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#### The 1AC reiterates a chronopolitical grammar of progress that secures complicity for black dereliction.

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I argue that the white supremacy Spencer evinces, in which nonblack persons of color can be contributing members of human community, reinforces the constitutive exclusion of racially black persons from the Historical frame. The rub is that Spencer is not wrong. Racially black persons cannot be-in-time because as pre-human artifacts—the trace of humanism’s race/ism or cut—they bear the weight of Man’s ontological anxieties. The promise of a universal human imago implores nonblack persons of color to make room for themselves not in a vacuum, but in an Historical world (wound) adhered by racial hierarchies, such that by activating the plasticity of racial whiteness as a human recognition, they entrench the constitutive exclusion of racially black minorities from human be(com)ing. To refuse to capitalize on this plasticity, to refuse to reproduce the antiblack sentimentality and violence of Enlightenment Europe would consent to arriving to the table of human civilization too soon—at the dawn of Man, which is how Martin characterizes the African continent—and too late, failing altogether to qualify for the recognitions and protections reserved for human subjects of a civil polity. To be sure, civil rights necessitate human recognition because “civil society” is but a placeholder for the discursive and material organization of Man (i.e., Man’s racial myths and legal categories), and because the political economy of liberal humanism is generated within and through libidinal antiblackness. The episodic and contingent violence that nonblack persons of color experience (for example, in Trump’s America) is the affective lever civil society operates to demand generalized loyalty, obscuring for nonblack minorities the choice whereby they consent to make themselves the instruments of white supremacy. The mechanism through which that loyalty is elicited is not (just) the state’s demand but liberal—libidinal—humanism’s demand for a collective, planetary distancing from and rejection of racial blackness. A white qua not-black human imago is at once the subject of Alt-Right claims to exclusivity and liberal humanism’s claims to inclusivity. Ours is a world in which those who enjoy what Frantz Fanon describes as “ontological resistance”51 (i.e., human qua white recognition) experience, in Trump’s as in Obama’s America, the ebb and flow of human community (i.e., social life), while the excommunicated, or in Wilderson’s hauntingly apt analogy for racially black persons, the “cows”52—as the raw material that makes and sustains our human world-making—are indiscriminately and senselessly, without stipulation or explanation, “accumulated and, if need be, killed,”53 in order to cohere the collective unconscious of our human community and to engender its social markers of Man. Same shit, different day I have already suggested that Trump’s simulated inclusivity betrays the continuity of the office of the American president and that his arrival to the White/Master’s House coheres and testifies to a paradigm sutured by unremarkable and interminable antiblack violence, even or especially as nonblack minority populations experience new violations in Trump’s America. The contingent and selective recognition of nonblack persons of color as white-cum-human beings absolves—gives cover to—the enduring violence whereby the black as a subject-that-is-not-one is defeated by the protections liberal humanism’s political machinery—civil society—erects to safeguard Man in his most vulnerable iterations (i.e., “worker, woman, […] gay, lesbian, and so on”). While racialized violence reduces the nonblack body (of color) to flesh, nonblack persons of color and racially black persons do not occupy comparable space-time coordinates and/or structural positionalities, because humanism’s flesh-making project or race/ism is essentially an antiblack violence. Afro-pessimism teaches us that racially black persons occupy a structural position analogous, if at all, to non-human animal beings54, which like the slave acquire value in/as death—as a meaty carcass consumable/consumed for its parts, including skin, hair,55 bones, organs, and (the story of Henrietta Lacks teaches us) cells. It is for this reason that Wilderson uses the analogy of a meat-packing plant to replace the “negro question” with the “cow question,”56 and why Sexton describes the “paradigmatic condition of black existence in the modern world” as “a perpetual and involuntary openness”57 to the tearing apart and looting of black flesh. Hortense Spillers names the hyper-vulnerability of the unsignified/unsignifiable black flesh to remain from humanism’s cut as a “hieroglyphics.” She clarifies that the “anatomical specifications of rupture” assigned to black flesh invite “the objective description of laboratory prose”58—”eyes beaten out, arms, backs, skulls branded, a left jaw, a right ankle, punctured; teeth missing, as the calculated work of iron, whips, chains, knives … the bullet.”59 Surely, this is not the representational regime of a body [End Page 226] typified by cohesion. Wilderson’s, Sexton’s, and Spillers’ interventions are Afro-pessimistic60 insofar as they dissuade the reader from holding her breath for a political metamorphosis that might finally recognize black humanity. Black fungibility like animal fungibility (perhaps too, like earth-matter fungibility61) will abate only after an epistemological catastrophe disorganizes our relational capacities and dissolves every frame of reference, obliterating the chronopolitical grammar through which those who can become Man, that is to say, who can ascend to the top of a racial hierarchy that is also or primarily a food chain, do so. Franco Barchiesi elaborates the Afro-pessimistic position to remind us that “the shift from multicultural liberalism to nationalistic supremacism” in the hour of Trump “is a change only in the form of Black subjugation.”62 Black persons categorically denied human recognition as a fact and not (just) as an inconvenience of their being “do not merely confront [the] violence”63 nonblack minority populations like immigrants, indigenous persons, and nonblack gender non-conforming persons experience as an event—for example, as a travel ban or the dismissal of marriage and bathroom rights. Rather, black Others as a people forged, Audre Lorde explains, “in the crucibles of difference,”64 are “actually constituted by [violence] through processes of depredation, coercion, and enslavement.”65 Barchiesi’s incisive reading of Wilderson’s “Gramsci’s Black Marx” (2003) makes it clear that Trump’s presidency does not qualify as an historical node, which is to say, does not signify the end of times or a new time/beginning, but rather, evidences the longue durée of black social death as a world-ordering structure, more to the point, as the structure for our be(com) ing-human. It is precisely “the inhumanity of Blackness [that] allows White humans”66 including nonblack persons of color to build institutions, ideologies of freedom, images of rights, and ethical meditations on democracy. Such political and cognitive capacities posit [black] bodies as their inert, “socially dead,” Wilderson writes, yet sentient objects, or outlets of white fantasies of coercion, improvement, imagination, violence, and healing. The inhumanity of [blackness], or the fundamental antagonism between White life and [black] death, is ultimately the condition of existence for the political conflicts, moral dilemmas, and social emergencies of civil society, as well as its aptitude to experience and narrativize history as a succession of events.67 To argue that antiblack violence is paradigmatic—a structure and a constant—is to suggest that reforms to civil society will not abate the violence black Others necessarily must endure to make civil society, more to the point, to make or conceive of a social polity—an “us”—in the first place. Wilderson’s intervention, abridged by Barchiesi to clarify our present moment as altogether typical, insists that the reorganization [End Page 227] of civil society’s parts will not de-escalate the rates at which black persons are indiscriminately maimed and murdered, because black life is not contingently fungible but essentially so, and because the metaphysics and/as metapolitics of black fungibility are not just essential for the making of a socially dead black Other. They are principally and foremost essential for the making of a non-fungible or white-passing “us”.68 The story of that be(com)ing, of a human subject that is “semantically-neurochemically” programmed to enact antiblack “individual and collective behaviors,”69 is located in the hearts and minds of those eligible for human recognition, as a libidinal economy. Insofar as Trump and his henchmen (i.e., Spencer) use liberalism’s seemingly capacious parachute to trap the rights of nonblack minority populations, they mobilize not an American nightmare but one instance in the “ongoing disaster”70 of “the social” that is mobilized by the American Dream. Trump’s hate-mongering is our price of admission not just for a model of the social organized by/as civil society, but for the making of human community (i.e., the “social”), that is to say, for epistemology and ontology itself. Recall Hartman’s argument that “the very effort to pry apart the Negro question and the social question exposes their enduring entanglements”71 as a private relation. Libidinal interests, untouchable by the law but which determine the law72, “[shape] the emergence of the social in the United States”73 as a racially unified site in which the immigrant and savage find the civil rights that correspond with human recognition. While nonblack minorities in Trump’s America are being made to experience, albeit irregularly and provisionally, what Michael Harriot describes as “the America black people have always lived in,”74 which denies human recognition to revoke civil rights, for the black Other who lives in this nowhere or “sunken place,”75 it matters not who steers the American ship. Hillary Clinton’s presidency like Barack Obama’s before hers would have (at best) activated the elasticity whereby nonblack differences (in Obama’s America, gay and trans rights especially) are accommodated by entrenching the constitutive antagonism of racial blackness (such that the hour of the first black presidency testified to the fact that black lives don’t or can’t matter).76 The violent removal of Vietnamese-American doctor and ‘model minority’77 David Dao from United Flight 3411 on April 9, 2017 serves to illustrate what Damon Young of Very Smart Brothas describes as the contingent blackification of nonblack minority populations in Trump’s America. Young resolves that Dao “wasn’t quite [black] for a day,” but that he “was definitely treated like [he was].”78 The wanton and senseless nature of Dao’s physical beating rendered his body (of color) fungible as an event, because this violence defied his treatment otherwise, for example, in Obama’s multiculturalist, ‘post-racial’ America. More specifically, Dao’s psychological suffering in the video seen ‘round the globe evokes the psychosomatic terror (pace Fanon) typical of humanism’s flesh-making project, that is to say, its anti/blackness. The absolute wretchedness whereby Dao cannot articulate his suffering, his demonstration of a “pain [he] can’t live inside of and can’t live without,”79 indeed, of a pain which he cannot signify, contain, or cathect with recourse to “the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography”80 is expressed by the hopelessness with which Dao pleads with his captors to “just kill [him].” We might pause to ask why the video of Dao’s suffering captivated audiences as it did. Certainly, had Dao been black, the violation of his person would not have registered as a scandal. Videos of black suffering have the opposite effect, prompting us to stand not appalled and aghast but agape and mesmerized, chomping at the bit for (pace Hartman) more “scenes of subjection” that might (impossibly) satisfy our unabating human appetite for the flesh of the Other. In addition, scenes of black subjection function to reassure us that the human world will continue to make room for nonblack minority populations by discarding with the being of the black. Our absence from fugitive demands for black life—our sheer disregard of black fungibility, such that some of us can claim in the hour of Trump that “this is the first time [we’ve] protested anything”81—further suggests that black and nonblack minority populations do not wade through the muck and mire of racism together. Even as black persons show up to do our work, “[taking] up so many causes not immediately recognized as black,” for example, “the rights of Palestinians and Indigenous water protectors,”82 and even as nonblack minorities like Dao are violated in ways that testify to the interminability of antiblack political and (as) libidinal violence and to the consequences of that violence for nonblack persons of color, it is the black who has had to do the wading—the sinking and the dying—so that we who are not fungible can do the living.83 What is specific about and underwrites the antiblackness of this moment, if anything, is that audiences view Trump’s violence as exceptional, and in lamenting nonblack suffering in Trump’s America valorize the protections of the liberal state, obscuring its structural antiblackness.

