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Africas of the Mind: From Indigenous Medicine to Environmental Psychoanalysis[1]

In Africa, some say, no one ever truly dies.[2] Where organisms end, the ancestors begin.[3] Infant *ogbanje* return from the dead, plaguing grief.[4] Human and animal blur nightly in therianthropic and anthropomorphic crossings.[5] In Africa, the subject is endlessly mutable. In this sense, the curative impulses in psychoanalysis and in Western medicine evolve within a benevolent myopia. How do you diagnose a subject who morphs between creatures or life-states? How do you cure someone who is destined to live, regardless of what ails? And if what ails is a long history (say, slavery, or racism, or colonialism), how do you cure that? The talking cure, like justice, is always remotely articulated and it always arrives too late. The belatedness of the talking cure, or of justice, means that its possibility is eternally present. The key pre-condition for its emergence is a plausible basis for dialogue. To that extent, an African psychoanalysis – a "decolonization of the mind," as it were – would need to speak in a vernacular idiom.[6]

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[1] I am grateful to Sam Durrant, Nicholas Ray, Ryan Topper, Jay Prosser, Ross Truscott, John McLeod and Graham Huggan who have all read and made helpful suggestions on this work in draft. Any errors remain my own.
[2] For the grandfather's rebirth in the grandchild, see Mbabuike, 50.
[3] For a lesson to a neophyte on how to best the ancestors, see Chinua Achebe's poem, "Those Gods Are Children" (2005).
[4] For a contemporary ogbanje personality, see Akwaeke Emezi's wonderful novel, *Freshwater* (2018).
[5] For !Nuin-!kuiten "who died from the effects of a shot he had received when going about, by night, in the form of a lion," see Bleek and Lloyd 236.
[6] I invoke Ngũgĩ's well-known formulation here. In my view, decolonizing the mind requires indigenous modes of theorization built on African concepts of subjecthood.

My starting propositions outline – in extremity – certain conceptual limitations of Freudian theory. "Africa" in my usage is a provocation and not a descriptor. I invoke "Africa" as a ground-clearing move so as to mark – and ultimately dissolve – an internal limit within psychoanalysis. As Ross Truscott has insightfully observed, "To name Africa in the text of psychoanalysis is to begin an interminable analysis of a relation between psychoanalysis and its colonial conditions of possibility."[7] Accordingly, my argument has opened with a critical ploy, mobilising the sign "Africa" and some of its possible thought-systems so as to inaugurate the project of revisionary psychoanalytic reading. My focus is, avowedly, on historically-disqualified forms of subjugated knowledge – on animism, witchcraft, therianthropy, indigenous medicine – and on their lay-practitioners. Where a conventional anthropological approach might seek to marshal such material for reductive cultural explanation and stereotype, my postcolonial vernacular approach has an entirely different purpose. I seek to decolonize psychoanalysis and to submit it to non-anthropocentric critique by vernacular African thought systems. Despite all of the accompanying conceptual risks of staging that theoretical conversation, I want to test the potential that historically-disqualified African thought-systems might retain as environmentally-inclined, psychoanalytic theories. If some of their propositions remain true some of the time, then the theoretical yields are clear: it is possible to derive a psychoanalysis that does not stop at the boundaries of the body[8] or the foreshortened temporalities of the life-span – a psychoanalysis that includes the animal, the vegetable and the environmental in its considerations. In my view, we now need an environmental psychoanalysis whose cure does not stop at the human subject. Additionally, we need a theory of mind that reckons with our perpetual placement in

[7] Personal communication.
[8] Timothy Morton has argued that the body is a problematic analytical category (108).

the fields of the political and the economic, and that contemplates how we cohabit with the abiding and unrestful dead. In such a theory, questions of subject and psyche would be inseparable from history and its hauntings. Moreover, its cures would be adjoined to our embodied practices, to our lived ecologies, and to our habitual life-spaces.

Psychoanalysis, at least as Freud conceived it, gestures towards such possibilities, but it finally falls short of them. In its regulatory or normative modes, psychoanalysis closes down the viability of magical categories, of aberrant dispositions and of social disruption. In Freud's attempts to excavate the bases for perversity or deviance, he fails to see a larger racial and Imperial ancestry shaping his insights. Freud's thought is culturally bound to ethnocentric ideas about mortality and the individuated self, and to anthropocentric ideas about the primacy and insularity of human categories. Further, Freud's gaze is limited by the immediate intellectual problems that he seeks to address.

Freud's trouble with perversity and deviance is that they are internal. They cannot be seen without markers or stigmata. We mark in order to repudiate. We *stigmatize*. Racism too is a framework of stigmas. As we know, psychoanalysis is not free of such movements. The trade-off between the structuring gaze of racism and the search for the cultural, behavioural or bodily markers of the symptom is precisely what is at stake in an inaugural South African psychoanalytic "case study" – Wulf Sachs' Black Hamlet (1937. I propose a literary re-narration of Freud's and Sachs' texts in the populist register of the demotic. The African demotic I have chosen (spirit medicine and therianthropic transformation) seems far-fetched, but it is also quite plausibly integral to psychoanalytic discourse itself. Since the talking cure and justice always arrive too late, I shall treat both Freud's and Sachs' texts as hostile witnesses – with the deliberate critical purpose of making them yield what they already seem

half-willing to say. As I read both thinkers against the grain, their texts will be re-inflected with African critical idioms, political history, and vernacular theories.

A key foundational move is to imaginatively restore a missing African subject to Freud's thought – to insist on its rightful and abiding presence there. Sander Gilman has observed of the 19th century that "certain major shifts in the iconography of the sexualized woman take place, not the least of which is the apparent disappearance of the black female." (228). One of "the black servant's central functions in the visual arts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was to sexualize the society in which he or she is found" (228). The visual presence of the black servant substitutes for the unconstrained sexuality of his or her mistress. The gradual disappearance of this black figure codes for the rendering of white sexuality as increasingly subliminal or unconscious. With the attribution of racially-coded features in studies of European prostitutes – the "Hottentot's apron" (248), the "prehensile" foot (248), and steatopygia (249) – Gilman points us towards the gradual internalization of an anatomical taxonomy. This internalization of race allows a movement from physical stigma to moral type, and thence to psychopathology. Race is domesticated – made nostalgically half-visible – in order to police sex at home. White women's degenerate sexuality is disclosed by their covertly black bodily features. Gilman makes this clear by drawing attention to the movement between Manet's *Olympia* (1863) and his later portrait, *Nana* (1877). Where Olympia's illicit sexuality is reflected by her black servant who accompanies her, Nana is unaccompanied, but carries the African "stigma" of steatopygia. As Gilman puts it, "Nana's seeming beauty is but a sign of the black hidden within." (251). In short, I would argue, black physicality is used to model white interiority. It is this African self imported into the European subject and then erased that psychoanalysis inherits as it conceptualizes both sexuality and the unconscious. Gilman notes that when "Freud, in his *Essay on Lay Analysis*

(1926), discusses the ignorance of contemporary psychology concerning adult female sexuality, he refers to this lack of knowledge as the "dark continent" of psychology" (256-7). Further, Gilman suggests that "Freud ties the image of female sexuality to the image of the colonial black" (257).

