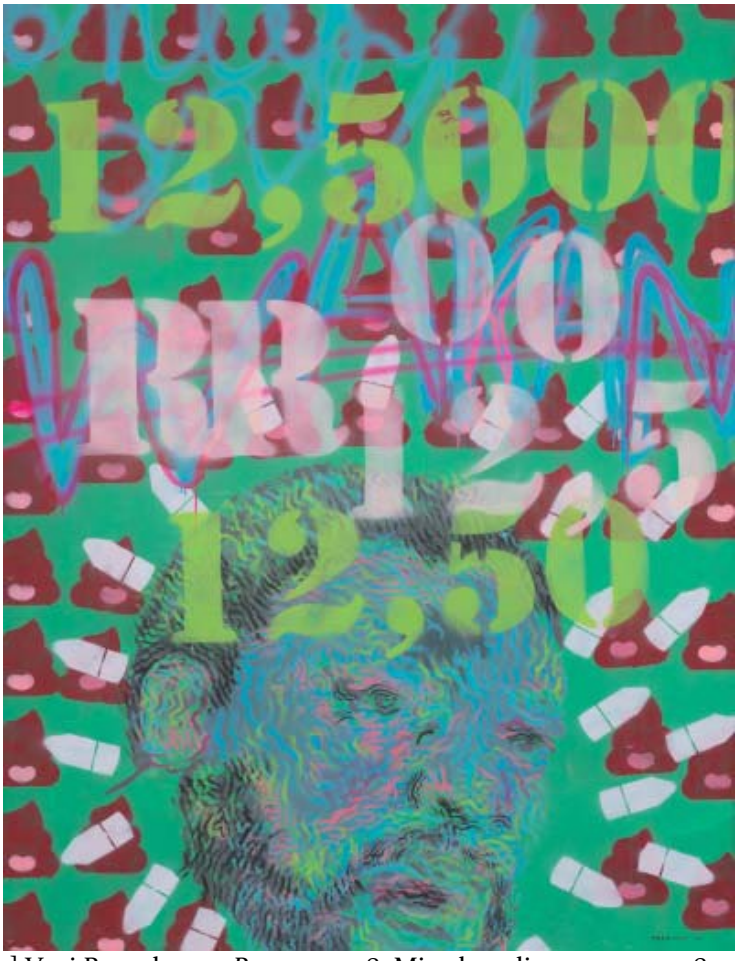
a result of the broader cultural critique of Eurocentric modernism that gave way to postmodernism."[26] Mercer, echoing Bhabha, further clarifies that laughter enables a "critical detachment" that "subverts the seriousness of racist stereotyping not with angry protest or rationalist refutation but with a *homeopathic* strategy that operates in-and-against the semantic capillaries of the symbolic order it critiques."[27] In their concept of Afrotropes, art historians Krista Thompson and Huey Copeland note that "Afrotropes make palpable…how modern black subjects have appropriated widely available representational means only to undo their formal contours, to break apart their significatory logic, or to reduce them to their very substance."[28] Abdur-Rahman, using her concept of black grotesquerie— which in turn echoes Mercer's "stereotypical grotesque" that aims at "unfixing blackness"—though "marked by structural ambiguity and excess…[black grotesquerie] undermines normative perception and action, renders contingent the presumed fixity of meaning, and ruptures the given world."[29] Interestingly these concepts, though relatively different, rely on the enabling energy of ambivalence and the unpredictability of contingency. Artists like Kara Walker, Betye Saar, David Hammons, et al., have creatively re-written blackface iconicity by poking fun, transmogrifying, and even adopting those stereotypes in their own terms "in order to dismantle them from the inside out."[30] And as Mercer argues, by way of a question, these strategies are not deluded exercises that assume that "art has powers to dissolve established versions of reality" or "imply that aesthetic innovation by itself leads to social change."[31]

Other views seem to stress a structural impossibility. In his critical essay "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke," which looks at the role of blackface minstrelsy, Ralph Ellison observes those "pleasures of archetype-hunting," and how the "role with which they are identified is not, despite its blackness."[32] That is, blackness isn't metaphor arbitrarily assumed and relinquished within the fetishistic frolicking of blackface minstrelsy but underwrites the entire charade. The adopted 'masks' of blackface minstrelsy—literary and figuratively—he writes, "was once required of *everyone* who would act the role—even those Negroes whose natural coloration should, for any less ritualistic purposes at least, have made it unnecessary."[33] And for that reason, Ellison notes, the "mask was an inseparable part of the national iconography. Thus even when a negro acted in an abstract role *the national implications were unchanged*."[34] Here, masking has a double function—it plays into the scopophilic drives of white *jouissance,* whilst also coercing the black subject to assume a kind of double negation, as neither a self nor an other. Zine Magubane, Jared Sexton, Saidiya Hartman, and David Marriott piggyback on this lingering or insistence in structural foreclosure, which at every "resurfacing…reveals the tenacity of the visual, narrative, and characterological paradigm,"[35] that "engender pleasures" that "thwart the emergence of an oppositional consciousness."[36] What seems relatively similar—echoing—amongst the latter group, that is beyond their noting of structural denial, is their skepticism towards detachment, as they're of flight. For Marriott, the split between the ego and alter, is prevaricated from the outset, that

is in the prelogical and phantasmic thought of negrophobic representation and/as being. Instead, he'd opt we "must descend into the icy depths like Orpheus if we are to experience that endless death that pierces us and that we preserve inside ourselves like a lump of ice."[37] Magubane, reading the coonish belligerence-inflected responses of Dennis Rodman and RuPaul turning the gaze against black stereotypical insults, adds an interesting dynamic, and writes:

> Despite their efforts to the contrary, neither artist has been able to fully bridge the gap between the kinds of black images our society can safely tolerate and the particular qualities they wish to embody and display. The public transcript simply cannot accommodate their efforts to turn the gaze of white society back on itself…However, because it is so often assumed that all black personae are mimetic representations of the real essence of blackness rather than carefully staged performances, the complexity of the interplay between those moments when stereotypes are reconfirmed and those when they are being parodied is often lost. And so, too, the tension between looking and laughing as opposed to being laughed and looked at.[38]

III.