#### Speculative political imagination re-elaborates the temporal prognoses that drain and imprison black energy.

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Does time heal all wounds? Or does time require certain wounds to sustain itself? Is the curative function of time an onto-metaphysical fantasy, one concealing the internecine operations of temporal subjugation? What happens to existence, or life itself, once we abandon time, its unquestioned positivity, and its presumed givenness (as gift, indispensable resource, or a priori condition)? Furthermore, is the activity of imagining even possible without recourse to time, temporality, or its durative schemas? Is the imagination a temporal captive, and does abandoning (or dare I say abolishing) time liberate the imagination to perform different tasks and pursuits? Questioning time is a difficult task, since thinking requires it (to re-orient existence beyond Newtonian, post-modern, or neo-liberal time and eschatology). Questioning, as meta-commentary, would require an exceptional position, both within and without time simultaneously, a position capable of investigating the very thing that enables investigation—holding time in abeyance. But the seeming impossibility of this enterprise would require a different noetic apparatus, since thought (as questioning) depends on time as its oxygen. The imagination, then, offers the promise of liberation from temporal tyranny, an enterprise contravening the conditions of reason, knowledge, forms, and, indeed, the possible itself. The potential “transgression”—to use a hackneyed term in American Studies—of the imagination is diminished, however, when it is bound to democracy. Democracy tethers the imagination to time, since democracy is an elaborate schematization, instrumentalization, and defense of time. During any moment of political and social crisis, we are importuned to re-imagine democracy, as imagining the future. To consider democracy futureless, or that its time has run out, or that futurity (and progress) is its devastating temporal myth, is to open oneself up to charges of theoretical heresy, despair, hopelessness, and any other abject calumny. In times of crisis, when the authoritarian kernel of democracy is exposed, theorists call on time to hold inconsistencies, resolve contradictions, blackmail hope, and repair brokenness. Once again, we land in the terrain that “time heals all wounds,” political or otherwise. Samuel A. Chambers defines the imagination as a “synthetic power of creation and re-creation—an ability to combine the uncombinable, to surpass binaries without merely collapsing them, to fashion something new” (620). And from such synthesis, we are told that a democratic imagination is possible, since we would “think the limits (and their transgression) of democratic theory and of democracy as well” (620). Here, we see that the democratic imagination recasts limits as possibilities rather than complete failures. Limits become the resource for creation and re-creation rather than evidence of destruction and uselessness. A couture Kantianism / Hegelianism (mixed with a splash of deconstruction) salvages democracy from the perils of its absurdity, devastation, and brutality. Why this investment in democracy’s “intrinsic” creative power? Can this creativity finally bring an end to anti-Black violence and Black suffering? Or is the knowledge of democracy’s fabulousness enough to sustain Blacks through police terrorism, environmental racism, re-enslavement through incarceration, and food / housing insecurity and discrimination? I would suggest that what makes such creative synthesis possible is an unacknowledged dependence on time. For proponents of democracy, it is time that is malleable for creative enterprises of re-imagination, of progress fetishization, and an “ontology of change” that need not justify (or prove) itself, declaration of change seems to be enough (Badiou, “Ontology”). What if, however, democracy is clinging to a depleted resource? What if time is no longer enough to orient existence, especially for those inhabitants of an abyss—within which time, space, ethics, and law are weaponized against existence? Put somewhat differently, democracy has exhausted the imagination. It is a speculative vampire that drains the imagination of any vital resource for its own survival. This speculation is an outrageous expenditure of energy, an enjoyment without end, a scholarly surplus-pleasure requiring an incessant (and useless) political repetition (Johnston). I would describe this speculation—the conjoining of time, democracy, and the imagination—as an interminable quest, or a certain “stuckness” in a scene of failure (a constant encircling of political and legal vacuity). This repetition is most dramatically demonstrated, for me, in Black political participation—voting, protesting, keeping hope alive, returning to the kernel of authoritarian violence (i. e., anti-Blackness) with unbridled hope, temporal determination, and an investment in the ontology of change (Warren; Farred). Time mocks Blacks, requiring historical déjà vu to be re-imagined, redeemed, rethought, or ignored, rather than accepting time as anti-Black enmity and democracy as the permanence of anti-Blackness. Chants of “yes we can!” “your vote matters!” “we have power!” “we’re moving forward,” etc., serve to neglect the failure of Black political participation and to imprison the imagination within futurity. As I am writing these remarks, I am witnessing the absurdity of this democratic imagination and its unrelenting time. On one news program, I hear that police shot unarmed Andre Hill, a forty-seven-yearold Black resident of Columbus, Ohio, without cause, and rather than offering him medical assistance, decided to handcuff him (just in case the supine, dying man finds a gun, magically, I guess). On the other news program, I hear Black politicians importuning, begging, and guilting Blacks into voting for change. Black political pundits assure voters that the ontology of change is realizable if you just exercise your right to vote. “Never again!” “We will transform police practices!” “This time will be different!” Did Blacks not vote when police shot twelve-year-old Tamir Rice as he was playing with his toy gun on the playground? (By the way, no federal charges will be brought against the police officers who shot him). Did Blacks not vote when Sandra Bland lost her life in police custody? Did Blacks not vote after police deprived Eric Garner and George Floyd (and apparently 70 other people) of breath (Baker et al.)? In answer to my inquiry “why should we continue to vote if anti-Black violence is not changing?” I am told, “Just keep believing, we can vote people in that can change things!” When I then ask, “But I voted for President Obama (suspending my nihilism in an intoxication of hope-affect), I thought things were going to change for Blacks? I feel just as unsafe and endangered post-Obama as pre-Obama,” I am told, “Obama wasn’t a ‘magic Negro.’ He did the best he could.” Then I ask, “So why vote if it will take an act of magic to address the existential threat of anti-Blackness?” Time mocks the cyclical movement of such inquiries, they are, indeed, unanswerable within the creative, synthetic, and powerful democratic horizon. Voting becomes the premier instrument of the democratic imagination—supposedly, it activates the imagination with futurity, avoids paralysis with action, and can be repeated. What type of creativity will finally eradicate anti-Black brutality? And could such creativity even operate within time? Could we still call such creativity democracy? Must we abandon time to enable the imagination to perform the mystical, the magical, and the ineffable? If we have understood nihilism as the entrapment (and misery) of metaphysics, the reduction of Being to value circulation (axio-ontology) and Being’s forgottenness, and the neutralization of various hierarchies of existence and legitimacy (Vattimo), then Black nihilism would suggest that time is not a natural right or intrinsic resource. Time is a supreme onto-metaphysical value that traffics in anti-Black violence, subjugation, destruction, and must also be reduced to myth, fantasy, and displaced. Rather than providing the resource for creativity and power, time is a racial privilege that embeds itself in Being and metaphysics—it anchors the human and engenders extreme brutality and destructive pleasure. It is impossible, then, to de-link time from the anti-Black violence saturating it. Enterprises such as Black politics and democratic imagination reproduce the “same” rather than introducing a break in violence. Put differently, the democratic imagination takes time for granted as a natural right or unquestioned condition of existence, rather than bringing this condition under investigation and suspicion; reproducing time, as a creative and synthetic activity, is its primary preoccupation. Black existence exposes time as an unreliable lure, one vested in certain onto-metaphysical fantasies. I would add to Vittorio Possenti’s remarkable anatomizing of nihilism—theoretical, moral, theological, technological, and judicial—spatio-temporal nihilism, since both space and time provide problems for Black thinking in the abyss and demand a protocol of thinking (or imagination?) that is released from the preconditions of Being and ethics. Black nihilism de-idealizes both space and time as offering anything intrinsically or potentially transformative. Thus, the limit of space and time, for Black existence, cannot be re-worked into anything life-affirming or synthesized into anything meaningful. To put a finer point on this reflection: Anti-Blackness is a problem of time and the democratic imagination. Police shootings and COVID-19 deaths, for example, foreground the failure of time to alleviate Black suffering. Time is not curative; it is a weapon of tremendous violence. Despite the optimism of Black political theorists, time entraps Black thinking in a web of contradictions, absurdities, and impasses. The pathetic theorizing of Melvin Rogers, for example in his “Between Pain and Despair: What Ta-Nehisi Coates Is Missing,” presents an incredibly impoverished, unreliable, and inept reading of Black pessimism and the crisis of Black existence—it links democratic action to the imagination and clings to an “ontology of change” despite all evidence to the contrary in Black life. His work, however, represents a coterie of Black political optimists so ~~blinded~~ by democracy’s promise that they consider Black pain a form of political possibility. It is a perverse enterprise capitalizing on what we might call black jouissance—futurity constitutes the “temporal material” for surplus-pleasure in Black suffering, travail, and political failure. If there is any hope for the imagination and its endless circulation in contemporary Black thought, it will need to abandon time and refuse its seductions. The future is but one temporal value we must de-idealize and insert into an anti-Black will to power—one wreaking havoc across the globe. In these desperate times, Black existence needs a liberated imagination, an imagination liberated from formal thought, the world, destructive transcendence and immanence, and dogmatic preconditions. So, why continue to expend energy re-imagining the future and democracy? Let us focus Black imagining on enterprises that sustain us in the abyss. Outlining and presenting such enterprises requires tremendous spiritual and intellectual energy—but such investment is all we have.

#### Labor focus is a liberal discourse of inclusion that masks the singularity of black fungibility.

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For the past few weeks a convergence of social media discussions on reparations, Shona Jackson’s book Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean, and her recent post “Humanity beyond the Regime of Labor,” as well as my own thinking about Black Studies’ engagement with Conquest have all compelled me to think critically about the issue of Black labor.[1] I would like to take a moment to focus on the conceptual limits of labor as an epistemic frame for thinking about Blackness (as bodies and discourse) and its relationship to settler colonialism. I am particularly concerned about the ways that Black labor may crowd out Black fungibility as a conceptual frame for thinking about Blackness within settler colonial discourses.

