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Fallen Matthews

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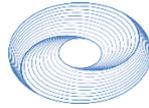
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Historians surmise that Blaxploitation saved what was, in hindsight, a self-destructive film industry. Hollywood neared bankruptcy as production, marketing, and distribution costs exceeded revenue in the 1970s (Lykidis 16). Movies made little, if any profits in the scheme of extravagant sets, stars, and styles which underperformed commercially. Cinema viewership declined in the wake of a residential shift to the suburbs, far from the inner cities where theatres were based (Saucier 454). Unsparing budgets and white celebrities underscored the luxuriant narratives of Classical Hollywood and New Hollywood, a standard of life onscreen that was inimical to the cultures and politics offscreen which arose from the waste laid by World War II, Cold War tensions, and the outset of the Vietnam War (Lawrence 17). However, blaxploitation monetized African American audiences, a viewership once dismissed to be fiscally negligible although they comprised roughly 30 percent of moviegoers (12). They found a reprieve in antiheroes and vigilantes, embodiments of resistance to the white hegemony whose definitive requisite was the systemic anti-Blackness Civil Rights and Black Nationalist movements opposed (Guerrero 3, 8). Melvin Van Peebles' *Sweet Sweetback's Badaass Song*, whose confident and cunning protagonist challenges and bests jurisdictional anti-Blackness, is most widely cited as the film that catalyzed the Blaxploitation genre (11). Gordon Parks Jr.'s *Superfly* further modelled Blaxploitation as a lucrative venture whose film and soundtrack generated vast profit (Quinn 99). Lower production costs engendered cinematic realism: a visuality that endowed films with greater fidelity to real life effected in scene, setting, and storyline on-

location respective to narrative milieu. Against their modest budgets in the thousands, these films grossed millions.

While Blaxploitation may use elements from other genres like fantasy, horror, noir, and westerns, Blaxploitation generically is characterized by the portrayal of Black everyday people whom incisively, contentiously overcome anti-Blackness (Terry 85). Bill Gunn's experimental *Ganja & Hess* does this uniquely as the film depicts an Afrocentric discursive conquest. The film follows Dr. Hess Green (Duane Jones), an anthropologist who becomes a vampire after his intellectual albeit erratic and suicidal assistant, George (Bill Gunn), impales him with an accursed dagger. The doctor falls in love with his assistant's widow, Ganja (Marlene Clark), who resolves becoming the same once she discovers Hess' vampiric nature. Vampirism takes on a new meaning with realism and racialization as African American positionalities continue to be afflicted by disparity, exploitation, exclusion, and inaccessibility alongside systematic anti-Blackness which extenuate our adversities. I find myself immortalized by pearls of wisdom which speak to ancestral strength and blood memory, akin to how kernels from an artifact—the cursed dagger—transform Dr. Hess Green and Ganja Meda into the undead.

In his suicide note, George opines on the inexorable perils and traumas which scourge African Americans in academia. He encourages Black academics to distrust the intellectualism and educational systems as they were cultivated through and rife with eurocentrism. "Philosophy is a prison," he says, "It disregards the uncustomary things about you. The result of individual thought is accruable only to itself." For me, this is nascent of recent equality, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) initiatives which actually underscore the academe's proclivity to hegemonize: commodify the very sanctions which impact scant as is marginalized peoples, to graft and implement repatriation and reparation in its own image. Gainfully employed academics are able to exercise

power that is epistemically inaccessible. They glean assets from the ubiquity of a colonialist meritocracy which posits the expenditure and function of education as wholesome, a conclusive paradigm for innovation with little, if any iniquitous purpose. I know this to be untrue. Therein, I often find myself at a loss as the sole Black and First Nations [Afro-L'nu] non-binary [demigirl] person amidst gainfully employed and other privileged positionalities whom 'champion' EDIA whilst their professional and discursive sanctums are buttressed by and contingent upon disparities. When my people remain absent, when nothing is done to amend the 'precarity' through which their absence sustained, it is not enough to merely *acknowledge* or *concede* that the institution is woefully lacking. EDIA avows itself as a sliding door: the aperture suspended from a grand track, operant upon multitudes rather than dichotomous hinges; the rectifier that equalizes ostensibly negligible aspects that make or break what matters most. The reality for BIPOC has been, is, and remains as revolving doors: partitions turn about a colonial axis—methodologies, theories, praxes, erasures—where disparities (the very ones that EDIA claims to amend) recur continuously wherein marginalized peoples are *come and go* but are unable to *stay*.

The more I critically consider my positionality and academic exegesis, the more I realize what vampirism underlays my transformation, survival, and demise as graduation is fated as expulsion. I grow increasingly desensitized to praise and more aware of how praise—or *acknowledgement*—does nothing to ensure me professorship, some semblance of financial security, or palpable prestige. EDIA itself is vampiric in its avid solicitation of insights and labour from the very marginalized positionalities it purports to uplift. The wealth of lip service paid in comparison to what pittance we marginalized peoples are afforded is abysmal. The voices of Black and Indigenous positionalities are always in demand, but not our wellbeing.

George speaks to this, noting the eurocentric affinity to supplant essence with performativity: “Gesture destroys concept. Involvement mortifies vanity... To be adored... is to be a symbol of success, and you must not succeed on any terms...” He tells us, “You are the despised of the earth,” a reference to Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (also translatable to *The Damned of the Earth*; French: *Les Damnés de la Terre*) whose title itself harks from Jacques Roumain’s *Sales Nègres*, a poem that laments on the struggles of “dirty niggers” as a colonized populace amongst other subjugated peoples: “And there we stand, all the damned of the earth” (Aksan).

There is an existential quandary posed by my academic prowess, knowing that catharsis entails addressing—not merely *acknowledging*—the ways in which colonialism, capitalism, and hegemony have affected my ability to relate to others. The objectification inherent to academic institutions proffer that everything and everyone can be possessed, in addition to material—medalled—representations of intellect and altruism. It is hard to discern between one’s calling to learn or educate and one’s desire to accumulate so that they may optimize their material or occupational acquisition. People qualitatively bleed me dry—take, take, take. Conversely, I am encouraged to siphon—whenever, wherever, whomever, however possible—within and beyond reach and revel in what I have wrought. Death holds no bearing as extraction persists even when one ceases to live. The academe will simply assimilate our mortality into its metrics because it is only able to memorialize us respective to the accreditation failure or success, in the scheme of our ancestors, peers, or successors. Whereas our demise further augments our own anguish as we become desiccate and strive to draw for, from whatever so that we might fulfill our hallows.

Ganja & Hess depicts this as we, Black peoples, stand to become monstrous as infectants and emulators of a hegemonic—in particular, the academic colonialist—enterprise. Blaxploitation spawns vampirism as a vehicle to explore the coalescence of need and desire in hunger. I reflect on

how those privileged positionalities who allege to admire me are the same who dispirit the slightest inclination that they advocate for more, if not for me than for others who make fill the hallows they so earnestly *acknowledge*; the same who disaffect my fears and ambitions so as to blaspheme any actant as gluttony whereas silence is temperance.

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