Colour Intensities: Logics of Race and Resistance in Jamaica

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Abstract: *This article evaluates the gains but also the losses of the set-theoretical ontology Badiou develops in* Being and Event*, in order to stress the importance of the shift to a concern with appearance and difference in* Logics of Worlds*. It is argued that this shift suggests a possible rapprochement between Badiou's philosophy of the event on the one hand and postcolonial critical race theory on the other. This is explored through an evental reading of the so-called 'Morant Bay Revolt' that took place in Jamaica in 1865. The article closes by exploring some of the overlaps between Badiou's development of an 'objective phenomenology' in* Logics of Worlds, *and Frantz Fanon's elaboration of a phenomenology of race in* Black Skin, White Masks*.*

I will take the opportunity afforded by this special issue to develop an argument I began in *Badiou in Jamaica: The Politics of Conflict* (Wright: 2013). There, I referred to the rich and complex history of anti-colonial resistance on the Caribbean island of Jamaica, in order to direct certain critical questions at the philosophical framework constructed by Badiou in *Being and Event* (2005). The way that work was being read at the time, at least in Anglophone academia, implied some potential limitations to its political purchase:

1) Understood as an absolute or Grace-like singularity, the event seemed to militate against any critical analysis of the hierarchies of power, inequality and injustice prior to its irruption.
2) The related insistence on the a-(or indeed *anti*-)historical status of the event seemed to negate 'historicity' in the Marxist sense of the movement of dialectical change *already* underway in a given conjuncture.
3) If conceived too starkly, Badiou's version of the Lacanian separation between 'individual' and 'subject' seemed to downplay the importance of day-to-day resistance and its possible relation to the emergence of a truth.
4) Badiou's faith in the faithful subject's ability to break with its ontological determination by the 'state of a situation' seemed in danger of tipping over into voluntarism.
5) Finally, Badiou's relegation of 'culture' to a mere synonym for the given, the banal or the quotidian, seemed to preclude any notion of a progressive *cultural* politics.

In what follows, I want to stress the extent to which the "objective phenomenology" (Badiou: 2009, p. 38) developed in *Logics of Worlds* addresses many of these tensions, which are in fact the very ones driving, rather than contradicting, Badiou's philosophical project. Further, I want to argue that *Logics of Worlds* opens up, in a way that its predecessor does not, a possible rapprochement with a field otherwise totally at odds with Badiou's work: postcolonial theory and, as part of that, critical race theory.

The value of exploring what Badiou can offer to postcolonial theory stems not from some perceived need to defend a discipline whose accommodation by the academy, as Gayatri Spivak has argued (1999), is hardly without paradoxes or drawbacks. Rather, it stems from their shared commitment to a politics of radical transformation and their common 'conditioning' by forms of subjectivity able to force such a politics. With the postcolonial theorist and historian Robert Young (2001), I consider postcolonial theory - when not mired in a problematic 'culturalism' Badiou in fact helps us to be critical of - to be a living inheritance of anti-colonial activism that can and should have contemporary relevance. As postcolonial critical race theory shows, the 'worlding' of today's globalised 'world' involves a viciously spatialised and racialised stratification, whether in the outsourcing of industrial and sweatshop labour, or in patterns of criminal incarceration or of mental

health problems (Brown: 2003). Like modern roads built over ancient trade routes, this racialised stratification follows the contours left by European colonialism within a form of globalisation that might justifiably be termed neo-colonial, albeit with due attention to the differences (Rao: 2000). A philosophy that claimed to be for militants (Badiou: 2015) yet was unable to engage with this contemporary reality would surely fail to live up to its ambition to 'compossibilise' political as well as other kinds of truths? This is the crux of the matter I wish to explore here: how can the power of philosophical abstraction, re-modelled on the rigour of set-theoretical mathematics in *Being and Event*, be put to work in the always particular, always historically conditioned, and always culturally encoded (postcolonial) world? I believe *Logics of Worlds* has much better answers to these questions than *Being and Event*.

After outlining the importance of the shift from one to the other then, I would like to return to the Jamaican example in order to explore the value of Badiou's ontology *and* his logic for the development of a theorisation of colonialism, race and resistance, which may yet be of use to contemporary anti-capitalist struggles. I will then close with some brief reflections on some surprising points of contact between Badiou's elaboration of an 'objective phenomenology' in *Logics of Worlds* on the one hand, and Frantz Fanon's use of a more traditional phenomenology in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986) on the other. It is my modest hope that by the end of this discussion the notion of a 'Badiouian critical race theory' might sound less like an out and out oxymoron.