[Fig. 2] Vusi Beauchamp, *R12 500*, 2018. Mixed media on canvas, 1.8m x 2m.

JAG is located in the tumultuous downtown precinct of Johannesburg; and like its decrepit surroundings, its prospects are flimsy. Cops are strewn all along its gate, and a fancy tent soars over its leaking roofs; the old colonial structure now really looks like a chicken shed. In the new South Africa, cultural spaces like JAG suffer a terrible neglect. And such neglect often functions as a code: that is, better explained as something between the Fanonian colonial spatiality and Armah's postcolonial apocalypse. A cartographic layout that blurs the temporal lines of past and future central to our narrative of national progress. A form of totalizing design or designation of life and death according to the colonial and racial logics of difference and separation. *Paradyse of the Damned* implicitly echoes Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), not just at the level of its title but also in how it concerns itself with apocalyptic conditions. In Afrikaans, *Paradys* means Paradise. Of course, the standard biblical narrative, positions the damned in hell, and the saved in heaven. In this oxymoronic slyness, it implies a sado-masochistic theatre of pleasures of the dead and dying, a kind of thanatological expression of unbridled delight. That pleasure is probable, sustainable, or even plausible in the contradictory, if not ironic, place; and under damnation, is a name we cannot afford to invoke without resorting to cynicism.

Beauchamp has exhibited widely, and amongst many of his solo shows, he includes, *Welcome to Banania* (2017), *Terrorist* (2016), and *Kaffer Paradys* (2006). The titles themselves indicate not only a penchant for contradictions but also for shock and awe. Arguably this proclivity for provocation and scandal isn't simply generated by his intermedial approach to art, but a satirical flippancy culled specifically from comic art. He has also co-published a comic book called *Kaffer Paradys* (2006) with Eric Rantisi. Appropriately, spectacle tends to require a certain level of comic craze, more often than not, averse to subtlety. Beauchamp's visual commentary arrives at his critical junctures by way of this characteristic simultaneity: a bit of a Basquiat-esque touch here, Pointilism there, and some street art elsewhere: yet the ubiquitous recourse to blackface seems to be where he draws his pictorial strength from. So, far from innocence or naiveté, his childlike cartoonish figurines tend to be dark and horrific. Their deliberate incompleteness and roughness, in a manner that is popular in Johannesburg public spaces, combines texts and visuals, employing disjuncture and palimpsestic methods to convey their urgency and also commonality. Other characteristics are featuring repeatedly like haloes, emblems of international corporations, afrotropes and so on, that also seem to add to the complex painterly world of Beauchamp. As largely works on canvas and paper, they take the public wall as their motif, which is manipulated as a contact-zone of disparate approaches. It is the availability of the public wall that gives it anonymity, and also unpredictability, that Beauchamp uses as latent symptomatic trait, a site of protest, shock, and commentary in this *oeuvre*. Vacillating between the comical and protest indexes the role of all things specular. And though shabbily put together, the boisterous indignity of the show was sensational.

Previously shown at Pretoria Arts Museum in 2015, the re-installment of *Paradyse of the Damned* at JAG is indicative of the gradual reach of his ideas and its public reception.[39] Right at the entrance of the gallery is a garishly composed painting entitled *R12 500* [Fig. 2] in which these digits are blown and repeatedly inscribed across the canvas. Its backdrop is conceived of rows of stenciled poo emojis (with bulged lips). In the painting, a figure resembling the younger bearded Cyril Ramaphosa, current President of South Africa, with his head haloed by bullets. The trade unionist turned tycoon, then shareholder of Lomnin, a British platinum mining company, was directly implicated in ordering the hit of Marikana miners in 2012, which left 34 dead and 78 in critical condition. The story behind the public execution, amongst a number of reforms the workers wanted, was a wage increase to R12,500 per month.[40] One would ask: how then does he, after this known catastrophic event, rise not only to Presidency but a nationally celebrated alternative to his predecessor? In fact, it was not uncommon to compare him to Mandela. That he murdered innocent working men and disrupted their families, has been met with sobering silence in certain corners. Therefore, deifying gesture by halo of bullets, intentions aside, isn't a mark of shame or insult but applause and "ignorability"[41] under the current regime. Thus, Beauchamp projects feces as the communicative background to convey disgruntlement and horror.

Is the humanization of excrement allegorizing the unsanitary, if not crude, habits of state functionaries? The recent pervasiveness of fecal ideographs since, at least, #RhodesMustFall, has given shit explanatory symbolic power within public discourse and equally weaponized it into a protest item. Like "the return of the repressed," excrement has literally and figuratively become a tool used to confront, rewrite, and besmirch elite spaces. For much of the chain reactions to turning poo into a protest item, excrement is gradually turning into an aesthetic prop under the aegis of the deracialized marker of "the poors."[42] But what if this subtlety facialized feces, with its big lips, not only, albeit inadvertently, draws easy parallels with the failures in public services or reminds us the ephemeral victories pervading activism? That instead of making the elites smell the results of their political doing, it is rather implicitly, yet harrowingly, alarming us about the interstitial connections between blackness and waste? That waste isn't only, as the class analysts would like to believe, a circumstance of economic exclusion but a fundamental emblem of blackness itself? Or as David Marriott might put it, that the repeated need to civilize, humanize, and even dispose of blackness is predicated on the fear of "being smeared with shit."[43]