While many scholars who understand themselves as humanists have long ago conceded that strict or heavy-handed Marxian (political economic) analyses are generally impoverished and wanting; labor as an analytic persists. Indeed, labor as a discourse, or what Shona Jackson would call a “metaphysics” and “ontoepistemology”—a way of living and a way of articulating this mode of living— still haunts our critical theories (Jackson, 2012, p. 217).[2] This is particularly true as scholars undertake the difficult work of understanding and naming how racialized people are situated within White settler colonial states. Configuring People of Color into the calculus of settler colonial relations is onerous and in fact laborious. It is especially difficult when trying to conceptualize the unique location of Blackness. I commend scholars for taking on this task.

In order to do this cumbersome work, scholars tend to rely on the tried and true rubric of labor. Labor becomes the site and mode of incorporating non-Black and non-Indigenous people into settler colonial relations in White settler nation-states. People of Color scholars often rehearse histories of arrival as populations of coerced labor as a way of explaining their presence, as well as distance or proximity to the category of the Settler. Labor also becomes a liberal discourse that allows immigrants and migrants to narrate the terms of their belonging and citizenship within White settler colonial states. In this way, labor functions as another discourse of inclusion. Recently, Jamilah Martin in response to Ta-Nehisi Coates’ article “The Case for Reparations” made a similar and astute point in her blog post “On Reparations: Resisting Inclusion and Co-optation” that reparations work as a discourse of inclusion within the project of American Democracy within the “U.S. anti-Black settler-imperial state.” While the integrationist project of reparations may be a liberal project of inclusion, it also relies on a “teleology of modern labor” (Jackson 2012, p. 147). It holds out hope for Black inclusion into a human family of laborers/workers. Yet, despite the claim of the Black laborer as “subject”, embedded within the metaphysics of labor, the bill H.R. 40 (otherwise known as the Reparations Bill) has not gained traction.

H.R. 40’s lack of success partially speaks to the inability of Blackness to become fully legible through human categories like the laborer/worker. Further, it evinces the ways that laborer and worker do not explain the ontological state of Blackness. In Red, White and Black, Wilderson attends to the ways that Afropessimists “have gone considerable lengths to show that, point of fact, slavery is and connotes an ontological status for blackness; and that the constituent elements of slavery are not exploitation and alienation but accumulation and fungibility (Wilderson 2010, 14). The “alienation” and “exploitation” that the human worker experiences through labor are contingent conditions resulting from human conflicts.

Many people can and have occupied these temporary and conditional abased human coordinates. White, Asian and South Asian, Latina/o and Middle Eastern indentured and other kinds of laborers have long inhabited White settler territories and nation-states and, as laborers, immigrants and migrants have all helped build the settler nation. Black laboring bodies have even been used to build the settler nation. However, Black labor is just one kind of use within an open, violent and infinite repertoire of practices of making Black flesh fungible.

One way that I have explained fungibility to my undergraduate students in my course “Gender and Sexuality in the African Diaspora,” is to think about the slave owner Madame Delphine LaLaurie’s use of enslaved bodies in the FX television series, American Horror Story: Coven. LaLaurie uses Black flesh to meet uses and desires beyond those of labor and profit. She runs a torture chamber in order to satisfy lusts that include and exceed the sexual. In one episode, she murders and then uses the blood of an enslaved newborn child as an elixir that wards off the aging process. One gets a sense that the possibilities for Black flesh are unending under her ownership.

The infinite possibilities for fungible Black flesh mark a fundamental distinction between fungible slave bodies and non-Black (exploited) laboring bodies. Further, Black bodies cannot effectively be incorporated into the human category of laborers. If Black laboring bodies were incorporated into the category; “laborer” would have no meaning as a human condition. Blackness is constituted by a fungibility and accumulation that must exist outside the edge and boundary of the laborer-as-human. If there were no Black fungible and accumulable bodies there could be no “wage laborer” that cohered into a proletariat.

While labor as a discourse may work for non-Black and non-Native people of color as a way of interpellating themselves within settler colonial relations, it does not explain Black presence, Black labor or Black use in White settler nation-states. Theories that attempt to triangulate Blackness into the Settler/Native antagonism in White settler states do so by positing Blackness as the labor force that helps make the settler landscape possible.[3] It is true that Black labor literally tills, fences in and cultivates the settler’s land. However, this singular analysis both obscures the issue of Black fungibility and reduces Blackness to a mere tool of settlement rather than a constitutive element of settler colonialism’s conceptual order.

Fungibility represents a key analytic for thinking about Blackness and settler colonialism in White settler nation-states. Black fungible bodies are the conceptual and discursive fodder through which the Settler-Master can even begin to imagine or “think” spatial expansion (King, 2013). The space making practices of settler colonialism require the production of Black flesh as a fungible form of property, not just as a form of labor. In Scenes of Subjection, Saidiya Hartman argues that the enslaved embody the abstract “interchangeability and replaceability” that is endemic to the commodity (Hartman, 1997, p. 21). Beyond, the captive body’s use as labor, the Black body has a figurative and metaphorical value that extends into the realm of the discursive and symbolic. What Hartman names as the “figurative capacities of blackness,” allows the Settler-Master to conceptualize Blackness as the ultimate sign for expansion and unending space within the symbolic economy of settlement (Hartman, 1997, p. 7; and King, forthcoming). Blackness is much more than labor within both slavery’s and settler colonialism’s imaginaries.

Like Hartman, I argue that Blackness’ figurative capacity and interchangeability has a life—or afterlife—within the discursive and spatial projects of settler colonial expansion (King, forthcoming). Settler colonialism requires a symbol of infinite flux in order to animate and imagine its spatial project (King, 2013). In my dissertation, In the Clearing, I argue that Jennifer Morgan’s book Laboring Women: Women and Reproduction in New World Slavery, configures Black women as spatial agents who are [symbolically] essential to the settlement of land during the colonial period in the coastal regions of the South and the West Indies. In fact, the Black female body must be discursively constructed in order to make it possible to even conceive of planting settlements during the “first generations of settlement and slave ownership” in South Carolina and Barbados (Morgan, 2004). Morgan argues that 18th century settlement required particular symbolic constructions and particular uses of the Black female body (Morgan, 2004, p. 26).[4]

Black fungibility represents this space of discursive and conceptual possibility for settler colonial imaginaries. Black fungible bodies work beyond the metrics and “metaphysics of labor” in White settler colonial states (Jackson, 2012, p. 215). Labor becomes a limiting frame for conceptualizing Blackness on White settler colonial terrain. Reimagining Blackness and theorizing anti-Black racism on unusual landscapes requires that we rethink the usefulness of convenient and orthodox epistemic frames. We must venture beyond labor and its limits in order to think about settler colonialism’s anti-Black modalities. Fungibility and other frames deserve our attention as we continue to think about anti-Black racism, Native genocide and the US settler-slave (e)state.

#### Focus on the political economy obscures libidinal violence AND neglects that white solidarity trumps working-class coalitions. Black subordination is the stage for class conflict

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To be sure, the pivotal political-economic role of slavery in fuelling national and global capital accumulation is not new. A plethora of scholars throughout the twentieth century, though with differing emphases, have shown how nineteenthcentury capitalism was inextricably dependent on Black slave labour. As Du Bois argues, ‘Black labor became the foundation stone not only of the Southern social structure, but of Northern manufacture and commerce, of the English factory system, of European commerce, of buying and selling on a world-wide scale.’58 Yet, revisiting the ways racial slavery and capitalism were linked remains important given the tendency in certain strands of Marxism to categorise slavery as pre-capitalist because the slave was not ‘free’ and the liberal freedom of the worker is taken to be the sine qua non of capitalism.59 In opposition to this tendency, the anti-Black relation reveals the ways slavery, as a mode of racialised expropriation, anchors the ‘unfree’ end of the labour spectrum and, like the colonial relation though in a radically different way, forms a precondition for the exploitation of normative wage-labour.

Looking at racial slavery solely through the lens of productive labour, however, fails to capture the ‘libidinal economy’60 of slavery. That is, the specificity of slavery as a regime of violence, domination and accumulation, including but not limited to the ways gendered, sexual and reproductive labour enabled and was conscripted to capital accumulation.61 Rather than bracketing the libidinal economy from the political economy, the anti-Black relation offers a dialectical reading of these constitutive aspects of racial slavery withoutreducing gratuitous anti-Black violencesolelyto a function of capital**.** Saidiya Hartman, for instance, troubles Du Bois’s and C. L. R James’s use of the category ‘worker’ to represent the slave, arguing that this move ‘obscures as much as it reveals’.62 In demonstrating how Black women’s labour exceeds the figure of the Black worker as conceptualised by two exemplars of Cedric Robinson’s Black radical tradition, Hartman at once draws attention to the ‘presumptive masculinism’ of this tradition, while simultaneously deepening this tradition’s insights.63 We can build on Hartman’s insights to connect two interconnected levels of gendered, racialised expropriation at the heart of racial slavery: the labour of the slave as a worker and the gendered labour of social and biological reproduction.64 In the context of the capitalist world-system, these two layers of political-economic and gendered, reproductive expropriation congealed in the institution of chattel slavery, accumulating profit for not only planters and slave owners, but also a vast intercontinental network of merchants, financiers, industrialists, states and corporations. In a direct sense, capital’s exploitation of wage-labour in the North and in Europe was premised on the expropriation of Black slave labour, including the reproductive capacities of Black women.