From Ontological Deadlocks to the Appearance of Difference

There can be little doubt that *Being and Event* is a profound intervention into the history of Western philosophy. The grandiosity of its title, self-consciously aligning it with Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Heidegger: 1998) and Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre: 2006), is actually fully justified. More rigorously than any other thinker before him, Badiou takes seriously the ancient Greek ontological problematic - at the core of the constitutive tension between philosophy and sophism (see Cassin: 2001) - of Being as Oneness or unity. But Badiou audaciously interprets the One of Being as the result of a formal process, a counting operation, a 'one-ing' that can be newly understood in the wake of mathematical developments in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. Thus, Georg Cantor's invention of set-theory and its subsequent formalisation by Zermelo-Fraenkel becomes an immensely powerful conceptual toolkit for abstracting the axiomatic co-ordinates of any set. Or rather, of what Badiou chooses to call a *situation*. Everything at stake in *Being and Event* is arguably crystallised in this barely acknowledged rhetorical move from set to situation. For Badiou's wager (one of his favourite Pascalian terms of course) is that the completely abstract, axiomatic and resolutely empty attributes of a mathematically conceived set can be transposed, intact, to a 'situation' in the social, political, cultural and ultimately phenomenologically lived and experienced sense. So if mathematical sets involve generative axioms, such as those governing the universal inclusion of a void multiple (axiom of foundation), or the belonging of the elements of subset to sets (axiom of extension), then the same can be said of what makes any situation into *a* situation distinct from others, whether that be a group of paintings, a political rally, a football team, or a galaxy.

There are enormous gains from this radical move. Firstly, set-theoretical ontology can literally be applied to anything that 'is', as long as what 'is' is accepted as the result of a counting operation that turns a multiple into an element that belongs to a set or situation. Precisely because set-theory brackets out particularising predicates, the scope of its potential relevance is unlimited. Secondly, with set-theory something positive can still be said of the nature of Being-qua-being 'outside' of or 'before' this counting operation (scare quotes to indicate that these are necessarily metaphorical notions), namely, that Being-qua-being is 'pure inconsistent multiplicity' (Badiou: 2005, p.28). This position helps Badiou to avoid the pitfalls of extreme idealism or indeed postmodern

relativism. Yet, thirdly, such an ontological claim is but a negative inference from the fact that our only access to this pure multiplicity is via consistent multiples counted within situations. This novel take on Heidegger's ontico-ontological difference manages to avoid both essentialist positions and the residually Cartesian traps of *Dasein*. Fourthly however - and this is much more important for Badiou's overarching political project it seems to me - the transition between set and situation ensures two things: that situations must have 'states' (another carefully chosen term which puts Cantor into unlikely dialogue with Lenin) the role of which is to gather into an overarching One all the ones that belong to a situation; but also that this 'state' can never succeed in making belonging and inclusion coincide fully enough to account entirely for the totality of the situation it supposedly 'governs'. The necessary inclusion of a void-multiple, for example, means that the state of a situation must actively dis-count a kind of extimate 'real' in the Lacanian sense, one that threatens its imaginary coherence yet cannot *not* be included. For this reason, there will always be elements on the 'edge of the void' (Badiou: 2005, p.175). In other words, the set-theoretical ontology elaborated in the first half of *Being and Event* ensures that radical change may be rare, unforeseeable and fragile, but it *is* always formally possible. This is what paves the way for the concept of the event developed in the second half.

However, it may also be here that the greatest philosophical gains tip over into certain political losses. For to *be* an event, an event must also not be one, or rather, it must not be One: it cannot count for the reigning state of the situation. It must be utterly unpredictable, the preserve of no particular group, including sociological class, and have no history. Only if faithful subjects gather around its name can the event *force* a recount, allowing it to exist in what will necessarily be a new situation. To be sure, there is something very appealing, some would say (neo)Romantic (Osborne: 2007), about this insistence on the possibility of radical novelty in an era depressingly dominated by the neoliberal consensus, a situation which Badiou will later capture very well with the concept of 'atonic worlds' devoid of points (Badiou: 2009, p.420). Yet it is perhaps here that one might hint at a kind of postcolonial critique – or at least contextualisation – of Badiou's philosophy. Is not Badiou's central concept of the event and the universal *very* European, and moreover very French? He clearly comes out of a Republican intellectual tradition that tends to take the French Revolution as universal exemplar of the universal itself, notwithstanding his efforts to articulate a longer history, from Spartacus's slave revolt to Münster's peasant war, and to step outside the European frame of reference through his close engagement with the Chinese Cultural Revolution (although as I have argued elsewhere, Badiou's Maoism is unsurprisingly very French as well – Wright: 2015).

