

What Is the University in Africa *for*?

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Let us leave this Europe...Let us endeavor to invent...¹

Introduction

The framing call for this Special Issue of *Kronos: Southern African Histories* elicited a series of readings of questions concerning the university, questions that structured both a lecture series and the theme of the annual Winter School hosted by the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR) at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in 2016. We invited submissions from those who gave lectures or participated on panels at that 2016 Winter School, on the theme ‘What Is the University *for*?’, and in the public lecture series ‘The Idea of the University in Africa’ convened by Brian Raftopolous on behalf of the CHR during 2016. Merging the titles of these two platforms, the Special Issue is titled ‘What Is the University in Africa *for*?’² An ambiguous, overdetermined question – and it is not the first time it has been posed – a question that plays with its scripts even as the readings it elicits attempt to evade its very strictures.

The invitation to the 2016 Winter School offered a set of questions organised around six themes: The University and the Question of Decolonisation; University Memory; The University Beyond the Critique of Eurocentrism; The University in the Image of the Nation; Austerity, Discipline, and Neoliberalism in University Discourse; and The University and its Centres.³ The invitation to ‘The Idea of the University in

1 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2004, first published in French in 1961), 235, 236. In the Constance Farrington translation of this well-known passage, invention appears elsewhere: ‘The human condition, plans for mankind and collaboration between men in those tasks which increase the sum total of humanity are new problems, which demand true inventions...we must invent and we must make discoveries.’ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (London: Penguin, 2001), 252, 253. Which is to say that both Philcox and Farrington translate invention into this concluding passage, but in different places.

2 Both The Idea of the University in Africa lecture series and the 2016 Winter School received funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences. The Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape duly acknowledges this generous support, which led to the production of this special issue. Ross Truscott is a Next Generation Scholar at the Centre for Humanities Research, a position funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Maurits van Bever Donker is Research Manager at the at the Centre for Humanities Research.

3 The Winter School, now in its seventh year, is a collaborative pedagogical project held between the CHR, the Department of Science and Technology/National Research Foundation, the South African Research Chair Initiative Chair in Social Change at the University of Fort Hare, and the Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change at the University of Minnesota. Scholars from the Indian Institute of Technology and Jawaharlal Nehru University have also been actively involved from the early winter schools. Over time, new partners have come on board, including the Jackman Humanities Institute at the University of Toronto.

Africa' was more open ended, and aimed to bring scholars from the African continent to UWC to discuss the possibilities and the constraints of the university – as a colonial inheritance – in Africa.

The title of the lecture series aimed to invoke, transpose and call into question a long line of thought on the university that goes under the title *The Idea of the University*, or variations on it.⁴ It is this tradition that Bill Readings critiques in *The University in Ruins*.⁵ As Readings suggests, the modern university has had three organising ideas: the Kantian university of reason, the Humboldtian university of culture, and, now, the university of excellence. The shift from the university of culture – the German idealist reworking of the Kantian problematic of the conflict of the faculties, and the model university exported across the globe with European colonialism – to the university of excellence has been occasioned, Readings suggests, by 'the decline of the nation-state as capitalism's primary instance of self-reproduction'.⁶ Culture – the double aim of the modern university since Humboldt, to research it as object, to inculcate it through teaching it – loses its meaning without the primacy of the nation-state. Into this vacancy has stepped, Readings argues, excellence, a vacuous idea without referent, which orders the neoliberal university today.⁷

In the face of questions over whether the 'idea of a liberal education' can and should be 'recovered', the idea of culture is, from the corporatised university of excellence, routinely decried as lost but retrievable.⁸ Against such nostalgic defences of the university, Readings suggests that 'we need to recognize the University as a *ruined* institution, one that has lost its *historical raison d'être*'.⁹ It should be emphasised that Readings is not advocating, against nostalgia, the mourning of liberal education – and nor are we – for the mourning of a lost origin was always at the heart of the university of culture. To mourn liberal education would be, paradoxically, to realise its idea of culture behind the veil of its interment. It would remain, if symptomatically

4 Two key texts along this line are John Henry Newman's nineteenth-century lectures and Jaroslav Pelikan's twentieth century return to them. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated in Nine Discourses Delivered to the Catholics of Dublin in Occasional Lectures and Essays Addressed to the Members of the Catholic University*, edited by Martin J. Svaglic (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982). Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992). See also Ronald Barnett, *The Idea of Higher Education* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990).

5 Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

6 *Ibid.*, 89. For Kant, Philosophy was the guardian of the idea of reason. In the British interpretation of the idea of culture in university discourse – in, for instance, Newman's lectures – Literature rather than Philosophy is centrally placed. The function that Philosophy and Literature assumed as they stood watch – not over the other disciplines, as it were, but over the idea of the university, which each discipline worked to realise – has for some time been dispersed; each discipline is at once responsible for its own limits, the finitude of its own forms of knowledge, which it now puts into the service of the market, directly or indirectly.

7 Some may argue that the university has shifted since the mid-1990s. Perhaps it has, as several papers in this Issue suggest, but Readings still quite accurately diagnoses the predicaments of the present. Certainly, the word is ubiquitous, with awards for excellence in teaching, excellence in research, excellence in community engagement regularly issued.

8 Barnett, *Higher Education*, x. To the question of whether it can be 'recovered', Barnett answers: 'I shall try to show that it can.' *Ibid.*

9 Readings, *University in Ruins*, 2, 19 (emphasis in original). The title of this essay aims to reflect this. The word 'idea' has been dropped in the merger. This is, in a sense, the argument of this essay stated in telegraphic form: There is no idea that orders the university.

and structurally, nostalgic for a Eurocentric university system.¹⁰ We are confronted, here, with the impossible but necessary task of mourning – decaethecting or, as Fanon would have it, leaving – mourning itself, at least those forms of mourning that engender monuments to national cultures.¹¹

In his meditation on lost objects, Sigmund Freud gives to a mode of inhabiting a loss that exceeds mourning, refuses mourning from within its confines, the name of melancholia.¹² It is the possibilities of this third relation that we aim to traverse here, even if nothing is guaranteed with melancholia – indeed, it is, at least in Freud’s initial formulation, a form of pathological mourning, a psychotic refusal of a loss, a form of haunting. The concept does, however, contain, as several postcolonial readers of Freud have suggested, the potential for invention – invention through and as critique. The university to come, beyond nostalgia for the university of culture, beyond mourning, monuments and excellence, will have to be invented from out of the cinders, the lost objectives, of the university in Africa.

In asking scholars to rework their presentations for publication – and some of the contributions retain traces of having been lectures, while others have been rewritten as essays – we requested that contributors respond to the following questions: What might it mean to think the margin of the university – its edge, that which sets it apart, which frames its labour – from the position of the university in Africa? Not only as a question of the marginalised, those to whom the university ought to be accountable and for whom it ought to exist, but also a marginality that impresses itself on the university in Africa, not by excluding but precisely through incorporation, assimilation. What is the place of memory in the university? How do universities narrate their own histories, recall and repress their origins and ends? If decolonisation has taken form predominantly as nationalist Africanisation projects, ranging from Mobutu Sese Seko’s Zaire, to the debates at Dar es Salaam or more radical forms of Africanisation cultivated under Julius Nyerere, what does it mean to pose the question of the decolonisation of a university in Africa today in the wake of that nationalism? If Africa was produced as an object within Eurocentric institutions

10 Within the German university of culture, the Greeks stood as the lost origin, as we discuss in more detail below, while within the Anglo university of culture Shakespeare stands ‘as the instance in which the nation-state finds its origin, as the welding of an ethnic nature with a rational state, a point at which an ethnic nature spontaneously expresses itself as a national culture’. Ibid., 79. A different originary moment, the structure of which, as Readings notes, replicates that of Greek autogenesis, ‘the lost origin to which a critical culture must seek to return by means of hermeneutic reworking through the rational institutions of the nation-state, such as the research University’. Ibid. Readings derives the guiding thread of his argument against mourning from Giorgio Agamben and Walter Benjamin: ‘Agamben is not content simply to mourn the lost meaning of culture. Just as Benjamin is concerned to *transvalue* rather than mourn the loss of aura once the work of art is universally exhibited, so Agamben attempts to transvalue the dereferentialization of culture – transvalue, that is, the process through which culture loses any specific referent. In so doing, he actually leaves the circuit of culture altogether, since “culture,” I would argue, has always been positioned in modernity either as the reconstruction of a lost authenticity (in its nostalgic or romantic mode) or as a coming to terms with the loss of origin (in its ironic or high modernist mode)’. Ibid., 50 (emphasis in original).

11 While Fanon does not explicitly raise mourning in this passage, he does note the way ‘the shadow of [Europe’s] monuments spreads’. Fanon, *Wretched*, Philcox translation, 235. It was Adam Sitze’s response to John Mowitz that drew our attention to the phrase ‘mourning mourning’, and we turn to this text below. Adam Sitze, ‘Response to John Mowitz’s “Humanities and the University in Ruin”’, *Later: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association*, <http://csalateral.org/issue1/content/sitze.html#fn> (accessed 25 November 2017).

12 Sigmund Freud, ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ in J. Strachey, ed. and trans., *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, XIV (London: Hogarth Press, 1957).

of culture, including universities, can the university be Africanised?¹³ What are the limits of decolonisation as a frame for the renewal of higher education in South Africa and elsewhere? If the university and the nation-state emerged, together, from within the ruptures that inaugurated the modern episteme, how does the recollection of a shared inaugural scene reframe contemporary struggles within the university? How does this relation between the idea of the university and the image of the nation both enable and trouble the collective that is called to rethink the university in Africa? Finally, what is becoming of the margin under the neoliberal university of excellence, on the African continent and beyond?

What follows is a discussion focusing predominantly on recent lectures and public debates on the university, a discussion that aims to both supplement these questions – bunched up above, running into each other – and to provide one frame within which the contributions to this Special Issue can be read.