At the same time, the Black slave, by being confined to the ‘unfree’ end of the labour spectrum, gives stability and meaning to the ‘free’ white male proletariat. Here, the role of racial slavery in the social order troubles any simplistic binary between the political and libidinal economies of anti-Blackness. Expanding on Du Bois’s insight about the ‘public and psychological wage’, a compensatory set of privileges extended to poor whites in lieu of their status as ‘not Black’, scholars such as David Roediger and Joel Olson have argued that the ‘wages of whiteness’ helped consolidate a white cross-class alliance.65 This class collaboration between capitalists and a significant segment of white workers is the foundation of the white supremacist racial order, ensuring the undisturbed accumulation of capital in and through the preservation of Black subordination. White supremacy, in other words, stabilised the inherently exploitative system of American capitalism by [obstructing] ~~retarding~~ the development of a strong interracial working-class movement. Drawing on Du Bois’s Black Reconstruction, Olson states,

Du Bois shows that racial oppression is a form of social control that perpetuates class relations. The white working class serves as a buffer control stratum between capitalists and the rest of the working class, facilitating social stability by holding down Black workers. But Du Bois shows that race does more than exclude, divide, degrade, and repress. It is also a productive form of power that accumulates humans into particular groups in order to produce relations of docility-utility. It does this through a peculiar arrangement of class relations, which are secured through various privileges granted to members of the dominant race. This cross-class alliance between the capitalist class and a section of the working class is the genesis of the American racial order.66

What is especially insightful about Olson’s analysis of anti-Black racial domination, emerging from his reading of Du Bois, is that race is not simply exclusionary, divisive and repressive. Rather, race is also productive, generating a web of social relations that manages the contradictions between capitalist society and egalitarian visions of a democratic order.67 Resting on the structural relegation of enslaved (and free) Black populations to the bottom of the social order, the historical effect of this white cross-class collaboration is that it has provided stability for American democracy ‘by reconciling political equality with economic exploitation through a system of racial privilege and subordination that deflects attention from class, gender, and other grievances’.68

The expropriation of Black labour is a key motive force structuring Black subordination. I use the term expropriation to emphasise the distinction between capital’s extraction of surplus value from Black labour and capital’s subjection of ‘free’ wage-labour. Even with the transition from slavery to wage-labour following the Civil War, it remains necessary to avoid collapsing anti-Black domination as simply a product of capitalist exploitation.69 This is because racism, and antiBlack racism in particular, remains productive of the American social order in a way that the concept of ‘capital relation’, by itself, cannot capture. Two important clarifications are necessary here. First, the argument I am making is not transhistorical. The relations between race, labour, capital accumulation and resistance are mutable and variable across time. However, I am suggesting that there are certain historical continuities in the ways white supremacy and identification with whiteness have fractured working-class struggles across the history of American capitalism.70 Second, in connecting the libidinal economy of slavery and anti-Blackness to political economy, I am not arguing that white supremacy is merely an extension of capital’s logic. While the psychic and material effects of gratuitous anti-Black violence do indeed reinforce and reproduce capitalism, the framework of the libidinal economy affords insight into how ‘white sadism’, ‘white enjoyment’ and the pleasures derived from this violence more generally exceeds the grid of political economy.71

#### Extinction reps are anti-black and reinforce capitalism.

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We argue that scientific debates and cultural representations offer parallel imaginings of apocalypse that escape specific culpability (for instance, in processes of settler colonialism, capitalism, or imperialism) and instead center a universal human frailty that ends with triumph, a clear moral, and a clean slate. Not all imaginaries reiterate this narrative; in closing we turn to fantastical artwork that holds the violences of colonialism, racism, and environmental destruction in tandem with creative and abundant futures. Our aim, as three scholars working at the intersection of climate justice, geopolitics, and futurity, is to bring race more firmly into conversations of the Anthropocene. We suggest that apocalyptic imaginings have often been framed through an exclusionary hierarchy of humanity, necessitating closer examination of how clichéd genre conventions that saturate our media environment rely on anti-Black racism and indigenous erasure. Without such attention, we risk reiterating these clichés in narrating environmental crisis. We focus on renderings of the apocalypse in American popular culture as a window into cultural anxieties, following scholars in media studies and ecocriticism (Murray and Heumann, 2014; O’Brien, 2016; Willoquet-Maricondi, 2010) and geography (Dittmer and Gray, 2010; Dodds, 2008; Kennedy and Lukinbeal, 1997; Lukinbeal and Zimmermann, 2006; Sharp, 1998). Bettini (2013) and Hartmann (2010) caution that unexamined apocalyptic imagery in policy documents will shift governance in response to climate change from politics to security. The spillage of sci-fi into science and security is not hypothetical; consider the U.S. Army’s recent “Mad Scientist Science Fiction Writing Contest,” encouraging contestants “to explore fresh ideas about the future of warfare and technology … with implications for how the Army operates in future conflicts” (US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2016). We write here for political geographers, political ecologists, and scientists engaging with the politics of the environmental future. It is beyond our expertise to comprehensively detail genres of apocalypse, but rather we outline three among many possible geo-historical junctures that can clarify the political stakes of the Anthropocene. This does mean, as we explain later, that our readings of the films lean into the clichés of these genres, rather than untangle their simultaneous complexity. We understand these geo-historical junctures as flashpoints of a “master-narrative of the political unconscious” (Jameson, 1982), a turbulent reckoning with what it means to be human that is fraught with the racialized hauntings of genocide, slavery, and ongoing imperialism. What kind of urgency does the Anthropocene produce? For whom? Baldwin (2012: 172) argues whiteness is figured through “tropes of uncertainty, Utopia, apocalypse, prophesy, hope, fear, possibility and potentiality.” Here, we disaggregate futurity’s tropes in conversation with a parallel undoing of the fundamentally racialized definitions of humanness (da Silva, 2011; Gilroy, 2018; Weheliye, 2014; Wynter, 2003). At the core of processes that accelerated environmental devastation, now represented as global, has been the consistent sacrifice of some lives for the betterment of others. The Anthropocene uncomfortably reiterates a nature/human binary figured in racialized terms, at times serving as a proxy for deep-seated anxieties of racialized Others “taking over” the planet. We construct three geo-historical junctures: a staged encounter between geological proposals under review by the Anthropocene Working Group and corresponding cinematic apocalyptic genres. Building on Jameson’s (1982: 153) articulation of sci-fi as dramatization of “our incapacity to imagine the future … the atrophy of the utopian imagination,” we analyze how these apocalyptic imaginaries break down or intensify human/nature divisions in ways that sometimes disrupt but more often reinvigorate a racial classification of humanity. We begin by reviewing the Anthropocene as a collective contestation over what it means to be human, elaborate our rationale for examining popular culture, and then analyze the underlying racial premises of common Hollywood tropes. We close the article with warning signs and alternate imaginaries that disrupt this troubled legacy. Anthropocene as apocalyptic futurity We build on a rich tradition of “storytelling” in environmental justice activism and research (Houston and Vasudevan, 2017) that examines the Anthropocene as a narrative (Buell, 2014) whose meaning is being contested among scientists, social movement actors, critical theorists and cultural producers. What then do we learn from the storytelling that takes place in debates over when the Anthropocene began? Lewis and Maslin (2015, see also Davis and Todd, 2017) propose, 1610 as start date: the conquest of the Americas. This territorial accumulation highlights, “a long-term and large-scale example of human actions unleashing processes that are difficult to predict or manage” (Lewis and Maslin, 2015: 177). While the, 1610 proposal has not gained traction in the scientific community (Hamilton, 2015), its acknowledgment of colonization’s genocidal violence makes possible a more incisive understanding of what is meant by the designation of the epoch (Davis and Todd, 2017). Other proposals also highlight politically charged moments in history, and are read as Gergan et al. 3 a corrective to Enlightenment hubris (Lovbrand et al., 2009). As noted by Robbins and € Moore (2013: 9), “Anthropocene scientific culture thus simultaneously displays a panicked political imperative to intervene more vocally and aggressively in an earth transformation run amok and an increasing fear that past scientific claims about the character of ecosystems and their transformation were overly normative, prescriptive, or political in nature.” Analyzing climate change as a literary narrative explores how scientific knowledge gains traction, “[crystallizing] the anxieties of a wider public” (Buell, 2014: 272). For Yusoff (2013), this “geological turn” pushes our focus beyond social relations with fossil fuels and human impacts on Earth, to think of human being as itself geologically composed; the social then emerges as an expression of geology and geochemistry. The Anthropocene debate offers critical scholars a rare opportunity to engage with the scientific community, making possible a more political geoscience (Castree, 2015: 15). However, these proposals may elide who is contained within the “human,” while potentially legitimating “non-democratic and technophilic approaches, such as geoengineering” (Baskin, 2015: 11). Ahuja (2016) argues, “Geology is a spawn of the colonial capitalist assemblage that is rapidly transforming the planet … the discipline cannot stand objectively outside the relations that term clumsily attempts to name.” We find ourselves in agreement with theorization of the Capitalocene that challenges the narrative of a “fictitious human unity” erasing the unevenness of ecological violence (Haraway, 2016; Moore, 2017), and in agreement with critiques centering the persistent role of colonial processes and settler colonialism as inseparable from climate-driven conditions of violence (Davis and Todd, 2017; Whyte, 2016, 2013). For Baldwin (2014: 525), climate change anxieties reiterate the human as a racial category “at a moment often characterized as simultaneously post-racial and post-human.” While post-humanist scholarship has presented an important critique of the anthros, postcolonial, decolonial and critical race studies suggest that analysis of the Anthropocene must consider how colonial demarcations of the human–nonhuman boundaries were premised upon and developed alongside racial hierarchies of human difference (Gilroy, 2018; Jackson, 2013; Livingstone et al., 2011). Ecological anxieties abound (Robbins and Moore, 2013), and “fantasies of apocalypse are both a product and a producer of the Anthropocene” (Ginn, 2015: 352). But what politics do visions of future catastrophe engender (e.g. Baldwin, 2012; Ginn, 2015; Katz, 1995; Schlosser, 2015; Skrimshire, 2010; Swyngedouw, 2013)? Following the premise of popular geopolitics, we understand that popular culture narratives enable particular forms of truth making, inciting affective predispositions that generate political action (or inaction) (Dittmer and Gray, 2010; Dodds, 2008; Sharp, 1998). Apocalyptic film can be consumed as a spectacle of future ruin that closes space for political action by fetishizing causes (such as carbon), proposing technological fixes, and downplaying unevenly violent results of ecological change. But it can also be a form of social dreaming that makes different futures possible (Ginn, 2015; Schlosser, 2015). What kind of present is generated by representations of the future that reinscribe the racialized colonial origins of the Anthropocene? Future rendered as “white decline” is fundamental to the operation of biopolitical projects in the present (Smith and Vasudevan, 2017). This anxiety is new in the specificity of Anthropocene as discourse, but also contains strands of familiar apocalyptic imaginings, and crossover between policy and pop culture. The cover of The Population Bomb (Erhlich, 1968), centers a small white baby in a bomb to generate anticipatory fear and action in the form of “population control.” This neoMalthusian vision is one among many cultural productions of its time that reveal the undercurrent of fear under the guise of preventing war and environmental catastrophe (Hartmann, 1995). But Public Enemy’s, 1990 Fear of a Black Planet album cover art is, to our eyes, a franker reading of overpopulation fears: a vision of a Black planet eclipsing the earth, with Star Wars lettering and the words “the counterattack on world supremacy” repeating at the bottom. This cover art renders visible the submerged storylines of reversal and takeover that occur through proxies and fantasy in mainstream pop culture. White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) is here stripped of pretense.