The larger conclusions here are that when we read for what is normal or healthy in the life of the mind, these standards have always already been hijacked. Moreover, although orthodox psychoanalysis – that eminent theory of the modern subject – betrays an unacknowledged partnership with Africans such as Saartjie Baartman, its key findings disqualify them from view. Africans are not only internalized. They are also secreted away, returning as narcissism or dream,[9] fantasy or fetish. In Freud's thought, Africans are hidden as individuals and communities, and then returned as abstractions. What might it mean to read psychoanalysis for what it represses? To read for the undisclosed African presence within psychoanalysis is to undertake not a masterful hermeneutics, but a long historical dialogue – a talking cure perhaps. Listening out for Africans in Freudian psychoanalysis must mean to concede that Europeans were never the only ones who theorized. Africa theorizes too and it always has. Indeed, a vernacular conversation might further articulate Africa's longstanding philosophical partnership in the iteration of European theory. The outcome would be, precisely, a grounding of the concept.

In my view, psychoanalysis is a theory of desire that is also a covert theory of race.[10] Robert Young suggests as much in his discussion of Charles Darwin's displacement of the debate between monogenists and polygenists: "the scientific arguments in support of racial

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[9] Christopher L. Miller argues that "[the] 'primitive' state of wish-fulfilment is how Europe conceives of African thought" (63).

[10] This is a reformulation of Robert Young's statement: "Theories of race were thus also covert theories of desire" (9).

prejudice moved elsewhere, to the theory of 'types,' to questions of psychological, intellectual and 'moral' differences" (13). Psychoanalysis inherits this legacy. If it engineers no other innovation, psychoanalysis averts attention from the body and its visibilities: the hysteric suffers not from nervous lesions, Freud and Breuer tell us in Studies on Hysteria, but from "reminiscences" (1893, 58). Psychoanalysis, with its unacknowledged historical freight, suffers from undisclosed reminiscences too. What are some of these undisclosed reminiscences? Quite distinctly, they are the moments of intercultural contact in larger European or American world-historical movements. When Freud (1927) speaks of the formation of the fetishistic precondition between German and English languages, he forgets to tell us about the formation of the term "fetishism" in the contact between European traders and West African target peoples.[11] This route from European comparison to Imperial origin is staged in Freud's own conclusion to the essay on fetishism. He moves from a description of the *perverse* domestic motivations of the European "*coupeur de nattes*," before arriving at an equivalent *normalcy* of social practice abroad in the wider world:

> Another variant, which is also parallel to fetishism in social psychology, might be seen in the Chinese custom of mutilating the female foot and then revering it like a fetish after it has been mutilated. It seems as though the Chinese male wants to thank the woman for being castrated. (1927, 357)

In short, we slide from the exceptional individual of European sexual practice (the *coupeur de nattes*) to the collective exception of Chinese social practice. Individual perversity at home stages collective cultural stigma abroad.

[11] For the conceptual history of fetishism, see McClintock (183-9).

A similar movement is at work in Freud's essay on narcissism. Originally used to denote the perversity of auto-erotic self-pleasuring, narcissism is also recognized by Freud to be a necessary stage in human development – a "libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation" (1914, 66). This movement from the self-preserving primary narcissism of the infant to the self-pleasuring secondary narcissism of the pervert allows Freud to speculate about the similarities between secondary narcissism's detachment of the ego from objects, and the schizophrenic's megalomania which "has no doubt come into being at the expense of object libido" (67). To the extent that megalomania is an insular theory of power, it prompts the ruse that it may be considered from outside its own boundaries. This ruse allows Freud to stage a series of unhappy cross-cultural comparisons:

> This extension of the libido theory – in my opinion, a legitimate one – receives reinforcement from a third quarter, namely, from our observations and views on the mental life of children and primitive peoples. In the latter, we find characteristics that, if they occurred singly, might be put down to megalomania: an over-estimation of the power of their wishes and mental acts, the 'omnipotence of thoughts', a belief in the thaumaturgic force of words, and a technique for dealing with the external world – 'magic' – which appears to be a logical application of these grandiose premisses. In the children of today, whose development is much more obscure to us, we expect to find an exactly analogous attitude towards the external world. (67).

It is obvious that there is a scale of transparency set in place here, such that European children are more obscure than the so-called primitive peoples.[12] This scale of transparency

[12] See Spivak (180)

is invoked to justify the idea that secondary narcissism replays an earlier mode: that of megalomania. In other words, the European adult's perverse secondary narcissism replays in its extreme form the infant's primary narcissism (including "megalomania"), which is itself more obscure than the normative secondary narcissism of so-called primitive peoples. The 'primitive' child – and perhaps even the mixed race child – is occluded from view.[13] And yet, Freud gives something away here. Who is it who overestimates the power of wishes and mental acts? Who is it who frames a theory in which thoughts and feelings are all-powerful, which is to say omnipotent? Who is it who believes in the thaumaturgic force of words, especially in conversion disorders? Who is it, in short, who arrives at the "talking cure"? Once again, in staging world-historical differences to evidence his psychoanalytic theory, Freud speaks less to "primitive peoples" than to the anxious conditions of theorizing. Likewise, the metaphorical mingling at work in the "dark continent" of female sexuality – holding together the disparate categories of gender, continental geography, colonial conquest, and race – bespeaks the anxiety of analytical failure. Faced with a castrated subject, Freud is stumped. Faced with an Imperial history, he leaves some constituencies in the dark.

The long legacy of the Great Chain of Being undergirds such analytical anxieties, such lacunae. Speculating about an original ego libido later attached to objects, but which persists in the subject, Freud describes this relation in terms of one of the lower life forms: seeing the relationship between ego libido and object libido to be much like "the body of an amoeba is related to the pseudopodia that it puts out." (68). This motif recurs when Freud ponders the distinctions in one individual between the self-preserving ego-instincts (hunger) and the species-preserving libido (sex). Freud elaborates the relation in the following way:

[13] My argument here is indebted to Spivak (179).

