

ALIENOCENE – DIS-JUNCTION

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# SPECTROGRAPHY OF THE BORDER

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In South Africa, xenophobia  
—and particularly concerning those coming from other African countries—  
became crystallized into a strong antipathy for “clandestine immigrants”  
who they think form some sort of subterranean and spectral nation.

—J. and J. Comaroff, *Alien-Nation: Zombies, Immigrants, and Millennial Capitalism*

## Prelude

“... as for the Africans, they arrive stripped of everything, of all possibilities, even stripped of their language. For the stowaway compartments on the slave ships is the site and moment where African languages begin to disappear.”<sup>i</sup> Capture had partitioned his lifeline, the “passage within the milieu” had splintered his mother tongue, the tale of the master had rendered him hideous in his own eyes: the “black man” had to reinvent himself by blending together with his own fractured traditions, the dialects, technics, and gods of both the Europeans and the “Indians.” This is why African lands still vibrate in the incantations that he whispers out into the invisible, in the faint pulsing of his work songs, in the “Outside Country” deployed through his hallucinated dance moves. It’s through reconstructing the human at the border of several worlds, through combining elements that a priori have nothing in common such as the French quadrille and the n’kisi from the Congo, that the black man became creole. And as such, creolisation is first and foremost a creative response to this primary “erasure of memory” that constituted the first Sub-Saharan deportations, those people Edouard Glissant called the migrants nus— “naked migrants.”

Zed, a young Ethiopian, described his attempt to embark on a ferry leaving from Calais<sup>iii</sup>: *First of all, there is the metal fence and the barbed-wire that I have to cut through, and cut some more and then I'm in. The scanner is raised to verify the truck. I look to see if there are any police present. I open the truck and crawl inside. If no one sees me and there is no guard dog, then everything is cool. It's the guard dog that becomes the last line of control. If the dog doesn't get a whiff of my odor, then I'm off to England.*

The runaway slave and the guard dog [molosse]<sup>iii</sup> form an inseparable pair, as much in the imaginary as in the reality of slave societies. Today, within the era of cybernetics, the guard dog has taken on the traits of a mobile and reticular “Border”<sup>iv</sup> that no longer simply adheres to the territorial limits of a Nation-state, but on the contrary exceeds these borders from all sides inside and outside, in order to attain, slowly but surely, the logic of selection and suspicion -- applied, at the outset, only toward those considered as undesirables (migrants, delinquents, etc.) – and eventually to entire populations (reduced to data flows), whether they are “foreign” or “native.” The “smart border”<sup>v</sup> has become a central element of the neo-liberal system of predation and the new algorithmic governmentality: through a whole series of apparatus: juridical, control technologies, transnational institutions such as Frontex, internment camps, etc.) the “smart border” plays an essential role in the production of an exploitable humanity that one can dispose of at will, through the “figure of the migrant,” which is from now on an object that has become a perpetual manhunt holding the migrant at a distance outside the law, within a condition of statelessness and pariah that is rather similar to that of the slave. In the experimental text that you're about to read (hovering between philosophical dialogue and anticipation), I have sketched out a spectral analysis<sup>vi</sup> of the borders that diffract<sup>vii</sup> our lives: going back in time to the possibles of a post-colonial enclave,<sup>viii</sup> to the “Jungle” of Calais, and all the way back to the “shadows” that crossed the Atlantic beginning in the sub-Saharan coastlines.

“We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us!”<sup>ix</sup>

A deserted beach. Off the coast, the incessant clearing away of ferries, port-containers, and supertankers. Alongside docks and the coastline, one can detect the furtive and aleatory trajectory of the ovoid drones, indifferent to the winds. Filtered through a white and immaculate dual wire fence mesh, one can hear the rumbling of long-haul trucks making their way to England, emitting a sepulchral tonality to the backwash of the North Sea. In the background, on the other side of the highway bypass, one can make out one of the two chemical factories of Calais. And farther inland, the crystalline belfry of Heroic Land—a new amusement park that sprung up from out of the ground shortly after the destruction of the “Jungle”—a park whose “New worlds” dedicating their worship to the heroes of Manga, video game characters and science fiction films, enthrall visitors heralding from all parts of the globe. Under the oblique rays of the setting sun, a silhouette can be seen blazing across the moist fabric of the beachfront.<sup>x</sup> The runner, with his face hidden under a hoody, slowly nears the crowds queued up and spilling from the blockhouses situated along the grassy dunes, where his trajectory will end up leading him to bump into another of the exiled: an ageless man seated cross-legged around a fire, his gaze lost somewhere between the two banks of the strait. The first day of the year 2025 was coming to an end.