Nevertheless, it does not follow that one could undertake a simplistic critique of the 'blindspots' caused by Badiou's unacknowledged Eurocentrism, in that mechanistic gesture characteristic of the lazier parts of poststructuralist postcolonial theory. A far from lazy version of this approach can be found in Susan Buck-Morss' important critique of Hegel's omission of Haiti from his philosophical post-mortem on the French Revolution (Buck-Morss: 2009). And yet in Badiou's very particular case, it is precisely his recourse to set-theory that has profound consequences for that Eurocentric conception of the universal itself, but without simply destroying it in favour of relativism, localism or Wittgensteinian language games. Taking his cue from Bertrand Russell's well-known critique of Frege, but also drawing on Lacan's related assertion that 'there is no other of the Other', Badiou demonstrates the incoherence of any universal proclaiming itself to be the 'set of all sets', the 'meta-set' capable of containing all others, with major theological, philosophical but also political consequences. And yet it is simultaneously set-theory that also grounds Badiou's faith *in* the universal, understood now as a generic logic on which a truly egalitarian politics can be built. In this sense it as if, on the issue of the universal at least, Badiou can have his French Revolutionary cake *and* eat it. And yet there are both gains and losses: because the set-theoretical universal can only be universal for a particular situation, never for all situations, it is

always entangled in the sedimented history, culture and phenomenological complexity that makes a situation *that* situation.

Toussaint L'Ouverture's appropriation of the metropolitan revolutionary discourse inflaming Parisians in the 1790s was clearly vital to the astonishing success of the first ever Black Revolution (Aristide: 2008 and James: 2001). Yet the persuasiveness of his discourse also had much to do with the tradition of slave resistance evident in the rich history of revolts and rebellions in Haiti and across the Caribbean: such was the existing terrain that gave his egalitarian words *traction* there. The extension of a generic logic into the Haitian situation obviously involved passing *through* the specific colour-coded relations of domination, subordination and marginalisation constitutive of Saint Domingue as it was then called. Notwithstanding the gains already acknowledged then, it is not at all clear that important things are not lost in the translation of this lived complexity into the language of sets, subset and their elements: race in particular does not seem well served by this terminology, and the same could be said of those other mainstays of cultural studies such a sex, gender and class. The very power of abstraction and formalisation at the centre of *Being and Event* threatens to flatten out or render irrelevant the granular particularities of, dare we say it, 'real' situations that give the universal its site-specific form. Does not the example of Saint Domingue already indicate that race is not so much a matter of Being, as of Being-there? Hence the importance of the developments in *Logics of Worlds*.

Even though *Being and Event* offered a kind of mathematical guarantee for the possibility of change, the affirmation of an 'excrescent multiple' beyond the state's count remained in some sense flat, a matter of 'in' or 'out' intrinsic to the axiomatic logic of sets. The project of *Logics of Worlds*, by contrast, is to bring the question of Being into relation with the, as it were, 'three-dimensional' question of gradated modalities of existence: *where* is this element in relation to others, *how* does it appear, with *what* relative intensity? Badiou enacts this change of emphasis, from Being to Being-there, through another terminological shift, this time from 'situation' to 'world', thereby invoking the essentially phenomenological issue of appearance. Objects not only belong to a world, they *appear* somewhere within it. As with set-theory, where we too readily imagine the set as a kind of sack holding discrete elements that pre-existed their container (we should instead think of axioms that simultaneously gather and *produce* elements), so with the notion of 'worlds', we are always tempted to imagine a kind of empty panoramic landscape that is *then* filled with the objects said to be 'in' that world. The new use Badiou makes of category-theory in *Logics of Worlds*, a branch of mathematics particularly well suited to the thinking of relations, allows him to insist that "'in' is [only] a metaphor for the localization of multiples" (Badiou: 2009, p.102). In other words, for a multiple to appear in or as part of a world it must have been subjected to a logical operation that gives it a place in that world, allowing it to appear as an object among other objects.

Badiou calls this logical operation the 'transcendental' of a world, and identifies three major functions:

1) The *minimum*: the 'least' or 'weakest' mode of appearance that is still nonetheless in or of a world, to the extent that *not* appearing can still be considered a mode of appearing
2) The *conjunction*: the intensity of appearance of two objects which can be related without mutual cancellation, so that they can appear side-by-side in a mutually reciprocal or 'commutative' relation that preserves their difference
3) The *envelope*: the global synthesis of *any* number of such objects and their conjunctions, including an infinity of them. *Being and Event* had already used set-theory to postulate infinities of different sizes (2005: p.142), and here category-theory helps to underline the transitive nature of 'worlding' (see Badiou: 2009, p.103)

These transcendental functions provide the outlines of a novel philosophical method that Badiou refers to, in a pleasingly paradoxical formulation, as an "objective phenomenology" (p.38). For readers familiar with Badiou's trajectory, this comes as something of a surprise given the break with his very early Sartrean phase, but the qualifier 'objective' is obviously crucial. On the one hand, in *Logics of Worlds* he now shares with the phenomenological tradition an interest in the bracketing or *epochē* of worldly perceptions and meaning-based interpretations, in order to access the underlying conditions of possibility that allow objects to appear at all, to become phenomena. On the other hand, Badiou does not want to retain from that tradition either the Kantian understanding of the 'transcendental' which can be seen as a subjective idealism; or the Husserlian emphasis on intensionality that remains fundamentally Cartesian; or finally the existential phenomenology of Heidegger which tends towards notions of 'authenticity' and begins from the presupposition of *Dasein*. Contra in particular to Merleau-Ponty's proximity to embodied perception and the dominance of the visual, Badiou wants to bend phenomenology to his own aim of an 'atomic logic' that needs no 'knower' or 'perceiver' per se. His objective phenomenology then steps outside of psychological but also epistemological problems in order to enable "a description without a subject" (Badiou: 2009, pp.38-39). The surprising echo of Althusser in this formulation has to be qualified in so far as *objective* phenomenology leaves room for the possibility of a non-Cartesian subject of truth to emerge.

