



**The Unfettered Future:
Beats Rhythming
E-motion
Towards
Freedom**

**a mix by Discourse Jockey [DJ]
aka Jazzmen Lee-Johnson**

faders up and:

**For all intended purposes
or for the purposes of this mix,
I define afro-futurism as
the innate alien futurity of Africa
and all its luminously dark descendents.**

Know that this is not the only definition.
Know that afro-futurism thrives on impossibility
and thirsts to be indefinable,
to be all that is liminal,
and everything between, between—so long as it remains
black
and beyond
what is.



Simply in a sentence...

Blacks were born alien; cast upon this eerie earth with a heightened sensibility, awareness, acute understanding of the planet, so much so, that our organic geography of origin is referred to as thee motherland—earth being one of many of our native sons—we streamed consciousness through its celestial body, unearthing a true compassion for nature and acceptance of the life cycles of living, dying, and birthing as they revolved, devolved, evolved, and enveloped a truth; we have been deemed strangers of our own land, foreigners in our indigenous estates—othered-outcast and abducted by the filthy actions of humanity, to be picked, poked, policed, taken, tortured, forced, controlled tested, controlled, and then controlled some more, in a project called oppression, whose greatest and most successful efforts bore slavery and colonialism.

In this piece I examine future's past. I profile the vestiges of an alien encounter: an abduction that led to a voyage through saltwater, and a landing in Surinam. On divine terrain, human settlers forced their alien hostages to work on sugarcane and tobacco plantations and sometimes, if that alien be light, alien could work in the homes of their human abductor. Such forced migrations and forced servitude riled up the aliens, moving them to dance in revolt. Insurrection, rebels aliens, and rebellions surged through Surinam. In order to suppress such risings the humans assembled other humans in an army to regain control over the aliens.

John Gabriel Stedman, a human, who volunteered in what I call the "efforts of oppression," wrote and published the story of these efforts titled, *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*. Stedman's Narrative details the conditions of Surinam and the horrors of extreme violence and torture the aliens faced. From 1772-1776, Stedman traveled to and lived in Surinam as a Captain of a cohort of European corps who volunteered to put an end to the alien revolts there. The potential and viability of the Human colony of Surinam had become increasingly unstable with various alien uprisings and desertions, absentee planters, and shifting plantation ownership. The temperament amongst slaves of Surinam at the time not only speaks to ways in which they were punished and tortured, but how they dealt with their pain. *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition Against the Revolted Aliens of Surinam*, [1] is a several-hundred page book broken into two volumes; over 25 chapters and 80 engravings provide insight into Stedman's daily life in Surinam: stories of battle, love, challenges as a leader, and images of wildlife, maps, soldiers, and the cruelty and punishment inflicted on the enslaved. [i]

In exploring this history, my twin—Academia Graphítß, has reinterpreted Stedman's narrative and the engravings found throughout the text illustrated by William Blake. I, Discourse Jockey, have also created sonic remixes of Stedman's accounts and Blake's images to enhance the telling and accompany Graphít's "sketches of potentiality."

Think of sketches of potentiality as drafted attempts to give the alien victims of torture, violence and slavery, breath and flesh. I contrast Graphít's restricted dying bodies with moody beats to evoke the emotion of the enslaved alien. What was the alien thinking feeling, wishing, wanting, and hoping? I posit this emotion through the production of rhythmic digital sounds—beats of [e]lectronic [e]motion.

I've created musical mixes for seven incidents of alien torture, violence, and death that can be found in Stedman's Narrative. These mixes ploy the notion of freedom as embodied utopia, that dancing to, in, around, and outside of the beat is a true expression of freedom. These aliens may escape their violent fates by shifting, swaying, rocking, bopping, jiving, boogieing, grooving, performing with conviction and a sense of agency.

Bearing this in mind, these broken beats also unfold the narrative of the incidents, denoting the sounds of whipping, breaking, fatigue, hopelessness, humor and triumph.