Bifurcated worlds

At a public debate held at UWC in 2016, titled ‘The University and its Worlds’, a part of ‘The Idea of the University in Africa’ public lecture series, David Theo Goldberg, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler and Achille Mbembe each offered a set of provocations on the university in times of neoliberalism.¹⁴

Goldberg named the problem as the ‘uberisation of the university’, wherein there occurs an ‘erosion of the conditions of work’ and ‘the loss of slow thinking’ in the face of quantified assessments of everything, generating indexes used to attract investment. Arguably, this is an elaboration of what Readings meant by excellence, which does not merely constrain intellectual work, Goldberg argued, but produces it in a particular form in advance. For Goldberg, we ought to unequivocally oppose the prospect of the ‘uberversity’ – where the overarching objective is an excellent rating, democracy displaced by crowdsourcing – defending slow reading and critical thought as the conditions for the selection of appropriate oppositional action. And we ought to imagine a different kind of university, as Goldberg noted in the discussion that followed.

For Brown, it is not simply that neoliberalism seeks to economise the university, increasing profits; financialisation orients universities toward shareholder value rather than only return on investment, with rankings and ratings acting as indexes of ‘creditworthiness.’ Brown offered a similar prescription to Goldberg: critical thought,

13 If to decolonise, to undo the epistemic violence of a Eurocentric education, has been, and continues to be, to *Africanise* the university, it is worth recalling Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s comment on Friday’s reading lesson in J.M. Coetzee’s *Foe*: ‘One of the words Barton tries to teach Friday is *Africa*. This effort is rich in meaning and its limits. The metropolitan anti-imperialist cannot teach the native the proper name of his nation or continent. *Africa*, a Roman name for what the Greeks called “Libya,” itself perhaps a latinization of the name of the Berber tribe Aourigha (perhaps pronounced “Afarika”), is a metonym that points to a greater indeterminacy: the mysteriousness of the space upon which we are born. *Africa* is only a time-bound naming; like all proper names it is a mark with an arbitrary connection to its referent, a catachresis.’ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Theory in the Margin: Coetzee’s *Foe* Reading Defoe’s *Crusoe/Roxana*’, *English in Africa*, 17(2) (1990), 14.

14 To watch these lectures, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s07xFdD-ivQ&t=316s> (accessed 25 November 2016).

opposition – the reawakening of the figure of *homo politicus* – and the imagining of a different kind of university.¹⁵

Butler noted the value of critique as a ‘dismantling in the name of values that are yet to be institutionalised’. If ‘impact’ has become a ‘keyword of austerity’, turning on whether knowledge has ‘an impact on the world’, then as Butler, Goldberg and Brown all argued, ‘modes of social transformation that seek to change the world or indeed to democratise our universities’ are undervalued precisely because these kinds of knowledge are neither measurable nor, on this accounting, likely to increase the ‘creditworthiness’, in Brown’s terms, of the university. There is thus a need to disrupt and to dismantle certain structures. It was here that the imagination was most explicitly pronounced, Butler calling for a ‘radical re-imagining’ of what the university is for.

The problem for Mbembe, echoing Butler, is ‘the inability to imagine renewed ideas of the common and an overreliance on discrete difference as the foundation of the political’. He ended his talk with ‘a plea for a renewed imagination’ of the university in Africa, so as to ‘reactivate the idea of the public, the common’, along the lines of a sociodemocratic impetus.

At the risk of collapsing the differences between these four interventions – and their differences were sharp – they offered three common propositions. Firstly, that we oppose the neoliberalisation of the university. Secondly, that we do so through critique. And thirdly, that we imagine a different university beyond its current austere condition. It is these three themes that we dwell on here, turning them.

In ‘The Importance of Research in a University’,¹⁶ Mahmood Mamdani offers one way of formulating opposition to the neoliberalisation of the university, different to ‘The University and its Worlds’. He begins with a brief history of higher education in Africa. The title of Mamdani’s lecture is worth noting for the way it frames that history. It is not the *African* university he is dealing with, but the university *in* Africa.¹⁷ Though there were, he notes, African educational institutions that date back a thousand years – in Egypt, Tunisia and Mali – the institutions of higher learning under which we currently labour are those ordered by the disciplinary divisions that emerged in nineteenth-century Europe.¹⁸ Universities of this order emerged *in* Africa, for the most part in the 1950s and 1960s, after independence. Here, the postcolonial

15 *Undoing the Demos* offers a reading of Michel Foucault’s lectures at the College de France, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, wherein he plots a shift from man as driven by self-interest to man as an entrepreneur, *homo economicus*. Brown argues that neoliberalism is not liberalism taken to its paroxysmal conclusions; it is a fundamental reorientation of liberalism, wherein there is available a figure of political struggle, *homo politicus*, a figure that, she argues, Foucault neglects. Rather than salvaging such a figure, Brown’s question concerns what has been lost in the shift to financialisation. Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015). As our discussion of John Mowitt’s ‘The Searing of the University’ in this Issue indicates, the availability of a figure of political struggle might not be a limit so much as a condition of possibility for *homo economicus*.

16 Mahmood Mamdani, ‘The Importance of Research in a University’, Keynote speech presented at the Makerere University Research and Innovations Dissemination Conference, Hotel Africana, 11 April 2011. See <https://misr.mak.ac.ug/sites/default/files/publications/3The%20Importance%20of%20Research%20in%20a%20University.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2017).

17 This is a very old debate. For two interventions into it from the terrain of the CHR, see Premesh Lalu, ‘Apartheid’s University: Notes on the Renewal of the Enlightenment’, *JHEA/RESA*, 5(1) (2007), 45–60; Suren Pillay, ‘The Humanities to Come: Thinking the World from Africa’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 37(1) (2017), 121–131.

18 In the nineteenth century, the university was divided into the Natural Sciences, the Social Sciences and the Humanities, and further segregated into disciplines that, as Mamdani notes, were entrenched within the university (in departments), between universities (in organisations) and in libraries (in cataloguing systems).

university coincides with the fulfilment of a nationalist struggle.¹⁹ Mamdani thus underlines the place of universities in national independence, with two models, state and market driven, the latter a more recent development. In the enclosure of a market-driven education, where the nation-state acts as an administrative set of channels rather than an organising idea, research, Mamdani suggests, comes to emphasise practical solutions rather than the rigorous philosophical formulation of questions. This he names ‘consultancy culture’.²⁰

If consultancy is solution-driven, critical research, for Mamdani – note we are upon the second theme from ‘The University and its Worlds’, critique, Mamdani’s version of it – is diagnostic. Within this frame, Mamdani offers the signs and symptoms of consultancy culture, chief among them the testing and implementation of programmes imposed from European or US universities and non-governmental organisations. For Mamdani, rather than partnerships, such intercontinental relationships resemble a form of ‘outreach’, as he puts it, ‘the incorporation of individual local researchers into an externally-driven project’.²¹ Thus the importance Mamdani gives to theory in universities in Africa at a moment when theory is being set aside for more practical, solution-driven projects. But theory is a far from straightforward undertaking:

The central question facing higher education in Africa today is what it means to teach the humanities and social sciences in the current historical context and, in particular, in the post-colonial African context. What does it mean to teach humanities and social sciences in a location where the dominant intellectual paradigms are products not of Africa’s own experience, but of a particular Western experience? Where dominant paradigms theorize a specific Western history and are concerned in large part to extol the virtues of the enlightenment or to expound critiques of that same enlightenment?²²

Mamdani’s question is not whether Enlightenment texts are worth reading and teaching: for him, they unquestionably are. The question, rather, concerns whether such texts are an adequate foundation on which to ground the contemporary university in Africa, which, he argues, they are not. Generously read, this is not a distinction in terms of value, but, rather, in terms of use. For Mamdani, ‘if the Enlightenment is said to be an exclusively European phenomenon, then the story of the Enlightenment is one that excludes Africa as it does most of the world’.²³ Mamdani suggests the development of frameworks that are of Africa, in languages and traditions of thought

19 Mamdani’s example is Nigeria, which had one university prior to independence and, three decades later, over 40.

20 Consultancy culture organises academic research and is not restricted to consultancy projects; it is at work whenever one finds ‘the collection of data to answer pre-packaged questions’, which takes the place of ‘the fundamental research practice of formulating the questions that are to be addressed’. Mamdani, ‘The Importance of Research’.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

that are properly African.²⁴ This is Mamdani's version of reimagining the university. If the African university remains practically impossible, it must, within the university in Africa, be posed as a question to postcolonial university discourse, even as the grounds of this question – rooted as it is in a bifurcation – must be put into question.

To reframe Mamdani's argument – and we return to it below – and gesture towards our own diagnosis, it is worth traversing, if briefly, the argument of Martin Bernal's *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, a text that was at the heart of what came to be known as the US culture wars, but a text that has also been widely taught in South African Humanities courses.²⁵ As is well known, Bernal proposes that ancient Greek civilisation is indebted to Egyptian and Phoenician colonisers. Athens itself, Bernal argues, took its name from an Egyptian goddess. Most immediately concerned with the period between 2100 and 1110 BC, Bernal argues that what is most cherished about Greece – including writing, philosophy and mathematics, even democracy – was borrowed from Egypt and the Levant. Bernal argues that during both the Classical (480–323 BC) and the Hellenistic (323–50 BC) ages, there was the broad view that, from 1500 BC, the Egyptians and the Phoenicians had colonised Greece. This left a marked Afroasiatic impression on ancient Greece, the cherished origin of Western European civilisation. This he reads out of, among others, Herodotus, Plato and Aristotle, for whom this Afroasiatic stamping of Greece had occurred in what was for them already a distant antiquity. This Classical Model, as he calls it, was acknowledged in Europe, too, until the eighteenth century, when it was replaced by what he calls an Aryan Model, according to which Greece was formed as if by autogenesis.²⁶

Black Athena has, then, a double aim. Firstly, to reconstruct a narrative of the indebtedness of ancient Greece to Egyptian and Phoenician influences, so as to produce a Revised Classical Model, a synthesis of the Classical and the Aryan models, but certainly far closer to the former. Secondly, to give an account of why such influences have been repressed. Bernal's simple answer is that the academic disciplines from the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries were not only complicit with Eurocentric racism, they helped to lay its foundation.²⁷ The reasons for the displacement of the Ancient model by the Aryan model concern, as Bernal puts it, 'the predominance, in the nineteenth century, of the linked concepts of progress,

24 This he made abundantly clear in his 2017 T.B. Davies Lecture at the University of Cape Town. Our worry about this proposition, set out below, should not foreclose what Ashis Nandy has called the recovery of indigenous knowledge. Ashis Nandy, 'Recovery of Indigenous Knowledge and Dissenting Futures of the University' in Sohail Inayatullah and Jennifer Gidley, eds., *The University in Transformation* (London: Bergin and Garvey, 2000), 115–123. Indeed, Nandy points in precisely the direction in which our critique is heading: 'Every scrap of local knowledge is not only a global heritage; it is an alternative form of universal knowledge seeking recognition and, if I may add, justice from the world of knowledge.' *Ibid.*, 122. This is where Readings, too, heads – education for justice.

