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## Physics of Blackness

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## Notes

### Introduction

1. Peterson, *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, 187.

2. Reid-Pharr, *Once You Go Black*, 10.

3. This has not, however, prevented Michaels from continuing to write and publish on Blackness.

4. *Culture* and *ethnicity* are often used to connote “race” without acknowledging as much; these terms provide the illusion that one is speaking of a clearly defined and delineated people without having to acknowledge that such delineations can be achieved only through an essentialized—and of course ahistorical—notion of race.

5. Here the “postwar” moment should be distinguished from equally important specific postwar periods in history.

6. Young and Braziel, *Race and the Foundations of Knowledge*, 5.

7. Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 222–37.

8. Dickerson, “Colorblind.”

9. I am not sure how Dickerson would feel about an increasingly large number of African Americans having one parent who is Black as per Dickerson’s definition and another parent who is either African or “West Indian” or Central or South American. History is often used to divide, but its accurate application usually reveals far many more joined lives, experiences, and ancestries than segregated ones.

10. Dickerson also specifies that Blackness requires “West African” ancestry, but historians of Middle Passage slavery are increasingly finding evidence of the trade’s reach into Africa’s interior and East Coast, rendering her geographic border for ancestry unusable.

11. Stolberg, “Obama Has Ties to Slavery.”

12. Falk, *In Search of Time*, 129–30.

13. Greene, *Fabric of the Cosmos*, 8.

14. Newton’s concept actually allowed time to flow both forward and backward with equal ease, despite the lack of evidence that this happened in the physical world. This problem of what is called the “arrow of time” is explored more fully in chapter 2, on diasporic Blackness, and first explained in the chapter breakdown following in this introduction.

15. This is Einstein's "fault" (or at least, he felt guilty enough to try to realize the GUT for the rest of his career following the Miracle Year and the ensuing fame)—that is, trying to find some way in which one could reconcile the motions and behaviors of planets and icebergs and other "big things" with the very dissimilar motions and behaviors of "small things," like subatomic particles.

16. Diedrich, Gates, and Pedersen, *Black Imagination*, 8–9.

17. Randall, *Warped Passages*, 29.

18. I use the term "they" to denote those individuals who do not identify as either male or female.

19. These two spacetimes differ, however, where they need and meet each other: while the Middle Passage epistemology focuses on concrete locations, actions, and interpretations of a collective history united in struggle, the postwar epistemology focuses always on the changing and multidimensional ways in which individuals constitute Blackness in any given moment.

20. Bakhtin's distinctly un-Marxist-Leninist ideas required him to be discreet about his publications, creating a situation in which scholars are unsure whether Voloshinov and Bakhtin are at times the same author.

21. Carretta, *Equiano, the African*.

22. Frank, "Cracking the Quantum Safe."

23. See my discussion of Thomas Jefferson and Blackness in *Becoming Black*. Jefferson famously argues that Blackness is a reducible physical quality, a "veil" that has been placed on the face so that whites may recognize Black inferiority despite its human shape (under the section labeled "Property" in *Notes on the State of Virginia*).

24. I distinguish between Henry's capitalization of all three words ("Middle Passage Epistemology") and my own to at least underscore that Henry's concept comes before my own and is also embraced as a useful means of interpellation for all U.S. Blacks, in spite of its apparent problems.

## 1. The Middle Passage Epistemology

1. Ouellette, *Black Bodies and Quantum Cats*, 37–39.

2. Falk, *In Search of Time*, 129.

3. *Ibid.*, 129–30.

4. Challenges to Newton's concept of linear spacetime can be found in Einstein's assertion—later proved correct through experiments—that time both speeds up and slows down. In other words, time does not always flow uniformly forward. As chapter 3 will consider, "spacetime" might also move backward (even if such occurrences are rare and assumed to occur only at the subatomic level).

5. Falk, *In Search of Time*, 134.

6. Pinkard, "Speculative Naturphilosophie," 26.

7. See Melber, “How to Come to Terms with the Past”; and English, “Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857.”

8. See Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*.

9. Greene, *Fabric of the Cosmos*, 190.

10. *Ibid.*, 191.

11. *Ibid.*, 189.

12. *Ibid.*, 209.