*(Still catching his breath, after lowering his head, the runner slowly crouches down and places his hands over the fire. Without saying a word, the seated man offers him a cigarette. With the crack of a match covered by the palm of his hand, within the light grey aura of a halo of vapor and smoke.)*

The Seated Man: Why bother running? If you look at the images of the Earth illuminated at night, if you observe the phosphorescent synapses at play on its surface and which envelop us as well, you will understand that we live under an invisible dome. No matter how much you train, you won’t escape them...

The Runner: You must understand, my heart is here, underneath this wrinkled skin of white sand. And each time that my fleeting steps strike down upon this crumbling ground, I rekindle my pulse. And I feel the flames upon my face, the incandescent friction of the wind wiping away the dead skin. *Harraga!* ... I'm a burner of borders: I've burned my papers, I've burned my dinars, my CFA, my shillings, my nairas, I've burned my past life, I've even burned the tips of my fingers, I no longer want to even leave a trace, but simply to throw myself headlong into the fray. And if I must make myself heard, it will be by way of a stitched-up mouth because a shadow has no voice.

The Seated Man: But who would like to hear what you have to say? As if the moods of an illegal immigrant would be of any interest to anyone! As far as the heart is concerned, don't you know that it always betrays us? Why don't you come back down to Earth, don't worry, the ground under your feet is pretty firm. Let's get down to brass tacks here: engineers have created equipment that can detect your heart rate and even your breath. The most secure way of crossing the border is to fall into a coma... which, I must say, is way more restorative than a sleep populated with desires and silly fears. There's nothing complicated about it at all: you take a pill and you wake up on the other side...

The Runner: Becoming a walking-cadaver, that's your solution?! There is nothing in the world, not even a ticket to Eldorado that would lead me to forgo this pocket of obsolete blood, this burning that animates and consumes me. An old Chinese chef once told me that writing is born from out of the steps sowed in the earth by a sparrow. A mandarin who passed by there would harvest them and from their combination arose the first alphabet. I often wonder who will know how to read my path...

The Seated Man: *Wake up brother, Jungle finished!* ... After everything you have experienced and gone through, you can't abandon everything now that you're so close to your goal. I've been waiting for you, it's been quite some time now that I saw you on the horizon, I can provide you with the substance that will allow you to embark on the "death ship": the places that we reserve for "naked migrants" are in the secured cold shipping containers. Using a cryogenic

gel, we can lower your heart rate and eliminate your breathing, and all those meat carcasses that are used as screens and shields: the “zombies”, -- that my dear friend, is what we call those who attempt the crossing—the zombies are able to cross without any problems whatsoever of being detected by the humans. The only side effect is a slight memory loss. A rather trivial detail—we live a life of death here, so you might as well go all the way.

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*You no longer know when it all began, this more or less conscious refusal to correspond to a role and place which they assigned you. Your revolt was both silent and immobile, and was more an evasive tactic than a direct confrontation. “Autistic...” how many times had you heard this term in the mouths of adults discussing your case. You didn’t like to talk, you didn’t want to be captured through the “terms” used by everyone else, those invisible chains that weigh us down, that hinder and frame our movements and our thoughts, and which tend to determine “who” we are. To name or un-name, is the privilege par excellence of the dominant who assume the role of the creative Word [verbe créateur ]: the power to call into existence, to produce “reality,” and to keep us all well in our place, here and not there.*