#### The alternative affirms an insurgent black feminine otherwise that disarticulates Man’s chronopolitical order.

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If Afro-pessimism is necessarily a black feminism—Wilderson explains, “Afro-pessimism is made possible by the critical labors of a particular strand of Black feminism, a la [Saidiya] Hartman and [Hortense] Spillers”137—then its critique, which elaborates “the world, and maybe even the whole possibility of and desire for a world” as the “master’s tools” of Audre Lorde’s intervention,138 arms the black feminist argument with ammunition to forge a cosmology typified not by plentitude but by lack. This cosmology is grounded not by phallic signification but by a “perpetual and involuntary openness,” which—Sexton teaches us—is “the “paradigmatic condition of black existence in the modern world.”139 The notable difference between an Afro-pessimistic approach and a black feminist one, if any, is that Afro-pessimism accepts and leans into the paradigmatic structure of black antagonism, accepting the Historical alienation that typifies social death, it bears clarifying, not as a closed door to social life but as a portal into an/Other sociality—off the record. Without a name or referent, the “elsewhere and elsewhen” of black social life, which “sprouts out of the wet places in [our] eyes…the waiting places in [our] palms, [and] the tremble holding in [our mouths],”140 finds refuge in black femininity because (pace Spillers) the immateriality of gender in the black instance does not default the metaphysics of racial blackness to phallic masculinity but to invaginated femininity. Speaking to a different audience, Lewis Gordon explains that the racially black man as (pace Spillers) the personification “female flesh ungendered” is always already feminine. He writes,

The black man is caught. He cannot reject his femininity without simultaneously rejecting his blackness, for his femininity stands as a consequence of his blackness and vice versa. Standing in front of a white [human] wall, he appears as a hole, as a gaping, feminine symbol to be filled, closed up, by the being who has being.141

Doubly penetrable as hole—as the invaginated Other of Freud’s phallocentrism and the human-animal Other Fanon describes—the black (feminine) is a figure that awaits signification interminably. Powerless to “escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography,”142 the black (feminine) conjures Other ways of being and knowing that “can be felt and perceived even though—or especially if—[they] remain unrecognizable or unintelligible to our current common senses.”143 Excommunicated from the historical frame, the black (feminine) gives sanctuary to our freedom dreams. Hers is the safe harbor that guards black life from humanism’s thieving reach. And, as “the historical evocation of chaos”144—as (pace Fanon) an im/ possibility for time—the black (feminine) rages against the machine to disarticulate the “historical categories” that engender human be(com) ing in the first place.

In an exchange with Wilderson, Hartman summons the life and writings of Harriet A. Jacobs to claim the non-negotiable centrality of the black feminine as “the space of death, where negation is the captive’s central possibility for action.”145 Black femininity as a “content [that] exceeds […] expression”146—recall that the black (feminine) “[presents as] a virtual blank” and has no shape or meaning—models the social life of social death and is the harbinger of an occult Otherwise. That is to say, the black (feminine) is pregnant/impregnable with possibilities for a non-Historical becoming. She disarticulates the spatialization of time qua the racialization of time to “[interrupt] the habitual formation of bodies;”147 her #blackgirlmagic indexes an/Other time—a gestational time—to induce “chaos” for the record and the record-keeper alike. Following Annie Menzel’s reading of maternal generativity, the black feminine as the site of maternity—the black womb—invokes “unspeakable violence with insurgent horizon.”148 Not just void, the black feminine-cum-maternal engenders another space for living, not in-time but divested from time as the marker of forward-movement and teleological development. Hers is not the time of History (i.e., Man’s chronopolitical order), which Walter Benjamin describes as a “homogenous, empty time”149 that dialectically (re)produces “the ‘time of the now’”150 in/as the time of tomorrow—of futurity, or humanism. Rather, hers is an embryonic and gestational time, which like the slow and stalled time of captivity qua the oceanic is the insurgent and occult time of waiting/wading and wanting.151 While the birth canal, in Christina Sharpe’s pointed rendering, is a “domestic middle passage” that “[disfigures] black maternity, [turning] the womb into a factory (producing blackness as abjection much like the slave ship’s hold and the prison)” and demanding from the black mother the reproductive labor of chattel slavery—Sharpe explains that the birth canal “[ushers children] into her condition; her non-status, her non-being-ness”152—the black womb, as a container for gestation and not the vehicle for entry, specifically, as embryonic space-time suspends black life to nurture its emergent but not-yet-emerging Otherwise.

Taking inspiration from Spillers’ exhortation in “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe” (1987) to “make a place for” the black (feminine) as a “[non-Historical] social subject,” not to make room for her in “the ranks of gendered femaleness”—in humanism’s liberal folds—but to claim her “insurgent ground,”153 which Menzel describes as Spillers’ call for a “maternal temporality of continuous upheaval,”154 I submit, in closing, that the black feminine qua maternal, as Rizvana Bradley describes her, a “(w)holeness”155 that, as Toni Morrison memorably insists, “consistently [defies] classification,”156 is at once void (i.e., socially dead) and pregnant (i.e., with social life). She summons the revolution that we—all of us, black and nonblack persons (of color) alike—seek, not (just) as a salve for Trump’s violence but as the escape hatch we can use to flee the White/Master’s house, the violence of liberal humanism as the architect of chattel slavery and colonialism, and the container for human be(com)ing—History—that constrains our movements generally. To live in the space-time of the black womb’s oceanic is to be swallowed up by the infinite expanse of racial blackness. As the site of an/Other social, this embryonic space-time disarticulates Man’s chronopolitical order and is the “elsewhere and elsewhen” that we have been looking for, to date, in the wrong place—in the letter of the law of a civil society that operationalizes humanism’s race/ism. We might find our freedom instead in the black mother, who uses the resources she does not have to hold and to carry, indeed, to make life-generat-ing black poetry from the grammar of this wor(l)d’s insatiably violent antiblack prose.

#### Plan focus is a smokescreen. Vote negative to foreground scholarship that better articulates black suffering.

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The latter task – the trenchant interrogation of racial blackness and/in the formulations of modernity and its leitmotif of freedom – was advanced immeasurably by Professors Lindon Barrett, Denise Ferreira da Silva, and Ronald Judy, each in their own way. Yet, as Wilderson again makes plain in his Red, White, and Black (2009), the grand and anxious question of freedom is preceded, logically and ontologically, by a perhaps more confounding question: what does it mean to suffer? To address such a query sufficiently is to disregard the official impatience that envelopes it. Of course, this sentiment of expediency plays to an understandably popular urgency that emanates from the severity of everyday life for the vast majority of black people and the attendant status anxiety of the so-called new black middle class. However, black creative intellectuals have done less and less talking about our pain of late and probably a bit too much posturing about our plans. If anything, we have a surplus of plans! What we do not have is a language – much less a political culture – that adequately articulates both the variance and commonality of our positions and our predicaments. African American Studies is perhaps more inarticulate about the dimensions and details of black suffering today, in an era marked by transnationalism and multi-racialism, than it has been at any other historical juncture. I am speaking here of suffering in its fullest sense: not only as pain, which everyone experiences – say, the pain of alienation and exploitation – but also as that which blacks must bear, uniquely and singularly, that which we must stand and stand alone (see Sexton 2007).

The proposal and invitation continues:

The yield of this gathering will be to assemble leading scholars alongside emergent voices in the field of African American Studies in order to reflect critically upon the mutual implication of a proliferate and diverse racial formation with the living legacies of the black radical tradition in the age of American empire. The symposium seeks to depart from prevailing frameworks for comparative ethnic studies – that is, discerning how the respective experiences of blacks and other people of color are similar or dissimilar and what have been their historic interactions – to consider how the matrix of enslavement, which is to say the invention of “propertized human being” (Harris 1993), has not only shaped myriad forms of oppression and marginalization, but has compromised their modes of resistance and [their] claims to independence as well. If there is an overarching objective here, it is to properly illuminate what might be termed the obscurity of black suffering, to rescue it from the murky backwaters of persistent invisibility as well as the high-definition distortions of glaring and fascinated light.

Proper illumination is a catchy byline, an instance of wishful thinking, if ever there was one. But can we not speak of it more charitably, perhaps as a stratagem? Or as a spur that exercises the limits of our thinking?

In her ground-breaking Scenes of Subjection, Saidiya Hartman calls our attention to the ease with which scenes of spectacular violence against the black body – what she terms “inaugural moment[s] in the formation of the enslaved” – are reiterated in discourses both academic and popular, “the casualness,” she writes, “with which they are circulated, and the consequences of this routine display of the slave’s ravaged body”:

Rather than inciting indignation, too often they immure us to pain by virtue of their familiarity – the oft-repeated or restored character of these accounts and our distance from them are signaled by the theatrical language usually resorted to in describing these instances – and especially because they reinforce the spectacular character of black suffering. [. . .] At issue here is the precariousness of empathy and the uncertain line between witness and spectator. Only more obscene than the brutality unleashed at the whipping post is the demand that this suffering be materialized and evidenced by the display of the tortured body or endless recitations of the ghastly and terrible. In light of this, how does one give expression to these outrages without exacerbating the indifference to suffering that is the consequence of the benumbing spectacle or contend with narcissistic identification that obliterates the other or the prurience that too often is the response of such displays. (Hartman 1997: 4)

To put it bluntly, how does one engage with black suffering at all without simply erasing it – refusing it, absorbing it, appropriating it – in the very same gesture? Hartman’s inventive response to what might appear, at first glance, to be a rhetorical question or a cruel joke (that is, making a case with evidence that is, strictly speaking, inadmissible) is to move away from the expected “invocations of the shocking and the terrible” and to look, alternately, at “scenes in which terror can hardly be discerned,” “the terror of the mundane and quotidian,” what she phrases appositely as “the diffusion of terror.” What she finds, if calling it a “finding” is not immediately to betray it, is the recapitulation – the repetition and summation – of this spectacular primal scene across the entirety of the social text of racial slavery and its aftermath. That is to say, it is never the case that this terror is not present. It saturates the field of encounter. It is ubiquitous and yet it is, perhaps for the same reason, barely discernible. One wonders thus: how might the discussion of this dispersed, ambient terror become any more compelling than that which is condensed and acute? The point being not that blacks enter the wrong evidence or pursue the wrong argument, but rather that they are disallowed from entering evidence or building arguments in the first place, barred, as it were, from bringing charges and levying claims of grievance or injury as such. Again, what does it mean to suffer, in this way? This “challenge,” as Hartman modestly calls it, of giving expression to the inexpressible is taken up again in Fred Moten’s remarkable text, In the Break. In fact, it is the discrepancy between subjection and objection that launches the accomplishment of a project opened and closed around the impossibility and the inevitability of “the resistance of the object” (Moten 2003: 1). That, at least, is how it sounds to me. What is disquieting and provocative in this exchange is what I take to be a certain turning away from the implications of Hartman’s precarious distinction between witness and spectator, a positional instability that is not mitigated by transpositions in the sonic register, nor, for that matter, in the performance arts more generally (Barrett 1999; Weheliye 2005).