13. Both Middle Passage histories of the West and those that seek to elide this ugly history often fail to mention that slavery has unfortunately always been (and remains so today) a global practice and hardly limited to the exclusive exploitation of Black bodies. Nell Irwin Painter’s *The History of White People* reminds us of this sobering fact, begging the question of how appropriate, if not inaccurate, it is to always align Blackness with slavery.

14. Henry, “There’s Saltwater in Our Blood,” 334.

15. *Ibid.*, 332.

16. However, the potential of reading *Souls* through Epiphenomenal time is not pursued, and the citing from Gilroy of “striving” returns us to one (or more) linear progress narratives—to the same conundrum about how to understand the relationship between Black progress and the obstacle of racism.

17. Henry, “There’s Saltwater in Our Blood,” 338–39.

18. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 9.

19. Carby, *Race Men*, 10.

20. Whether or not these words were first composed by a white suffragette or the actually rather eloquent Truth herself, the message is the same.

21. Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 3–4.

22. *Ibid.*, 68.

23. *Ibid.*, 256.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 258.

26. Progress narratives that are deployed in mainstream literary studies at the high school and college levels also adopt this strategy: the racism of *Huckleberry Finn* is denied because, it is argued, Twain intended it to be an antiracist tale, so it must be one (or it “was” for “its time”). The racism here is not the use of *nigger* but the uneven description of Jim, whereby he lurches from wise sage to unbelievable idiot (despite a life enslaved, he must be told by Huck to lie down in the boat as they cross into a slave state) to sadistic figure of fun (his imprisonment and pending punishment for escaping are used by Twain to lampoon the romantic prison narrative in Dumas’s *The Count of Monte Cristo*). Because Twain is canonical and, I would add, a formidable novelist, it is then reasoned that as part of a progressive tradition of literature—in which writers supposedly experiment with increasingly complex, diverse, and nuanced styles—he cannot symbolize a step back, say, from

Alexander Hamilton's defense of Black equality. See Hamilton's letter to John Jay dated March 14, 1779, in which he discusses the possibility of recruiting Blacks for the Revolutionary Army, writing, "The contempt we have been taught to entertain for the blacks, makes us fancy many things that are founded neither in reason nor experience." See <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch15s24.html>.

27. Gikandi, "Race and Cosmopolitanism"; Barnes, "Black Atlantic—Black America"; Chrisman, "Rethinking Black Atlanticism."

28. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 4.

29. Adesanmi, "Nous les Colonisés."

30. Woubshet, "Tizita."

31. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 4.

32. *Ibid.*, 7.

33. See Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*; Collins, "It's All in the Family"; and Young, "Logic of Masculinist Protection."

34. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 6.

35. These dimensional limits of the Middle Passage epistemology have been noticed before, perhaps most tellingly by famed anthropologist and founder of the renowned Atlantic Program at Johns Hopkins University, Sidney Mintz, himself a scholar on the Caribbean and South American Diasporas. I engage with and further elaborate on Mintz's arguments in chapter 4.

36. See Wright, *Becoming Black*; Zamir, *Dark Voices*; and English, *Each Hour Redeem* for analyses that link Du Bois and Hegel, as well as Gates, *Figures in Black*; and Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*.

37. Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 4.

38. Dickerson, "Colorblind."

39. Walters, "Barack Obama and the Politics of Blackness," 8–9. It also underscores the degree to which an uncritical engagement with history—that is, failing to read that history as what one is constructing in the "now"—can sabotage an argument. Historians such as Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, and Evans, "Economies of the American Negro," remind us that there were times when family-based plantation slavery employed fewer slaves than large-scale industries and corporations.

40. Walters, "Barack Obama and the Politics of Blackness," 25.

41. Dickerson, "Colorblind," 8–9.

42. See Simons, "Brazil's Blacks Feel Bias 100 Years after Slavery." By contrast, U.S. Blacks make up about 13 percent of the U.S. population, or just over 40 million people. Yet these statistics do not make clear whether Blacks born outside the United States are included or whether the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 estimate of 313 million for the total U.S. population also speaks to the presence of undocumented workers and those who overstay their visas. See United States Census

Bureau, “State & County QuickFacts,” <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>.

43. By underscoring the possibility of “Africanizing America,” Du Bois grants agency, but primarily through explicit examples of Black men. *Signifying* takes up the cause of Black female agency but also curtails it by turning deaf ears to sexist practices that violently read Black female bodies as objects. *Black Atlantic* underscores agency for all Blacks but does not pursue this possibility through texts that explicitly manifest female and or queer agency.