In this idiosyncratic understanding of phenomenology, objects exist neither simply in people's heads as perceptions of empirical reality or as illusions, nor indeed outside worlds in some other metaphysical realm, although they can exist in *other* worlds than the one they currently appear in, especially human 'objects', to which Badiou refers rather poetically as "the being of a thousand logics" (2009, p.114). What existence objects have, therefore, is always 'in' a world as part of a relational network of other objects. And as in *Being and Event*, there is no over-arching world of all worlds. It is precisely this "inexistence of the Whole" (p.109) that begs the phenomenological question of what logical operations turn Being-qua-being into *a* being or *an* existant within an enveloping but never totalised world? If the emphasis on the generic in *Being and Event* derived its power from the Platonic category of the Same, *Logics of Worlds* is much more concerned with difference. The transcendental appearance of an object becomes the product of two intersecting axes of differentiation: self-difference, which endows an object with the isolatable identity that distinguishes it from pure difference or radical multiplicity; and relational difference, which localises that identity *there* in a gradated, modulated world of other identities.

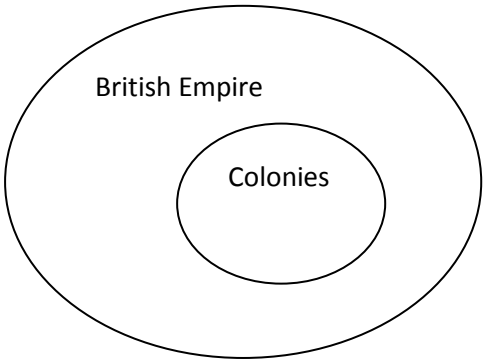
This new interest in difference in itself hints at some possible intersections with postcolonial theory, where the concept of difference, whether as *différance* or as the cultural difference supposedly recognised within liberal multiculturalism, has been central, but also deeply problematic (see Hallward: 2001). I will return to this in my concluding comments, but let us now explore these issues not through abstract theory, but via the example of colonial Jamaica.

The Ontology of Resistance in Jamaica

In *Badiou in Jamaica: The Politics of Conflict* (Wright: 2013), I made the case for something like a set-theoretical approach to colonial but especially imperial modes of sovereignty in order to make sense of Jamaica's evolving forms of inclusion within the British Empire. Set-theory can foreground the role of the 'state' of the imperial situation as being concerned with a counting operation that not only counts innumerable multiples as one (territories, plantations, slaves, ships, exchangeable goods, slave owners, colonial administrators etc.), but also attempts to count that count as part of an overarching set - an Empire in other words, which in the British case famously grew large enough for the sun supposedly never to set on it. Thus, set-theory can redescribe imperial power as adhering to

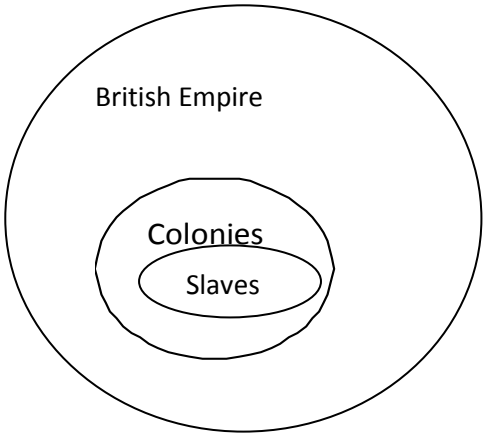
the axiom of extension, which ensures that the multiples that are elements of a sub-set must also belong to the set of which that sub-set is a part (Badiou: 2005, p.60). During the slave period in Jamaica, this allowed slaves to be included in the Empire, albeit fundamentally in the form of 'chattel'. This can be represented very simply as follows:

Situation:



Colonies ∈ British Empire: the colonies belong to the British Empire as multiples that compose it, and are therefore among its presented elements. They count as one.

State of the Situation:



Slaves ⊂ British Empire: the slaves are included in the British Empire as parts of the subset of the colonies which, in turn, are elements of the Empire. The axiom of extension is satisfied insofar as the parts of the subset are also elements of the set. Slave-ones are counted as One.