*You’re having some memory problems. It’s not simply a question of absent-mindedness, like when you’re in the middle of doing something and then you no longer remember why you’re running down a set of stairs with a book or a knife in your hands. No, it’s something much more troubling: the feeling of only being a surface, without any depth, without any access to your own opacity, without any true anchoring within what just preceded this present moment, as if your memory were nothing more than a notebook with all the pages blacked out, marked out, ripped up, and completely illegible. And this recurring feeling that you have just landed into your own body, that you had been thrown into it as if by chance, that there had been some sort of malfunctioning of the compass needle, that these limbs which are set in action by way of your impulses were in fact simply pretending to obey you, that they actually don’t belong to you, that you’re actually not really in the right place where you belong, that*

*you're simply passing through; perhaps have already passed through... You still felt that you were still somewhat a zombie...so there's nothing surprising by the*

*fact that you were so fascinated by the stubbornness and uncooperative nature of the runaway slave. You are a man who is asleep, a man who wanders, a man who has given himself over to drifting with the secret hopes of one day breaking free from the invisible threads that govern your body and turn it into a voodoo doll: an apathetic creature, a stranger to its own movements.*

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*(The runner suddenly is jostled as if awaking from a bad dream, and nervously tosses some twigs into the fire while keeping his host in his line of sight.)*

The Seated Man: Why do you keep on looking at me with those big eyes where I read nothing but terror and mistrust? I'm not the one responsible for your damnation. I'm nothing more than a guide, what some call a fixer [*passeur*]. I get the job done. I'm merely providing a service, a monetary service, certainly, but a service all the same: if it wasn't me, it'd be someone else. I'm not claiming to be an angel, I'm simply playing the hand that I was dealt, and take my cut after you have crossed. There's nothing diabolical about it in and of itself, I'm not going to ask you to sign a piece of parchment with your blood – that only happens in films –, a simple handshake will be perfectly fine. Consider me more like a pioneer, I'm simply following the rule of the day: "to reject limits," including those of life and death...

The Runner: You think that I didn't recognize you!? ... I should have never accepted the dubious water you offered me in the desert. They had even warned me: you save simply to allow those indebted to you to lose more. A thousand names have been bestowed upon you: *passeur*, coyote, boatmen, smuggler, chairman, stalker, landlord, persuader, forger. The truth is, you're the overseer of the crossroads I don't blame you, you're a simple intermediary. And one

helluva joker! Your travel agency is a complete sham! You work for the faceless slave traders...

The Seated Man: You've got it all figured out, eh! I'm already rather familiar with your tale about human trafficking. It makes me nauseous listening to all these Africans who pass their time whining about their fate. And somehow, they believe themselves to be different, innocent because they're victims. But all that is desired in the end, is to make a business out of the dead, to convert them into a species that stumbles with bells and whistles, it's what you call "reparations." You turn history into a tribunal and justice into a form of revenge.

The Runner: There's no point in getting upset, I have nothing to do with the guilt that weighs on you. You talk of "Africans" as if they existed, as if their life counted for something. But an "African" is an invisible man or rather, every man who is invisible is an "African." Some years ago, it was in 2017, I believe, I came across a video where one could see a dark point emerging from the waves, several fathoms away from a Venetian shuttle-boat. I had to re-watch the scene several times to understand, to realize what was happening. "African!", "leave him to die!", "go back home!" ... Beneath the laughter and insults of the onlookers, a young man with dark skin sank into the water. Afterwards, I learned that it was a 22-year-old Gambian refugee named Pateh Sabally. That's pretty young to see Venice and die. On that day, amidst the backdrop of the Venetian dream, I witnessed the inexpressible atrocity of a waking nightmare. Are we thus condemned to live and think like pigs!?!...

*(The runner stops and is suddenly caught up in convulsions. His eyes bulging and his voice having become hoarse. He appeared to be addressing a crowd.)*

Don't blindly continue down your paths. Open your eyes to the filth that looks on, to those who laugh at this part of our Humanity and compassion that is drowning, I would like to simply say this: the "black man" that is in agony beneath you here and who you insulted, this fantasized "African," this "black man" born out of the decomposition of a "white man," this "black man" does not exist! Precisely because he only lives in the deepest part of you. But what did you think?! We can't so easily free ourselves from his part of the



shadow...Yes, I know, you didn't say "nigger," you were content in treating Pateh Sabally as an "African," as the dregs of humanity, as a life unworthy of living. You didn't say it because "nigger" is not a word but a yawp, a dog bark that dehumanizes the master as much as the slave! But where you see an "African," I see a young man, I see promise, desire, life force, dreams, courage, the humanity that has burned out inside you—, and that, secretly, you envy.