> The individual himself regards sexuality as one of his own ends; whereas from another perspective he is an appendage to his germ-plasm, at whose disposal he puts his energies in return for a bonus of pleasure. He is the mortal vehicle of a (possibly) immortal substance – like the inheritor of an entailed property, who is only the temporary holder of an estate which survives him. The separation of the sexual instincts from the ego-instincts would simply reflect this twofold function of the individual. (70-71)

Here, we have the coexistence in one self of the lowest life orders ("amoebas" and "germ-plasm") and the supposedly higher life orders ("the inheritor of an entailed property," such as the son of a European nobleman, perhaps). In these imageries applied to the ego-instincts and sexual-instincts, we find a fault line between amoeboid species and human self, and a fault line between gendered sexual relation and male social station. These fault lines amount to the social and sexual unconscious of theory, if you wish, and Freud papers over the cracks by having covert recourse to race. Entertaining the possibility that libido is "only the product of a differentiation in the energy at work generally in the mind" (71), he discounts the importance of the distinction, arguing that "this primal identity may have as little to do with our analytic interests as the primal kinship of all the races has to do with the proof of kinship required in order to establish a legal right of inheritance" (71-2). Analytic interests – at least as Freud describes them – repudiate the sexual anxieties at stake in polygenetic and monogenetic 19th century theories of race (in which "the primal kinship [or not] of all the races" is precisely at stake). Furthermore, analytic interests repudiate the class, race and gender anxieties at stake in the "proof of kinship required in order to establish a legal right

of inheritance" – a kinship claim that might aid a white, male heir's succession to a nobleman's entailed property perhaps?

The succession of an heir to an entailed property staves off certain broader social anxieties. What is at stake is a simple question – to whom (else) has the mother contracted her sexuality? Leading on from this, we might intuit an ever-present anxiety – is the real father possibly a black or working-class man? By disavowing the relation between primal and legal kinship, Freud ignores the gender, race and class fault-lines at work in the legal frameworks and in the scientific racist debates that he inherits – frameworks and debates which, as we know from Robert Young, focus on primal kinship through the viability or terminality of mixed-race children. This is the ignored historical and social ground upon which Freud's own conceptual apparatus occasionally relies. Between amoebas and the nobility on the Great Chain of Being lies all the rest of the world.[14]

The rest of the world is implicit in Freud's account of narcissism. Freud sees narcissism at work in the charm of the infant's self-contentment, which he links to the "charm of certain animals which seem not to concern themselves about us, such as cats and the large beasts of prey" (83). As we have seen, Freud has also earlier associated the "children of today" with "primitive peoples" (67). In Freud's discussion of parental regard for the narcissistic infantile ego – "the centre and core of creation – 'His Majesty the Baby', as we once fancied ourselves" (85) – there an implicit pathologizing of indigenous political sovereignty. We should remember here that Freud inherits the racist pseudo-science that claims a kinship between Hottentots and orang-utans. This is an inheritance recapitulated in

[14] My nomenclature here is indebted to Derrida's critique of the International Psychoanalytic Association in "Geopsychoanalysis" (1991).

Freud's simile involving "cats and the large beasts of prey" and his metaphor of "'His Majesty the Baby' [which is to say, 'the primitive' at one remove]." Here we might ask which landscape it is that is populated by cats and the large beasts of prey, not to mention infantilized kings? Freud's imagination wanders far afield – half disclosing, but never quite naming, an Africa of the mind. In short, the essay on narcissism situates itself in an international bestiary, in which the model of the European child's mind is derived from the independent life missions of large animals and from the sovereign political categories of indigenous peoples, broadly defined. These are motivated metaphors and we should refuse them. A cat may look at a king, but more often each has their own independent aspiration to fulfil.

By extension, the project of re-humanizing psychoanalysis should include the necessity of anthropomorphizing its key concepts. The politicized language of Freud's essay on narcissism is plausibly attributable to this Imperial scene of encounter. The neurotic's "primitive libidinal instincts" (90) emerge in the paranoiac as the "undefined multitude" (90) in "revolt against this 'censoring agency' [of the conscience]" (90). The paranoiac's delusions of being watched mean that his conscience "confronts him in a hostile form from without" (91). Who is this ill-defined, revolting multitude stalking and ambushing Freud's thought? Who is this hostile primitive who needs to be watched and "governed"? Inhabiting such imageries, do we find ourselves in a place in the mind or in a place in the world? Do we find ourselves amid the struggle for sanity in the face of unreason, or amid the struggle to surveil and police in the face of decolonizing revolt? Speaking of the superego and its monitoring function of conscience, Freud writes in Civilization and its Discontents: "In this way civilization overwhelms the dangerous aggressivity of the individual, by weakening him, disarming him and setting up an internal authority to watch over him, like a garrison in

a conquered town" (1930, 77). Once again, the language of conquest and occupation bespeaks the suppressed ground of Freudian thought. It is almost possible in passages such as these to imagine psychoanalysis as a defence against decolonization. Unsurprisingly, it is Frantz Fanon who undertakes the single, small act of translation necessary for us to literalize Freudian libido theory. In Fanonian terms, the libido can be thought of as something other than an interior human faculty. Instead the libido may be reconceived as the native's negotiation of a charged and material public sphere that is structured by the settler's colonial coercion, by a racist gaze and by socio-economic obstacles. Such coercion, exclusions, and obstacles may be overcome via the subject's disinhibited political violence – linking curative psychiatric practice to political struggle.

Let us speculate, provocatively but playfully, that decolonizing national struggle is tacitly present in Freud's essay on narcissism. The policing conscience in the essay on narcissism is a forerunner to the ego-ideal. In "addition to its individual side, this ideal has a social side; it is also the common ideal of a family, a class or a nation" (1914, 96). When Freud publishes his essay in 1914, Africa has only had the boundaries of the modern nation-state drawn up for 30 years – since the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. By definition therefore, Freud consigns Africans and other colonized peoples to a state of narcissism and perversity.[15] Another way of saying this is that the figurative political territory of the Freudian psyche is in a permanent state of race war, with "primitive" ego libido endlessly at odds with acquisitive object attachments. Literalizing metaphor for a moment, this is the European's internal African – the primitive par excellence in racist scientific theory – as the deepest seat of self. The internal African's repossession of himself – the investment of the libido in the ego – is the very origin of madness, of the unthinkable. And this internal African is

[15] See Spivak (178-9) for a similar argument.

perpetually in conflict with the European's capitalist acquisitiveness in the arrayed world of objects – many of which, it has to be said, already belong unacknowledged to others.

If Freud occasionally depopulates his metaphors of mind, then the project of a vernacular psychoanalysis might be to repopulate Freudian thought with theory from Africa. Thinking in the vernacular might re-enliven Africa's long partnership in modernity with the dignities of intellectual seriousness and theoretical equivalence.[16] Vernacular theory is always situational, improvisatory and opportunistic. To think through it is to work with imprecise, spontaneous, and movable taxonomies. Vernacular theory can never be a grand narrative. Its action within the social cannot be institutionalized in the same way as, say, psychoanalysis and literary criticism. Vernacular theory is a demotic. It demotes and democratizes high theory. When we think seriously in the vernacular, we realize that all belief is a form of theory. In this sense, career academics were never the only ones who theorized. Vernacular theory, as I read it, relies simply upon arranging popular cultural critical metaphors into an inventive, tropologically-agile interpretive framework – whether we are considering the blues (Baker), signifying monkeys (Gates), quilts and gardens (Walker xi-xii; 230-243), records (Gilroy 13, 16), *mami watas* (Ogunyemi, Drewal), or a conversation on a train (McLaughlin 26-29). In what follows, I track a psychoanalytic case study of an African vernacular healer.