Such is the transitive operation of the imperial count. However, set-theory can also help to redescribe outbreaks of anti-colonial resistance, such as slave revolts or post-abolition riots, as the emergence of 'excrescent' multiples that belong to, but cannot be included by, the reigning imperial state. The axiom of excess for example, which demonstrates that inclusion will always be massively in excess of belonging (Badiou: 2005, p.81), is in productive tension with the axiom of extension, thereby suggesting the ontological possibility of such irruptions of the uncountable.

In *Badiou in Jamaica: The Politics of Conflict* (Wright: 2013), I developed a sort of set-theoretical taxonomy of several conflicts in Jamaican history – the first 'Maroon War' (1655-1731), 'Tacky's Rebellion' (1760), the 'Sam Sharpe Rebellion' (1831) and the 'Morant Bay Revolt' (1865)as well as the struggles around national independence – in order to distinguish between those conflicts that simply entrenched the very terms of imperial power on the one hand, and those with more evental consequences on the other. Thanks to the ultimate ungovernability of any situation, I presented the evolving forms of imperial sovereignty - ranging from colonies to dependencies, from mandates to protectorates, and on to the weak set of the British Commonwealth – as so many transformations in inclusion induced by these disruptive sequences. This in turn helps to clarify the 'two Empires' theory common within histories of the British Empire (James: 1998), the first of the two empires being the territorial usurpation and raw super-exploitation of the colonial period, the second being the later imperial phase in the Nineteenth century, when an ideological project of

'civilising' colonial subjects came to the fore. In other words, as the European Empire began to legitimate itself on the basis of a kind of universalism, drawing on both Christian universalism and in some ways a distorted appropriation of the secular universalism of the French and American Revolutions, it could no longer sustain the ontological difference of the count that had separated the enslaved from the free, the colonised from the colonisers, and the periphery from the metropole.

Just as importantly, set theory also makes it possible to identify the *ontological* grounds for presenting such otherwise momentous changes as the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, emancipation in 1833, and even formal political independence for Jamaica in 1962, as little more than what Badiou calls *simulacral events*: that is to say, disruptions in which there is the often spectacular outward appearance of change, but an underlying ontological continuity. His usual example is Hitler's National Socialism as a simulation of the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, borrowing as it did the emphasis on mass mobilisation and the militant party as well as a certain (anti-Semitic) critique of capitalism in the name of the workers etc. (Badiou: 2002). However, beyond this European example, the concept of a simulacral event is surely relevant to the bitter-sweet experience of independence and decolonisation for many former colonies in the mid-Twentieth century. It was this lesson in the profound difference between reform and revolution, between formal freedom and its actuality, that drove the development of postcolonial approaches to the critique of political economy, such as dependency theory and world-systems theory (Young: 2001).

Moreover, the suspension of qualifying predicates characteristic of set-theory also implies some political cul-de-sacs that postcolonial theory itself has not been adept at avoiding, in so far as it has not always resisted the temptations of identity politics. Thanks to the at once Maoist and set-theoretical definition of truly transformative politics as an ontological *break*, upon which Badiou insists so stubbornly, it becomes obvious that building a claim on the basis of a quality already counted by the State of the situation cannot, in and of itself, ground a truly emancipatory politics. This accounts for Badiou's caution about phenomena like the négritude movement associated with Léopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire, and for his related dismissal of cultural forms of politics (see Bosteels: 2005, p.258). Any such politics of identity, predicated in *négritude* on the militant assertion of a noble black essence, cannot logically partake of the truly egalitarian power of the *generic* universal.

I will come back to this question later, but it may be here that we encounter, once again, conceptual or theoretical gains that threaten to tip over into political losses. For any analysis of anti-colonial resistance, including sequences with good claims to being evental, cannot help but both deploy and *pass through* race, racism and their inextricable entanglement in the colonial or imperial count, such that though fraught with dangers, the strategies of *négritude* may well be subjectively important. This is why the theory of appearance developed by Badiou in *Logics of Worlds* adds a crucial dimension to set-theoretical ontology, helping us to theorise the Being-there of racialised appearance.

The Appearance of Race in the Morant Bay Revolt

Let us now explore this through the example of just one of Jamaica's sequences of conflict, the 'Morant Bay Revolt' of 1865. Since most readers will not be familiar with this incident, I will begin with a breakdown of its key elements in chronological order:

a) On the 8th of October, 1865, in a court house in Morant Bay in the South-Eastern corner of Jamaica, one Lewis Miller was prosecuted for trespassing after going into a neighbour's pasture to recover his horse. When the verdict of guilty was reached, an angry crowd that

had gathered outside the courthouse to protest previous injustices caused a major disturbance. This crowd was led by Paul Bogle, a Baptist deacon and political agitator who had been denouncing the appalling conditions for poor blacks in Jamaica from the pulpit of his church, and who had gathered a significant following, as well as support from one of the few coloured representatives in the Jamaican House of Assembly, George William Gordon. The magistrates in the court house issued 28 arrest warrants that day, including one for Bogle, but after scuffling broke out, Bogle escaped with most of his followers and returned to his home village of Stony Gut.