44. Biracial identity is another concept that epistemologies constructed through a linear progress narrative cannot incorporate. See my reading of Johnson, *Pym*, at the end of chapter 2.

45. Rimer and Arenson, “Top Colleges Take More Blacks, but Which Ones?”

46. Dickerson’s readership seems equally bifurcated—some praising her courage in bringing uncomfortable truths to light, others arguing that her column is simply clever satire and therefore the humorless accusations and pained questions are unwarranted.

47. The latter is qualified as belonging to this second group “to a lesser extent.”

48. All things come full circle. See English, *Unnatural Selections*, a fascinating study of the history of eugenics among early twentieth-century white and Black American activists, writers, and journalists—including W. E. B. Du Bois.

49. Of course, many “white” Americans proudly claim nonwhite ancestries somewhere on their family trees. Yet while American Indian ancestry is a favorite, Black or African ancestry is rarely mentioned.

50. Ironically, Gates himself has asserted this finding based on the genetic research he is conducting. See Hicks, “It’s Rare.”

51. While hardly true of every community and individual, many African Americans like to speak of a grandparent, usually a grandmother, who was indisputably of “pure African descent.” This is a point of pride, for the purity automatically denotes successful resistance to white slave masters’ desires. Yet even here we run into trouble, as “pure African” is an oxymoron given the broad and rather distinct varieties of nations and ancestries that inhabit a continent: to be of combined Ibo, Ife, and Ashanti blood is hardly “pure,” and the chances that that grandmother’s ancestors were able to choose mates who shared the exact same point of origin is highly unlikely. At the very least, for the thousands who claim one “pure” ancestor, the majority of them are likely to be disappointed should they submit to a DNA test.

52. In *Becoming Black* I argue along similar lines—that is, that “Blackness” as a concept is a relatively recent white European invention that was then claimed by the people who had been labeled as such and since then has enjoyed a fascinating if complex history of discourse and counterdiscourse. Yet I would distinguish my definition from that of Gates and Guinier, above all else because I reject any one

homogeneous definition of “Blackness,” whereas they propose a scholarly rigidity with a similar nod toward historiography.

53. I am not sure what to make of the designation “*children* of biracial couples,” as this is an exceptionally small category—significantly smaller than that of children of *interracial* couples—which is perhaps what was meant, given the tendency of many white Americans to confuse the two terms and use them interchangeably. In any event, if we follow the exact category delineated, we are still speaking of people who, while once classified as “quadroons,” would now be called “biracial” regardless of their own affiliation or self-defining.

54. I drive in Chicago.

## 2. The Problem of Return in the African Diaspora

1. Carroll, *From Eternity to Here*, 29–30.

2. Many popular narratives on time travel do in fact play with this notion that time travel makes someone old younger, but the human time traveler either is encased in a machine that withstands the effects of reverse-entropy or in some other manner withstands that irresistible force of our molecules reacting in reverse (which might be so shocking we wouldn’t want to see it recreated—to think of reverse digestion and eating, reverse growing, “dispensing” back into the womb, and Lord knows what else).

3. The impact of Spillers’s essay is too vast to cogently notate, but for the latest scholarship (all award-winning), see Moten, *In the Break*; Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*; and Young, *Embodying the Black Experience*.

4. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 65.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.* Here, being “at the podium” suggests a speech to be given and Spillers’s own status as a famous academic who travels the world to give talks.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 65.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Tellingly, the female equivalent has already been co-opted to denote marriage.

12. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 66.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

15. Spillers, “‘Watcha Gonna Do?’” 304.

16. Indeed, most sexual iterations of African cultures stress a vibrant heteropatriarchal culture, creating a utopian or near-utopian notion of harmonious communal living that suspiciously resembles the prelapsarian era narrated in the Bible, the Torah, and the Qu’ran.

17. For example, while African American history buffs will be familiar with the “Buffalo Soldiers”—African Americans who served in the nineteenth-century U.S. cavalry—less known is their role in the attempted genocide of American Indian tribes. This means that a history book may feature the first dimensions of these soldiers but have less to say about the second, perhaps massaging it into a generic statement about Custer’s Last Stand.

18. See chapter 1 for a discussion of how origins must dominate all events located on a linear progress narrative.

19. This assumption seems further borne out by the fact that each “yanking” back appears occasioned by Rufus’s emergency needs and that Dana always manifests around his (and her) family’s plantation.