In South Africa during the 1930s, psychoanalysis is pioneered by Wulf Sachs' Black Hamlet, which stages an inaugural dialogue between Sachs, a European émigré, and John Chavafambira, a Manyika traditional healer. What I value in Black Hamlet is that it presents us with a filtered discourse (of spirit medicine) that widens its own initial psychoanalytic

[16] For a recent critique of Freud and Marx via Afro-Atlantic religions, see Matory.

premises. Nevertheless, as readers, we need to strain against such narrative and structural filtering of Chavafambira's belief.[17] The flaws in Sachs' psychoanalytic case study are legion and I do not propose to mitigate them here. For instance, in a reversal of the curative relation, Sachs the "therapist" solicits his "patient;" approaching Chavafambira with the lure of sharing medical knowledge and revealing hidden aspects of the self (73-4).[18] Sachs imposes a placatory and corrective therapeutic project upon an increasingly politically rebellious Chavafambira. He quite preposterously invites free association in an unfree society.[19] Sachs, the aspiring writer – who initially plans to mine Chavafambira's life-history for a novel (x) – eschews the emerging pattern of free association and edits and frames this pattern to derive the linear, chronological development of a biography. As such, Sachs narrates against the grain of the psychoanalytic model. There is, too, the problem of language[20] – Chavafambira speaks "broken though fluent English" (75) but his speech is rendered by Sachs in a gentrified mode.

In like vein, Sachs vacillates between three registers of comparison for Chavafambira and his acquaintances, two of which have so far escaped critical comment. I propose to read them here. Firstly, there are the idealized literary, mythical or religious comparisons. All of these may be read for political anxieties in South Africa of the 1930s. Chavafambira is Hamlet (236-41) – a rightful king who kills an illegitimate political usurper. Chavafambira is Odysseus (289) – and Black Hamlet has wishfully placed him in exile in order, perhaps, to expel him amid sirens from South African national borders. Chavafambira is contrasted with

[17] The nature of Sachs' filtering is far more complex (and in some instances necessary), than I am able to allow for here. Suffice it to say, Sachs occasionally invents episodes in Chavafambira's life so as to stage anti-racist critique that might otherwise have led directly to Sachs' own deportation from South Africa. Some of Sachs' filtering, in other words, is progressive politics undertaken at great personal risk to himself.
[18] All references will be to the 1937 editions, except where otherwise stipulated.
[19] Megan Vaughan has also made this point (119).
[20] For a comparable example of psychiatric cases and criminal proceedings in Nyasaland, see Vaughan (104).

Don Juans and Casanovas (144) – and we should note here a wishful injunction against cross-racial intercourse. Chavafambira's elder brother, Amos, is "the Christ-man, Count Myschkin, the hero of Dostoevsky's *Idiot*" (310) – and we should observe that the African *nganga* is wishfully akin to a madman. Secondly, there are the more stereotypically bestial or dehumanizing analogies applied to Chavafambira and his black communities. Chavafambira is variously "a hawk" (79), "a bird of prey on still wing" (82), a "bird of prey tensing its talons for the attack" (234), a "hunted animal, pinned in a corner" (241), with "claw-like hands" (250), and he is among surprised travellers who are "frozen like a pointer when partridges are flushed" (129). Chavafambira treats a man with "little rabbit-eyes" (179), he lives in a slum with "gesticulating silhouettes [. . .] a shuffling, swaying noisy multitude" (208), and he travels on public transport among hundreds of "gesticulating" and "chattering" fellow-blacks (139). In sum, Black Hamlet is courting racist imageries. And yet, because Chavafambira's theoretical practice relies upon the vestiges of the animal (he "throws the bones" in order to divine), we can also observe in such symptomatic authorial flourishes Sachs' fears of his own analytical inadequacy before Chavafambira's practical interpretive schemas. Thirdly, as we know from Jacqueline Rose's brilliant reading in her Introduction to Black Hamlet, there are Sachs' projective identifications, in which Chavafambira's plight is received in terms of analogies with the persecution of Jews.

Despite all of the drawbacks I have mentioned, they form only half of the story. What makes Sachs' Black Hamlet such a powerful document of its time is that other voices contrive to plot. In a remarkable passage, Sachs reports the exclamations of African patients in a mental asylum. Let us listen to these voices, who speak more powerfully in our time:

> [A] group of men were talking of the riches of which they had been robbed. "I am a chief; I have many, many wives and cattle. But my brother has taken my women and keeps me here with these dirty kaffirs," a middle-aged man said in a sly, irritated voice.
>
> "You liar," an elderly Bushmen retorted promptly, speaking in Afrikaans. "I am King George, and I know all the chiefs. [. . .]"
>
> [A tall man] was the chief magistrate, the tax-collector, chief of all the whites, sent to punish the people. His voice rumbled on and on as he explained that he was in the lunatic asylum because the white people had put him there, fearing he would punish them for taking the land from the natives. Suddenly he stopped his narration and, squatting down in front of John, and addressing him quietly, said: "All my people, my servants, and soldiers are outside in motor-cars, waiting for me to come out. You'll go with me, won't you?"
>
> [Chavafambira] joined a solitary figure whom he recognized as Barlow, a Xosa boy, who immediately began to intone his lamentation. He suffered from religious delusions. "Christ came to me last night," he proclaimed in his monotonous sing-song voice. "He told me that I was chosen to punish all the white people."
>
> [He] was God and Satan. He was their son. (251)

These are political madnesses, inspired by fantasies of equivalence that may be fulfilled via acts of political retribution.[21] Taken seriously, these are stories of land theft and sexual dispossession, of consignment to racial abjection ("dirty kaffirs"), of embodying or personifying power and sovereignty ("King George," "chief magistrate, chief tax-collector, chief of all the whites," "God and Satan"). These are not the extraordinary stories of the

[21] A similar pattern emerges in schizophrenics in Nyasaland in the 1930s (Vaughan 100-101).

mad. They are the powerfully commonplace consciousnesses of the oppressed. Notice how the tall man has been imprisoned because whites fear punishment for their theft of the land. Notice too how he invites Chavafambira to join a militarized collective gathered outside. This is the call to revolution once removed. If to dream of freedom is madness, none among us would be sane. If madness in a systemically racist society is freedom-by-proxy, then the foremost prescription is militant uprising to disrupt the totality of oppression.[22] These patients are their own best diagnosticians. While madness is the unthinkable – being by definition not subject to reality-testing – it cannot be confused with men daring to dream against injustice in the world.