b) Three days later, Bogle and fully four hundred followers marched back into Morant Bay to resume their protest. They ransacked the police station before moving on to the court house. A volunteer militia had been organised to meet them there, and as they approached, a volley was fired into the crowd killing ten people. Nonetheless, they drove on into the court house, set fire to the school and adjoining buildings and released fifty-two prisoners from the jail house. Policemen, prison guards and legal clerks were hacked to pieces with machetes and beaten to death with clubs.

c) The rioting and killing continued into the following day, spreading out into the whole parish of St. Thomas-in-the-East. The day after that, the 13th, the governor of the island, Edward John Eyre, declared martial law, although he restricted it to the county of Surrey and excluded from within this zone the city of Kingston. Troops were immediately deployed and bloody fighting continued for ten days until a Maroon regiment captured Paul Bogle on the 23rd of October. The following day, Bogle was court-marshalled and hanged.

d) Prior to Bogle's execution, George William Gordon had been arrested on the 17th of October in Kingston, which was still under civil jurisdiction, and then transferred to Morant Bay where martial law operated. There he faced a court martial rather than a civil trial and, being found guilty of sedition and treason, was executed on the same day that Bogle was captured. The martial law by which Gordon was condemned to death stayed in effect until the 13th of November, by which time the 'rebellion' had been largely suppressed.

e) News of the 'rebellion' in Jamaica was met in Britain, initially, by relief that one of the Crown's most valuable possessions had been saved from near destruction. Yet as details of Governor Eyre's use of martial law emerged, particularly in relation to the execution of Gordon, murmurs of concern turned into a full-scale public outcry. Prodded into action by the Jamaica Committee (formed specifically in response to Morant Bay and boasting high-profile members such as the philosopher and economist, John Stuart Mill), the Colonial Office launched a Royal Commission into the disturbances. When this Commission concluded in April 1866, it found that the death penalty had been used too freely, that floggings had been unnecessarily vicious and sustained, and that the burning of over 1,000 homes of poor blacks was excessively cruel. Governor Eyre was dismissed but, much to the chagrin of the Jamaica Committee, he never faced trial for the murder of Gordon (although he was unsuccessfully tried for 'high crimes and misdemeanours').

f) The British Government's political response to Morant Bay was to dissolve the Jamaican House of Assembly, which had previously enjoyed independent executive power, and to impose on the island the ignominy of Crown Colony rule (rule directly from Westminster). The new Legislative Council that replaced it was composed overwhelmingly of metropolitan officials and lacked even the modicum of 'popular' representation the previous Assembly had had. That is, the sovereignty, both legal and administrative, of the mother country was

reasserted through the inclusion of the Jamaican subset into the imperial set. As Sherlock and Bennett have put it, "'Massa' was still there, but the crown was now in control" (1998, p.265).

g) As Kostal (2005) has exhaustively documented, the events at Morant Bay led to a lively, long-lasting and ultimately unresolved journalistic as well as scholarly debate in Britain as to the history, definition and morality of martial law as a tool of metropolitan and imperial statecraft.

The set-theoretical framework of *Being and Event* arguably only gets us so far with understanding this sequence. To now draw on *Logics of Worlds* as well, it is helpful to foreground two new concepts introduced in that book: the notion of the 'subject body' (Badiou: 2009: p. 455), and that of the 'obscure subject' (p.58). The subject body is "composed of all the elements of the site […] that subordinate themselves, with maximal intensity, to that which was nothing and becomes all" (p.468). By contrast, the obscure subject attempts to occult such a subject body by replacing it with "a full and pure transcendent Body, an ahistorical or anti-evental body (City, God, Race …)" (pp.59-60). This last, very rare references to race by Badiou, helps us to link these notions to two distinct phases that can be discerned within the Morant Bay sequence. Firstly, the truth-sequence which lasted from October 8th to October 23rd 1865 (a-d above), during which the 'subject-body' of Bogle's black peasant army briefly emerged into maximal rather than minimal appearance, its numbers growing as fidelity to the truth of black exploitation was transmitted to other blacks (what was nothing became all). This black subject-body, however, dissolved with Bogle's execution and a re-assertion of racialised inequality. Secondly then, the obscure-sequence which I would argue lasted from October 13th 1865 to April of 1866 (d-g above). It was during this time that the reactionary subjectivity of Governor Eyre, and the use of martial law, attempted to completely obscure this evental black subject-body by re-asserting the obscure body of imperial sovereignty through the dissolution of the Jamaican Assembly and the imposition of Crown Colony rule. Race is demonstrably central in all this, but how?