25 Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, Volume I, The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785–1985* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

26 To reiterate the point noted in footnote 9, in the British university of culture, Shakespeare occupies this originary position. Hence the multiple interventions which seek to read Africa into Shakespeare. On *King Lear*, for instance, see Tony Voss, 'The Lie of the Land: Some Co-ordinates of *King Lear*', *Shakespeare in Southern Africa*, 8 (1995), 1–22. But see also Marshal McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

27 As Robert Young puts it: 'Bernal's book suggests that the parameters that have already been set up defining the limits of colonial discourse need to be extended much more widely into the history of academic disciplines. *Black Athena* holds out the much more disturbing possibility that all Western knowledge is, directly or indirectly, a form of colonial discourse.' Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 160.

romanticism, and racism', out of which emerged ideals of purity, with impurity associated with degeneration and, hence, backwardness.²⁸ It was, Bernal speculates, simply intolerable for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europeans to accept that Greece, the 'epitome of Europe' but also its 'pure childhood', was 'the result of the mixture of native Europeans and colonizing Africans and Semites'.²⁹

Black Athena has been on the sharp end of much criticism, the most cutting of which can be summed up in a single word: obviously. But it has also been called 'one of the most subversive academic works of the late twentieth century',³⁰ and affirmed by, among others, Edward Said. Valentin Mudimbe refers to its publication as an 'event', a singular occurrence, one which 'will', he anticipates, 'profoundly mark the next century's perception of the origins of Greek civilization and the role of ancient Egypt'.³¹ The key point for us, however, is that the Egyptian and Phoenician influences on ancient Greece cannot themselves, according to the logic internal to *Black Athena*, be pure; there is encounter at the origin.³² *Black Athena* refuses the easy distinction between texts on the Enlightenment and its autocritique and texts that are, properly, of Africa. Indeed, we might ask in what sense the Egypt of old can be taken to be equivalent to the Africa produced through the Enlightenment and colonialism.³³ Which Africa?

Bernal lodges *Black Athena* in an intellectual genealogy that includes the likes of W.E.B. du Bois, and he is sceptical of the Afrocentric reception of the book.³⁴ Recovering Africa, so as to affirm its worth according to existing measures of the world, however strategically necessary, would not be, as Mudimbe would have it, an event. *Black Athena* would offer merely an alteration in the content of knowledge, a new origin, while reinscribing the structure of the argument it displaces and the mode through which knowledge is produced.³⁵ The question, rather, is how to intervene at the level of the ordering of the world in which Africa is produced as before – spatially in front of, an object, temporally behind – Europe and the US.³⁶

28 Martin Bernal, *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to His Critics*, edited by David Chioni Moore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 4.

29 Bernal, *Black Athena*, 2 (emphasis in original).

30 Jacques Berlinerblau, *Heresy in the University: The Black Athena Controversy and the Responsibilities of American Intellectuals* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 13.

31 V.Y. Mudimbe, 'African Athena', *Transition*, 58 (1992), 114. This does not stop Mudimbe from sounding out a set of worries, both about *Black Athena* – Bernal's failure to distinguish between racism and race thinking, to note just one – and the potential for a misappropriation of the ideas it sets out.

32 The idea that Egypt is itself the product of encounter, including encounters with peoples south of Egypt, is at least available, if only implicitly, in *Black Athena*, though this is sometimes called a 'blind spot'. 'What did the interior of Africa thus contribute to Egypt, and via Egypt, to classical Greek, European, North Atlantic, global, civilization?' Wim van Binsbergen, 'Black Athena: Ten Years After: Towards a Constructive Re-assessment', *Talanta*, 28–29 (1997), 19–20.

33 Sylvia Wynter comes to a similar impasse in her discussion with Katherine McKittrick, where she argues that the human is comprised of mythos and bios, of story and the biological, a condition that makes where the story begins a vital concern. And yet, that vital concern only makes sense in a context where the very hierarchy one would want to overturn is maintained as legible. Sylvia Wynter, 'Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations' in Katherine McKittrick, ed., *On Being Human as Praxis* (London: Duke University Press, 2015), 9–89.

34 Bernal, *Black Athena Writes Back*.

35 See Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 280, n. 37.

36 Whether Africa is a place of raw data or viewed as a site of intellectual vitality, the frame, which sets it apart from Europe and the US, remains in place. Which is what is at stake when the Comaroffs write that they 'seek to do more than just turn the story upside down, thus to leave intact the Manichean dualism that holds Euro-America and its others in the same, fixed embrace'. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Theory from the South; or, How Euro-America Is Evolving Toward Africa* (London: Paradigm, 2012), 7.

Along somewhat different lines, one can make a similar claim by reading Léopold Sédar Senghor's Negritude texts on the notion of rhythm, his rewriting of *Einfühlung*, empathy, derived from European science, a concept forged precisely for the task of dealing, comparatively, with difference encountered in scenes of colonialism. If Humanities scholars in Africa face a problem of developing traditions of thought that are of Africa, as Mamdani suggests, such traditions are lodged in Eurocentric frames. Yet, as Mudimbe also notes, 'today Africans themselves read, challenge, rewrite these discourses as a way of explicating and defining their culture, history, and being'.³⁷ Although there is much worth worrying over in this rendering of Negritude, is this not precisely how we might understand Senghor's concept of rhythm? And let us simply note that with empathy, an imaginative capacity – though also an affective, cognitive, kinetic, even nervous phenomenon – we are upon the third theme staked out in 'The University and its Worlds'.

It is through the gaze of ethnologist Leo Frobenius that Senghor is able to reject the idea that Africa is inferior, backward.³⁸ Crucial for Senghor is the weight Frobenius gives to intuition and, specifically, to *Einfühlung*. 'It was Frobenius,' Senghor states, 'who more than any other, more even than Bergson, reinstated intuitive reason in our eyes.'³⁹ As Senghor states elsewhere: 'The gift of empathy, and thus the gift of creation, the Germans have shown abundantly in all the branches of art and knowledge.'⁴⁰ This, too, as Senghor argues, is the 'Negro's contribution.'⁴¹ Senghor's relation to Frobenius is, however, far from straightforward. In the double-edged autodeconstructive words of his 'Foreword' to an anthology of Frobenius' writings, Senghor states: 'I have been saying it for decades, the independence of the mind is an indispensable condition of all other independence. And it was Leo Frobenius who helped us to achieve it. Therefore he is still our master.'⁴² Senghor finds something worth holding onto in 'the German ability to respond to the call of reality, to make a consonance of sounds, to vibrate on the wavelength of the *Other*, of the *Thou*.'⁴³ To this extent, Senghor remains faithful to Frobenius, his 'master', and it is this ambiguous relation that enables 'independence'. If at the heart of Senghorian Negritude is German ethnology, however, it is not ethnology repeated faithfully. One might say that it is ethnology mastered, a relation reversed.

37 Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 11. 'I am personally convinced that the most imaginative works that reveal to us what are now called African systems of thought,' Mudimbe writes, 'can be fundamentally understood through their journey into *Einfühlung*. In the case of African scholars, it often becomes a case ... of sympathy towards oneself and one's culture.' *Ibid.*, 158.

38 Léopold Sédar Senghor, 'Foreword' in E. Haberland, ed., *Leo Frobenius on African History, Art and Culture: An Anthology* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2007), vii–xiii.

39 *Ibid.*, x–xi.

40 Léopold Sédar Senghor, 'Negritude and the Germans,' *Africa Report*, 12(2) (1967), 48.

41 Léopold Sédar Senghor, 'What the Black Man Contributes' in R. Bernasconi and S. Cook, eds., M.B. Mader, trans., *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003) (essay originally published in 1964), 287–302.

42 Senghor, 'Foreword', xiii.

43 Senghor, 'Negritude and the Germans', 48.

Whatever his blind spots and faults, Senghor read the concepts he repeated, and it is not simply a matter, for him, of reversing an order, turning it around.⁴⁴ Invention is at stake. Senghor's concept of rhythm is often treated, unkindly, as essentialist, as conjuring the gyrating unthinking 'Negro body'. Rhythm, for Senghor, however, is a mode of knowing the world, and it is, as noted above, what he makes of *Einfühlung*, transposed from ethnology. Instead of identifying objects, one identifies with them, but, crucially, this also entails creation, the key in Senghor's discussion of rhythm being not repetition but reprisal: a theme recurs elsewhere, differently, 'reprised at another place, on another level, in another combination, in a variation.'⁴⁵ Knowledge in this mode, for Senghor, is a response to the object that is its 'creation-re-creation.'⁴⁶ This is both what the concept thematises and the process through which it was forged. Rhythm, that is to say, is a mode of questioning, of knowing the other: 'It is a state of abandon that becomes need, an active attitude of communion – indeed, identification – no matter how strong the action – I was going to say the personality – of the object. A rhythmic attitude.'⁴⁷ Frobenius has been incorporated here; Senghor, through identifying with him, has invented something.