TRACKLIST

An Alien Hung Alive by the Ribs to a Gallows

The Execution of Breaking on the Rack

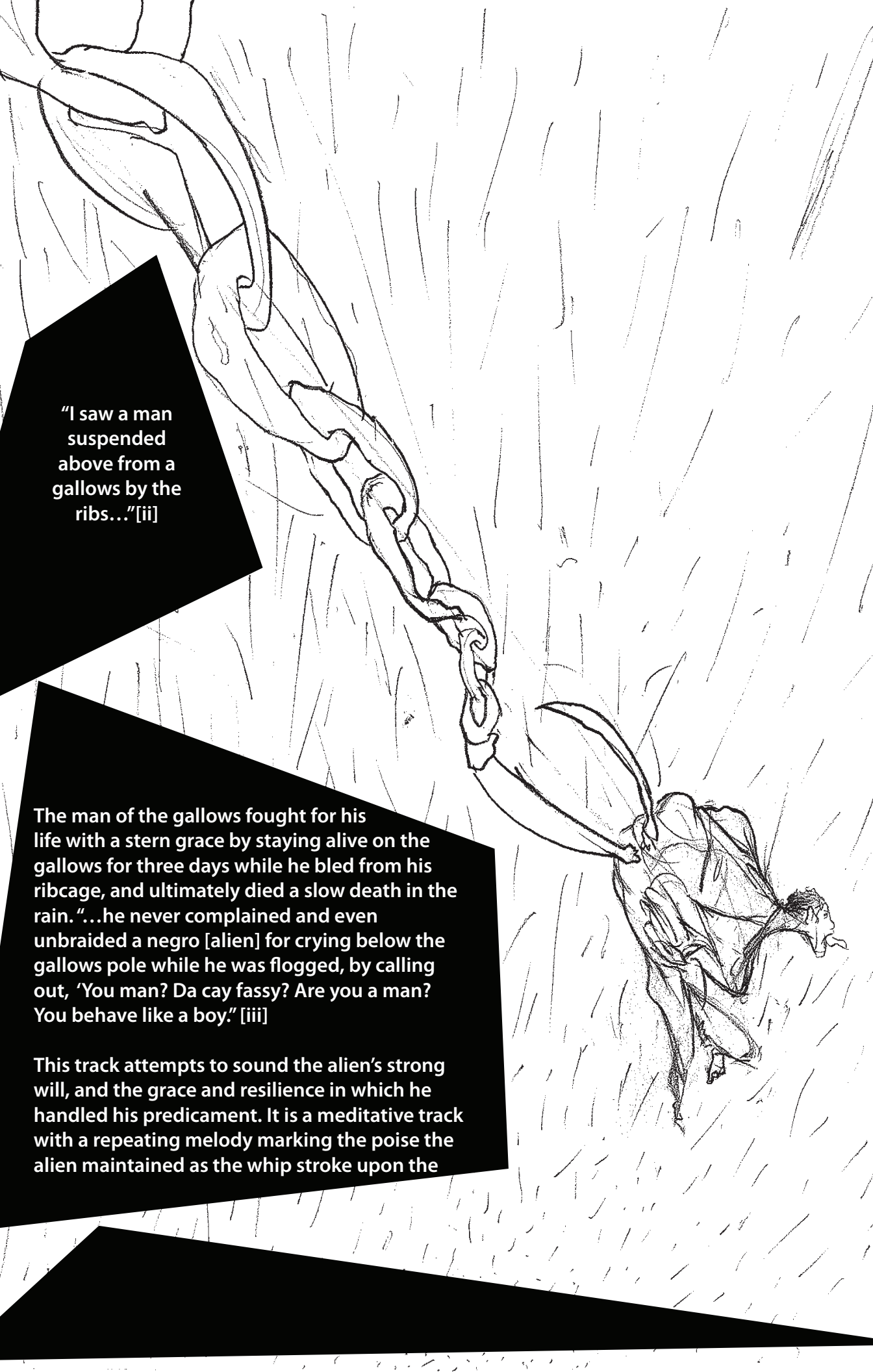
Flagellation of an Alien

Shot Alienself with Pistol Upon the Human's Bed

Alien Falls Naked From a Garret Window on a Heap of Broken Bottles

Order: A Young Alien Should be Flogged Principally Across the Breasts

Alien Slave with Weight Chained to Ankle



**"I saw a man
suspended
above from a
gallows by the
ribs..."[ii]**

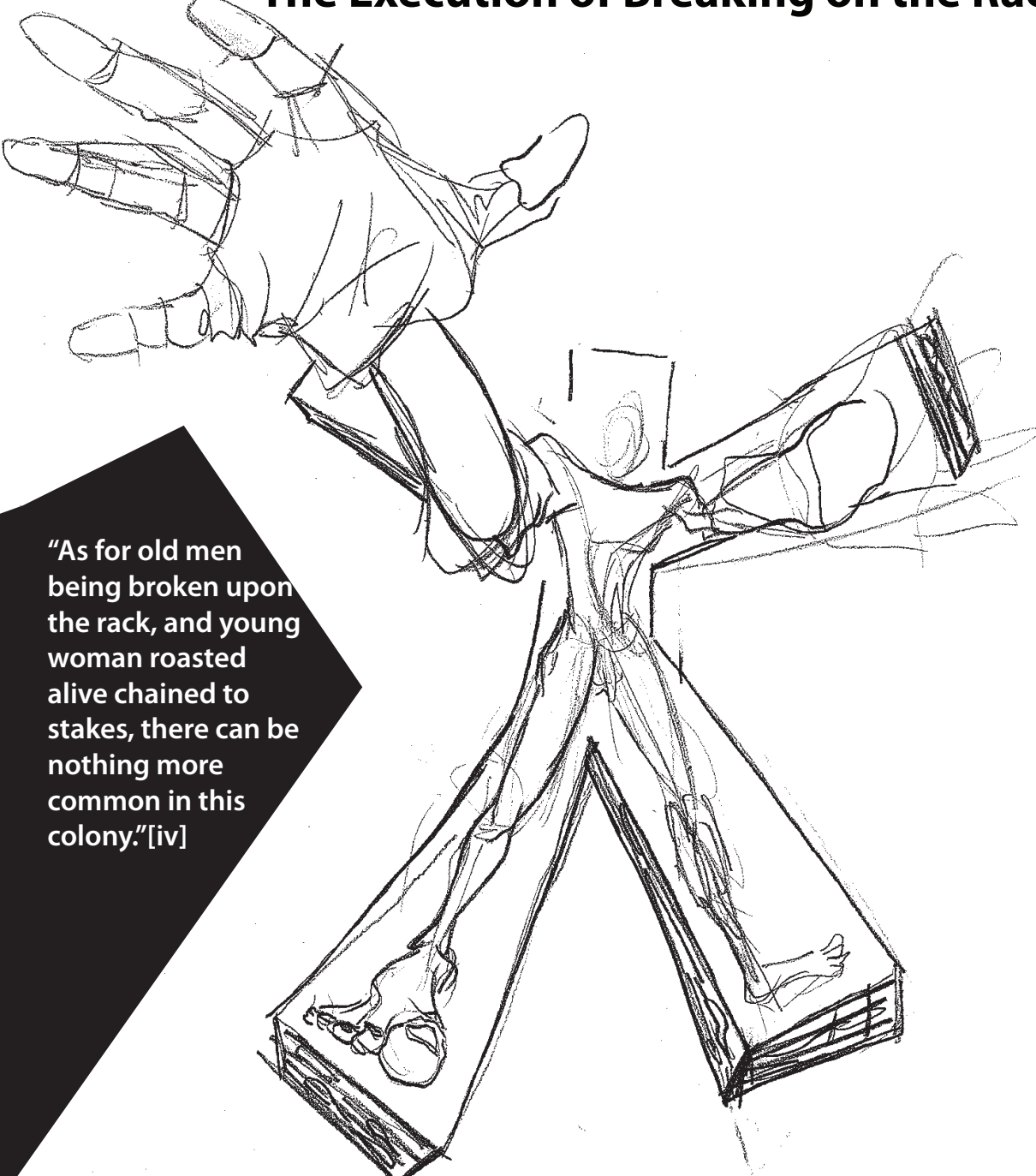
The man of the gallows fought for his life with a stern grace by staying alive on the gallows for three days while he bled from his ribcage, and ultimately died a slow death in the rain. "...he never complained and even unbraided a negro [alien] for crying below the gallows pole while he was flogged, by calling out, 'You man? Da cay fassy? Are you a man? You behave like a boy.' [iii]

This track attempts to sound the alien's strong will, and the grace and resilience in which he handled his predicament. It is a meditative track with a repeating melody marking the poise the alien maintained as the whip stroke upon the