20. Dubey, “Speculative Fictions of Slavery,” 780.

21. *Ibid.*, 786–87.

22. *Ibid.*, 802.

23. Andrade, “Nigger of the Narcissist,” 223.

24. Condé, *Heremakhonon*, 3–4.

25. In Pfaff, *Conversations with Maryse Condé*, Condé explains that she chose the title *Heremakhonon*—which means “wait for happiness” in Malinke but can also be found in Mali—because it represented a transnational context. Most important, “the name merely symbolized for me all the illusions fostered by the newly independent African nations” (39).

26. Condé, *Heremakhonon*, 166–67.

27. Perhaps Guinea, perhaps Mali, but most likely an “everywhere” and “nowhere.”

28. See Harris, *Native Stranger*; Wright, *Black Power*; and Campbell, *Middle Passages*.

29. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 3.

30. In childhood studies, children are also often interpellated as “whole” human beings rather than as incomplete beings in the making—the latter being the logical conclusion of interpellating the human life cycle through a linear progress narrative (in spite of all the experiences to the contrary). Interpellating children through Epiphenomenal time leads to the former manifestation, as shown in the reading of Mavis and Samaya in chapter 1—in their “now,” children are whole, not incomplete, and as multidimensional as adults.

31. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 3–4.

32. *Ibid.*, 234.

33. See Peters, *Eldorado of the Ancients*.

34. See Haggard, *King Solomon’s Mines*.

35. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 69.

36. Johnson, *Pym*, 159.

37. *Ibid.*, 83–84.

38. Here I should note that the “prohibition” on naming non-Black ancestries (in a nonderogatory way) is almost wholly specific to contemporary African Americans who trace their lineage through slavery on U.S. shores. Black collectives in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America do not generally view non-Black ancestries as a source of shame that, if named, must also be rejected in the same breath.

39. Johnson, *Pym*, 135.

40. Perhaps adding to the irony is the fact that the origin of the term *mulatto* is from “mule” because, like the offspring of a horse and a donkey, human beings with one Black and one white parent were often believed to be barren. The charge of being barren was a common one in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourses on race, and white European philosophers such as G. W. F. Hegel had no compunction about making this charge against white American men as well: their virility, he claimed, having been sapped by the intense climate. See Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze’s *Race and the Enlightenment* and James W. Caesar’s *Reconstructing America* for each respective claim.

41. All except Jaynes’s best friend, Garth, who escapes initial capture and then barbers to keep his freedom by giving the Tekelians his remaining supply of beloved Little Debbie snack cakes.

42. Johnson, *Pym*, 322.

43. In an interview with Charles H. Rowell, commenting on her inspiration for writing her novel *Kindred*, Butler notes, “I wanted to take a character, when I did *Kindred*, back in time to some of the things that our ancestors had to go through, and see if that character survived so very well with the knowledge of the present in her head” (Rowell, “An Interview with Octavia E. Butler,” 51).

44. Rudolph Raspe’s tale of Rabelaisian proportions is largely forgotten except through these two markers: the “trilemma” story and of course the controversial diagnosis of “Münchhausen’s syndrome by proxy,” in which (usually) mothers harm their children in order to receive (perhaps intensely caring and concerned) attention for themselves from medical professionals (often assumed to be male, thus confusing what might be a desire for attention with a romantic-sexual craving for masculine authority figures).

45. Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, 120–21.

46. Johnson, *Pym*, 136.

47. Campbell, *Talking at the Gates*, 7.

48. This suggests that they also read his complaint of assault as a case of confusion between the literal and the figurative.

### 3. Quantum Baldwin and the Multidimensionality of Blackness

1. Kaplan and Schwarz, *James Baldwin*, 1.

2. Ibid., 3.
3. Randall, *Warped Passages*, 1–2.
4. Ibid., 13.
5. Ibid., 14–15.

6. In their books on post-Blackness, journalists Ytasha Womack and Touré do not seek to erase, deny, or minimize the importance of the Middle Passage epistemology but instead stress how generational, economic, sexual, gender, and political differences produce many distinct Black discourses that do not cohere with “traditional” definitions of Blackness. Both books, I would argue, denote “traditional” views of Blackness in the United States through the Middle Passage Epistemology. See Womack, *Post Black*; and Touré, *Who’s Afraid of Post Blackness?*

7. Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, 22–23.
8. Ibid., 23.
9. Randall, *Warped Passages*, 134–35.
10. Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, 24–25.
11. Ibid., 27.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 97–98.
14. Ibid., 118.
15. Ibid., 120.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 120–21.
18. Ibid., 121.
19. Ibid., 122–23.