Can we really tell, then, what sort of scholarship is of the Enlightenment, including its autocritique, and what is of Africa? Should we concern ourselves with setting in place and policing the line between them? Or could the university in Africa not concern itself with the ways in which these two ostensibly divided traditions of thought implicate each other, are never fully separable? As Bachir Diagne puts it, 'Africa is not only in Africa.'⁴⁸

While there is much in Mamdani's lecture that is provocative, we would assert, in the company of figures such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, that Africa's experience, and that of Europe, are not easily distinguishable; they are held in common, if differently, and reducing the distinction to an ontological level lends itself towards reinforcing the problem. This returns us to the title of the panel discussion to which the speakers each paid scant attention: 'The University and its Worlds', the worlds

44 Cf. Léopold Sédar Senghor, 'Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century' in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), for the outlines of his argument that what shifts in European philosophy is, precisely, the concept of man to which an apparatus like empathy might be attached. For him, Europe is now that which must catch up.

45 Senghor, 'What the Black Man Contributes', 296.

46 L.S. Senghor, trans. H. Kaal, 'On Negrohood: Psychology of the African Negro', *Diogenes*, 10(37) (1962), 6. Indeed, as Diagne has argued, Senghor's notion of rhythm poses a question to the world, recalling Fanon's final words to *Black Skin White Masks*: 'My final prayer: O my body, always make me a man who questions!' Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008 [1952]), 206. Diagne suggested as much in his Distinguished Deans Lecture at the University of the Western Cape in 2014. In support of this claim, we might note that immediately before this, Fanon asks: 'Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other?' Fanon, *Black Skin*, 206. But in this instance, as a question of the body, not the calculability of reason.

47 Senghor, 'What the Black Man Contributes', 289.

48 Bachir Diagne, *The Ink of the Scholars: Reflections on Philosophy in Africa*, translated by Jonathan Adjemian, Codesria, <http://www.codesria.org/spip.php?article2610> (accessed 27 November 2017), 4–5. Against the assumption that writing is the condition of possibility for philosophy – for, it is assumed, African orality devotes all energies to memory and transmission, leaving none for critique, therefore there was no philosophy in Africa prior to the arrival of European culture – Diagne's *The Ink of the Scholars* offers two theses. Firstly, oral texts reveal, when grasped in their intertextuality, pronounced critiques of the traditions of which they are a part; they do not simply repeat, as faithfully as possible, their predecessors; they – in a term that echoes Léopold Sédar Senghor – offer reprisals. Secondly, such a position has to ignore 'the established history of intellectual centres in Africa where texts containing an undeniable philosophical dimension were studied and commented on, in writing, and where the names of Plato and Aristotle, for example, were known long before the European presence'. *Ibid.*, 57.

the university produces. Which one becomes the question? Mamdani, it should be noted, at least grapples with this. As he puts it, 'most of the world'⁴⁹ is excluded by what the university teaches, cast beyond its gates, objectified for contemplation and intervention.⁵⁰ Hence the strategic imperative of forging traditions of thought of Africa, a matter – this must be underscored – of invention, not recuperation, even if this, for Mamdani, will come to lean on the discipline of Political Science and, above all, the concept of History.⁵¹

The work of negation

If the preceding section suggests something like the African university as a lost object the university in Africa is required to abide by, even if retrieving it within the disciplinary logics of the university will unearth with one hand and rebury with the other, it is the theme of mourning and melancholia that we want to begin setting out in this section.

In his Distinguished Dean's Lecture given at UWC in 2013, 'The Humanities and the University in Ruin', John Mowitt intervenes into what he calls, reading Mamdani's 'The Importance of Research in a University', the predicaments of a university system that has undergone a shift from 'Eurocentric legitimation' to 'neo-liberal legitimation'.⁵² Mowitt, reading at that shift Readings marks as the becoming excellent of the university, underscores what is 'unelaborated' in Mamdani's account of the distinction between consultancy, on the one hand – research carried out under the influence of neoliberalism – and critical research, on the other – research that tends to draw on the Enlightenment and its autocritique, though, of course, not only – namely, a concept of the labour of Humanities scholarship.⁵³ What value comes to attach to this labour beyond appeals to Eurocentrism or neoliberalism, culture or excellence? What might the Humanities name as its intellectual labour under conditions of the

49 Mamdani, 'The Importance of Research'.

50 Surely the problem is not one of exclusion but of 'hierarchical inclusion', even according to the logic of his argument. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 166–167. See also Comaroff and Comaroff, *Theory from the South*, 11. See also Readings, *University in Ruins*, 90–111.

51 Mamdani is concerned with historicising the native as category fabricated by the colonial state. As such, Mbembe goes perhaps too far in calling Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject* a work of new nativism. Achille Mbembe, 'Ways of Seeing: Beyond the New Nativism. Introduction', *African Studies Review*, 44(2) (2001), 1–14. In a series of lectures between *Citizen and Subject* and 'The Importance of Research in a University', Mamdani asks, as if responding to Mbembe: 'How far have we gone beyond settler claims to being custodians of cosmopolitan pluralism and nativist preoccupation with origin and authenticity?' Mahmood Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 85. The charge: new settlerism. We have no intention of getting embroiled in old arguments. The issue we take with this response, however, is that it presumes, in its empiricism, that behind the mask of nativeness is the *thing*, Africa, whereas, for Mbembe, 'Africa exists only as an absent object, an absence that those who try to decipher it only accentuate... Thus we must speak of Africa only as a chimera...' Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 241. To the question of what lies behind the mask, one might read Mbembe as saying that it is precisely this question, its staging, its performance, dissimulation, inscription, echoic repetition, deconstruction. The risk here is ontologising absence. Though this is averted, our own sense of 'proper' is derived from a reading of Fanon, who states of decolonisation: 'It infuses a new rhythm specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of a new man.' Fanon, *Wretched*, Philcox translation, 21. We cite here the Philcox translation of *Les damnés de la terre*, rather than Farrington's, which reads: 'It brings a natural rhythm [*un rythme proper*] into existence...' Fanon, *Wretched*, Farrington translation, 28. In Philcox's translation, it is a rhythm proper to 'a new generation of men [*apporté par les nouveaux homes*]; a rhythm that will come with the 'creation of a new man', i.e. there is nothing natural about it; *it is a work of invention*, though also – and here in sympathy with Mbembe – of questioning as a social act, a performative.

52 John Mowitt, 'The Humanities and the University in Ruin', *Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association*, <http://csalateral.org/issue1/content/mowitt.html> (accessed 10 January 2016).

53 *Ibid.*

corporatisation of the university, where intellectual labour is registered, tabulated and rewarded according to its efficacy and impact?

The predicament Mowitt has in mind is, in Marxian terms, ‘the extraction of surplus value from educational labor, including the labor of studying.’⁵⁴ Simply put, students may indeed have a point that something is taken from them when universities use, or are forced to use, performance indexes of excellence – whether concerning degree completion or alumni employment rates, community engagement projects, and so on – to secure investment in the university’s future, to speculate: ‘In effect, surplus value is being extracted from so-called unproductive (intellectual) labor and this produces a link between students and workers that has only the most oblique relation to their jobs.’⁵⁵ It is, in short, a condition of the making calculable of education.

One response to this situation, sufficiently overarching to impress itself on the title of Mowitt’s lecture, emerges in his recourse to *The University in Ruins*, ‘brushing it against the grain’ by refracting it through Walter Benjamin’s *The Origin of the German Trauerspiel*. This move allows Mowitt to ‘hear’ in the ‘melancholic strains’ of *The University in Ruins* ‘something urgent about the contemporary fate of the university.’⁵⁶ Mowitt’s conception of an adequate response to ‘this moment of danger’, or that which ‘flares up’ at this moment – the echo of Benjamin should be clear enough – is ‘re: working’, ‘re, colon, space, working’, a translation of Bertolt Brecht’s *umfunktionierung*.⁵⁷ ‘Workers as objects of reflection, but at the same time, workers as subjects caught up in the labor of reflection, of repeating themselves differently.’⁵⁸ Of course, Mamdani might retort that Benjamin is simply yet another critic of the Enlightenment who, for all that he wrote, was nonetheless faithful to its promise, even if not in conformity with the ideals of that enlightenment. The key point, however, is that Mowitt is attempting to inhabit, through the concept of re: working, the very problem of objectification to which Mamdani points. If the objective of the university has for a long time been objectification, how does one inhabit this so as to turn it?

Mowitt lodges this concept of re: working in the space between the refusal to work and the enjoyment of the work of studying, ‘a practice suspended between refusal and pleasure’ that will allow the valuation of the work of study that succumbs to neither culture nor excellence, neither Eurocentrism nor neoliberalism.⁵⁹ Mowitt rejects the option of collapsing the difference between studying and the refusal to study.⁶⁰ The refusal to participate in intellectual labour – a decision reached through the expenditure of intellectual labour equal to or exceeding that of participation – comes with a wager that is not difficult to grasp when we, at South African universities, look

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid. In Readings, this arguably goes under the name of ‘transvaluation’. Readings, *University in Ruins*, 50.

58 Mowitt, ‘The Humanities’.

59 Ibid.

60 For a reading of this refusal, not in Mowitt but rather in the writings of Richard Rive, see Adam Sitze, ‘Study and Revol’, *Safundi*, 17(3) (2016), 271–295.

back at campus shut-downs since 2015. Protest may short-circuit a process of extraction, as if to say, try and report on this to the bureaucratic logics of the university. The risk, however, is not only that of bankruptcy, particularly for historically black universities; it is the university being placed under the administration of, as Mowitt puts it, 'the asses of vocationalization that can already be heard braying at its gates'.⁶¹ To be clear, this is not a conservative criticism of protest – as he reiterates in his contribution to this Special Issue, as we discuss further on – the problem is that protest might have more in common with what it seeks to displace than it realises.