Clearly, the curatorial decision to have this piece at the entrance, prepared the audience for what was to come in the show. From socio-economic problems, to political leadership, to the media, to consumption—everything trembles under the artist's critical brush. The prevalence of blackface as a consistent iconographic sign, whether tentatively suggested or fully mobilized, jumps up with its typical visual ferocity. Intended irony and other discursive calculations tend to get lost or even

subsumed in the quest to demythologize blackface. Aesthetically, against the largely psychedelic and kaleidoscopic substrates, like the shit ideographs mentioned above, blackface here, with its overstated subversive aims, retains and enfranchises the protocols of its injurious foundations. The characteristic prominence of black male subjects, and especially politicians or public servants, relies on established demonological sentiments towards black masculinities. As art historian Michael Hatt has pointed out, "what is true of...the diverse modifications of the basic stereotypes [is] that they involve an implicit belief in the negro's racial difference in terms of gender."[44] Relying on the guise of Sambo, a figure gendered as one without gender but also as *excess*, Hatt argues, helped characterize the captive body as a "childlike, docile, and comic creation." For Hortense Spillers these figures are:

> Embedded in bizarre axiological ground, they demonstrate a sort of telegraphic coding; they are markers so loaded with mythical prepossession that there is no easy way for agents buried beneath them to come clean. In that regard, the names by which I am called in the public place render an example of signifying property *plus*.[45]

In *Mambo Jambo* [Fig. 1], a work in which the excessiveness of these signifying properties is both palpable as it is also eluding comprehension, proprietary relations appear abundantly. Dominated by pinks, in the back and foreground, and various shades of blues and greens, it first appears that the painting dramatizes black male fixation with white women. This composition is structured in a manner that allegorizes a liturgical exercise akin to the worship of the Virgin Mary in the Catholic Church. Right at the top center, a seemingly white feminine figure posing in the full substitutive surrogation of the father—what bell hooks notoriously terms "doing it for daddy"[46]—stares, coldly, through the viewer into distance. Behind her head, it's written, in bold pink letters, KAFFER. By her sheer composure, she has long jettisoned all liberal Samaritanism—accepting her position and its attendant role at the zenith of the human chain. On each side of her heels she's anchored by two male figures kneeling slavishly, with their arms jutting towards her, in the form of the famous eighteenth century British abolitionist medallion, *Am I Not a Man and a Brother*. On top of each male effigy, the word SHIT "deifies" each figure. Whilst they stare at her pleadingly, she appears in total disregard of their appeals. At the center of the canvas a pink inscription horizontally cuts through: *Mambo Jambo,* a phrase that has come to stand for the incomprehensibility of black speech-acts. Rather incomprehensibly, other textual annotations cascade down, as if offering clues to the entire narrative plain. At the rear end of the picture appears a blackface minstrel choir in joyous celebration, as if their sonic intervention embalms the masquerade with aura. The pink palette does not seem coincidental or unconsidered, if anything, it echoes with the stereotypical compositional inflections that haunt this body of work. The didactic nature of the overall commentary not only relies on notable (read: problematic) visual tropes but constructs its narrative plot

on similar grounds. Between the now hackneyed exegesis about the black heteronormative male's lascivious praise for white women, and the depicted black masculinity in cowardly submission or as amusement prop, the same prescriptive gesture is at play here. Through repeated recourse to plantation visuality, whether in its inflammatory or empathetic forms, Beauchamp repurposes these ventriloquizing postures with apolitical enthusiasm and a jingoistic acquiescence to their incendiary conclusions.

[Fig. 3] Vusi Beauchamp, *Congress*, 2014. Mixed media on canvas, 1.8m x 2m.

In the painting entitled *Congress* [Fig. 3], this gleeful recourse to the most proverbial of tropes, that is, "the heart of darkness." Through this seemingly impenetrable and esoteric forest, a figure resembling the young Nelson Mandela abstractedly appears in the background. Over him an emblem or ribbon hovers above like a halo, and the word "king" is inscribed across it. The punchline seems clear: Mandela is the "king of the jungle." Across the middle of the image, the word "cooning" is inscribed in cursive red Coca-Cola typographic style. Below, towards the edge of the painting, in black, is written CONGRESS. Suppose the prominent blackface figures, with their thick red lips, gaping mouths and big eyes, in shock or jubilation, are his "comrades." In archetypal neo-Tarzanist specular visuality, we encounter

the "traditional Hollywood image of the pop-eyed African in the jungle."[47] Is the abstracted Mandela Tarzan here? If so, the implications of that are neither flattering nor politically sensible as Magubane suggests to us above. It has become commonplace to publicly refer to the African National Congress (ANC) as the "circus," a slanderous moniker that re-adjudicates blackface lexical descriptions of the black politician. The exoneration of Mandela hinges on the false appraisal of his ushering a "miraculous revolution," on the basis that whites didn't lose their unjustly accumulated wealth of the time of "transition." This honorary whiteness, or even the "mythical body"[48] allegedly existing independently of the man, arguably are inventions in the wake of the debased historical mission and the rise of the mythological triumphantalist ruse of Rainbow Nationalism.