20. “*Je vais voir Paris, moi aussi, avec mes yeux. Désormais, je serai un peu comme tout le monde, je porterai une auréole, un parfum, l’auréole et le parfum de Paris. Je vais toucher les murs, les arbres, croiser les hommes.*” Dadié, *Un Nègre à Paris*, 7.

21. “*Je suis le seul Nègre parmi tant de voyageurs blancs. Je prends place près d’un hublot. Personne ne veut s’asseoir près de moi.*” Ibid., 21.

22. “*Je regarde, partout de Blancs; des employés blancs. Nulle part une tête de Nègre. C’est bien un pays de Blancs.*” Ibid., 25.

23. Two Napoleon-era politicians who, it is believed, plotted to depose Napoleon but were foiled.

24. “*Et il a pour maîtres Talleyrand et Fouché. A ne rien comprendre ou si je le comprendre bien, ce qui lui importe c’est de bâtir sa fortune sur le dos du temps. Et pour ce faire il court, devance le temps qu’il attend assis à la terrasse d’un café à boire à petits coup à la manière des oiseaux, un demi de bière. Sois tranquille, le temps ne le trouvera pas là, il sera déjà en route décidé à conserver l’avance gagnée à ne pas vivre.*” Dadié, *Un Nègre à Paris*, 60.

25. “*Je vais faire rire les nombreux tourists hissés sur la Tour Eiffel ou l’Arc de Triomphe, ces opulents clients des riches hotels. . . . Et qu’est-ce que j’emporterai moi?*”

*Le métro. Il faut vraiment être Nègre de pure souche pour n'admirer à Paris que le métro.*" Ibid., 83.

26. "Nous nous sourions constamment. Même couleur dans ce pays de Blancs et pas moyens de se lier. Si la couleur nous rapproche, tout nous sépare. Un fossé que les multiples sourires n'ont pu combler. Qu'en penses-tu?" Ibid., 196.

27. I am harking back to 1950s Burma Shave ads in which the "jingle" was broken up into a series of successive signs posted along the highway—one read the message bit by bit while driving forward.

28. Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy*, 3–5.

29. Ibid., 8.

30. Ibid., 9.

31. Adolf Hitler, of course, was born and raised in Austria but, as German-speaking, can be understood as Germanic.

32. Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy*, 64.

33. Ibid., 49.

34. Ibid., 51.

35. Ibid., 67.

36. Ibid., 66–67.

37. Ibid., 130.

38. Ibid., 131.

39. "Einfach. Mit einer Tafel Schokolade kriegte man die schönste Frau Italiens" (translated in text, by the interviewee, Andrade); "In einer kleinre Stadt in Norditalien schrubbten die Bewohner die Haut des Schwarzen Astrogildo Sacramento, um zu sehen, ob die Farbe abging" (In a small town in north Italy the inhabitants rubbed at the skin of one of the Blacks, Astrogildo Sacramento, to see if the color rubbed off). Morgenrath and Rössel, *Unsere Opfer*, 166.

40. Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, 178.

41. Ibid., 121–22.

42. Ibid., 22.

43. Murphy, "Subversive Anti-Stalinism," 1038–39.

44. Ibid., 1040.

45. Not to be confused with Professor James Miller of George Washington University, a prominent scholar of African American literatures.

46. Miller, "What Does It Mean to Be an American?"

47. Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name*, 5.

48. "Postwar" because Aidoo names Marija's husband "Big Adolf" and her son "Little Adolf" and manifests the former as a looming, oppressive presence.

49. Yes, I am aware of the unfortunate connection between the names of these two tropes. Perhaps it is a testament to my literary devotion that I did not notice the subtext of the "bush" and "Tower-phallus" tropes until almost the final round of edits.

#### 4. Axes of Asymmetry

1. See Van Sertima, *African Presence in Early Europe*; Goodwin, *Africa in Europe, Volume One*; Lawrance, “Black Africans in Renaissance Spanish Literature”; and Brackett, “Race and Rulership.”