One should be reminded of the fact that "nigger" is not a word but the common ancestor of all clandestine people. "Nigger" is not a word but an evil spell: capitalist sorcery that turns humans into fragmented pieces. Know that in the bowels of the slave ships is where this bizarre biopolitics was set into motion, tasked with selecting and managing the bare lives. It's here that our humanity was born and made available as merchandise: a humanity managed by controlled flows, convertible into sugar, cotton, indigo, stock options, and algorithms.

I can most certainly guarantee you that the African black man or woman is the ultimate flexible worker, the integral proletarian, integrally scanned by capital: her worth is evaluated throughout her lifecycle, the cost of her reproduction along with the cost for raising her is also calculated, and while we also of course hold copyright on all of this, we generally prefer using a piece of ebony wood, a black slave, until they are completely worn out and then we simply import a whole new lot of them—it's way more cost effective than raising them and letting them grow old. Oh sure, you can take on airs of importance now, but while you wait, you're worth nothing more than an African! Your family names and so-called great lines of heredity don't mean anything whatsoever, in the eyes of the universal market, you are liquefied, a flow that we continuously pump as much as we pretend to damn it up in reservoirs.

*(Like a star succumbing to its own mass, the runner curls into a spiral onto the cold and humid sand in one fell swoop.)*

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*Child, it was during your first days of elementary school – in a beautiful Parisian school in the 15<sup>th</sup> arrondissement—that you discovered yourself to be*

*“black” and “African” in the eyes of your fellow classmates. You could say that you stood out like a sore thumb among them all—you were the lone tan-skinned among them—and your bamboula name didn’t really help. Do you remember that time, it must have been a Sunday evening, they showed Tarzan in black and white on TF1, a really good Tarzan with a romance between the ape-man and Jane high above the canopy, with a real Tyrolean cry piercing through the jungle, with Johnny Weismuller’s supersonic crawl, swimming zig-zags around the crocodiles, and almost always in the background, almost outside the frame: an indistinct mass of negroes—creatures created in the darkness of savagery whose sheer drop off the side of a cliff or devouring by wild beasts elicited no more compassion than the death of a pack animal.*

*You immediately loved it. It was you who were the king of the jungle jumping from one vine to the next high above the screen, and who deployed a life that was just as wild as it was free, without wearing shoes, or pants, without red stoplights or wrong way signs, without all these buildings that block out the Parisian horizon—a life that could only be expressed beyond words, in this cyclonic cry where you dreamed as well to shout out in the middle of the streets and corridors of the subway stations.*

*Do you remember that the next day after the first broadcast of Tarzan, something strange happened to you at school, it was as if the film continued or rather continued to chase after you: monkey calls, “umgawas,” the “cheetahs,” the “bwana,” the “negroes,” and the “go back to the jungle” rained down like so many bullets on you and it was no doubt at that exact moment that you realized that you were not part of the camp of the winners, the camp of the conquerors, the cowboys, the Livingstones...you would have liked to have disappeared underground, to scrub, scrub, and scrub some more with soap, with detergent, with bleach, scrub this skin that couldn’t certainly belong to you. You would have liked to have taken sand paper to it, and polish it down until it became transparent. To become invisible. Nope. This filthy color doesn’t come off that easily, it sticks to the skin like oil: you were nothing more than a pitiful seagull stuck in an oil spill. With a bit of distance, this kind of experience seems anodyne, but sometimes all it takes is a tiny impact, a tiny shock wave for a mirror to shatter and for our face to splinter to the point where we are no longer*

*able to recognize ourselves. Who knows what kind of life Pateh Sabally could have lived, this shadow emerging from the wave...*

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*(The seated man places his hands on the febrile temples of his companion. One, two, three minutes pass before the latter wakes and sits up with a start, as if emerging from out of a bout of sleep apnea.)*

The Runner: This has been happening to me a lot lately, I say and do things that I forget just as quickly, when I regain self-awareness (*rubbing his hand over his face and skull*). Who is here exactly?... Can we say “I” when nothing can assure us that it is indeed “us”? And how can we say ‘us’ when “I” is an other?... One day, after one of these spells, I saw myself on the screen of a smartphone of one of my friends: I was dancing, I was hopping around, I was slicing through the air with an imaginary sword, twirling and spinning around myself, a whirling dervish inebriated by the whispering winds of the dunes.