The second option is to re: work study so as to wrest from it enjoyment, pleasure. The problem here, as Mowitt notes in a brief discussion of the work of Robert Castel and Jacques Donzelot, is its proximity to the discourse of the concentration camp, a wager, then, even greater than the vocationalisation of the university. Here, Mowitt zeroes in on the preventative mental health measures part and parcel of organised whistling while you work. While student support services, including psychological counselling, are woefully underfunded and overwhelmed at universities in general and historically black universities in particular – and thus an anti-psychiatry movement would seem to have a meek, if not a phantom, opponent here – the coercion at work within this form of re: working study is often difficult to see. For whom do we enjoy, often against our best interests? In Freudian terms, why are we so often driven to repeat things that are ostensibly unpleasurable? Why do we desire unpleasure? Or, as Gayatri Spivak has asked, what is the relation between desire and interest? Who is it that comes to represent desire and interest, and their non-coincidence?⁶²

The lever, for Mowitt, is Georg Hegel's concept of negation. For Hegel, as Mowitt reads him: 'What science...requires is a struggle between knowing and being, a struggle based in negation where the life of the mind advances by assimilating the object and negating the identity between the subject and the object produced through that assimilation.'⁶³ At the frontier between the mind and matter is death, the labour of the negative as death. For Mowitt reading Hegel, it is negation that lies between refusal and pleasure, a theme he finds elaborated in Marx's notion of unproductive labour, and which Mowitt reads out of *The University in Ruins* under the heading of 'dissensus'.⁶⁴ Ultimately, this leads Mowitt to – enables him to – negate Hegel so as to affirm a Nietzschean concept of affirmation. Within Mamdani's bifurcated view, Mowitt remains committed to the Enlightenment, yet what Mowitt is perhaps asking, rather, is that we read Friedrich Nietzsche – and Benjamin – within a genealogy of philosophy that is not necessarily of the Enlightenment or even of Europe. This might, in a sense, amount to a re: working of philosophy that is capable of producing a different concept of the world, one that refuses the easy dichotomy of Europe

61 Mowitt, 'The Humanities'. Cf. Readings, *University in Ruins*, 151, when he claims that 'the discourse of excellence can incorporate campus radicalism as proof of the excellence of campus life or student commitment'.

62 Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Larry Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–302.

63 Mowitt, 'The Humanities'.

64 In Readings' terms, the university becomes a site wherein 'the question of being-together is posed, rather than an ideal community'. Readings, *University in Ruins*, 127.

and Africa. This might just carry a difference that is not exhuming and inhuming simultaneously, not melancholia and not quite mourning, but, rather, invention. But we are not there yet.

Professional melancholia

The Humanities is frequently defended to the taxpaying public, as Adam Sitze notes in his response to Mowitt's lecture, by emphasising the importance of teaching 'self-reflection and self-critique'.⁶⁵ Taking oneself as an object. If this, as some, including Brown, Butler and Goldberg, argue – Mbembe approached this differently: push the system to its absurd limit so as to break it fully – is what the Humanities is for, Sitze is concerned with the aporia such a defence of the Humanities presents today:

Humanists who defend the humanities to the public today sometimes invoke the words of *The Apology of Socrates* in their defenses as if the conclusion of Socrates' defense – the sentence of death – were somehow not an essential and necessary part of that defense. But *The Apology of Socrates* is, as Kierkegaard argued, precisely a defenseless defense: it is an ironic defense, a defense of the examined life that, on principle, seems not at all designed to succeed in the task of defending the examined life. It is a defense that, in fact, seems to find redeeming value in the ironic self-consciousness with which the philosopher willingly accepts the verdict, the decision for death, that is passed upon him by the tragically uncomprehending democratic public – a public that, above all, seems not to consent to the notion that its taxes ought to be spent to maintain the life of a parasitic figure who, in turn, spends his leisure-time teaching the children of the rich how to bite and sting the host that sustains them.⁶⁶

Nothing can come of such a defence but a victory in which the Humanities dies a death that is, at least, philosophical to the end, following its principles into the grave that is, properly, its own. Less tragically, and in Brown's terms, it sacrifices all 'creditworthiness' to calculability, so as to become a philosophical spectre to the speculation in which the Humanities cannot but participate, as Mowitt would have it.

As Sitze reads him, Mowitt productively shifts the Socratic plea for the Humanities from a juridical defence to a question of labour.⁶⁷ Sitze is most immediately concerned with drawing attention to the telecommunication technologies through which scholarly work is conducted as the reproduction, the transmission, of a tradition of

65 Sitze, 'Response'.

66 Ibid.

67 As Sitze notes in 'Response', the word translated as leisure is *skolē* – from which is derived the Latin *schola* and the English 'scholar' and 'school' – and engenders a defence of scholarly labour, as a defence of the 'examined life' as it has been inherited from Plato, that is, as Sitze suggests, a defence of a peculiar sort of work that is not work at all. Cf. Readings, *University in Ruins*, where he reads the ways in which the university of culture reoriented the medieval university's opposition between the active life and the contemplative life towards a form of labour that was between leisure and utility.

thought.⁶⁸ ‘If it is true that there can be no humanities without the transmissibility or reproducibility of knowledge, so, too, in other words, can there be no humanities that does not rely in some way on *technē*.’⁶⁹ Often thought of as ‘the constitutive exterior of the humanities,’ *technē* is, thus, for Sitze, at the heart of the work done in the Humanities and at the heart of the human as such, the key point being that the changes in information technology that threaten the Humanities are issued from within its folds. Any defence of the Humanities entailing the negation of technology – and the Humanities continues to define and defend itself against vocational, that is, technical training – would be a negation of the very condition of possibility for the Humanities.

If the threat to the Humanities is not exterior to it, this allows us to discern in the Socratic defence of the examined life something like what psychoanalysis means by defence, the warding off of a conflict concerning the ‘extimate interior’ of the Humanities, namely, *technē*.⁷⁰ The work of the Humanities – and its defences, its symptoms – is plagued by an autoimmune disorder, for its very condition of possibility is what threatens it from within.⁷¹ All the Humanities can do in the face of this aporia is teach lessons that forecast an end of the university in the age of teletechnical reproduction, lessons that would be defended, paradoxically, as essential to the examined life. From such lessons there would be, as Sitze puts it, ‘the counterintuitive threat that a certain humanities, a radically abbreviated humanities, shall survive the end of the university, and this not despite but precisely because of the technics it supposes.’⁷² The Humanities will have become the narcissus flower that remains in the ruins of the university. Taking itself as its own object, the Humanities cannot but defend the lesson of its own demise, or, rather, of its perpetual demise as a scaffold for something else, an irreducible remainder that will survive.⁷³

‘What then,’ Sitze asks, ‘is the paradigm for a type of scholarly work that seems to consist mainly of or even exclusively of relinquishing prior paradigms of scholarly work?’⁷⁴ Sitze responds to this question by placing it in the frame of Freud’s distinction between mourning and melancholia, a theme already there in Mowitt’s lecture. In ‘Mourning and Melancholia,’ Freud proposes melancholia, in contradistinction to mourning, as a refusal to accept the ‘verdict of reality,’ to acknowledge the loss of an object. Freud has in mind a loved object, but also an ideal, such as the nation. The question of labour features in Freud’s essay, for mourning and melancholia entail ‘similar internal work.’⁷⁵ Namely, the slow ‘work of severance,’ the ego required to ‘sever its attachment to the object.’⁷⁶ What distinguishes melancholia from mourning is intense self-criticism, the melancholic ego drawing constant attention to how

68 As a first step, he draws attention, in Mowitt’s notion of re: working, to ‘the “re-” that many email programs automatically generate in the “Subject” heading.’ Sitze, ‘Response’.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 This is only the case if we accept the bifurcation between the human and technology.

72 Sitze, ‘Response’.

73 We cannot lose sight of the fact that Sitze’s essay is written – and published online – in the teeth of this very predicament. Which is the point he makes of Mowitt’s lecture.

74 Sitze, ‘Response’.

75 Freud, ‘Mourning and Melancholia,’ 245–246.

76 Ibid., 255.

wretched it is.⁷⁷ Freud's insight into melancholia is that, when listened to carefully, the criticisms are addressed to the lost object, which has been swallowed whole so as to preserve it. As Freud argues, in order to prolong psychically an attachment to a lost or otherwise forbidden object, an object-cathexis is withdrawn into the ego, introjected, establishing 'an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object.'⁷⁸ The psychic compromise here is being the lost object rather than having it, even if being it means one must berate it as oneself, risking death.

As Sitze diagnoses the labour of those within the Humanities, facing a loss of legitimacy for the labour they undertake, they are 'professional melancholics.'⁷⁹ Turning the concept, Sitze is nonetheless within a line of Freudian thought that takes melancholia as a mechanism of transmission: 'The humanist, just like the melancholic, seems to take himself as the object of incessant criticism, turning his "subjectivity" into the "object" of a critical knowledge the techniques of which he then seeks to transmit to his students.'⁸⁰ For Sitze, then, the central function of this melancholia is the perpetuation of 'existing traditions of thought,'⁸¹ encrypted in this turning on, this objectification of oneself.

Sitze's use of Freud's formulation allows us to rethink the African university as a lost object, on the one hand, and the Enlightenment as a heterogeneous set of lost objectives, on the other. But rather than two discrete losses, they are not fully separable: it is Enlightenment disciplines that are kept alive in the labour of retrieving traditions of thought that are of Africa. And vice versa.⁸² Here, it matters little whether scholars work unselfconsciously at recovering the virtues of the Enlightenment or, in Freud's words, 'disparaging it, denigrating it and even as it were killing it.'⁸³ This is to suggest a diagnosis of a failure to have mourned two objects that are, at base, one.⁸⁴ The idea of the African university as a lost object and the Enlightenment as a set of lost objectives in the university in Africa are part of one and the same melancholy university discourse that presumes a bifurcated world.

The invention of melancholia

Sitze's key move is to bring together the condition of melancholia and *technē*. 'Melancholic dispositions,' Sitze writes, 'are the indispensable condition of possibility for the transmission of sublime inheritances, for the conversion of the self into one of those technical apparatuses that's able to operate as a device for the transmissibility of tradition.'⁸⁵ The apparatus that turns on and attacks that internalised tradition is the psychic apparatus: 'Far from being the *opposite* of technics, melancholia is here

77 We are of course playing deliberately with Fanon here, 'the wretched of the earth' being those for whom invention becomes necessity, lest one is doomed to repetition.

78 Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', 249 (emphasis in original).

79 Sitze, 'Response'.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 This much, at least, is suggested by our reading of *Black Athena*.

83 Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', 256–257.

84 It is a failure to have mourned all too obvious in Humanities departments that continue to teach, uncritically, Enlightenment texts, but also in those where these same texts become the objects of critique.