2. Alpers, “African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean.”

3. Pybus, *Black Founders*.

4. Mintz and Reed, “The Legacy of the Atlantic Program.”

5. Interestingly, Mintz is framing this problem very much along the lines of Bayes’s Theorem: The conditions that produced the intellectual parameters of the Atlantic Program have changed, rendering those parameters now less accurate because they have not been “updated.”

6. Massey, “Politics and Space/Time,” 154–56.

7. Massey, *For Space*, 77. “The process of invention seems itself to be constrained by deconstruction’s horizontality” (54).

8. *Ibid.*, 118.

9. See chapters 1 and 2 on the invention of Blackness in the West in Wright, *Becoming Black*, 27–110.

10. Afrofuturism is an interesting case—is it a linear progress narrative? I think this depends on how future Blackness is imagined by each specific discourse. Sun Ra intersects his Afrofuturist visions with aspects of Afrocentrism and Pan-Africanism and imagines the future as potentially progressive, so many of his interpellations of Blackness may cohere with a linear progress narrative. Janelle Monae, by contrast, who is also identified as an Afrofuturist artist, often uses visuals (as in “Tightrope”) that intersect various eras, real and imagined, with one another through costume, imagery, and sometimes music. There are at least aspects of epiphenomenalism present at these intersections, but it might also be the dominant frame of interpellation in the video.

11. Pybus, “World Is All of One Piece,” 181.

12. *Ibid.*

13. My thanks to Paul Joseph (Pablo) López Oro for this information.

14. This is also true for the postwar era, not the least because it does not cohere with the thematic conclusions many linear progress narratives attach to the end of the war. If World War II was a victory of democracy over fascism, why did one of the Allied powers (Russia) become an enemy of the rest? And why did two and one-half (given the division of Germany into East and West) of the Axis powers then become trading partners and political collaborators with their opponents? Many films and other creative treatments of the immediate postwar era highlight this moral ambivalence, so multiple meanings of the era, or multidimensions, are easily recognized and interpellated, sometimes even in dominant texts.

15. The “Windrush” narrative is named after the *Empire Windrush*, the ship that transported the “first” postwar Black Caribbean “immigrants” to England on June 22, 1948. See Mike and Trevor Phillips’s BBC documentary and book of oral histories, *Windrush*, for the most common interpellation of the “Windrush” generations. See also Barnor Hesse’s essay “Diasporicity” in his edited volume, *Un/settled Multiculturalism*.

16. Similarly, Hans-Jürgen Massaquoi’s autobiography, translated as a single volume in English as *Destined to Witness*, interpellates Blackness through a Middle Passage epistemology. Despite his Cameroonian and German parentage, Massaquoi explains that he was able to interpellate his Blackness (especially with an absent father) only after hearing about Joe Louis and Jesse Owens on the radio. Using these models, Massaquoi finds a way to survive living in Hitler’s Germany, and after rejecting a life in Cameroon following the Allied victory, he emigrates to the United States and into its established Black collective. As a result, a life that intersects with so many experiences and peoples restricts these encounters to those grounded in a purely heteropatriarchal logic: men are encountered as either enemies to be vanquished or allies; women are either attractive sexual objects and models of demure femininity or else dear old mother. Even narratives that we might hope to be horizontal and multidimensional then, emanating as they do from a single and very agential individual, can interpellate a relatively unique life uncritically through dominant hierarchical structures. Massaquoi hates the Nazis and their fascism and loves the United States and its freedom-fighting African American men—producing a Black German narrative that sits quite comfortably next to both Black and white (U.S.) progress narratives that use the Second World War.

17. Even traditional narratives must switch between urban capitals and various battlefields, calling attention to such distortion by explaining again and again that certain events, although necessarily narrated sequentially, were in fact happening simultaneously.

18. One could read Smith’s first novel as interpellating Blackness through *U.S. versions* of Afropessimism, but this is a distinction lacking meaningful difference. While it eschews the Middle Passage Epistemology’s progress narrative (Blacks are destined to always be oppressed), it needs this linear progress narrative to argue *against* progress. While claiming to be static, U.S. versions of Afropessimism nonetheless doggedly track each moment of the Middle Passage Epistemology to state yet again that no progress has been made.

19. My thanks to Myrtie Williams for this contribution.

20. Before Einstein, physicists followed the shared assumption that space and time were distinct categories. In the instance cited here, I use parentheses to indicate that while in the ideal this is assumed to be a problem of time, in the material it is a problem of spacetime.