The Seated Man: Ah ah ah! ... the winds of the dunes or the winds of the genies? In the beginning, all rhythm is a rhythm of a race: the hammering blows of the feet on the ground, the pounding blows of the heart against the chest, the pounding of the hands against soft skin. My dear friend, one doesn’t recklessly trace the rhythmic lines without one day having to take into account the invisibles... But I assure you, you’re in their good graces, I know, I have my sources. What is happening to you is a blessing. Above all when one comes from your milieu...

The Runner: My milieu?

The Seated Man: Yes, your milieu, and don’t try to act naïve. You’ve done a great deal of university studies, right? From Islamabad to Paris, I’ve met a handful of guys like you: “people” who present themselves well, who know how to “speak,” who have never had to work out in the fields, or scalping tickets, or plumbing through the dumpster: citizens that were born “well off,” products certified to conform with the standards like in medical clinics where everything is white and sterilized clean. You have always been served by women or

descendants of slaves, but with the “Whites” by some sort of black magic, you instantly become one of the “oppressed,” even a spokesperson for an entire “community.” But what does it mean to be “Ethiopian” when one is “Omorro,” what does it mean to be “Mauritanian” when one is “Harratin,” what does it mean to be “Burmese” when one is “Rohingya”?

The Runner: You hide your game very well my brother, you have quite a beautiful rage stirring inside you, and I admit, I prefer that you sharpen words rather than blades...Yeah, I know, I’m a fucking bourgeois and I should have never found myself in this mess! I had an entire future in front of me, I had an inheritance, I was a “black skin, negro mask” who shined glory the whole day long on the black pharaohs and the apostles of negritude while simultaneously spitting on the niggers that populated the shantytowns of Africa. But having since seen the world through the eyes of the wretched, the future that they have sketched out for me brings me nothing but nausea: I no longer want to live in a golden bunker. I can’t take all the access codes, and the control screens, and the bodyguards, and the strip tease of success throughout the endless Afropolitan soirees. During my journey throughout the continent, I bore witness to the perpetual racket and the debased misery. I shared my sleeping quarters with rats in putrid crammed cells. I served as a kind of trophy for the Saharan military... for sale to a Europe that was just as arrogant as it was hypocritical. But I also experienced, for the first time, a boundless fraternity.

The Seated Man: Enough with the chit chat, you’re growing tiresome and making me tired! Things are very simple: there is a border, there is a guide [*passseur*], there is a candidate for crossing over. So, if you don’t want to attempt the crossing, explain to me what the fuck you’re exactly doing here!?

The Runner: You’re really going to think I’m crazy. All I really wanted was to save my own skin....” We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us!”  
What’s the point of crossing borders since they’ve already crossed us, since they follow our every move, even inscribing themselves into our flesh itself. Like those electronic ankle-bracelets they put on convicts, like the chips inserted underneath the skin of our children who we love so dearly, like the retinal-scans

which open, with a blink of the eye, the gates into our security-controlled residences.

What's the use of crossing the borders since we will always remain at the doorstep, since these walls, these enclosures, these bulletproof barricades that you are offering to help me pass through are nothing more than the most hideous form of it all. The borders have become "intelligent," veritable microprocessors that endlessly overflow the national boundaries, proliferating at the heart itself of their insides to the point of transforming the least point of access into a check point at every public or private site, and turning any human element composing a flux into a suspect.

What's the use of crossing the borders since they are inside of us and inside of us they sever the native from the foreigner, man from woman, the white man from the black man, the secular from the Muslim, the heterosexual from the homosexual, the healthy from the pathogenic, leading us to the metastases of schizophrenia. In order to separate the wheat from the chaff, we ended up rolling out processes for the entirety of humanity which up until now had only been required of "migrating bipeds": the registering of fingerprints, the biometric inquisition, the detection of "high-risk persons".