Certainly, the cry 'colour for colour!' was repeatedly heard among the black participants in the Morant bay incident, as well as an inversion of racist indiscrimination: "we don't know one buckra [white person] from another, we will kill them all" (Heuman: 2000, p.7). Yet the complicated chromatism which still effects Jamaican society to this day, and which has long necessitated distinctions between 'black', 'brown' and 'white' that double as class indicators (as disturbingly demonstrated in the practice of 'whitening' black skin by means of carcinogenic bleach), meant that the demand 'colour for colour' was difficult in practice to enforce: those of suspect skin-hue and therefore allegiance were forced by Bogle's followers to swear an oath on the bible to 'cleave to the blacks'. This already indicates that 'the blacks' was a subjective much more than it was an epidermal category. One should not therefore interpret this too quickly as an extreme form of identity politics. In the phenomenology developed in *Logics of Worlds*, such identity politics would automatically be a politics of included difference, appearing within the existing transcendental of that world. In fact, I would argue that poor blacks operated in the Jamaican world of 1865 just as Marx argued the proletariat in general operates within capitalism: in *Contributions to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Marx: 1970), he famously describes the proletariat as a class which has a universal character because its suffering is universal. It does not claim a particular redress because the wrong done to it is not a particular wrong, but wrong in general. This is not identity politics then. It is not *as* blacks in any essential sense, or *for* blacks in any communitarian sense, that Bogle's

followers rebel, but as those who are dis-counted within their world *through* blackness as a differential logic of appearance. Rather than the blackness filled by racist discourse with predicates such as 'inferior', 'backward', 'physical not cerebral', 'uppity' etc., this is the much more challenging because predicateless blackness of the void. In this sense, the suffering of poor Jamaican blacks that briefly attained maximal appearance in October 1865 condemned the entire colonial system, articulating the exploitative truth at its rotten core even post-emancipation (for crucially, these were manumitted ex-slaves, formally free blacks who rose up against the white supremacist oppression that made a mockery of that supposed freedom). It was this that caused such ripples well beyond Jamaica, posing a serious problem of legitimacy for the 'mother country', as evidenced by the debates around martial law (Kostal: 2005).

Here, we seem to confront again the major tension between universal truths, and the locally situated, relational nature of truth-procedures, including the always local determination of multiples. How can Morant Bay articulate a universal truth when it is so clearly colour-coded? What is tremendously difficult, yet of paramount importance, is maintaining a term like 'race' as a descriptor of a purely formal, relational difference ordering the regime of appearance in the particular world of mid-Nineteenth century Jamaica. Overlaid, to be sure, by the discursive 'racisms' of which postcolonial critical race theory has made us rightly aware, this relational understanding of race *has absolutely no ontological basis whatsoever*. As a discourse of appearance par excellence, race is clearly a transcendental rather than an ontological problematic: "We will call 'transcendental' the operative ensemble which permits the giving of a sense of 'more' or 'less' to identities and differences in a determined world" (Badiou: 2009, p.127). No discussion of Jamaica, past or present, could ignore the role of race in this specific sense in establishing the 'more' and 'less' characterising the distribution of actual and symbolic capital in Jamaican society.

Badiou's emphasis on commutative relationality even in situations of conflict in *Logics of Worlds*, best exemplified in his account of the 'Oka crisis' (p.313) in Quebec in 1990, enables us to perceive racial antagonism as *both* violently structuring (making the situation 'black and white', one might say) *and* as a matter of mere appearances, both concrete, and without underlying essence. The maximal intensity of appearance which the existence of black exploitation suddenly embodied during the evental sequence of Morant Bay remains a relational intensity, and not a Spinozan, vitalist, ontological one. Far from allowing itself to be captured by the dominant transcendental inscription of 'blackness', it is only as the abject yet defining (relational) Other of colonial white supremacist discourse that 'blackness' here has revelatory and transformative power. Difficult as this may be for many black Jamaicans then, and those generally enamoured of the négritude project and its legacies, this can have nothing *directly* to do with a lost, metaphysical 'Africa', with the ancient civilisations of Ethiopia or Egypt, or with the supposedly inherent qualities of African resistance to a tragic history of oppression (which does not prevent such claims having an important role to play in maintaining resistant individuals, to which the Rastafari movement in Jamaica is an eloquent testament). However, it is just as important to say that the logic of race itself cannot be somehow set aside altogether in resurrecting the evental logic of the Morant Bay Revolt.

Towards a Badiouian Postcolonial and Critical Race Theory?

In order to further persuade the reader that a Badiouian critical race theory is feasible, I will conclude by pointing out, albeit very briefly, some suggestive points of contact and overlap between

Badiou's approach in *Logics of Worlds* and that of anti-colonial activist and theorist of racism, nationalism and decolonisation, Frantz Fanon.