The diviner, too, is someone who dreams of the future. Tellingly, we discover that *ngomas* and *ngangas* are frequently committed to mental asylums in the South Africa of the 1930s (249, 261). What is it that makes Chavafambira's vernacular theory of his times proximate to madness? We know that Chavafambira shares a symptom with one of the "mad," since he himself dreams of King George arriving to "help the natives" (194) immediately prior to Sachs' arrival. Chavafambira's dreams are proximate to madness because they imagine power differently – they anticipate liberation.[23] Nor is it simply the case that Chavafambira is looking towards British patronage – his father in law, George, is a skilled diviner too. Chavafambira's disguised wish – as Sachs, to his great credit, will come to realise – is to gather a community of usurpation that applies pressure from inside national borders (the father-in-law, George) and outside of them (the "international" head of Empire, King George). Chavafambira's consciousness is cryptopolitical. His dream is a disguised wish that

[22] I am indebted to a remark by J. M. Coetzee: "[. . .] I understand that, in South Africa [under Apartheid], you have to be mad in order to be sane." (personal communication).
[23] I am inspired here by Freud and Breuer's claim that hysterics "in their hypnoid states [are] insane, as we all are in dreams" (*Studies on Hysteria*, 64).

is fulfilled half a century later, during the 1980s, via mass civil disobedience and economic boycotts, reinforced by international sanctions.

All symbolization is a lovesong for lost landscapes.[24] We might listen out in Black Hamlet for the abiding presence of Chavafambira's lived ecologies. His practice of throwing the bones is an ecological archive, fitting thoughts (of a patient's ailment and circumstance) with remembrance (of land theft, of ancestry, of the lost organic bodies of theory). When Sachs examines Chavafambira's "bone-lore," he lists "elephant-bone, tortoise-bone, bones of a buck, of a mamba, of a zimba (?), cattle-feet, bones of a sheep, goat, pig, hyena, castrated male sheep, calf, lion, baboon" (218-19), all of which accompany nutshells, dominoes and pennies. Elsewhere Chavafambira throws dice (330). And yet, so much is lost in translation. Sachs' "zimba (?)" may well index a misheard relic from Chavafambira's abandoned home, "Zimba(bwe)." Alternately, it may derive from Sachs' mistranscription of the Zulu usage "simba," gleaned by Chavafambira from the Transvaal's migrant labour slum yards (or from his Zulu wife, Maggie) and applied by way of sly critique to Sachs' manipulative meddling:

> **-simba** (**i**(**li**)**simba, ama-**) n. 1. pat of cow dung; excreta. 2. (pl.) discreditable acts. (Doke, Malcolm and Sikakana 282, emphases in the original).

The cerebral purity of Sachs' psychoanalytic method is scrambled by Chavafambira's vernacular and insurrectionary ordure of things. Sachs wagers a higher conceptual language against Chavafambira's more immediate demotic, practical schemas to scrape a living

[24] This claim is inspired by Annette Kolodny's comment, "Paul Shepard undoubtedly has a point when he claims that 'we have yet to recognize the full implication of the mother as a primary landscape'" (5).

(including, by chance, dice, nutshells, dominoes and pennies). The bones (along with the dominoes, the nutshell and the "zimba") are inedible remnants of organic plant and animal life recycled, and they substitute for the human ancestors who inform the healing consciousness, but whose physical remains may not be exhumed. The ego materializes here in a conversation between healer and patient – these "bones" are objects that mediate between reason, hunger and the procreative drives. Unlike the Freudian model, however, these objects always precomprehend the social (illness is caused by another's maleficent projections) and the historical (ancestral consciousness is the basis for diagnosis and cure). Chavafambira's "bone-lore" accords other life-presences (animals, such as lions) a notional stake in analytical outcomes. Indeed, his inventory of the inedible accords animals who have no use-value as food (lion, mamba, hyena) the protection of the supernatural and its prohibitions. Much of this intricacy bypasses Sachs but, in truth, Chavafambira claims that his medicine does not work on, or for, whites. It is a racially-insular medicine designed to diagnose intra-communal hostility and to cure the remotely-projected malfeasance of the witch. In this sense, Chavafambira's medicine works with the projective mechanisms of racism in a distorted, translated form, so as to pioneer a self-regulating black community of power. The racially-insular power of the disadvantaged is not the megalomania of the Freudian primitive. Instead, it is a stratagem of survival improvised in circumstances of last resort.

Moreover, an ecological record emerges within this spirit medicine. Beyond Black Hamlet's immediate moment, the historical and geographical variation in animals typically defined as witch familiars by Southern African practitioners such as Chavafambira forms a diachronic record of changing ecologies and eco-systems, especially as these were impacted by farm enclosure, Apartheid industrialization and the systemization of wage labour. For instance,

the transition of lowveld witch-familiars from "hippopotami, crocodiles, lions, leopards" circa 1900 to "polecats, skunks, snakes, elephants" in the 1930s (Niehaus, Mohlahla and Shokane, 45) arguably bespeaks the increasing enclosure of farmland and the culling of predatory cats, reptiles and roving hippopotami in order to protect livestock and crops.[25] The later transition of familiars to typically omnivorous, scavenging or even pet animals – such as "baboons, wild cats, dogs and bats" in the 1960s and "genets, mongeese and hyenas in the mid 1970s" (45) – permits us to infer the sightings of domestic, proximate and borderline animals within the radically-contracted and politically-engineered locale of the *Bantustan* or "homeland" after 1958. The legislative regulation of human movement – especially via the pass laws (1952) – considerably delimited the variety of animals that could be observed and theorized.

Likewise, the stories of animals as witch familiars take on a character informed by socio-economic change. Niehaus, Mohlahla and Shokane inform us that, after 1960, the Green Valley in Gauteng saw the emergence of "the *tokolotši* [a diminutive, well-endowed ape-like creature] and the *mamlambo* [a snake-like or fish-like creature, a Southern African analogue of the *mami wata*]: new familiars believed to have been purchased by local witches from Nguni-speaking *dingaka baloi* ["doctor witches"] on the mines or in Kwa-Zulu Natal" (46). Niehaus, Mohlahla and Shokane plausibly locate the origins of these stories in the shift from the "earlier period of subsistence agriculture" to the "people's dependence on wage labour" (46). Not only do these familiars track historical oppression and socio-economic change – they also map the lived spaces of the daily. The human, with its notions of culture as good and calculated conduct (*maitshwaro*) occupies the centre of the settlement (*motse*) and the

[25] The shooting of Huberta the Hippopotamus in 1928 by farmers in the Eastern Cape underscores this point. Huberta made national news headlines when she strayed from St Lucia in northern Kwa-Zulu Natal and travelled down the eastern Southern African seaboard.

animal, with its allied notions of innate desire (*duma*) and absence of self-restraint (*gatelela*) in moments of hunger and lust, occupies the domains of nature and instinct (both *tlhaga*) (47-8). Witches and familiars travel and metamorphose across the categorical boundaries and spatial borders between the human and the animal. The witch may shape-shift into an animal form and the familiar may shape-shift into a human form. Indeed, "as babies, witches have the ability to cling to walls like bats" (48) and, for their part, familiars understand language and "are fed like human infants" (48). This correspondence between the animal and the infantile plays out in terms of the witch's incestuous and bestial erotics, for "the familiar can become the witch's lover or child" (45). The conceptual underpinnings of witchcraft amount to a theory of the body, of desire and of personality:

> Duality and shape-shifting are intimately related to conceptions of personhood. The duality of person and animal in witchcraft resonates with the duality of the person's visible natural body (*mmele*) and its invisible, libidinal and animal-like desires (*duma*). At times illicit desires are suppressed, at other times they manifest themselves, dominate and consume the body. Rapists, womanisers and promiscuous women who succumb to their desires and violate the proprieties of marriage are described as inhuman (*bo hlola*) and as lacking *maitshwaro*. They and others who behave unacceptably may be called animals. People who turn against their kin are referred to as dogs (*dimpša*). Those who are cunning, dishonest and untrustworthy are called snakes (*dinoga*). (49)

Let us pause for a second and reflect upon the possibilities of this theory. We are not far from a direct translation of Freud's second topography, in which the perpetual clash between unconscious, "animal-like," libidinal desires (*duma*) and the superego's regulation of good

human conduct (*maitshwaro*) is mediated by the ego. This is an ego encompassing the compromises and bi-directional metamorphoses of the witch (an animal-like human) and the familiar (a human-like animal):

good conduct (*maitshwaro*)	←→	desire (*duma*)	←→	instinct (*tlhaga*)	←→	body (*mmele*)
superego	←→		ego		←→	id
subject	←→	witch	←→	familiar	←→	animal
settlement (*motse*)	←→		boundary		←→	nature (*tlhaga*)

Table 1

In short, what we have here is an African vernacular psychoanalysis, with its internally-consistent theories of mind, body, personality, and illness (resulting from the witch's curses upon, or possession or entrancement of the sufferer). This vernacular psychoanalysis offers us a distributed self whose locales are both near and far. The substitutability of its elements makes this self radically mutable – anyone can become bewitched or transformed, animal elements of fish or snake are interchangeable with money, water or rainbows. Besides the genesis of illness in another's projections, the other key difference from Freudian theory is that the dream is not typically a disguised wish. Instead, the dream is a revelatory narrative that takes place in a supernatural realm – a realm which is, of course, only the daily realm of human mind and animal body amplified with the kinetic power of the subject's insertion into social and ecological relations. In other words, dreams of witchcraft are a trans-species dialogue that discloses social intrigue (an acquaintance's secret maleficent wishes and behaviours which are disclosed via animal or bodily emanations). In this sense, the dream is a disguised narrative of environmental circumstance, social danger and inter-personal harm.

This African vernacular psychoanalysis offers key opportunities to revisit Freudian theory. Firstly, it tracks socio-economic change (from agrarian subsistence to wage labour). Secondly, it records ecological change (in its mutating taxonomies of the familiar). Thirdly, it is community-oriented, instead of subject-oriented. Moreover, the attribution of the symptom to another's malevolent projection is indirectly political, insofar as it dramatizes a key mechanism of Apartheid racism. However, while the projective mechanisms of race may apply to the cause of illness, the actual diagnosis is of unrestrained capitalist acquisition. *uMamlambo* (Xhosa for "mother of the river") in particular concentrates a theory of acquisition-as-if-by-magic; which is to say it explains the baffling accumulation of wealth in the concrete and engineered context of almost total socio-economic dispossession. The *mamlambo* is a little like the Faust myth – it offers its owner vast wealth, but it eventually "dominates, enslaves and destroys its keeper. It is believed that the *mamlambo* prevents single people from marrying and attacks the spouses of married people" (56). *uMamlambo* indirectly invokes race, but only to better explain the operations of Apartheid's racialised economics. In fact, the *mamlambo* is cross-racial. When the *mamlambo* assumes a human form, it "becomes the witch's supernatural lover. It changes into a white man or white woman with silver, shiny hair. Moreover, informants believe that the *mamlambo* can assume the [African] witch's image" (56). *uMamlambo* is assumed to live in the witch's stomach (57), like a foetus. In short, the *mamlambo* is a complex of sexual, reproductive, bi-racial and cross-racial characteristics, in which categories of race, kinship and ethnicity are scrambled, but only to assert a key material difference. Here, this difference is expressed in Tsonga: "*Mulungu a nga na xaka, xaka ra yena i mali* [White people have no kin/nation, their kin/nation is money]" (58). It is said that "men obtained the *mamlambo* from whites on the gold mines" (57) and that the *mamlambo* has "eyes that shine like diamonds" (56). In sum, *mamlambo* bespeaks the creeping and insidious enthralment to the money form that the

migrant wage-labour system instils as it services the mining industry, and the resulting damage and disruption to family and community.

It behoves us to return to Chavafambira with this vernacular psychoanalysis in mind. Chavafambira, of course, practices his art thirty years before the transformations that Niehaus, Mohlahla and Shokane track in the familiars of the Green Valley. As we have seen, the *mamlambo* and a related familiar, the *tokolotši*, first make their way to the Green Valley from Kwa-Zulu Natal in the 1960s, often purchased from Nguni *dingaka baloi* (46). And yet, Chavafambira's wife, Maggie is of Zulu parentage (Sachs 98). In this sense, Maggie is arguably party to and the transmitter of a Zulu cultural story that will take a further generation to express itself in Gauteng more widely. Chavafambira himself mentions "*ticoloshes*" in conversation with Sachs, proving his familiarity with at least one of the Nguni familiars (178). In this sense, Maggie and Chavafambira are harbingers – dreamers of the future expressing a symptom that the broader community around them has yet to form. In his literary, bestial and ethnic metaphors for Chavafambira, Sachs marks – and misses – other, unreadable emanations. There is, of course, the animal body that we (all of us) possess. But there is also the possession by spirits and therianthropic-anthropomorphic crossing of the witch and the familiar.