85 Sitze, 'Response'.

the mode or mood *specific* to technics, at least a technics of a very specific sort.⁸⁶ For Sitze, melancholia is part of the disavowed technicity of the Humanities, the mechanism by which transmission can occur, insofar as loss hollows out the subject as a receptacle for the tradition to be relayed to future generations. Such transmission is not only attended, but defined, by self-critique. But if the section above worries about melancholia, in this section we attempt to affirm something in it – its inventiveness.

The student movement has been diagnosed as hysterical.⁸⁷ Much of what is routinely called ‘black anger’ can, too – alongside scholarly critiques of the Enlightenment that draw their form and force from precisely that which they oppose – be framed as melancholic.⁸⁸ In ‘The State of South African Political Life’, Mbembe begins by drawing attention to the protests that erupted and have reverberated across South African university campuses.⁸⁹ The state of which Mbembe writes is being called, in different quarters, as he notes, ‘decolonization’, but it is, as he puts it, ‘*a psychic state* more than a political project in the strict sense of the term.’⁹⁰ Among those names given to the problem within this discourse of decolonisation is whiteness. While in agreement with this assessment, Mbembe issues a caution over whiteness being installed as an ‘erotogenic object’, keeping the problem firmly in place. To name the problem as one of whiteness, he argues, will not offer an easy exit to the script that has produced a politics of impatience, which is also a politics of anger; at least, it may keep those who rail furiously against whiteness libidinally cathected to it, continuing to orient and shape life in the wake of apartheid. Therein lies the danger, not only of a repetition of the past in the very attempt to move beyond it, of remaining passionately attached to whiteness, even if in hatred, but also the possibility that what is being called decolonisation shares certain traits with whiteness itself, a politics of pain, upon which identitarian claims are increasingly staked, leading to ‘self-enclaving’, finding its reflection in a form of whiteness that has sought to ‘fence itself off, to re-maximize its privileges’ – two markedly different and, at the same time, isomorphic symptoms of ‘an astonishing age of solipsism and narcissism.’⁹¹ Misnaming the state

86 Ibid.

87 We focus below on Mbembe’s formulation of hysteria, but see also Bert Olivier, ‘Protests, “Acting-Out,” Group Psychology, Surplus Enjoyment and Neoliberal Capitalism’, *PINS*, 53 (2017), 30–50. Olivier sets to work Lacan’s seminar XVII to think through university discourse, capitalism and the hysteria – in the strong sense of the word – of recent student protests. It is a formulation to which we are open. Indeed, the allusion, in the panel on ‘university discourse’ at the Winter School, was to Lacan’s four discourses, relevant not least because the scene in which Lacan sounded out seminar XVII was student protest, the protests of May 1968 in France. He famously stated that students wanted a new master and that they would, in their hysterical outrage, get one. It did, however, open the road for the emergence of what he called the analyst’s discourse. Jacques Lacan, *Book XVII, The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, edited by J.A. Miller (New York: Norton, 2006). Olivier clearly knows his Lacan, but we have lingering questions about the dogmatic application of Lacanian psychoanalytic ideas. Put perhaps too strongly, consultancy has many masks.

88 There is a point of connection here between Butler’s recommendations concerning opposition to the neoliberal university discussed above and Sitze’s formulation, at least when one reads a persistent thread that runs through Butler’s work. For Butler, opposition to forms of subjection presupposes a reliance on precisely the subjection one opposes, presenting a wager of one’s very existence, a confrontation with death: it is to oppose the very condition of one’s formation as a subject, which she formulates in terms of melancholia. Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*.

89 Achille Mbembe, ‘The State of South African Political Life’, *Africa Is a Country*, 19 September 2015, <http://africasacountry.com/2015/09/achille-mbembe-on-the-state-of-south-african-politics/> (accessed 25 November 2015). We draw here on our discussion of Mbembe’s essay in Maurits van Bever Donker, Ross Truscott, Gary Minkley and Premesh Lal, ‘Traversing the Social: An Introduction’ in Maurits van Bever Donker, Ross Truscott, Gary Minkley and Premesh Lal, eds., *Remains of the Social: Desiring the Postapartheid* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2017), 1–42.

90 Mbembe, ‘The State of South African Political Life’.

91 Ibid.

of which he writes, Mbembe's intervention nonetheless calls for a deconstructive reading of the myths of whiteness as well as the snares of its libidinal economy. 'There will be no plausible critique of whiteness, white privilege, white monopoly capitalism,' Mbembe argues, 'that does not start from the assumption that whiteness has become this accursed part of ourselves we are deeply attached to, in spite of it threatening our own very future well-being.'⁹² This could be thought of in terms of hysteria, but also as a form of melancholia, precisely a condition shared with the melancholic critical scholar who rails against the Enlightenment.⁹³

This is not a new formation. It was with Aristotle that melancholy first became associated not only with a physiological and temperamental disequilibrium, but also with genius: 'Why is it that all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts are clearly melancholics, and some of them to such an extent as to be affected by diseases caused by black bile?'⁹⁴ Giorgio Agamben in *Stanzas* takes up Aristotle's words. As Agamben notes, the 'black biled temperament' has since Aristotle been associated with philosophical contemplation, even if this melancholy disposition was also placed alongside 'the wretched children of Saturn.'⁹⁵ Agamben posits melancholia as a form of critique, but not a form of critique that transmits, but, rather, invents. Critique, for Agamben, is located at a frontier between poetry and philosophy, the former possessing its object without knowing it, the latter knowing it without enjoying it: 'To appropriation without consciousness and to consciousness without enjoyment, criticism opposes the enjoyment of what cannot be possessed and the possession of what cannot be enjoyed.'⁹⁶ It is into this genealogy of critique, which begins with the medieval noonday demon, *acedia*, that Agamben places melancholia.⁹⁷ Within this frame, melancholia does not simply look backwards, encrypting an already lost object within the ego, but, rather, 'offers the paradox of the intention to mourn that precedes and anticipates the loss of the object', the function of melancholia being 'to make viable an appropriation in a situation in which none is really possible', melancholia encasing its object within the 'funereal

92 Ibid.

93 Mbembe is correct to name this as narcissism, but melancholia is precisely a form of narcissism. We do well to recall *Black Hamlet* here, Wulf Sachs' 1937 psychoanalytic biography of traditional healer John Chavafambira, which was renamed *Black Anger* in its US republication in 1947. Rather than seeking to subdue Chavafambira's rage, Sachs takes it as a sign of Chavafambira's latent vitality. On Sachs' account, Chavafambira had withdrawn from this anger impotently, unable to make any decision, just like Hamlet. If ethnopsychiatry is the target of *Black Hamlet*, *Black Anger*, published 10 years later, undermines the very text it revises. This, too, can be read as a form of melancholia. In Sachs, a self-conscious psychoanalyst critical of his tradition, and Chavafambira, an analysand beset by self-destructive rage, melancholia faces its mirror image – doubled, perhaps, in Mbembe writing about angry students. Wulf Sachs, *Black Hamlet: The Mind of an African Negro Revealed by Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996 [1937]).

94 Cited in Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (Nendeln: Kraus-Thompson, 1979 [1964]), 18. It seems unnecessary after *Black Athena* to assert that Aristotle should be read as not wholly of Greece.

95 Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 13. Aristotle, among others, associated melancholy with a perversion of Eros. Indeed, as Agamben notes, love and melancholy were seen to lean on each other; falling in love unbalanced the humors, while a contemplative tendency made one susceptible to amorous flights. As a condition that 'would possess and touch what ought merely to be the object of contemplation', as Agamben puts it, 'the saturnine temperament thus finds its root in the intimate contradiction of a gesture that would embrace the unobtainable'. Ibid., 18.

96 Ibid., 21.

97 As Agamben notes, *acedia* did not only have a negative value in the Middle Ages, which may have laid the ground for Renaissance revaluations of this 'malady of the contemplative'. Ibid., 13.

trappings of mourning' so as to secure it, to conjure it, bring it into being.⁹⁸ We thus return, through Agamben, to the theme of reimagining the university, but in somewhat different terms: as a precondition of invention, perhaps, an invention that carries a certain radical newness, because, as our discussion of Mowitt below suggests, the inventor is always already produced as sacrificed, in cinders.

Ranjana Khanna offers a reading of melancholia that is, like Agamben's, anticipatory, but also, unlike his, tuned to postcoloniality.⁹⁹ Mourning, as Khanna suggests, acts in the service of nationalism and monumentalisation – according to which the nation founds and maintains itself – while melancholic spectres call the common history of national communities into question, haunt the order – the structure and the injunction – of mourning. Khanna thus rejects any palliative promise that would seek, as an end, mourning and, thus, assimilation in representational processes, epistemologically and politically, attending, rather, to the traces engendered by such processes, traces that will always remain 'unknown, inassimilable, interruptive, and present'.¹⁰⁰ Melancholia, here, is accorded a kind of critical work in relation to a loss that comes with a failure of assimilation. Melancholic remainders are, one might say, the life that is objectified – thingified – as black.¹⁰¹ But the remainders that memorialising systems of national representation produce are not ontological essences anterior to yet escaping reparative and reconciliatory representations; they are neither an origin nor a leftover, but, rather, as Khanna puts it in relation to 'feminine labour', that which draws attention to the ways in which representation produces feminine labour as an ontological essence, 'as the mother, nurse, receptacle, and imprint bearer'.¹⁰² If melancholic remainders can be thought of as that which reveals the mask of representation that allows it to pass itself off as such, as precisely not a mask, then attending to them cannot be simply a matter of including the excluded, the marginalised. There is, here, perhaps, a basis on which to anticipate – or invent – a different future that may not be recuperated to the cause of mourning and memorialisation: attending to the insistence of the melancholic remainder, not a call for just inclusion but for a justice to come.