I have already mentioned Badiou's early phenomenological influence coming via Sartre and his very late development of an 'objective phenomenology', so perhaps the overlaps I am indicating here could be said to stem from Fanon's arguably related, though also very different, deployment of a phenomenological framework. Fanon studied under Merleau-Ponty in Lyon in France in the late 1940s and was influenced by his *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty: 2012), but always looking beyond France, he quickly pushed Merleau-Ponty's focus on the embodied nature of consciousness towards considerations of the lived and felt realities of racism in the colonies. Consciousness of the 'Manichean world' of the colony, rooted in the schema of the black body, is shown by Fanon to involve a dialectical interplay between seeing and being seen (and thus seeing oneself) always via a visible marker that indexes a putative inferiority. The skin, as the surface upon which the relations between self and Other are played out, becomes a prison, walling the black man up in his own abjected body: "the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema" (Fanon: 1986, p.112). Reciprocally, whiteness in the colonies *appears* to mark a 'natural' superiority - intellectual, cultural and moral – which legitimises the transcendental place of whites in the viciously divided world of the colony, yet simultaneously locks them, too, in a brittle, almost frozen identity. This use of phenomenology is probably clearest in those famous passages from *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986) in which the influence on Fanon comes less from Husserl or Merleau-Ponty, and more from Hegel, specifically, the latter's discussion of the master-slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel: 1977). Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre: 2006) also plays a part in Fanon's arguments regarding the constitution of blackness via the gaze of the racist Other, and of the colonial subject via the coloniser's violent repression. Indeed, at one point in *Black Skin, White Masks*, he declares, in a phrase that resonates poignantly with *Logics of Worlds*, that "I am the slave […] of my own appearance" (Fanon: 1986, p.116).

Crucially, Fanon arrives by this phenomenological route at the very conclusion we have just inferred from Badiou's *Logics of Worlds*, namely, that race cannot be approached as an *ontological* category. Though an early text, written long before his involvement with the FLN in Algeria, Fanon is clear in *White Skin, Black Masks* that 'blackness' is precisely a relational category, one unthinkable outside its binary relation to 'whiteness', both of which terms exist not at the level of being but at that of an appearance constructed by colonial domination: "The Negro is not" he famously says, "Any more than the white man." (p.231). In Badiouian terms, we could say that racism is the transcendental logic that ensures that 'blackness' will always be less than the more that 'whiteness' must appear as in the colonial world. Racism is what ensures the "epidermalization of this inferiority" (p. 13) that endows the dignified, *human* black body, especially as an active political body, with a null degree of appearance. Yet Fanon would recognise the potential in Badiou's own insistence that a null relation remains a relation, and on basing "the logical possibility of negation in appearance" (Badiou: 2009, p.107). Much of the later text, *Wretched of the Earth* (2001), explores the difficult dialectical transformation of such a null relation with a minimal appearance into the maximal appearance of a national independence movement, focussing particularly the redirecting of colonial violence.

However, Fanon also takes his distance from the logic, if not the passion and commitment, of the négritude movement when it lapses into the ontology of blackness he refutes, both in *Black Skin, White Masks* and *Wretched of the Earth* where he is very critical of the related pitfalls of cultural nationalism (see the chapter entitled 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' in Fanon: 2001). Like Badiou, Fanon is deeply suspicious of exclusively 'cultural' forms of politics, recognising that they often unwittingly inscribe rather than undo racialised differences. Thanks to his Marxism, in fact, Fanon is much more comfortable with just the kind of generic politics Badiou advocates,

though he phrases it in the very different terms of a "new humanism" (Fanon: 1986, p. 9). For Fanon, this new humanism opposes to the alienation of the Manichean split dividing whites from blacks in the colonial world, the universal category of 'Man' (women, one would hope, would not be exempt). And yet, much more conscious of race than many of his French intellectual friends – indeed he felt betrayed not only by France as an imperial power that brutally supressed Algerian independence movements, but also by the many leftwing intellectuals who followed the *Parti Communiste Français* in arguing that Algeria must remain a *département* of France even long after the bloody Sétif massacre of 1945 – Fanon never simply dismissed the négritude approach altogether either. As Peter Ludis, stressing Fanon's Hegelian debt, has recently argued: "Fanon affirms the importance of négritude as the mediating term in the movement from the individual to the universal precisely because he *rejects* any black ontology" (Ludis: 2015, p. 50). Tarrying with the putative negative of blackness, passing *through* it on the way to a négritude of appearance rather than of essence, is clearly not incompatible with an evental subjectivity. It is for this reason that Fanon, sounding very much like Badiou *avant la letter*, could write "the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it" (Fanon: 1986, p. 229). Does this not acknowledge the logical importance of race, even for the generic subject that tries to break with a racist world, at the same time as suspending its supposed ontological essence? Have we not just seen this mediating role for race in the example of the Morant Bay revolt in Jamaica?

To conclude then, if the 'post' of post-colonial theory can be interpreted in a properly evental way, relating not simply to the colonial past (which Fanon also refused to be defined by: "I am not a prisoner of history" (1986, p.229) he said), but to the eternal or infinite truths still carried by anti-colonial sequences, then a Badiouian critical race theory, drawing on the 'objective phenomenology' developed in *Logics of Worlds*, may yet provide a philosophy for militants who wish to force change on to a globalised but also neo-colonial world.

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