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#### Black abjection is the root cause of capitalism---AND fungibility shapes contemporary markets so it controls the case

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W. E. B. Du Bois suggested the white worker’s choice and the black slave’s absence of choice were important components of the capitalistic distinction between blackness and whiteness. Du Bois argued white workers always held out hope that “they themselves might also become planters by saving money, by investment, by the power of good luck.”71 Black slaves come into existence not as exploited, which is to say “free” to sell their labor (choice), but expropriated in ways that mirror the extraction of natural resources.72 Another way to say this is that the slave, much like the tree or cattle, for Frank Wilderson,73 is the ground on which human capitalist exploitation stands. Julia Ott’s comprehensive review of research on slave capital bears this out: the transatlantic slave trade and slave-based Southern US commodity production created modern capitalism, financing transformations in technology, industry, and economy more thoroughly than any other capital input.74

Ian Baucom explains the connection between the objecthood of black slave bodies and the economic rationality of finance.75 According to Baucom, it was the transatlantic slave trade that birthed the modern financial calculation of value through insurance on slaves. The value of slave bodies as chattel, which could, if circumstances demanded, be cast overboard from a slave ship facing turbulent seas, was guaranteed in advance for the owners of slave ships by insurance policies. The calculation of the cost of that insurance was a foundational form of what Baucom variously terms “actuarial historicism” or “theoretical realism,” which are forms of rationality that “ground value in the loss of the singular and the invention of the average.”76 In other words, insurance on slave bodies evacuated their singularity more completely even than enslavement, rendering them placeholders of value, which could be converted into paper money either through exchange or through the exercise of an insurance contract once they were cast overboard. For Baucom, the modern credit economy and finance capitalism itself are founded on the reification of speculative values that the insured transatlantic trade in black slaves inaugurated. In his formulation, it is the white slave trader or actuary who can see through the “thingliness” of the objects of slavery to calculate their speculative value, embodying the “speculative culture of finance capital” that has much in common with the economic rationality invoked in the calculation of the abstract cost of “free” checking accounts, despite their very real lived costs for poor customers.77

These dynamics did not end with slavery. The twentieth century is rich with examples of outerdetermined black objecthood within capitalism.78 The 1939 Federal Housing Authority Underwriting Manual that served as both guide and tool for suburbanization in the US not only ratified the practice of “redlining” whereby neighborhoods of black families were drawn out of mortgage lending, but actually directed homeowners to use racial covenants to prevent black people from moving into their neighborhoods.79 Both redlining and racial covenants acted on black homeowners and potential buyers, making them objects to be circumscribed and excluded. They also prevented black people from becoming privileged subjects of the American mortgage boom, which was built and protected for those consumers who fit within the racialized subject position of homo economicus.

#### Market concentration can’t explain inequality or wage stagnation, and antitrust won’t solve.

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This paper highlights some empirical findings from the new literature on the effect of labor and product market concentration on wages. We address three questions about market concentration that have not always been placed front and center in this literature. The first question is, “Does concentration adversely affect wages at a point in time?” The second question is, “Has concentration grown over time?” The third question is, “Can growing concentration by itself explain a significant portion of the change in wage trends in recent decades?” We find there is evidence to answer “yes” to the first and second questions but not the third. To be clear, the failure to answer affirmatively to the third question is not a criticism of these studies. The studies are not claiming that rising concentration alone can explain wage stagnation or inequality. Yet too many readers have taken these studies’ findings to this conclusion.

Finally, this paper makes two broader points about market power. First, market concentration is not the only source of power—particularly employer power—in markets. Second, even unchanged employer power (like that conferred by market concentration) can play a role in growing wage suppression and inequality if it is accompanied by a collapse of workers’ market power. The new literature on market concentration tells us a lot about employer power, but further exploration of what has happened to workers’ market power remains a key research agenda.

This paper highlights the need to tackle sluggish wage growth and rising inequality with a broad menu of policy interventions that go beyond those provided by competitive models to focus on employer and worker power, and even beyond the antitrust agenda suggested by focusing exclusively on market concentration.

Following are our key conclusions:

Labor market concentration is negatively correlated with wages, but the scope of its downward pressure on wages is limited.

New research shows that labor market concentration is negatively correlated with wages. However, the effect of labor market concentration is comparatively modest when scaled against what we consider the most significant wage trend in recent decades: the growing gap between typical (median) workers’ pay and productivity.

The new literature on market concentration has not yet provided concrete empirical estimates of a key labor market trend of recent decades—rising compensation inequality. This should be a priority for this research agenda in the future.

The new concentration literature does allow us to estimate the effect of market concentration on the share of overall income claimed by labor compensation. These estimates suggest that concentration has not risen enough, nor is its effect on labor’s share of income strong enough, to account by itself for an economically important share of the divergence between economywide productivity and the typical worker’s pay in recent decades.

The new research on labor market concentration implies that this concentration reduced wage growth by roughly 0.03 percent annually between 1979 and 2014, a decline that would explain about 3.5 percent of the total divergence between the median worker’s pay and economywide productivity over the same period.

One important study shows that the “average” labor market is “highly concentrated.” But differences between measures of concentration of the average labor market and the labor market experienced by the average worker have important implications for how to assess the impact of labor market concentration on long-term wage trends. In other words, many labor markets suffer from high degrees of concentration, but most people work in labor markets with only low-to-moderate degrees of concentration.

Nonetheless, labor market concentration is a particular challenge for rural areas and small cities and towns. This is an important finding for those looking to provide economic help to residents of those areas.

#### If employer power is high, it’s because of the minimum wage, union collapse, trade, arbitration agreements, and weak benefits regulation---not market concentration.

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What if relative employer power has grown only because workers’ power has been hamstrung by policy?

Given that frictions can reduce workers’ ability to find alternative employment, it is no surprise that some employers strive to create such frictions. For example, many firms require that new employees sign noncompete agreements as a condition of employment. If workers believe that these noncompete agreements are enforceable, then their ability to search for better jobs can be restricted, giving firms some degree of monopsony power. Or employers may collude to refrain from poaching one another’s employees. The baldest real-world example of this type of employer collusion surfacing in recent years was the cartel of Silicon Valley employers that agreed to not hire one another’s employees.20

A common assumption uniting analyses of labor market concentration and studies documenting frictions that generate dynamic monopsony power is that growing employer power might lie behind American wage trends. It seems clear to us that employers do wield more relative power vis-à-vis their workers and that this plays a large role in driving wage trends. But this rise in the relative market power of employers might owe less to growing market concentration or labor market frictions and more to the collapse of policies and institutions that buttressed the relative market power of workers.

It may have always been the case that American labor markets are concentrated, and that this concentration—all else equal—puts downward pressure on wages. It may also have always been the case that labor markets (particularly low-wage labor markets) are riven with frictions that—all else equal—give employers the power to set wages. But in previous decades, these always-and-everywhere sources of employer market power were likely neutralized by institutions and policies that provided countervailing power to workers. In more recent decades, several of these institutions and policies have been eroded or rolled back, with nothing to replace them as sources of countervailing power.

For example, since 1979, macroeconomic policy (particularly monetary policy) has prioritized steady and very low inflation over low unemployment. Even by too-conservative standards set by official estimates of the natural rate of unemployment, macroeconomic policy has failed to secure full employment for the large majority of these years. This has led to labor markets with too much slack to allow low- and moderate-wage workers to demand and achieve consistent wage gains. The evidence is quite clear that low- and moderate-wage workers need lower rates of unemployment to post wage gains than do their higher-wage peers. It is no coincidence, in our view, that the only period of strong, across-the-board wage growth since 1979 was during the late 1990s and early 2000s, when unemployment was allowed to fall far below levels that had previously been thought to lead to accelerating inflation. In those years, while wages grew across the board, inflation did not accelerate.

Besides labor markets tight enough to allow robust wage growth for most workers, other bulwarks of market power for typical workers (labor standards, broadly defined) have also eroded in recent decades. The most prominent example is the federal minimum wage, which in inflation-adjusted terms is now roughly 25 percent lower than it was at its height in 1968, even though productivity has nearly doubled and low-wage workers have become far more educated in the intervening years (Cooper 2017). Policymakers have failed to enact sufficient increases in the federal minimum wage despite growing economic evidence that most minimum wage increases since 1990 (at the federal or state level) have not caused measurable employment loss, contrary to predictions of competitive labor market models (Cooper, Mishel, and Zipperer 2018). This finding is consistent with low-wage labor markets that are characterized by dynamic monopsony power held by employers. In models of dynamic monopsony, legislated wage increases can lead to higher wages and greater, not lessened, employment.

For middle-wage workers, the key labor standard that has eroded is collective bargaining. Research demonstrates that this erosion has had a substantial impact on middle-wage workers, both union and nonunion (Rosenfeld, Denice, and Laird 2016). The view that labor market concentration and other specific sources of employer power have always been present but were tamed in previous decades by countervailing worker power is consistent with the empirical findings by Benmelech, Bergman, and Kim (2018), which, as noted earlier, seem to indicate that the growth of labor market concentration in and of itself cannot explain a dominant portion of rising wage inequality or the divergence between typical workers’ pay and economywide productivity. Though not mentioned earlier, Benmelech, Bergman, and Kim (2018) also provide empirical results clearly showing that the wage-suppressing effect of labor market concentration is lessened when union coverage is strong. So, if labor market concentration has been relatively constant, but the countervailing force imposed by unionization has eroded, this combination could well have led to significant wage losses. If this is the case, then concentration is clearly an important ingredient in the story, even if eroding employee power is the real lever.