Interventions

Certainly, there are multiple ways of hearing the injunction to imagine a different university. Yet any easy recourse to the imagination runs the risk, as Qadri Ismail's contribution to this Special Issue, 'Exiting Europe, Exciting Postcoloniality', underlines, of clinging to a Eurocentric concept that is far from innocent. Which

98 Ibid., 20.

99 Khanna, *Dark Continents*.

100 Ibid., 24.

101 In Khanna's postcolonial frame, which draws on the work of Nikolas Abraham and Maria Torok, what is transmitted is the secret that formerly colonised nation-states have assumed the form of that from which a break has been made, producing colonial spectres wherever a European nation-state would have required the colony and the other, which were not historical accidents in the formation of modern European nation-states but constitutive elements. See also Zita Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

102 Ranjana Khanna, *Algeria Cuts: Women and Representation, 1830 to the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), 12, 13, 14.

is to say that Ismail reads the imagination as it is elaborated within the university of culture from within the disciplines of English Literature and Anthropology. If for Readings the university is no longer an 'ideological arm of the state' designed to inculcate national culture, but a 'bureaucratically organized and relatively autonomous consumer oriented corporation', Ismail forecloses any nostalgia for the university of culture.¹⁰³ Rather than reimagining the university, Ismail offers recritiquing the imagination. As Ismail notes, 'seemingly innocuous', the imagination is a part of a network of signifiers that 'format the subject as modern, in opposition to an uncivilised, naturalised other',¹⁰⁴ a point Anna Tietze similarly circles in her review, in this Special Issue, of Dan Magaziner's *The Art of Life in South Africa*.¹⁰⁵ Thus we begin with Ismail's demanding essay, which lodges its intervention at the conceptual level, asking after the ways in which Africa was produced as Africa.

In his contribution, Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni attempts to think the possibility of an *African* university, rather than the university *in* Africa. In doing so, he traces three genealogies: first, the precolonial African university; second, the Eurocentric model of the university imposed through colonial rule; and third, decolonial projects for the establishment of universities, which began, Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues, prior to nationalist decolonisation, that is, with colonisation itself. Thus, 'grammars of liberation', in this intervention, emerge out of colonial encounter. It is into these three historical lines that Ndlovu-Gatsheni places the student protests that began in South Africa. Which is to say, they didn't begin in 2015; they are, for Ndlovu-Gatsheni, part of far older struggles. Beyond offering a historical overview of education in Africa, he argues that what is required in the current conjuncture is, following Fanon's conclusion to *The Wretched of the Earth*, leaving a European epistemological structuring of higher education. And yet, not simply bracketing Europe.

Ismail's and Ndlovu-Gatsheni's articles sit in a tense relation, for it is precisely the injunction to leave Europe – to mourn it, perhaps – that Ismail puts into question; not, of course, to conserve Europe, but in order to disclose the impossibility of such a project, one that must nonetheless be undertaken. While Ndlovu-Gatsheni gestures towards resolutions of an impasse comparable with Mamdani's recommendations, Ismail would have us read the itineraries of the concepts we set to work – including those we set to work in writing histories of precolonial Africa – as a preliminary step in any staging of postcoloniality. In short, Ismail brings a Fanonian lesson in reading to the arguments that too easily invoke his uneasy conceptualisation of decolonisation.

It is against the backdrop of the discussion of what Mamdani calls 'consultancy culture' that one might read Catarina Gomes' contribution to this Special Issue, 'On Freedom, Being and Transcendence', which focuses on higher education in Angola.

103 Readings, *University in Ruins*, 11, 12. What Ismail draws attention to is that, at the juncture at which Newman and Arnold stand, Literature, the guardian of the idea of culture in the Anglo-US episteme, is not simply supplemented by Anthropology; the two disciplines operate together to produce a Eurocentric concept of culture upon which the university is to be grounded. Qadri Ismail, *Culture and Eurocentrism* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015).

104 Ismail, 'Exiting', this Issue.

105 As Tietze puts it, art education for white children emphasised 'freedom of the imagination', while black training was in crafts, 'work with one's hands that resulted in the production of functional items'. Tietze, this Issue.

Gomes aims to defend nothing less than a sense of freedom as critical thought, a potential held within the Humanities but being constrained by, amongst other forces, neoliberalism, which solicits useful thoughtlessness. This concerns scholars and students alike, and Gomes focuses on the everyday practices of the classroom, on, for example, the all-too-familiar experience of students' struggles to state their arguments in their own words, independently.¹⁰⁶ Far from a problem of plagiarism that has psychological roots, it is, Gomes suggests, solicited by an educational system that values mimicry. Plagiarism is merely the name given to precisely what the market requires, preformatted, standardised part-objects. Only by disavowing the complicity with the market can the university bemoan unthinking students.

Gomes outlines the ways in which questions of the independence of the university have traditionally been posed as a false choice between either the university as an instrument of existing power structures, carrying out a mandate, or as an ivory tower in which knowledge is pursued, independently. The Angolan public university system, Gomes shows, falls into the former category, acting as a disciplinary apparatus that creates docile post-independence subjects technically trained for a market economy that prioritises development, equating employability and citizenship. But, Gomes argues, critical thought, as a practice of freedom, would, far from advancing independence unfettered by political pressures, set about deconstructing this false opposition, an opposition similar to the injunction to only be either for, or against, Africa. In this way, Gomes questions the dominant modes through which the contributions made by the Humanities are defended, precisely for the ways in which they fail to transcend these two antithetical positions.

This is followed by John's Mowitt's paper, 'The Searing of the University', which offers a take on austerity quite different from the four presentations in 'The University and its Worlds', but also from Gomes, and pivots, rather, on the attention to reading called for by Ismail. Indeed, Mowitt and Gomes present almost polar opposite views, a divergence, like that between Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ismail, we cannot but welcome here. Austerity, as Mowitt tracks it, has its genealogy in Eurocentrism; as Mowitt puts it, 'the logics of austerity and Eurocentrism converge'.¹⁰⁷ There is a kinship, Mowitt suggests, between the founding texts on austerity and a tradition of European thought that would resist austerity in the name of freedom, a line that runs from Locke on property, through Keynes, Hayek and Sartre on freedom and responsibility: 'What Sartre and Hayek share is their insistence upon the essential tie between freedom and the individual.'¹⁰⁸

Mowitt's intervention asks us to think the current protests and deliberations around 'austerity' in relation to the concept of subjectivation on which liberalism, and neoliberalism, hinge. Put differently, Mowitt takes up the problematic of

106 Gomes also sets about thinking through this predicament using the example of Problem Based Learning, an approach forged in Canada and transported elsewhere. Ostensibly adhering to an approach in which students guide their own learning approaches and objectives, it reinforces a worldview, Gomez argues, that dehistoricises scientific knowledge and reproduces 'Eurocentric modern and positivist imaginaries'. Gomez, 'On Freedom', this Issue.

107 Mowitt, 'Searing', this Issue.

108 Ibid.

the Humboldtian university, which had as its aim ‘the formation of autonomous subjectivity, fostering independent judgment, combining erudition and responsibility’.¹⁰⁹ For Mowitt, this concept can be located in the term ‘searing’, which he attaches from the writing of Walter Benjamin. In short, he argues that the leading critique of austerity in the university – that of Wendy Brown – through calling for *homo politicus* and making the production of that subjectivity the main concern of the university, actually hinges on the very subjectivity on which neoliberalism also hinges: the responsible, if not austere, subject of modernity. What Brown invokes as *homo politicus* – which she proposes is missing from Michel Foucault’s account of the birth of neoliberalism – is internal, Mowitt argues, to the proto-neoliberalism that served as the incandescent conditions of possibility under which freedom and responsibility were fused. Put differently, to resist austerity in the name of *homo politicus* is to become, precisely, neoliberal.

This predicament is one that the students organising the FeesMustFall protests at South African universities also share: to burn the university is to maintain the very colonial formation, the neoliberal Eurocentric formation, that the students in fact want to overturn. The logic of austerity is paradoxically carried out by the burning of the university. Against this repetition, Mowitt sets ‘the rattling of a structure’, where, as he puts it, ‘what is at stake is precisely the strategic task of *occupying* a structure, but in order to “hate” it properly, that is, immanently’.¹¹⁰ Arguably, this returns us to the theme of melancholia, identification with the object, which is railed against, hated, properly, but it is also the undoing of the relation between identity and property that is at the heart of austerity.

The language of a subjectivity produced through searing becomes, for us, especially productive when drawn into relation with a formulation by Césaire in his *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*.¹¹¹ In the moment of the recognition of black life as a living death, as an ‘election of cinders, ruins and collapse’, Césaire situates this black body as structuring the world, the world produced through it while refusing it the right to be the measure of that world: ‘I have no right to measure life by my sooty finger span... I a man, to so overturn creation [read the world as constituted through this expression of Europe], that I include myself between latitude and longitude!’¹¹² While properly this measure is not marked by soot (*la suie*), but is, rather, smoky (*fuligineux*), that is, fully consumed through the sacrifice, sooty does carry with it both the reduction by fire to cinders as well as the blackness invoked two stanzas later when Césaire declares: ‘not an inch of this world devoid of my finger print’, where *empreinte digitale* both invokes the finger print and the process of printing, and thereby ink, as such.¹¹³ Austerity, searing, we might suggest, has always produced the darkened, if not blackened and black, body as a remainder.

109 Mladen Dolar, ‘Seven Questions for the Professor’ in *What Is Education? New Critical International Anthology* (Copenhagen: Probléma, 2017), 210.

110 Mowitt, ‘Searing’, this Issue.

111 Aime Césaire, ‘Notebook of a Return to the Native Land’ in Aime Césaire, *The Collected Poetry*, translated by Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), 32–85.

112 *Ibid.*, 45.

113 *Ibid.*, 47.

What Mowitt names as ‘searing’ – the fusion of freedom and responsibility characteristic of austerity – Janeke Thumbran takes up in her contribution to this Special Issue as ‘self-reliance’. Thumbran’s ‘Separate Development and Self-Reliance at the University of Pretoria’ begins with, and then returns to, a 2007 outing in which the University of Pretoria’s office of community engagement took a group of black women from a Pretoria township on an educative trip to Oranje. But what this example of community ‘outreach’ allows the paper to underline is not only the congruity between post-apartheid university outreach and neoliberalism, but also a kinship between post-apartheid lessons in self-reliance that the university hoped the women would learn from Oranjians and the promotion of separate development that was apartheid. If there is a relation between self-reliance and separate development it resides, Thumbran suggests, in the concept of ‘community’, an order-word for the university, then and now. It is in this sense that Mowitt and Thumbran can be read alongside one another. Such a searing lesson in self-reliance, Thumbran suggests, is doubly determined: on the one hand a repetition of apartheid’s discourse, on the other an effect of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy, introduced in the mid-1990s.