Beauchamp's paintings, even with their veneer of criticality, assume an orientation which does not operate outside of the purview of this mythology. Images of Mandela appear at least almost four times in this show. In his *oeuvre*, the depiction of Mandela interestingly follows a self-replicating pattern that seems dedicated at times, in spite of its critical commentary, to evade fully blackfacing Mandela. Works like *Skull* (2013) and *As You See on TV* (2012) are suggestive of this. In *Skull*, marked by his distinctive youth hairstyle, Mandela appears either abstracted or even stripped of his flesh into skeletal figure. A living death that even precedes his post-prison stardom. A critique representative of the Africanist view. But this is a *faux* representation. It appears there's also a tactical formality, if structural, reason behind this—after all, blackface cannot go unnoticed no matter how nuanced it is. As it were an anti-portrait, its objective is not always to veil, but also eliminatory. The mask of blackface is the mask of the proprietor and captivity (literally and imaginatively) and accordingly, of the fungible conquered body. At the level of its pictorial *modus operandi,* blackface must selectively extract or exaggerate to imply itself. Whether quietly reconfigured or detonating the field of vision its nocturnal grandiloquence, each grain inflected presence is symptomatically effective. Like in *Congress*, the iconicity of Mandela appears subdued, but nevertheless compositionally, formally, and narratively implies a supplementary account to the dominant hagiographic national image of "the Santa-Clause." Though we can attribute to the visible figure relative humanity, we are bound to run into an analytical cul-de-sac. The defamatory portrayals of Mandela that seem to contravene the dominant view of global iconicity aren't fully its opposite. And when looked at differently, that is politically, they represent the same reactionary view. Ultimately, they not only both exonerate the pervading hand of whiteness which parades each effort, but also allay the "forces of capitalism, racism and state violence" that structure them.[49] The iconographic monumentalization of Mandela was a racial capitalistic construct, which staged a systematic foreclosure of black freedom dreams by singularly extracting and molding Mandela as a symbolic savior.

The voguish representations of black political figures like Mandela, Steve Biko, and even Jacob Zuma in the works of contemporary South African artists

inadvertently participate in the cyclical orgy of what Sylvia Wynter calls "licensed heresy," those inscriptions of blanchitude "binding the structure of production under the hegemony of its imaginary social significations."[50] And indeed, under the banner of such an imaginary blackness is overdetermined from without. True to the form of racial typecasting, their significant differences amount to nil; they become what Spillers might call a "nightmarish undifferentiation."[51] Stereotypes prevent dynamism, fixing the other into an eternal anachronism, always an outsider to the time and place of the victim's presence. Stuart Hall aptly described this fixity as 'naturalization,' an attempt to "halt the inevitable 'slide' of meaning, to secure discursive or ideological 'closure.'"[52] Like Linda Steenkamp inside a cage, or Victor Mlotshwa forced into a coffin, blackface flirts or insatiates the movement between life and death, performance and existence, or even appropriation and property. It is an expression of white proprietary procurement, which allegorizes a turning "of people into things, objects into fetishes."[53] In other words, it's a semiotic inscription of endless redaction, reconstructing itself as a sovereign aesthetic within an "autotelic and self-perpetuating regime."[54] In this sense, stereotypes can render themselves as obsolete or ambiguous, so that they can travel beyond their established denotation. Zanele Muholi's current photographic project *Somnyama Ngonyama—Hail the Dark Lioness*, is also exemplary of this type of recuperatory strategy which employs racial stereotypes and ethnic trinkets in self-otherising ways to satisfy, it seems, the exoticising interests of her occidental eyes. Sometimes employed considerably and in other moments reluctantly; it is clear even by Muholi's own consistent rendering of the repetitive recourse to Blackface and auto-ethnographic visuality, that these gestures serve what Oguibe might call "playing the Other"—not necessarily to subvert their significatory violence of these tropes but to give them a palatable veneer. Thus, we must ask after Marriott and, later, Sexton, if the reliance on the images really cleanses us of our inhibitions only by allowing us to feed well off our own abjection? This is the implicit wish behind Beauchamp's work, which assumes the role of brokering the significatory power of racial typology by way of individuation or characterization. Listen to him talking about the *Kaffer*:

> ...I came up with this 'Kaffer Paradise' comic where there is paradise everybody is a *kaffer*, white, black whatever, everybody in that comic book is basically a *kaffer*. And to sort of shift it away from if you are blackened dark that word [only] applies to you. [My attempt was] to see how I could [dismantle] the word *kaffer* into [a global] word, in this paradise everybody is that word and how is that going to change (chuckles) perception?[55]

This implicit reluctance is a ruse: the aim is to "take away the power it has over black Africans and expose its legacy that continues to this day."[56] His imaginary power to "name" ends up misnaming, if not underestimating the power of the thing he thinks he's undermining. Contrasting himself with white cartoonist Zapiro and musical groups like *Die Antwoord*, he says "I remain accountable and mindful of a

derogatory interpretation of raced and gendered politics." Contrast this with the opening lyrics from the video "Enter the Ninja" from Die Antwoord: "Checkit. Hundred per cent South African culture. In this place, you get a lot of different things. Blacks, Whites, coloureds. English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu, watookal [whatever]. I'm like all these different things, all these different people, fucked up into one person."[57] This parallels Beauchamp's work and its ambition, as it also problematically echos, against its wishes, in Muholi's as well.

As Christopher Ballantine has noted in his work that the history of minstrelsy in South Africa has been around at least since the late 1840s, and upon its arrival, "blacks…tried to capture it for their own ends."[58] Indeed, latent iterations of this "end"—minstrel cultures—have, in subtle gestural signs, unfolded throughout the historical evolvement of black popular musical practices in South Africa from its early mining hostel forms of entertainment to more modernized ones—from Marabi to iScathamiya up to Kwaito. Though not a radical exception from Steve Biko referring to white liberals as "a bunch of do-gooders," cultural writer Bongani Madondo, riffing on U.S. novelist Norman Mailer's term "White Negroes," has noticed how white "anthropological desires" persist in contemporary culture, fighting "not to be out blacked."[59] This fetishistic desire to be culturally black recalls a line from Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*: "the man who adores the Negro is as 'sick' as the man who abominates him."[60] These quests in cultural production are therefore inseparable from the blithely public renditions of blacks as buffoons and sexual deviants that have remained part of white entertainment and critical practice.