Benmelech, Bergman, and Kim (2018) also show that the wage-suppressing effect of labor market concentration is increased when imports (particularly from lower-wage nations) are high as a share of the local economy. This finding, which is consistent with well-publicized findings by Autor, Dorn, and Hanson (2013), also highlights that trade flows can place downward pressure on wages through channels besides their effect on relative demand for various types of labor. The shorthand description for the effects of globalization on wages running through labor market power is that trade flows impose a threat effect that can dampen wages. Again, if labor market concentration has been an ongoing fact of life that was “trying” to suppress wages for decades, but growing trade flows from lower-wage nations led to a collapse of worker-side market power and the combination led to wage losses, then concentration is a key ingredient in this story.

While economists have been slow to wrestle with the labor market fallout of policy efforts to shift relative market power from workers to employers (at least until the recent spate of literature), employers and their representatives in the policy world certainly seem to think these policies are important. Besides the policy changes listed above, employers have pursued an aggressive host of practices meant to limit workers’ bargaining position, and policymakers, particularly through the blessing of case law in the courts, have often ratified these practices. Examples of these employer practices include mandatory forced arbitration agreements, noncompete agreements, and nonpoaching agreements.21

Further, because of the thin policy framework surrounding mandatory benefits and labor standards, the provision of nonwage compensation—such as health insurance coverage, retirement contributions, paid sick and family leave, vacation time, and the availability of consistent and predictable scheduling—can differ radically across employers. This makes it harder for employees to seamlessly compare jobs with full information and makes it hard for them to unambiguously identify better outside options for employment. All of these factors have systematically undercut workers’ individual and collective leverage relative to employers and led to slower wage growth, especially for low- and middle-wage workers.

#### Courts circumvent.

Newman 19, University of Miami School of Law professor and a former attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice Antitrust Division. (John, 4-5-2019, "What Democratic Contenders Are Missing in the Race to Revive Antitrust", *Atlantic*, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/04/what-2020-democratic-candidates-miss-about-antitrust/586135/)

But the federal courts represent a massive stumbling block for any progressive antitrust movement. Reformers have identified two paths forward; both lead eventually to the court system. The first is relatively moderate: appoint regulators who will actually enforce the laws already on the books. Warren’s plan rests in part on this straightforward idea. The second, more audacious path requires congressional action to amend and strengthen our current laws. Warren’s call for a new ban on technology companies’ buying and selling via their own platforms falls into this category. Klobuchar has also proposed new antitrust legislation that would make it easier to block harmful mergers and acquisitions. But no matter its content, enforcing a law requires persuading a judge. When it comes to U.S. antitrust laws, federal judges—not Congress, and not regulatory agencies—are the ultimate arbiters. The Department of Justice Antitrust Division, one of our two public enforcement agencies, files all its cases in federal courts. And although the Federal Trade Commission (the other) can decide cases internally, the inevitable appeals eventually end up in court as well. No matter how strongly worded a law may be, ideologically driven judges can usually find a way around enforcing it. The cyclical history of U.S. antitrust law is proof that judges wield nearly limitless institutional power in this area. Soon after Congress passed the Sherman Act in 1890, a conservative Supreme Court began to chip away at its effectiveness. Congress reacted in 1914 with the Clayton Act, which sought to ban anticompetitive mergers. In 1936, at the height of the New Deal era, Congress passed the Robinson-Patman Act, which prohibits price discrimination (charging different prices to different buyers for the same product). These laws were actively enforced for decades. But starting in the late 1970s, conservative judges began to erode the Clayton Act. Today, megamergers among competitors such as Bayer and Monsanto barely raise eyebrows. So-called vertical mergers, which combine suppliers and their customers, are now all but immune from antitrust enforcement—see the DOJ’s failed challenge to AT&T and Time Warner’s recent tie-up. Under the business-friendly Roberts Court, the Robinson-Patman Act has similarly been eviscerated. By the 2000s, the ideas of the conservative Chicago School had become mainstream in antitrust circles. Robinson-Patman, a law intended to protect small businesses, was an easy target for Chicago School critics narrowly focused on efficiency and low consumer prices. Their attacks found a receptive audience in the federal judiciary. Among insiders, Robinson-Patman is now known as “zombie law.” It remains on the books, but regulators no longer bother trying to enforce it. If Democrats want to change antitrust law, they will first and foremost need to change the judges who apply it. Yet none of the 2020 contenders championing antitrust reform have even mentioned the possibility of appointing progressive antitrust thinkers to the bench. Conservatives, on the other hand, have long recognized the centrality of antitrust to broader questions about the apportionment of power in society. In his seminal work, The Antitrust Paradox, Robert Bork called antitrust a “microcosm in which larger movements of our society are reflected.” Battles fought in this arena, Bork wrote, “are likely to affect the outcome of parallel struggles in others.” Strong antitrust enforcement keeps powerful monopolies in check. Toothless antitrust allows the unlimited accumulation of corporate power. Recognizing the high stakes, the Republican Party has gone to great lengths to appoint conservative antitrust experts to the federal judiciary. Bork was an antitrust professor at Yale Law School before becoming an appellate judge in 1982.\* Frank Easterbrook practiced and taught antitrust before donning the black robe in 1985. Douglas Ginsburg served as the head of the Justice Department’s Antitrust Division before he became a federal judge in 1986. None of the three managed to join the Supreme Court, but not for lack of trying. Reagan nominated both Bork and Ginsburg to serve as justices, though Ginsburg withdrew and Bork was famously rejected after a contentious Senate hearing. And whom did the GOP select as its very first U.S. Supreme Court nominee during the Trump Administration? None other than Neil Gorsuch, who practiced antitrust law for more than a decade before joining the Tenth Circuit. Even as a judge, Gorsuch continued to teach a law-school course on antitrust until his confirmation to the Supreme Court in 2017. Once upon a time, progressives demonstrated similar concern about judicial treatment of antitrust laws. Justice Stephen Breyer, for example, served as special assistant to the head of the DOJ Antitrust Division before his judicial appointment by President Jimmy Carter. Earlier still, Justice John Paul Stevens was an antitrust lawyer, scholar, and professor before his appointment to the bench. Today’s Democratic 2020 hopefuls seem to have forgotten the lessons of history. Their antitrust proposals focus exclusively on appointing the right regulators and amending our current statutes. These are right-minded ideas, but they overlook the central role judges play in our political system. There is an old saying in the legal community: “Hard cases make bad law.” That may be true, but it is just as often the case that bad judges make bad law. Real antitrust reform will require more than regulatory and legislative tweaks; it will require the right judges.

#### Alt causes to surveillance. [KU = blue]

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This goes beyond the economic sphere. Many leaders are already using the coronavirus crisis to ramp up intrusive surveillance and roll back democracy, often taking inspiration from China. Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has won new dictatorial powers to indefinitely ignore laws and suspend elections. In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu enacted an emergency decree preventing parliament from convening, in what has been described as a “corona-coup.” In Moscow, a network of 100,000 facial recognition cameras are being used to make sure anyone placed under quarantine stays off the streets.

But it is not just strongmen leaders who are exploiting the crisis to tighten their own grip over society. Last week Google and Apple announced that they were jointly developing a global tracking “platform” that will be built into the operating system of every Android and Apple phone, turning virtually every mobile phone into a coronavirus tracker. Many Western governments are now working in partnership with them to scale up national surveillance tools. In the UK, Google and Apple are working with the National Health Service (NHS) to develop a mobile phone app that will trace people’s movement and identify whether they have come into contact with infected people. The US, Germany, Italy and the Czech Republic are also reported to be developing their own tools. Thanks to the coronavirus, China’s surveillance architecture could arrive in the West much sooner than we think.

#### Antitrust interventions don’t instigate movements---they coopt them.

Crane 18, the Frederick Paul Furth, Sr. Professor of Law, University of Michigan. (Daniel A., 9-27-2018, “Antitrust’s Unconventional Politics,” *Virginia Law Review*, Vol. 104, https://www.virginialawreview.org/articles/antitrusts-unconventional-politics/)

A final reason that the politics of antitrust sometimes confound conventional left–right divides has to do with the pragmatic sense that some regulatory interventions may be necessary to preserve capitalism politically, and that antitrust may be the least objectionable one. This “antitrust or else” perspective has characterized the politics of antitrust from the beginning.

The conventional view that Congress intended the Sherman Act to seriously undermine the trusts is balderdash. According to Professor Merle Fainsod and Lincoln Gordon of Harvard University, “[T]he Republican Party, in control of the 51st Congress, was ‘itself dominated at the time by many of the very industrial magnates most vulnerable to real antitrust legislation.’”[87] A more realistic view is that the 51st Congress passed the Sherman Act to avert more radical reforms. Speaking on the Senate floor in 1890, Senator John Sherman warned his brethren, many of whom were controlled by the trusts, that Congress “must heed [the public’s] appeal or be ready for the socialist, the communist, and the nihilist.”[88] Sherman thus conceived of his eponymous antitrust statute as politically necessary to diffuse more radical political movements—as a sort of Band-Aid on capitalism.

The idea that antitrust legislation and enforcement are necessary accommodations to public demand has a long pedigree in both conservative and more progressive circles. Writing in 1914, William Howard Taft described the Sherman Act as “a step taken by Congress to meet what the public had found to be a growing and intolerable evil.”[89] Notably, Taft did not own the public’s concern himself, nor did he attribute such a concern to Congress. Similarly, Theodore Roosevelt was relatively unconcerned with the trusts personally, but he “saw the trust problem as something that must be dealt with on the political level; public concern about it was too urgent to be ignored [90]

Beyond the concern that, absent antitrust, capitalism itself might succumb to reformist pressures, there is a more modest possibility that, absent antitrust, political pressures would lead to overregulation. Antitrust and administrative regulation are conventionally viewed as alternatives to address market failures. From the Reagan Administration to the Financial Crisis of 2008, the overall arc of American law involved simultaneous deregulation and relaxation of antitrust enforcement. If popular dissatisfaction with the economic status quo grows, demand might grow to pull either the regulatory or antitrust lever. Those ideologically committed to a light governmental hand on the market might prefer the antitrust alternative.