Neptune was a free alien, a carpenter. As punishment for killing an overseer, he was sentenced to death by being quartered, or "broken alive." Neptune had stolen a sheep to entertain an alien Neptune admired, "the overseer, who burnt with jealousy, had determined to see [Neptune] hanged; to prevent which, the negro shot him dead among the sugar canes..."[v] Neptune, the victim of torture, attempting to stand after being severely beaten. "...as he set of barbarous rascals, at the time removing his right hand by the help of his teeth, he rested his head on part of the timber, and asked the by-standers for a pipe of tobacco..." This of course was met with more torment and torture, Neptune then put in a plea for the torturers to put a quick end to Neptune's life by chopping off Neptune's head. Upon refusal, Neptune continued to joke sarcastically, singing "two extempore songs (with a clear voice);"

This track features the rimshot usually played after a joke. The dissonant and eerie vibraphone alludes to the sorrow of Neptune's predicament. The bass is full and sarcastic, the drums beat Neptune to death.

"The Execution of Breaking on the Rack"



"As for old men being broken upon the rack, and young woman roasted alive chained to stakes, there can be nothing more common in this colony."[iv]



“Her only crime consisted of firmly refusing to submit to the loathsome embraces of her detestable executioner.” [vi]

This track is a broken beat—to express the resistance and refusal of the alien to submit to force, the rhythm fall out of conventional 4/4 time into an odd 9/8 time signature. The snares, cymbals, kicks, resemble the lashes.



“Flagellation of an Alien”

**This is a track of melancholic doom.
The warped melody swirls like a
ghost, the menacing bass foreshad-
owing the soul leaving the body.
Drums trigger bullet.**



“For instance, one of the foot-boys[alien], called Jacky, not having rinsed the glasses according to her mind, she ordered him to be whipped the next morning; but the unfortunate youth soon put himself beyond the reach of her resentment: for, having taken farewell of the other negroes on the estate, he went up stairs, laid himself down upon his master's own bed, where, placing the muzzle of a loaded fowling-piece in his mouth, by the help of his toe he drew the trigger, and put an end to his existence.” [vii]

“Shot Alienself with Pistol Upon the Human’s Bed”

"Alien Falls Naked From a Garret Window on a Heap of Broken Bottles"

"...this was indeed an accident, but she was so mangled, though not dead, that she exhibited a spectacle nearly as wretched as the other.—Cursing my unlucky fate, I turned the horses, and drove to the beach, as the only place to avoid every scene of cruelty and misery..."[viii]

This track questions the accidentalness of the aliens fall from the window with a sinister bass. The cowbell conveys the tinges of the broken bottles.