From cartoonist Zapiro's Rape of Lady Justice (2008) to Brett Murray's painting, The Spear (2010) and innumerable others, the preponderance of pathologized and caricatured blackness has been running amok in the post-1994 era. Shielded behind commentaries on state capture, maladministration, and corruption, they rendered the black body as the playground of unadulterated insults. Perhaps with the exception of few public intellectuals like curator Khwezi Gule and media professor Adam Haupt, there's been a relative absence of dissent memorable enough.[61] Haupt called into question the ritualistic blackening up and the cultural appropriation of the white duo, Die Antwoord, paying strict attention to how forms of stereotyping practices don't just generate economic and symbolic returns for whites. In visual arts, Gule has observed a similar trend, that these derogatory images seem only fit for "corrupt" black politicians, but never their white or coloured conspirators. For Gule, in his article on Kannemeyer's *Pappa in Africa*, "courting controversy and notoriety has become the stock in trade of artists of the post-1994 era."[62] Both interventions, their limits aside, suggest to us not only the problematic of a racially unidirectional flow of stereotypical practice, but also begin to unravel how signifying can be a thriving and necessary strategy to establish various forms of psychopolitical, aesthetic, and ethical fortifications against blackness.[63] Contrary to Gule's moralism, Danie Marais' rejoinder to him accentuates the unthought pleasures such images enable for whites. With the diligence of a savant with a red pen, Marais,

in luxuriating energy, sterilizes blackface of its wrinkly improprieties and recasts Kannemeyer's work as an act of aesthetic proficiency and dutiful citizenry. Quoting his other reflections on *Pappa in Africa*, Marais recalls, "it isn't possible to get to the bottom of the race and identity politics without getting your hands dirty."[64] Key words: bottom, race, dirty. Kannemeyer, from this view, is definitely doing the most—he's cleaning the lavatory. As Slavoj Zizek would say, there is no satisfaction better than that of finally removing the stain. For Marriott, "The stereotype of black abjection is preserved as the history that must be canceled out even as it is raised up by the manufacture of a mutually enriching ideal of productive self-creation."[65]

IV.

Perhaps to draw toward conclusive remarks, I want to go back to the beginning, to the remarks about effectivity, something I was trying to articulate through my running notes here. Throughout this entire piece, I have been trying to think around the question of colonial *effectivity* that opens Homi Bhabha's essay, "The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse." Maybe without clarity, I have been trying to pose and posit this effect, more so how it can be perceived in Beauchamp's work. Albeit not as a way of attempting to raise the question of ambivalence—in the strict sense of postcolonial thought, that is—that often mystifies power. I have been thinking rather of, or with, effectivity, as that which "indicates the subtext of ongoing black captivity" that Jared Sexton picks up in his reading of Antoine Fuqua's blockbuster film *Training Day* (2001) as that which we "can neither transcend nor do without; *a trope* whose inarticulate demand for redress is not accommodated by cinema [read: visual arts] that flirts with historical antagonism but fails to move beyond unmistakably inadequate resolutions, whether community policing schemes or individual escape attempts."[66] Ralph Ellison might refer to this effect or that which it metonymically represents, as the "trope of tropes."[67] Let's hear Hortense Spillers' suggestive advice:

> When I spoke of the "hieroglyphics of the flesh" in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," I was trying to identify not only one of diasporic slavery's technologies of violence through marking, but also to suggest that "beyond" the violating hand that laid on the stigmata of a recognition that was misrecognition, or the regard that was disregard, there was a *semiosis* of procedure that had enabled such a moment in the first place. The marking, the branding, the whipping—all instruments of a terrorist regime— were more deeply *that*—to get in somebody's face in that way would have to be centuries in the making that would have had little to do, though it is difficult to believe, with the biochemistry of pigmentation, hair texture, lip thickness, and the indicial measure of the nostrils, but everything to do with those "unacknowledged legislators" of a discursive and economic discipline.[68]

It is those unacknowledged legislators which I have been after, that which is anterior and beyond the significatory logics of blackface minstrelsy that Beauchamp's

work enunciates, though it might have sounded that my critical leaning was more towards dismissal, or even displacement. As said from the jump, my interest, if articulated well, was the self-activating process of subjectivization that I was after. Thus, the paradox lies, at least it seems to me, not in whether or not these tropes can or cannot be redeployed for subversive purposes, but in that their popular reinscription has given them not only honorific, but also critical stature such that we are no longer sensitized to their troubling histories or their casual circulation—especially if tinted with some critical commentary. The irony of it all, of course, isn't just the self-recycling structural posture of racist discourse but it's also that Beauchamp himself, as a Black person, does not treat his images as mirrors (to borrow from Marriott once more), instead he assumes a critical self-exoneration from the general public's ridicule.

With all his handy skills and instruments such as his brimful palette of cold and warm colours in a largely palimpsest technique, Beauchamp's art is, sadly, trapped. He pick-pockets iterations of various styles with the same coonish zeal he seeks to address. His own subversiveness seems rather undercut from the jump—its critical interventions notwithstanding.

Creatively, Beauchamp's work is undoubtedly flat, and conceptually, spectacularly pedestrian. Nowhere does it enrich the agenda of social transformation or the racist discourse he believes he undermines. Instead, it unthinkingly gives racism a radical voice. It is this kind of anti-black mediocrity, with all its exhibitionist proclivity, and non-reflexivity, that should invigorate interests far more content, not with what is said, but instead, with how it is said. It also raises questions about how the language that we rely upon often goes unnoticed, especially in critical discourse (whether textual or visual). The iterance of racist idioms and idiosyncrasies, as *Paradyse of the Damned* indicates, has the power to undermine itself in its pursuit of its original goals. Besides the issue of the banality of racist tropes, it occurred to me that, increasingly, the utilization of these epithets is slowly expanding beyond their supposedly typical right-wing confines, and they are gradually informing even the grammar of the views of those in the supposedly critical and dissenting quarters in South Africa and beyond.