If post-apartheid lessons in self-reliance, fusing freedom and responsibility, bear a kinship with the promotion of separate development, then at the edge of the argument is a hypothesis concerning the emergence of apartheid. If post-apartheid lessons in self-reliance can be framed as a repetition of apartheid-era promotion of separate development, of what was the apartheid-era promotion of self-determination a repetition? Thumbran goes some way to show that post-apartheid lessons in self-reliance recall not only apartheid but also the predicaments of liberalism that apartheid took over, even attempted to solve. Proposing something like a chain of repetitions, the obvious question is how far back this goes. Certainly, further back than the Kantian writings of Alfred Hoernlé, which apartheid ideologues drew on. Is Immanuel Kant’s ‘What is Enlightenment?’ not precisely an injunction of self-sufficiency in the realm of thought, independent autonomous use of reason in public?¹¹⁴ It would be a stretch to call apartheid Kantian, yet one could not, without a certain Eurocentrism, call apartheid purely an impediment to the Enlightenment. As Thumbran cites him, one of the university advocates of apartheid-era self-reliance at the University of Pretoria calls it an ‘undertaking’, suggestive, perhaps, of the deathliness of what was ostensibly packaged as a project of care, one that leaves the subject of that encounter, if not mortified, then certainly on the receiving end of an unliveable double bind: the Enlightenment, which burns, sears, blackens.

In her contribution, ‘Occupational Hazards’, Jane Taylor offers a series of reflections on the contradictory objectives within the university today: reproduction and revolution, the transmission and renewal of traditions of thought, engendering a kind of oscillatory tension at the heart of university discourse.¹¹⁵ Taylor turns to

114 See Immanuel Kant, ‘What is Enlightenment?’, <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html> (accessed 26 June 2014).

115 Cf. Readings, *University in Ruins*.

junctures between university work and arts practice, junctures at which, rather than resolving the double bind of reproduction and revolution, there are presented possibilities for the reformulation of a predicament inherited. While concerned with contemporary arts practice, Taylor draws attention to a scene from seventeenth-century Europe – that is, a scene at a formative moment for the traditions of thought inherited by the postcolonial university, and she underscores objective knowledge, knowledge that posits a strict division between a knowing subject and an object known, a theme we have attempted to dwell on – wherein a working-class woman, convicted of infanticide, hanged for her crime, was handed over to anatomists for dissection, and revived on the table. The event discloses, for Taylor, the relation between Natural History and Human History, between the objectification and mapping of gendered bodies and the geopolitics of colonial rule.

Bradley Rink, for his part, underlines the ways in which different forms of mobilities – he focuses on three: participation in academic networks such as conferences and winter schools, the creation of new knowledge through fieldwork, and the transmission of data, increasingly digitised data – are central to the stated missions of universities in South Africa. In other words, reading the question ‘What Is the University in Africa for?’ Rink discerns in the mission statements of three South African universities objectives that entail mobilities. But Rink also draws attention to the fixity, stasis and immobility that these mobilities imply, as well as the frictions these engender, frictions that he reads into the recent student protests. Asking that we grasp the contemporary South African university as a kind of Foucauldian heterotopia – and it should not be forgotten that Foucault first coined the term in his archaeology of the Human Sciences, *The Order of Things* – Rink’s article can be read alongside Taylor’s as thinking through the contradictory injunctions that short-circuit the subject of the university, producing, if not searing, then friction burns.¹¹⁶

Patricia Hayes opens her contribution to this Special Issue, ‘The Blur of History: Student Protest and Photographic Clarity in South African Universities, 2015–2016’, with a discussion of what Elizabeth Edwards has called ‘strong’ photographs, images produced within a social documentary tradition during apartheid, and which have become iconic of the struggle against apartheid.¹¹⁷ If the apartheid state utilised visual clarity for the sake of surveillance, ‘strong’ photographs turned this focus onto scenes of police brutality, but also resistance to subjection, marches and mourning. However strategically effective such images were – and without disavowing both the injustices and solidarities they register – they constitute what Khanna renders as the monumentalised history of national community. It is also the mode, as Hayes suggests, through which the FeesMustFall student protests were imaged. While Hayes does not refer to melancholic spectres, what she invokes as the ‘blur of photography’ can be read this way, as that which asks after the remaindered of monumentally

116 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Random House, 1994), xvii–xviii.

117 Hayes, ‘Blur of History’, this Issue.

‘strong’ images.¹¹⁸ Hayes also allows us to return to the Benjamin quote on which Mowitt draws in his paper, calling attention to the place of photography, not as analogue of searing subject formation, but, rather, as an element of the materialities of postcolonial subjectivity.¹¹⁹ Focus, as Hayes notes through the work of Lindsay Smith, is not a freezing, but, rather – at least etymologically, the Latin *focus* recalling ‘hearth, fireplace’ – a burning point, a point of gathering.

Aidan Erasmus contributes to this Special Issue a review essay on Wolfgang Ernst’s recently published *Sonic Time Machines*, titled ‘To the Technical Media Themselves’, pointing a finger at Edmund Husserl. What Erasmus discerns in Ernst’s text are not simply the implications of the concept of sonicity – which shifts attention to media technologies, away from the phenomenological subject – for African History, which has always presumed something like orality and aurality; it is not simply that sonicity calls History, including African History, into question, which it does. Erasmus asks, rather, what readings of histories of technology from the margins might impress on new Media Studies, a discipline that has, since its formation, not only been grappling with technology, but has always had education in mind. For the founding texts of this discipline, education was not something to which readings of technology could be applied. One might even say that it was a concern with education that produced the very field of which Ernst is now a key figure.

In ‘Thought, Policies and Politics: How May We Imagine the Public University in India?’ G. Arunima notes how in current policy deliberations in Indian higher education, many of the same conflicts internal to the Humboldtian idea of the university are being replayed under new conditions, where the technologisation of access stands in for the democratisation of education. In this context, the paper makes two related interventions. Firstly, it offers a critique of the recently drafted National Policy on Education that would see the privatisation of higher education, contrasting it with earlier iterations of the idea of the university committed to state funding and, at least potentially, social justice. Secondly, it offers a meditation on the Facebook posts and scattered writings of Rohith Vemula, a student activist who tragically ended his life in January 2016. The paper is instructive purely for the way it attends to the thought of a young man who posed the question of what the university is for, and whose own responses to this question entailed complex and suggestive intersectional formulations

118 Indeed, Hayes and Khanna can be put into an interesting dialogue. Against such images, what Khanna has in mind is something more akin to ‘a postcard from the past’, as she puts it, ‘so much more transitional and disposable than the monument’, yet able, nonetheless, to bear witness to the violence of a monumental representational frame and, without representing those remaindered, draw attention to that which remains unrepresentable. The postcard would, as Khanna notes, not escape taxation; it would be stamped by the state, and yet it would reveal only – at least in the instance she has in mind, a card, which pictures a mourner at a gravesite, with her back turned to the camera, a card that its holder might wish to turn over to see her face – an inscription that must stand as the trace of this other. Khanna, *Algeria Cuts*, 20, 21.

119 Where Mowitt breaks off, the quote continues: ‘For it is another nature that speaks to the camera rather than to the eye; “other” above all in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to one informed by the unconscious.’ Walter Benjamin, ‘Little History of Photography’ in Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael Jennings, Brigit Doherty and Thomas Y. Levin, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone and Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 277–278. For Benjamin, ‘reality’ sears through ‘the image-character of the photograph’, allowing the rediscovery of a ‘spark of contingency’, imperceptible to the human eye but communicated to the camera. The Underwood translation gives ‘singled its pictorial character’. Walter Benjamin, ‘Brief History of Photography’ in Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, translated by J.A. Underwood (London: Penguin, 2008), 176.

of race, caste, slavery, social death and gender. This is an essay in learning to learn. There is a tone of deep sadness to this essay, yet G. Arunima refuses, as we read her essay, any form of mourning Rohith Vemula's death that could be incorporated into a narrative of national progress, that is, she resists the temptation to monumentalise him. Against representing Vemula as martyr, G. Arunima insists on and abides by the fragmentariness of the archive left by a student activist who was concerned with inventing forms of representation rather than merely pressuring for the inclusion of the marginalised into existing structures, even as this should at times be fiercely fought for. It is with this difficulty that the essay leaves its reader.

We end with Cesare Casarino's 'Farewell to the University (without Nostalgia)'. The title suggests a loss of the university. If not nostalgia, Casarino leaves the relation to the lost university – the relation that has been and is being assumed, or the relation we ought to assume – open. But one has immediately to ask, for it is far from clear, which university? If the public university has given way to the corporatised neoliberal university, it is the latter that we might leave. And by leave Casarino means 'a systematic redirection of resources of all sorts', a practice that aims to build 'new types of institutions outside and beyond the confines of both the past and the present university'.¹²⁰ The university of the past because the public university itself, that which has been destroyed by privatisation, was not an institution of the common – the common, for Casarino, is 'that which enables and yet is concealed by the distinction between the public and the private',¹²¹ and this returns us to a theme raised by Mbembe. It might be possible to say that what Mowitt names as a 'searing', Casarino calls the 'demolition' or the 'destruction' of the common, which is precisely the privatisation of the common. Whatever there is in Casarino's text that can be read as melancholic, it is of the propositional kind that Agamben designates as a form of critique that apprehends an object so as to make what would otherwise be impossible available to thought: 'The common university does not yet exist in actuality – but I do sense its powerful potentials in the current, ongoing, actual struggles.'¹²² Casarino proposes a 'double-pronged strategy' of working within a system and beyond it, so as to realise the possibility of the university of the common. Melancholia, perhaps, as the condition that necessitates the ordering of a different terrain, the invention of the new as a re: working.

120 Casarino, 'Farewell', this Issue.

121 Ibid.

122 Ibid.