21. Morgenrath and Rössel, *Unsere Opfer*, 9. My translation.

22. In the West, we are most often taught that it was Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939—after a series of broken promises and creatively named invasions of Austria and Czechoslovakia—that precipitated the outbreak of hostilities. Yet, the previous postcolonial critique argues that, if this war was only about fighting the forces of fascism, it is fair to ask why Britain and France did not declare war when Hitler began his persecution of German Jews or when Hitler's initial inspiration for Nazism, Mussolini's homegrown and rather amorphous fascism, first began beating its chest. In fact, many historians who have worked on Mussolini's 1935–36 invasion of Ethiopia, such as Zabecki (*World War Two in Europe*, 1476) and Metaferia (*Ethiopia and the United States*, 35), have argued (respectively) that “the Italian invasion of Ethiopia . . . in 1935 and military actions in 1936 were part of the chain of events that preceded the European nations' entry into World War II” and that “the Italian attack heralded the demise of the League of Nations and the beginning of World War II.”

23. Like many others, I dislike the term *Third World* because it derives from an argument in which capitalist, majority-white democracies in the West are the “First World” and Communist nations are the “Second”—an irrational ordering notable only for its blatantly superficial ideology.

24. Morgenrath and Rössel, *Unsere Opfer*, 9.

25. Eschenberg, “Morts Pour La France,” 363.

26. *Ibid.*, 365.

27. I have not yet been able to find any histories of German conscription in Africa, which would have taken place during Rommel's invasion because Germany lost its few colonies in the Treaty of Versailles (although more than 100,000 German citizens remained—see Henderson, *Studies in German Colonial History*, 34). Black Germans who served in the army were few and far between, and the bulk of the Black civilian population lived in hiding and near starvation, as most were deprived of ration cards and other means of sanctioned subsistence. These histories, then, are largely found in autobiographical narratives given the intensely individual routes, some of which ended up in the death camps while others emerged to tell their tale—one of whom eventually immigrated to the United States to become editor-in-chief of *Ebony* magazine, as we learn in Massaquoi's autobiography. Likewise, Blacks from South America are also in short supply, mostly available through individual narratives of soldiers and civilian activists.

28. Mwangi, *Africa Writes Back to Self*, 1.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, 1–2.

31. *Ibid.*, 3–4.

32. Bousquet and Douglas, *West Indian Women at War*, 1–2.

33. As noted earlier, some scholars believe that World War II should be marked as having begun in 1936, the year of the Italian fascists' invasion of Ethiopia, rather than 1939, the year of the Nazis' invasion of Poland.

34. As I show later in the chapter, similar logic can be applied to finding the histories of East African women, in this case in Kenya.

35. It is possible that future research will bear out military records of Black African women who served or aided the colonial militaries (or perhaps resisted the forced conscription of their male loved ones). At the moment I do not know of the colonial authorities using anyone other than Black African men as soldiers and support staff (i.e., staffing kitchens, performing clean up, etc.) in the war effort.

36. Articles such as Bujra's, which breaks with conservative readings and categorization of women, often dispensed with the pre/post/colonial altogether and used temporally vague markers, albeit often paired with spatially specific sites, such as "early Nairobi."

37. Bujra, "Women 'Entrepreneurs' of Early Nairobi," 214–15.

38. See Abbott, "Full-Time Farmers and Week-End Wives"; Urdang, "Fighting Two Colonialisms"; and Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*.

39. Which Bujra describes as a low-profit, morally marginalized auxiliary activity that supplemented (usually retired) prostitutes' incomes.

40. Bujra, "Women 'Entrepreneurs' of Early Nairobi," 227.

41. My deepest thanks to Professor James Force (and my colleague Sanford "Sandy" Goldberg for suggesting I contact him) for guiding me to his own work and to Snobelen's, which helped me to resolve a host of confusions I encountered during my solo attempts to answer this question.

42. Snobelen, "Isaac Newton, Heretic," 1.

43. While there are many variations, Trinitarianism holds that the Holy Trinity of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are epiphenomenal in their manifestation—that is, they occur not in sequence but simultaneously.

44. John Maynard Keynes, in "Newton, the Man," theorizes that Newton must have been a "Judaic monotheist of the school of Maimonides."

45. McGrayne, *Theory That Would Not Die*, ix.