Endnotes:

1. Hayley Miller, "Protesters Trash South African *H&M* Stores Over Racist Ad," *Huffington Post,* January 14, 2018. Retrieved from: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/south-africa-hm-protests-racist-ad_us_5a5b9d47e4b0fcbc3a1122e9
2. Rebecca Taylor, "White Farmers Jailed for More than 10 Years for Forcing Black Man into Coffin," *Sky News*, October 27, 2017. Retrieved from: https://news.sky.com/story/white-farmers-jailed-for-10-years-for-forcing-black-man-into-coffin-11100320
3. Vhahangwele Nemakonde, "Penny Sparrow Calls Black People 'Monkeys'," *The Citizen*, January 4, 2016. Retrieved from: https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/927765/kzn-estate-agent-calls-black-people-monkeys/

4. "'Colonialism Wasn't Only Negative'— Helen Zille", online, BusinessTech. Access: https://businesstech.co.za/news/general/164777/colonialism-wasnt-only-negative-helen-zille/
5. See: V.Y Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.; Charles W. Mills, "Bestial Inferiority: Locating Simianization Within Racism," in *Simianization: Apes, Gender, Class, and Race,* ed. Wulf D. Hund, Charles W. Mills, et al. Zurich: LIT VERLAG, 2015; Kobena Mercer "Carnivalesque and Grotesque: What Bakhtin's Laughter Tells Us about Art and Culture," in *No Laughing Matter: Visual Humor in Ideas of Race, Nationality, and Ethnicity,* ed. Angela Rosenthal. Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2016.
6. Mills, "Bestial Inferiority," 30.
7. Although not stated, the general theoretical orientation of these notes is indebted to Afro-pessimism and associable theoretical tendencies in the works of Hortense Spillers, largely compiled in her 2003 volume *Black, White, and in Color.* See: Hortense Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003.
8. Cedric Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film before World War II.* Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2007, 127.
9. Eric Lott, "Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy," *Representations* no. 49 (summer 1992): 27.
10. Sianne Ngai, "'A Foul Lump Started Making Promises in My Voice"': Race, Affect, and the Animated Subject," *American Literature* vol. 74, no. 3 (2002): 571-601. This text also forms part of her subsequent monography *Ugly Feelings* under the chapter title "Animatedness." See: Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
11. Of course, black people have been circumventing these practices from the inside, which is not to imply they/we were ever outside the system but rather denied presence. Yet, I am wary of how the recognition of staged moments of resistance and smuggling in of resistance, more than being acknowledged as "fact" often gives way to valorization. Consider how Kara Keeling—after James Snead—opines that 'temporalities of culture in general have begun to *conform* to the temporalities previously posited as particular to black culture, and the extant political potentials of "the human" have started to parallel those available through examination of the historical relationship between the logics of commodification and "the Black."' And that maybe indeed "the saturation of culture by the logics of Capital, the rearrangement that accompanies that process…might offer support to innovative and egalitarian alternatives." But I remain skeptical: if white supremacy coheres by way of a denial of blackness and its cultures, as history has taught us, the intermittent arrivals and departures to and from black cultural production — from Pablo Picasso to Amy Winehouse — then blackness is indeed the gift that never stops giving. See Kara Keeling, "Passing for Human: Bamboozled and Digital Humanism," *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* vol. 15, no. 1 (2008): 237-250.
12. See: Paul C. Taylor, *Black is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics*. Hoboken: Wiley, 2016. See especially chapter 2.
13. For example, recall the scene from the recent film *Kong: Skull Island*, where the black Lieutenant Colonel Preston Packard (Samuel L. Jackson)—who has come to represent the roles previously played by white actors—stands with a fire torch at the other end of the lake, whilst Kong charges on. The camera vacillates between Kong and Packard, seemingly drawing attention to the affects of rage that permeate both figures. As many theorists have pointed out, the filmic metaphor of Kong stands for what blacks, and especially men, have been to the white imagination—an uncontrollable beast out to reconquer the world, which thus must be stopped. Thinkers like Sol Plaatje, Richard Wright, and Jean-Paul Sartre have dedicated texts, novels and plays to this trope of the black man as a grotesque and senselessly lecherous beast, in their disparate conceptions of the "white problem." In the film Kong, however, latent in the scene mentioned above is how the very narrative arc of the mythic creature captured by US agents in nameless rainy forests, now appears as if without its implied early 20th century assumptions on race by literally having a black character. But the rage that permeates both Kong and Packard—two irrational entities—switches roles, where the latter's insensitive and blood thirsty character becomes the beast. Thus, its intensions rewrite the script with an uncanny resemblance in characteristics that transliterate simianization directly to blackness. However, other thinkers have drawn attention to how King Kong, in the same gesture, redramatizes the narrative of the transatlantic slavery and the related matters of spectatorship, white enjoyment, and black denigration. For writings that have reconsidered how the

pornotropic case of Kong, see: Stefanie Affeldt, "Exterminating the Brute: Sexism and Racism in King Kong," in Mills, et al., *Simianization*; James Snead's *White Screens, Black Images: Hollywood from the Dark Side*, ed. Colin McCabe and Cornel West. New York: Routledge, 1994 (see especially the first two chapters); and, last but not least, Jared Sexton, "Chaos and Opportunity: On Training Day," in *Black Masculinity and the Cinema of Policing*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

14. Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color*, 208.
15. Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse," *Screen* vol. 24, no. 6 (1983): 18-36.
16. David Marriott, *Haunted Life: Visual Culture and Black Modernity*, Newark: Rutgers University Press, 2007, 231.
17. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markman. London: Pluto Press, 1967, 110.
18. The debates in the 1990s and early 2000s are largely covered in various volumes and independent essays; most notably: Brenda Atkison and Candice Breitz, eds., *Grey Areas: Representation, Identity and Politics in Contemporary South African Art.* Johannesburg: Chalkham Hill Press, 1999; Elvira Dyangani Ose, Tracy Murinik, et al. *Erase Me From Who I Am*. Las Palmas, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, 2006; Gary Van Wyk's *A Decade of Democracy: Witnessing South Africa*. Sacramento: Axis Gallery, 2004; and Thembinkosi Goniwe, "From My Sketch Pad: Notes of a Black South African Artist," in *Coexistence: Contemporary Cultural Production in South Africa,* ed., Pamella Allara. Waltham: Rose Art Museum, 2003, among others.
19. On the tribalism as an ideological category constructed under apartheid laws, see: Archie Mafeje, "The Ideology of Tribalism," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 9, no. 2 (1971): 253-261. For a more recent explication of how tribalism impacted cultural identification, see: Peter Lekgoathi's "Ethnic Separation or Cultural Preservation? Ndebele Radio Under Apartheid, 1983-1994," *South African Historical Journal* vol. 64, no. 1 (2012): 59-80.
20. See: Everlyn Nicodemus, "Inside. Outside.," in *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*, ed., Clement Deliss. London: Whitechapel, 1995.
21. See: Sarat Maharaj, "Fatal Natalities: The Algebra of Diaspora and Difference After Apartheid," in *Fault Lines: Contemporary Art and Shifting Landscapes,* eds., Gilane Tawadros and Sarah Campbell. London: Turner/A&R Press, 2003.
22. See: Olu Oguibe, "Art, Identity, Boundaries: Postmodernism and Contemporary African Art," in *The Culture Game*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, 10-17.
23. Okwui Enwezor, "Reframing the Black Subject: Ideology and Fantasy in Contemporary South African Representation," in *Race-ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History,* ed. Kymberly N. Pinder. New York: Routledge, 2002, 372.
24. Huey Copeland and Krista Thompson, "Perpetual Returns,"*Representations* vol. 113, no 1 (2011): 1-15.
25. To trace these works I would suggest that the reader checks the words of the following cultural thinkers: Bhabha, "The Other Question,"; Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The 'Blackness of Blackness': A Critique of the Sign and the Signifying Monkey," in *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, 235-276; Alexander G. Weheliye, "Pornotropes," *Journal of Visual Culture* vol.7, no. 1 (2008): 68-81; Leah Dickerman, David Joselit, and Mignon Nixon, "Afrotropes: A Conversation with Huey Copeland and Krista Thompson," *October* no. 162 (2017): 3-18; Manthia Daiwara, "Afro-Kitsch," in *Performing Hybridity,* ed. May Joseph, et al. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, 177-181; Tavia Nyong'o, "Racial Kitsch and Black Performance," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* vol. 15, no. 2 (2002): 371-391; Patrine Ercher's *Negrophilia: Avant-garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000; and so on.
26. Mercer, "Carnivalesque and Grotesque," 13
27. Ibid.
28. See: Huey Copeland and Krista Thompson, "Afrotropes: A User's Guide," *Art Journal* vol 76 (2017): 7-9.
29. Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman, "Black Grotesquerie," *American Literary History* vol. 29, no.4 (2017): 700. See also: Kobena Mercer,"Intermezzo Worlds," *Art Journal* vol. 57, no. 4 (1998): 43-45.
30. Petrine Archer, "Negrophilia, Diaspora, and Moments of Crisis," in *Afro-Modern: Journeys Through the Black Atlantic*, eds., Tanya Barson and Peter Gorschluter. London: Tate Liverpool, 2010, 37.