Black Hamlet is haunted by another, undeclared presence. It is not a ghost on the ramparts; Sachs' vanquished prophet-king murdered by a malign step-father. Instead, it is a woman underwater. Who is she? She is a "Black Ophelia:" a *mami wata*, a *mamlambo* or an *njuzu*. In Europe, Ophelia perishes by drowning. But as we know, in Africa, no one ever truly dies. A more technical way of saying this is that radical translation is always a scene of revivification. Chavafambira's journey from Zimbabwe to South Africa is interrupted by a

presence that possesses him in later life. It is a Manyika witch (*murowi* or *umthakathi*) whose youth and beauty cloud his practice of "smelling out" in a bewitched kraal. Chavafambira's lucky dream of gathering eggs (83) is recast by the *murow*i's taunt, "'You look like an empty egg that the black snake has sucked'" (86). This taunt figures her power over him: the snake is the *murowi's* familiar, supping on the unborn. Indeed, we learn afterward from Chavafambira's reports of accusations circulating among his co-workers in the hotel: "I didn't discover the witch; I didn't discover the snake" (93). Additionally, the taunt and Chavafambira's dream point out in relief what he has failed to do at the bewitched *kraal*: he has omitted to sacrifice "a black hen to his parent's *midzimu* as he had been told to do" (125, 83). An emanation of power, the snake feeds on his own sacrificial failures. At the root of Chavafambira's failure is a quandary of human sexuality and divine obligation. We know of Chavafambira's medicine that the "sweet, firm outline of a young girl's breast might cause him to betray his trust" (80), and it is exactly the *murowi's* youthful sexual appeal that possesses him, "A young girl gets easier hold of people, as this one got hold of me" (87). Chavafambira is sexually bewitched by the *murowi*, captivated by his desire for her. The *murowi* has possessed Chavafambira and thereby infiltrated and intervened in his psychic relations to his parents and his ancestors. In this sense, Chavafambira's youthful sexuality strains against the larger life-structures of ancestral genealogy and vocational destiny. And yet, these seemingly inimical forces do not settle. Instead, they commingle, infusing and inflecting one another. One of the plights of the bewitched kraal is that drought and famine have prevailed for three years (78). Chavafambira's spirit conversations with his father and the *midzimu* bring thunderstorms and rain (83, 89). As Chavafambira later says of a dream "[w]ater is a woman [. . .] perhaps I will sleep with an unclean woman" (108). These distributions of the animate form a dramaturgy of power and influence. Chavafambira has alleviated drought with water, which is to say a woman, which is to say a *murowi*, which

is to say an impediment to his medicine and a doom upon the kraal. The ailment and the cure are indistinguishable from the failure of the healer's shaping force. In fact, we might even say that Chavafambira can be read for the clandestine telekinetic force and the psychic suggestion of the *murowi*, as Sachs insightfully observes: "the image of the first love remained in him, as in us, for life, consciously or unconsciously playing a role in his destiny" (91). Haunted by the desire to know what Chavafambira desires – this is to say, haunted by a *murowi* and her riverine familiars of fish, snakes, *mamlambos* – Sachs' novelistic ensemble rearranges the inchoate details of a single life into the larger logic of an African destiny.

All stories shift shape. In the early 1930s, Chavafambira and Freud are contemporaries. Posterity only reveres the latter as a theorist of modernity – and this despite Sachs' positioning of Chavafambira as that inaugural modern man, Hamlet. For democratic and decolonizing reasons, Chavafambira's residual traces should also be received as theory.[26] The "Africa" that I have deployed here is not a nativist cipher, but a radical scene of translation discoverable at theory's imaginative horizons.[27] (The reader who sees in my argument an outright dismissal of Freud or sentimental primitivism in my according of the status of theory to the filtered discourse of "Chavafambira" has perhaps missed the point. I advocate straightforward equivalence between two thinkers of modernity who are not worlds apart, not least because they shared a mutual acquaintance in Wulf Sachs). As theories of the social and the psychic, *Mami Wata* and *uMamlambo* can never be nativist frameworks of understanding – they always pre-comprehend a genesis in Imperial contact and in bi-racial dynamics. While, the "end of a tropological exercise is the alteration of reality itself" (Baker

[26] Ranjana Khanna admirably undertakes a comparable task (2003).
[27] On vernacular theory as "parallel discursive universe," see Gates xii.

28), the vernacular theories that I have adopted are improvisatory and contingent. They are neither logically necessary, nor descriptively reductive, nor ultimately generalisable (one might found an equivalent method on Nollywood Jedis, for instance). It is the transformative and inventive energy of vernacular theory that is useful in broadening a key theory of mind (psychoanalysis) into an environmentally-sensitive theory of the social (spirit medicine).

In the interests of radical co-implication we might translate, collapsing the artificial scenes of "Europe" and "Africa" that have so far ghosted our discussion. Let us imagine, if we dare, an impossible African creature like the *mamlambo* at the heart of Freudian psychoanalysis. Let us imagine that this creature has, say, the head of a man and the body of a lion. Let us, following Freud and Sophocles, call this creature the Sphinx.

The Sphinx, part-lion and part-human, is a cryptozoological beast like the *mamlambo*. As a cryptid creature, it amounts to a missed possibility in Freudian thought. The real riddle of the Sphinx is not a humanizing question. We see this clearly in Apollodorus' version, "What is that which has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed?" (3.5.8). Oedipus' answer offers the human male as a foreshortening of possibility, "as a babe [man] is four-footed, going on four limbs, as an adult he is two-footed, and as an old man he gets besides a third support in a staff." (3.5.8). In fact, we might even read the Sphinx's subsequent suicidal leap as an outcome of Oedipus' death-dealing performative.[28] Cleaving man from his own monstrosity, Oedipus casts the Sphinx from the world of the possible. The real riddle of the Sphinx is its fascinating cryptid impossibility. It calls to mind what cannot exist. Like Oedipus, Freud is more interested in what the Sphinx says than in what the Sphinx is. The sheer impossibility and fascination of trans-species dialogue is noticed by

[28] In an entirely different discussion, J. Hillis-Miller is the originator of this phrase (156).

neither Freud, nor Oedipus. Both convert the impossibly plural Sphinx into an occasion for the definition of man, an occasion for the insular progression of a single lifecourse from infant (four feet) to man (two feet) to dotard (three feet). And yet, the culminating point of the Sphinx's riddle, the dotard's tripedalism, is only organically possible in a mutant universe. The Sphinx's riddle is, in another sense, about itself and its three-legged mutant kinds. The Sphinx's riddle, that is to say, begs questions of the human and invites us to ponder our own mutancy. All of this is lost on Oedipus and Freud. In fact, Freud's wonderful meditations on prosthesis and bipedalism in "Civilization and its Discontents" might be read as an aversion to the Sphinx's cryptozoological riddle – in which what is symbolically at stake is whether the dotard carries a walking stick or proceeds upon a genuinely monstrous third leg. The castration complex – in which the phallus might be construed as the phantom limb, a spectral masculine "third leg" organizing human development and sociality – would in my speculative reading proceed conceptually from Freud's own resistance to monstrosity.