*The Seated Man:* You are correct at least regarding one point: all that counts from now on is our "profile": the digital shadow that doubles each of our movements and interactions, the "ghost" as the Japanese call it. It's this hemorrhaging of data that flows from our lives permanently captured by databases and algorithms for the overwhelming profit of the occult forces of capital and the security agencies.

*The Runner:* Praise be to transparency dear friend, you know it's just for our collective security! During these dark times, citizens have a duty to be crystal clear. There's an endless war led as much against the internal enemy as the external one, an enemy that is all the more pernicious since he hides in the slightest folds of our cities, in the countryside, and in the corners our own conscience. You have to admit, the human skin, this surface of contact, this sensible border that we so delight in pressing up against, is nowadays nothing more than a control surface. Who among us hasn't experienced the small

amount of terror when the time comes to scan the spirals of one's fingerprints or the fractal geometry of one's iris? To be authenticated is to be admitted among the "elite," at least until the next round of scans. To worry about the fate of the "rejected": the person not born in the right neighborhood or on the right bank of the river, or better still, the person who dared to enter into actions of dissidence, is already guilty before even having been judged. Anesthesia, the price one must pay for immunity!

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*Your father, who was just as black as the men you watched on the screen of your tiny television, must be seated close to you—you lived in a maid's quarters—, and nevertheless, you didn't associate at all with the Tarzan niggers. You aren't able to remember the face he would make in looking at all those superstitious negroes. They were idiotic and above all behaved with a frightening docility. How could you have imagined that he felt humiliated given that you yourself— like the young West Indians described by Fanon<sup>xi</sup>— completely identified with Tarzan. How could you see an African "nigger" inside your Father, your father who was nothing but revolt, your father who spent his nights discussing the Revolution with his exiled comrades, your father who terrorized you by way of a mere glance of his eye—there's nothing more banal for a son—the strongest and most courageous man in the world: a hero... With a bit of distance, you tell yourself that if he had to flee his own country today, you would no doubt have not done so by obtaining a visa or airplane ticket and that even if you had succeeded in reaching France, his narrative would have been called into question; and given the tightly wound ball of nerves that your father was made of...there's no doubt they would have sent you back pronto in the hands of the "security services" that he was fleeing. And what for you is nothing more than an uchronic hypothesis, is unfortunately the reality for a large number of refugees today.*

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*(The silhouette of the runner suddenly freezes in the twilight. And with a couple of quick and efficient movements, he covers over the embers in the humid sand, then*

*puts on a biometric tracksuit, leaving nothing to be seen but his eyes and mouth.)*

The Seated Man: Your senses are well honed, I can hardly perceive the humming of the cyberdogs. *One could say my brother that your skin is becoming devalued by the second.*

The Runner: Don't worry, there's still a couple of tricks still up my sleeve. Why do you think that out of all the "migrants" that are tracked, captured, and interned, there is only a very small fraction who end up finally getting sent back? From the Port of Calais to the Cape of Good Hope, it's a complete mess to deal with for the Nations involved, so we reassure the citizen as best we can: to try to conjure fate we exhibit walls like so many fetishes, protector divinities, *vade retro satana*, but their repulsive actions concerning migratory bipeds is only a diversion. The border is less a wall than a filter, it captures and manages human resources. It is a selection machine: a matrix that encodes clandestine refugees and migrants, into shadows, into manual labor that is as docile as it is spectral. You could say that employing the "living," and by living I mean "natives," has become too costly. You know very well, Babylon needs us: we are its maids, its construction workers, its *ballon d'or* winners, its sex workers, its creative force behind the invention of new algorithms, its emergency room doctors, and of course, the primary material and target of its new war of capture; the business of enclosure. The great foxhunt wants nothing more than to keep us in the beyond, always at the edge of life and the law, in a life stripped bare of its right to have rights, within a death definitely deferred. Spare the rod and spoil the child you will tell me! The crack of the whip, the duty of the National Police, the dog bites, the burning of tear gas, the lacerations from razor wire, all this old pedagogy of cruelty has always had as one of its objectives to save the damned from their own indignity. *The first thing that a native learns is to stay in his place, don't go beyond your limits...*<sup>xii</sup>

The Seated Man: So you at least admit that limits are made to be broken. What are you waiting for then? Grab hold of your chance! You are one of the heroes of the great reality show, you survived the Saharan torture camps, the raging seas, the disinfectant sprays of Lampedusa, the dissection of the organ traffickers

of Lagos and Cairo. With your skills, you could pretty much become whatever you wanted on the other side. I really don't understand what's keeping you here. The Jungle was an encampment. Just another mega squat along with the rest...