31. Kobena Mercer, *Travel and See: Black Diaspora Art Practice Since the 1980s*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, 10.
32. Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1964], 47
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Sexton, *Black Masculinity,* 28.
36. Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, 47.
37. Marriott, *Haunted Life,* 241.
38. Zine Magubane, "Black Skins, Black Masks or 'The Return of the White Negro:' Race, Masculinity, and the Public Personas of Dennis Rodman and RuPaul," *Men and Masculinities* vol. 4, no. 3 (2002): 254.
39. By the time of this writing, it appears that a third iteration of *Paradyse of the Damned* was being installed at Kalashnikov Gallery (Johannesburg). This review reflects on the show as encountered at the Joburg Art Gallery in June 2018.
40. For more journalistic reflection on the narrative of Marikana Massacre, see: Greg Marinovich's *Murder at Small Koppie: The Real Story of the Marikana Massacre.* Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2016.; Peter Alexander, et al., *Marikana: A View From the Mountain and a Case to Answer.* Auckland Park, SA: Jacana Media Ltd., 2012; *Miners Shot Down,* Documentary Film, dir. Rehad Desai, Johannesburg: Uhuru Productions, 2014.
41. See: Jared Sexton and Steve Martinot,"The Avant-Garde of White Supremacy," *Social Identities* vol. 9, no. 2 (2003): 169-181; see also: Steve Martinot, "Skin for Sale: Race and the Respectful Prostitute," *in Race After Sartre: Antiracism, Africana Existentialism, and Postcolonialism*, ed Jonathan Judaken. Albany: SUNY Press, 2008, 55-76.
42. In his essay "The Obscurity of Black Suffering," Jared Sexton writes "It is as if there is no way to talk about anti-blackness, or the matrix of racial slavery, without reducing it to those anemic empirical markers of that pass for class analysis. It is as if the only way to register this ongoing event of racial slavery is to analogize it to neocolonial subjugation…or assimilate it to processes of economic exploitation.'" These remarks can serve to both expose the continual referral to black people's experience as "the poors" as one of those instances where the naming of racial blackness is but an impediment or a foreclosure of some other grand theory of organizing or political practice. See: Jared Sexton, "The Obscurity of Black Suffering," in *What Lies Beneath: Katrina, Race, and the State of the Nation*, ed., The South End Press Collective. Boston: South End Press, 2007, 120-132. For elaborate examples on how this prevarication of not only naming the racialized nature of oppression in the post-apartheid reality, also their political strategies, especially in reference to excremental politics, see: Richard Pithouse, "Thought Amidst Waste," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* vol. 47, no. 5 (2012): 482-497; for an art historical example, see: Nomusa Makhubu's "Changing the City After Our Heart's Desire: Creative Protest in Cape Town," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* vol 53 (2017): 686-699.
43. This is a recurrent thought in David Marriott's body of work from his early books namely *On Black Men* (2000) and *Haunted Life* (2005). It has also reiterated in shorter dispatch articles such as "On Decadence" (2017). See: David Marriott, *On Black Men*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000; David Marriott, *Haunted Life*; *David Marriott* "On Decadence: Bling Bling," *e-flux journal* #79 (Feb. 2017).
44. Michael Hatt, "'Making a Man of Him': Masculinity and the Black Body in the Mid-Nineteenth Century American Sculpture," in *Race-ing Art History: Critical Reading in Race and Art History*, ed Kymberly N. Pinder. New York: Routledge, 2002, 193.
45. Spillers, "Mama's Baby," 203.
46. See: bell hooks, "Doing it for Daddy: Black Masculinity in the Mainstream," in *Reel to Real: Race, Sex and Class at the Movies*. New York: Routledge, 1996, 104-113.
47.Wole Soyinka, "Neo-Tarzanism: The Poetics of Pseudo-Tradition," in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, eds., Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson. London: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, 227.
48. Steven Nelson, "Nelson Mandela's Two Bodies," *Transition,* No. 116 (2014): 130.
49. Frank B. Wilderson III, "Obama and Mandela: The Parallels and the Differences," unpublished talk, February 2, 2010.
50. Sylvia Wynter, "Sambos and Minstrels," *Social Text* no.1, (1979): 150.

51. Hortense Spillers, "Peter's Pans: Eating in the Diaspora," in *Black, White, and in Color,* 23.
52. See: Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices.* London: Sage Publications & Open University, 1997.
53. Dickerman, et al., "Afrotropes: A Conversation with Huey Copeland and Krista Thompson," 10-11.
54. Spillers, "Peter's Pans," 22.
55. "Interview with Mxolisi Vusimuzi Beauchamp," retrieved from: https://mmutleak.com/2015/05/03/interview-with-mxolisi-vusimuzi-beauchamp-part-ii-2/
56. Ibid.
57. Die Antwoord, "Enter the Ninja," 2010, YouTube video, 5:12, Posted August 2010. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cegdRoGiJl4.
58.Christopher Ballantine, "A Brief History of South African Popular Music," *Popular Music* vol. 8, no. 3 (1989): 306.
59. Bongani Madondo notes that these acts—From Johnny Glegg, P.J. Powers, to Pule Welsch and even the *Die Antwoord*—we see a situation whereby these 'smart creatives [make] profit simply through fitting into cultures deemed 'on the rise' or exotic without really adding anything new or complex, intellectually, artistically or incendiary, to those cultures.' That is, in order for whites to satisfy a kind of metaphysical emptiness or simply for purposes of pure enjoyment, they turn to black people and their practices—to empty of the very substance, much like they have dispossessed their worlds. See: Bongani Madondo, *Hot Type: Icons, Artists & God-Figurines.* Johannesburg: Picardo Africa, 2007
60. Fanon, *Black Skin*, 10.
61. Adam Haupt, "Die Antwoord's Revival of Blackface Does South Africa No Favours," *The Guardian*, October 22, 2012. Retrieved from: https://www.theguardian.com/global/2012/oct/22/die-antwoord-blackface-south-africa.
62. Khwezi Gule, "Just 'Cause You Feel It Doesn't Mean It's There," *Mail & Guardian,* August 23, 2010. Retrieved from: https://mg.co.za/article/2010-08-23-just-cause-you-feel-it-doesnt-mean-its-there
63. Noting the limits, especially of Gule's rebuttal and the strains that motivates his agenda, is linked to how his remarks are quick to caution against the pitfalls of generalization of the stereotyping image. For Gule, amongst many of his reservations, is that Kannemeyer's typecasting pathologizes blacks *a priori*, forgoing even the fact some "Africans travel to other countries—not as refugees businessman and women tourists and scholars." (Ibid.) What Gule seems frustrated by, but cannot articulate nor see how his own resistance reconstitutes the problem, is forgetting that blacks are not people with pathologies, but are *de facto* pathology. That the luxury of individual distinction of black subjects seems permanently out of bounds in stereotypes, is telling. It is no wonder Gule recourses to cheap moralism that the artist irresponsibly riles up white fears but also at the same time assures us "it is not that Kannemeyer is ignorant of privilege that comes with being white" (Ibid.).Yet what he misses is the necessary and coarticulated pleasure that Kannemeyer generates.
64. Danie Marais, "Denying the Privileged a Voice," *Mail & Guardian*, August 27, 2010. Retrieved from: https://mg.co.za/article/2010-08-27-denying-the-privileged-a-voice
65. Marriott, "On Decadence."
66. Sexton, *Black Masculinity*, 31.
67. See: Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
68. Spillers, "Peter's Pans," 21.