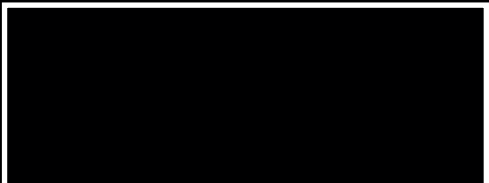
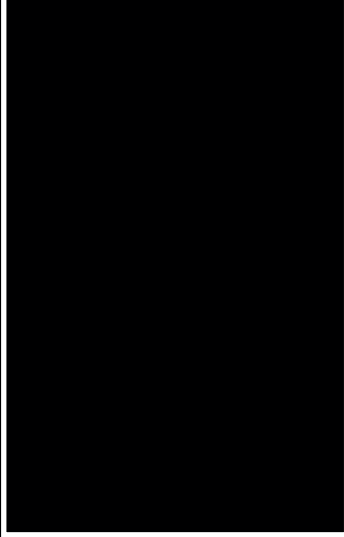
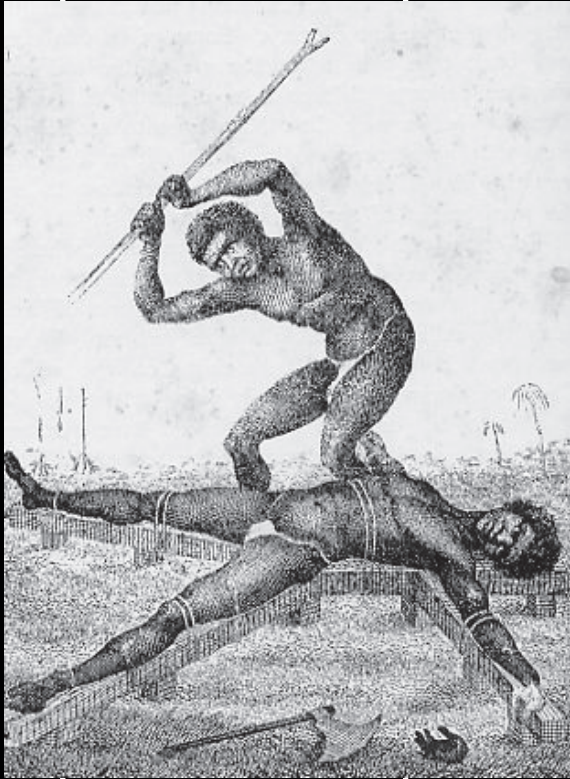
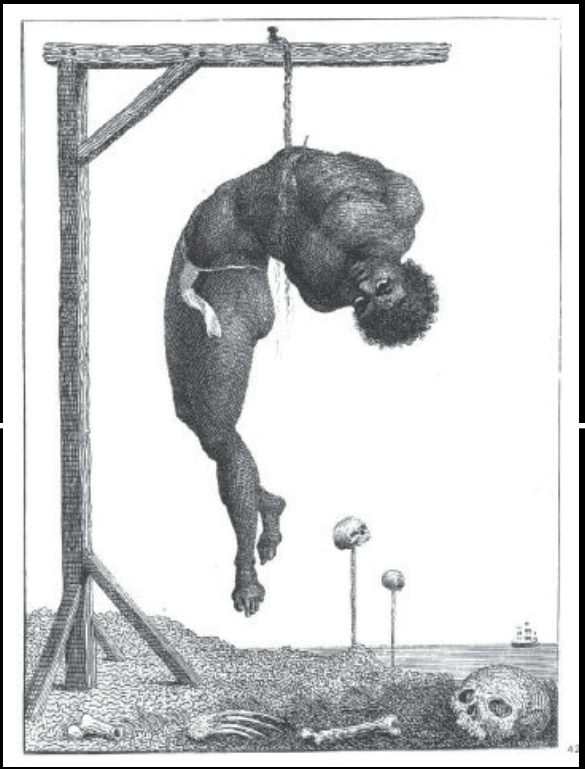
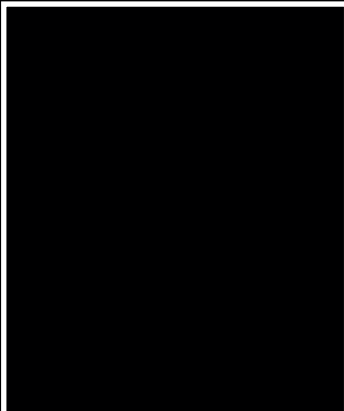


"Order: A Young Alien Should be Flogged Principally Across the Breasts"

This track transmits a series of whip cracks with drums and bass.

"Alien Slave with Weight Chained to Ankle"

This track straddles two modes of experience. One in which the alien slave struggles to carry the weight. The bass drags and the electric hi-hat hiccups as if a short sigh. The latter in which the slave triumphs and continues onward with the weight upon the head—the beat optimist and cheerful moves one to two-step.



William Blake's Images
from John Stedman's Narrative

Flagellation of a Female Sumboc Slave?

FootNotes

[1] Stedman's Narrative was actually published under the title Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam. But Blacks being the alien, I refer to all titles of "samboe" and "negro" found in Stedman's Narrative, as alien. I've also removed gender from Stedman's accounts.

[β] Academia Graphit like Discourse Jockey [DJ] is a character, a persona, an identity, a pseudonym, and an alias that I—Jazzmen Lee-Johnson—take on in my "academic" writing. Academia Graphit explores my scholarly interests through the visual medium and Discourse Jockey [DJ] explores these interests through sonic mediums. I present them as twins of my self.

EndNotes

- [i] Van Lier, Rudolf, "Introduction," Introduction of Narrative of a Five year's Expedition Against The Revolted Negroes of Surinam. Amherst, Mass., University of Massachusetts Press. 1972. Print. p.v-xv
- [ii] Stedman, John. Narrative of a Five year's Expedition Against The Revolted Negroes of Surinam. Amherst, Mass., University of Massachusetts Press. 1972. Print. p64
- [iii] Ibid
- [iv] Ibid
- [v] Ibid, p382
- [vi] Ibid, p177
- [vii] Ibid, Chapter 27
- [viii] Ibid