*The Runner*: Schools, cinema–restaurants, hammams, an Ethiopian church, mosques, a theatre, bakeries, vegetable gardens... You call that a “squat!” They could have attempted to make a sorting facility, and a dehumanization area... the border can always be subverted. It's this possibility of transgression that the Jungle deployed. You don't recall the words uttered by Zimako,<sup>xiii</sup> the one who created the secular school, L'Ecole Laïque du Chemin des Dunes: “It's not a jungle, it's a forum!”, he often exclaimed. It was his way of reminding us that the first forum— the public place where one deliberated about the common affairs of Rome— was first constructed outside the City, at the city's borders, its edges. To put it simply, what is on the outside can eventually one day become the center of things. The Jungle should have been a relegated zone far from the city, and in the end, in a very short time, it became one of the hearts of the city: a space where people who, in the beginning, seemingly had nothing in common (Afghans, Sudanese, urbanists, artists, jurists, volunteers from all over Europe) entered into relation, experimenting with other modes of organization, circulating other forms of knowledge, creating new forms of alliances, elaborating a new common language. Something that could sabotage the humanitarian and policing order of controlled government hand-outs.

Cosmopolis emerges from out of the mud, by way of its insolent freedom, the Jungle escaped the imaginary of trash that we always place on encampments and shanty towns. The Jungle was not some unworthy place devoid of laws, populated by the indigenous and the rejects of society that the experts from News Channels dissected on live TV. A forest, no doubt, but certainly not the forest of Tarzan. More like the forest of runaway slaves! Don't you see, a forest maroons<sup>xiv</sup> refuge can even be born just as much in the heart of a city as it can in the interzone of transit: it is born from our *détournements*, from our poaching, from our bootlegs, from our lost and unruly steps. I can still feel the fire of the Jungle under the dunes. The battle won't be carried over to the other side since there is no longer any inside and outside, it will continue within the chaotic vortex of the inter-worlds. The refuge is no longer inside or outside of



us, it is at the fold of the world and the self, of the self and other, in a suspended relation that can only be deployed in one and the same movement of the fugue—this force of flight that transforms our bodies into graphic and utopian waves. The real question today is not how to cross the border, but how to inhabit it, how to turn it into a new fault line where we can conjure and create a surging opening for the magma of humanity to come. I know that the in the word “border” one always hears the shock of armor, the clash of bodies in struggle, the clamor of armies readying for confrontation. But before being a line of confrontation, the border is a zone of contact, its distinguishing character is firstly to bring people together. Before being lines, the borders are sites of life where humans have always re-invented themselves through the nourishment of the strangeness of their neighbor. Like coral reefs, the borders don’t breathe, and only live through their pores, their asperities, their porous surfaces where the continual entanglement of incommensurable worlds are produced: a creative hybridization, a creolization.

*(With the slow emergence of the vegetal growth, shadows emerge surrounding the dunes, androgynous silhouettes holding a portable flame-thrower in one hand and a hydro-pulser<sup>xv</sup> in the other. After a moment floating in the air, they rejoin the runner through a couple of feline leaps.)*

The Seated Man: Where are you going with that fire and water and what the hell is this group of X-Men?!

*(Pointing toward the translucent arrow at the entrance of Heroic Land)*

The runner: Liana-Man, Caimen-Men, Panther-Man..., south of the Sahara, we never waited for Hollywood to create our own secret societies. We are going to burn down paradise and put the fire out that is burning in hell!