What structures Freud's resistance? The Sphinx is a composite sign that, untangled, reveals a phobic repudiation. Lion and man take us to the heart of the analytic relation. In fact, Freud conceived of the analytic relation as, precisely, a big cat looking out for an African. Claudia Tate offers this remarkable anecdote:

> In *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (1957), Ernest Jones, Freud's eminent biographer, reports that in 1924 Freud rejuvenated an "old joke" by referring to an American patient as "his 'negro'" (Vol. 3, 105). Jones explains that Freud's use of this "strange appellation" dated back to 1886. At that time, Jones recalls, "the consultation hour

> was at noon, and for some time patients were referred to as 'negroes'" (Vol. 1, 151). Jones does not specify whether this practice began with Freud or the maid who escorted the patients to the consultation room. In any event, Freud assumed authorship of the joke. For when the joke leaked into the public domain and materialized also in 1886 as "a cartoon in the *Fliegende Blätter* depicting a yawning lion muttering 'Twelve o'clock and no negro,'" Freud identified with the lion and produced a new rendition of the joke by conflating it with the cartoon (Vol. 1, 151). Two years later, in [1888], according to Wilhelm Fliess, Freud shared this bit of revised jest with him by pondering "whether some negroes will turn up at the right time to still the lion's appetite" (Freud, *Complete Letters* 368). The "old joke" must have delighted Freud because, as Jones reports, Freud told variations of it to those in his inner circle for several decades. (54)

What does it mean that an Austrian Jewish analyst becomes an (African?) lion waiting to consume an (African?) American analysand? In this scene, Freud the bipedal European man has been therianthropically transformed into a quadripedal African animal. Perhaps some witching is afoot. In a stunning role-reversal, the dehumanized Freud has cannibalistic urges that the patient "Negro" wisely thwarts. Freud's bizarrely bestial and anthropophagic racial fantasy places us in yet another Africa of the mind, a scene of encounter in which the psychoanalytic cure is achieved by the placing in relation the combative narcissisms of the analyst and the analysand, the "big cat" and the "African." We are now closer to answering which landscape it is in the essay on narcissism that is populated by cats and the large beasts of prey, not to mention infantilized kings. The intricacies of ego-libido and object-libido

prove to be reassuringly vernacular when their figurative terrain is examined. The "Negro" in this demotic encounter is, in a way that perhaps half-redeems Freud's caricatural jest, a Fanonian man – like the Chavafambira of Black Anger (1947), perhaps? – chancing unnoticed upon a lesser world.

In my view, Freud's favourite joke means that the Sphinx (part-lion, part-man) is an invested composite sign in his thought. By extension, the Oedipus disguises analytic, therianthropic and world-historical relations that have not been fully thought through, much less worked through. We might term this unexplored analytic landscape "Africa" and proceed to populate its latent possibilities. Two philosophical scenes merge, then: first, Freud's narcissistic ego-image as "His Majesty King Lion" wishing to repossess its African object; second, the undead Chavafambira rattling the old lion's bones.

A provisional resolution follows. There is a basic shortcut possible in psychoanalysis. If man (African) and animal (lion) disclose an alternate version of the analytic encounter, then one direction for an environmental psychoanalysis might be to work therianthropically with African understandings of our animal selves. That is, we might fuse both philosophical scenes (Chavafambira, Freud) in the name of our planetary historical entanglements. As an African human-animal composite,[29] the Sphinx's riddle and being alert us to the key moves of a progressive self-alienating method. The fascinating impossibility of our cryptid selves,

[29] There are, of course, two sphinxes. One is the female Theban Sphinx from Sophocles and Apollodorus on which the textual Oedipus legend relies. The other is the male Egyptian Sphinx that persists, still, in the world. In the Freud Museum, both Sphinxes can be found in his study. The Theban Sphinx, a small sculpture, can be seen on a cabinet next to the front bay window. The Egyptian Sphinx can be seen in a large portrait just behind the door. Assuming a closed door during an analytic session, the Egyptian Sphinx would be invisible to Freud and in the direct line of sight of the patient on the couch, triangulating in uneven ways the analytic relation. What Freud represses (the African Sphinx), the patient sees. What Freud displaces (the Theban Sphinx), the patient cannot clearly distinguish from the couch. In Thebes, the Sphinx commits suicide, banishing itself from the analytic scene. In Egypt, the Sphinx survives and looks on. Another way of saying this is that in Africa, in psychoanalysis, no one ever truly dies.

in short, is therapeutic. The cryptid breaks down the known orders of the natural, the animal and the human. The cryptid disturbs the categories of our worlds, and with them our boundaries of self. Speaking of companion animals, Doris McIlwain highlights the therapeutic mechanism that they introduce:

> Unable to resist what psychologists call "transference," we might project our failings onto dogs – but it's unlikely they do the same in reverse. Transference is there wherever old, often unspoken patterns or templates of viewing others and getting close to others (or not) script even the newest encounters we have with other people. Before you know it you are reminding someone of someone else, while you encounter in them difficulties or impasses that in developing relationships that have been with you for decades. The hardest thing about transference is that all this repetition doesn't mean that you are more likely to see these patterns, give them a good shake and reappraise them. [. . .] With people, transference is two-way. At least with dogs, there is a built in freshness and there's no risk with them of "counter-transference." (167)

We cannot avoid transference, but the animal will refuse any neurosis brought to it because it cannot work as a placeholder for the human. The yield of the cryptid, the therianthrope, of the "more-than-human," is that they do not quite work as a placeholder for anything, let alone the animal, the human or indeed the known world. This is because the cryptid and the therianthrope are tropological beings whose appearances shift shape.

Psychoanalysis, if it is nothing else, is a serious method of self. Its key inefficiency is that the analytic scenario presumes a one-on-one encounter. The missed opportunity in psychoanalysis is that it fails to behold the Sphinx and reflect upon, act upon, what it tells us about the self. This is as true for Oedipus as it is for Freud (as it is for us). To attune to the animal-human-spirit transformations in our own moment, every moment, like Chavafambira, might form the basis for an autopsychoanalytic method. Autopsychoanalysis would require neither a therapist nor a companion animal – indeed, Niehaus, Mohlahla and Shokane inform us that in some Southern African communities, "[w]itches and familiars are shown to constitute a duality in which human and animal identities are different manifestations of a single form" (46). The efficiency of autopsychoanalysis is that it relies upon no other institution than purposeful thought and the daily practice of "co-being."[30] Co-being is a commitment to a different way of being (with) our selves. The yield of autopsychoanalysis is nothing other than the reanimation of our own matter, a habit of obligation to a renewable world. This need not be a world that presumes our own abiding presence in it. Other entities – including the mineral, the climate or even the toxic or inert – would have a stake in analytical outcomes. Their interests may not ultimately coincide with ours (but then, in "Africa" and in molecular chemistry no one ever truly dies). Turned beyond the time-frame of a life, turned beyond the insistence of the individual subject and its anthropoform regimes of need and interest, turned towards wider communities of life and death, turned towards the cryptids that we all are in our unacknowledged dailiness, autopsychoanalysis might form the basis of an environmental practice and a progressive self-undoing method. African cryptids and therianthropes, African ancestors and the unborn, African witches, spirits and familiars are not a world away, in theory or practice, from everything that we (all of us) already are. There is no logical necessity to cast our environmental predicament and its futures in this way. If vernacular

[30] This term appears in Durrant and Topper (2020).

theory is provisional, unschematic and ungeneralisable, then other modes of theory and practice must be possible and indeed necessary. Perhaps, however, they might agree that ceding human explanatory power is the primary environmentally-committed move.

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