*(Suddenly, a pack of cyberdogs and a swarm of drones emerged from behind the blockhouse. The “Unruly”—the name of the secret society—launch into a nyabinghi chant whose pulsations scramble and disarm the navigation devices of the robots. In the space of a couple of minutes, the collisions multiply and the machines destroy themselves.)*

*Babylon system is the vampire  
Suckin' the children day by day  
Me say : de Babylon system is the vampire, falling empire  
Suckin' the blood of the sufferers  
Building church and university  
Deceiving the people continually  
Me say them graduatin' thieves and murderers  
Look out now: they suckin' the blood of the sufferers<sup>xvi</sup>*

*(Placing his hand on the opposite bare shoulder of the seated man.)*

The Runner: This skin with which I touch you and which is endlessly shed, in the end, there is nothing deeper than that. So, let us celebrate our ashes...

Translation: Drew S. Burk

<sup>i</sup> Edouard Glissant, *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 16.

<sup>ii</sup> See Nicolas Klotz's and Elisabeth Perceval's poetic and political film : *L'héroïque lande* (2017).

<sup>iii</sup> The incarnation par excellence of the apparatus of capture of slavery. See *Les fugitifs* d'Alejo Carpentier or *L'esclave vieil homme et le molosse*, de Patrick Chamoiseau.

<sup>iv</sup> An archipelago of checkpoints that are becoming more and more interconnected, most notably through the mutually shared databases between Nation-States, security agencies, and the shipping and transportation sectors, etc.

<sup>v</sup> The predictive and proactive logic of globalized risk management. It is a question of anticipating the event before it is even produced. In the area of migratory politics, it's about stop the migrant already in his own country (the brandishing of Visas, the reviewing of transportation data, etc.). With the ever-increasing externalization of the borders of the EU, the Senegalese navy, for example, will lend a great deal of support to the Spanish and French navy in alerting them of the migrant ships setting sail from their coasts.

<sup>vi</sup> The borders cover a broad-spectrum in our daily life (from secured access into buildings to customs checkpoints and the daily verifications of identity); they project moving shadows in our imaginary and shape our perceptions.

<sup>vii</sup> In the middle of the Cold War, Jung established an analogy between the dissociation of the word split into two antagonistic blocks (communist/capitalist) and the psychism of modern

man, each block became refracted in the other: “The iron curtain, heresy of machine guns and barbed wire, traverses the soul of the modern man”. [I have translated this reference from the original French quote, T.N.)

<sup>viii</sup> See “Des enclaves postcoloniales”, Christiane Vollaire, in *Décamper* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016).

<sup>ix</sup> Slogan used by the movement of Mexican migrants in the USA: “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us!”

<sup>x</sup> Heroic Land is the name of a “real” project of the construction of an amusement park in Calais whose anticipated cost will be around 300 million euros. “Heroic, adj.: Someone who demonstrates great courage.” Communiqué from the Mayor of Calais: “By associating the name of the city with such a powerfully positive image, the park will contribute in raising the notoriety of the city throughout France and its neighboring European countries.” Opening estimated for 2019: <http://heroicland.com/>

<sup>xi</sup> “In the Antilles, the young black man identifies himself de facto with Tarzan versus the Blacks.” Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (Revised Edition, Grove Press, 2008), 131.

<sup>xii</sup> *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon.

<sup>xiii</sup> For more on Zimako Jones, see <https://www.theguardian.com/media/ng-interactive/2015/aug/10/migrant-life-in-calais-jungle-refugee-camp-a-photo-essay>

<sup>xiv</sup> The term, maroons is derived from the old Spanish phrase, Cimarron, a term used for speaking about domesticated animals that had become re-wilded. That is, domesticated animals that had been released, escaped, or freed back into the wild. The term also became used to refer to runaway slaves and eventually a “maroon” became used to refer to a creative process of “becoming undomesticated.”

<sup>xv</sup> Depending on the circumstances, a hydro-pulsor is a tool or a weapon that converts ambient humidity into a powerful and extremely dense stream of water capable of cutting, perforating, or repelling depending on the intensity of the range of the stream of water selected by the user. Similar to a water jet cutter [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water\\_jet\\_cutter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_jet_cutter) that can actually condense water into a stream so powerful that it can cut through steel. Def. Pataphysical Dictionary.

<sup>xvi</sup> “Babylon system,” Bob Marley, 1979.