It is hard to judge at any given moment how much political support for antitrust intervention is motivated by genuine concern over monopoly and competition, and how much of it derives from the fact that, in the face of popular demand for a governmental cure

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to a perceived evil, it is often easier to delegate the solution to antitrust than to propose a regulatory solution. From the Sherman Act forward, however, it is certain that antitrust has often been deployed as a foil to more interventionist forms of regulation. The ideological and political implications of that move are complex and not neatly housed in left–right categories.

Conclusion

Antitrust is back on the menu. Given the ebb-and-flow patterns of antitrust enforcement in American history, that should come as no surprise. Nor should it be surprising that the pressures for enhanced antitrust enforcement are coming from both wings of the political spectrum, as is the defense of the incumbent consumer welfare regime. Despite the appearance of a conventional left–right divide over antitrust enforcement since the 1970s, in broader historical perspective the ideological lines over monopoly and competition are far less determined.

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### 2NC---Root Cause

#### Capitalism’s origin is the plantation, NOT the factory---reducing anti-blackness to a derivative of class conflict conceals enslavement and dooms their movements

Sorentino 19, Assistant Professor of Gender & Race Studies at the University of Alabama. (Sara-Maria, Fall 2019, “The Abstract Slave: Anti-Blackness and Marx’s Method”, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 96, pg. 25-27)

This preliminary reading, however, is not induced by critical cues on Marx’s part. Marx does empirically provide examples of the coexistence of abstract and concrete domination, free and unfree labor, as well as of force being used as a political tool. But unlike Sylvia Wynter, who insists that the secret of capitalism is to be found “not in the factory but in the plantation,” 54 Marx maintains that labor, under the sign of industrial manufacture, is the representative “unity of the diverse.” Although the presence of wage labor may not define capitalism—after all, both slavery and wage labor preceded capitalism, only to be rearticulated by it—the main achievement of Capital is nonetheless to define the social relationship between capital and wage labor. Again, the attention is not on the abstract slave’s reproduction of political ontology but on abstract labor’s role in the production and positing of capital: Capital “produces not only commodities, not only surplus-value, but it also produces and reproduces the capital-relation itself; on the one hand the capitalist, on the other the wage-labourer.” 55 Slaves remain empirical protrusions and formal flourishes to the logic of capital; they are not theorized as part of this social relationship.

We can say, for now, that Marx recognizes trans-Atlantic slavery’s ostensive “capitalist nature” as a historical particular, important for the development of capital and the means by which it is reproduced, yet ultimately inessential to his critical presentation of capitalist totality. Sequestering his profound insights into the genesis of subjectivity from the constitutive problem of slavery and blackness, the slave can only analogically reappear as theoretical ammunition in a comparative explication of capitalist materiality. Marx’s grafting method is incongruous with his major methodological innovation: Slavery is theoretically abstracted out of the capitalist totality, even though the purveyors of personal domination—masters, purportedly—are recognized in their transformation into those capitalists who, in Marx’s articulation, are themselves sufferers of abstract domination. Indeed, in the second volume of Capital, Marx again affirms that the slave market “retains an element of natural economy” and “receives supplies of the commodity labour-power from war, piracy, etc., and this pillage is not mediated by a process of circulation, but is rather the appropriation in kind of other people’s labour-power by direct physical compulsion.” 56 The difference that historiographers have identified in the slave market, where slaves were being produced for circulation in a complicated causal relationship to blackness, is explicitly disavowed, its qualitative difference repressed.57 Slavery’s modes of subjection, then, never become the Marxist premise from which to re-think the condition of production of knowledge and social life, of mind and matter, of freedom and necessity.

A large determinant of this repression is that Marx never theorizes race as a productive force. In a key fragment found in Marx’s “Wage Labor and Capital,” Marx parrots Pierre-Joseph Proudhon to ask (and answer) “What is a Negro slave? A man of the black race. The one explanation is as good as the other.” 58 His critique of Proudhon’s tautology does not fare much better, as Marx continues: “A Negro is a Negro. He becomes a slave only in certain relationships.” 59 Blackness is naturalized apart from the economy, and slaveness is contingent on broader relations of production. By naturalizing, and thus neutralizing, the power of racial slavery, capitalism’s disavowal of its own conditions of reproduction is theoretically carried over into Marxism, insofar as, to be a little glib, Marx is himself a product of capitalism and immanent to its standpoint. Or, as Hortense Spillers suggests with respect to Freud, Marx “could not ‘see’ his own connection to the ‘race’/culture orbit, or could not theorize it, because the place of their elision marked the vantage point from which he spoke.” 60 Because Marx’s method expresses the political ontology of the human (only), it is one-sided: Slavery, as a real abstraction, goes behind Marx and Marxists’ backs.

If Marx constitutively unthinks racial slavery, then the problem of racial slavery cannot simply be integrated into the theorization of capitalism without the entire constellation of the abstract and concrete undergoing a dramatic modification. Nor can Marx’s critique be destabilized only at the level of his mode of “inquiry,” as with Robinson’s substitution of the Anglo proletariat for the Atlantic maroon, without also intervening at the level of abstraction engendered by Marx’s dialectical “mode of presentation.” 61 Further, because Robinson (1) characterizes “racial capitalism” as a problem of the appropriation and extraction of black labor power and (2) reduces race to an “epistemology” for the “rationale and cultural mechanisms of domination,” his rejection of Marx’s abstractions all too easily translates into their redemption.62 With race as a ruse approximate to “false consciousness,” Robinson can assert that the black radical tradition has increasingly made strides in rendering the problem of race “more transparent,” acquiring awareness and clarity with “each historical moment.” 63

Moreover, in his progressive enthusiasm, Robinson misses that “transparency” and “history” may be emergent abstractions of anti-blackness.64 While Robinson does identify that “racialism,” both material and ideal, “insinuated not only medieval, feudal, and capitalist social structures, forms of property, and modes of production, but as well the very values and traditions of consciousness through which the peoples of these ages came to understand their worlds and their experiences,” the traditions of consciousness to which he alludes do not challenge the formal predicates of consciousness itself.65 Despite approaching the depth of the structure of anti-blackness, then, Black Marxism delivers an oppositional consciousness whose immanent outside (“Africanity”), predicated on a developmental ordering of history, invested in sovereignty, and proselytizing a narrative of redemption, keeps Marx’s abstract premises intact. Marx’s abstractions absorb the slave. Therefore, instead of the corrective of the concrete, I argue that we need, to repeat Marx, to re-diagnose the “general illumination,” that which “bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity.” 66

### 2NC---AT Extinction First

#### Extinction’s non-unique, placing it in the future smooths over the ongoing black apocalypse

Karera 19, assistant professor of philosophy and African American studies @ Wesleyan University. (Axelle, “Blackness and the Pitfalls of Anthropocene Ethics”, *Critical Philosophy of Race*, Volume 7, Issue 1, pg. 43-46)

In all their shocking glory, Summers’s remarks epitomize a pervading instrumentalization of black existence, which challenges much of the totalizing gestures of Anthropocene narratives. It is the logic intrinsic to these gestures that I have attempted to lay out thus far. Braidotti, Morton, Tuana, and even Colebrook in her incisive interventions, are unable to relinquish or effectively resist the homogenizing consequences of the discourse.42 Their respective ethical and critical prescriptions sidestep an engaged account of social antagonisms, and more specifically those enacted along racial lines. Instead, these are smoothed over and displaced in the name of an ethics of futurity grounded on a deeply naturalized variation of relationality—namely that all beings, insofar as they are earthly at least, are fundamentally interconnected and can (or must) only be perceived as such. This affirmation, as well as Braidotti’s own brand of vitalism, is not only symptomatic of a more entrenched form of historical amnesia concerning questions of culpability (i.e., how did we end up here and who is responsible). More perniciously, they appear to be yet another instantiation of Saidiya Hartman’s provocative claim that “the white bourgeois family can actually live with murder in order to reconstitute its domesticity.”43 In its most blatant form, Summers’s secret memo is precisely this! There is nothing sacrificial in his proposition; it is not about preserving the air quality that matters—so to speak—at the expense of Africans. Rather, Africa—and therefore blackness—remains the disposable trash container of the world par excellence; a case of instrumentalization in its most primitive execution. Under these conditions, one is thus pressed to inquire how can a global ethics of care44 be possible when fundamental questions of racial culpability are eluded in the name of a shortsighted conception of “becoming” and an aggrandized notion of ontological relationality—both of which remain unwilling to sustain engagements with their violent racial foundations. Indeed, in her critical essay evocatively titled “The Mattering of Black Lives: Octavia Butler’s Hyperempathy and the Promise of the New Materialism,” Diana Leong asserts that the “reduction and disavowal of race [. . .] is something of a structural necessity for the new materialisms.”45 In ways that significantly resonate with my own argument in this article, she contends that, in addition to being a discursive necessity, circumventing the race question in this discourse “enables an ethics of relation or affect that further legitimizes the reduction and dismissal of race.”46 In other words, as I have also maintained, the ontological realism that naturalizes this “hyper-ethics” of relationality can only be maintained by the concealment of systems of racial oppression.

Recall that the ethical dimension of Braidotti’s becoming-posthumanist strives for the actualization of a community-to-come unrestrained by “the guilt of ancestral communal violence, or the melancholia of unpayable ontological debts.”47 This suggests that posthumanist reconfigurations of subjectivity and its creative invention of a “future people” as solutions to our ecological demise, hinge on the forgetting of the atrocious making of “another people” by slavery and the responsibility such violent history bestows on the Western world. What remains at stake here, however, is not so much the general (and generic) recognition of the differential effects of our environmental crisis on vulnerable populations. The literature exists, and the work continues to be done.48 Rather, we must return to the structural conditions that facilitates and renders possible the “symptomatic desire to abandon race.”49

If indeed, as Leong forcefully argues, “Blackness [. . .] is the specter that haunts the Anthropocene and its possible futures,” it is imperative that we incisively revisit the conditions that make “blackened” life and death unregisterable and therefore un-grievable. And if indeed grievability and the imperative to survive constitute, as Colebrook suggests, the “we” of the Anthropocene, it behooves us to attend to those ungrievable lives for which even survival requires facing death. That is to say, those lives for which existence requires suicidal decisions such as deadly expeditions across the Mediterranean Sea, the Mexico-United States border, and the many “border-fortresses” of the EU. How can we possibly ascertain to possess an “adequate cartography of our real-life conditions,” when we continue to sidestep considering the precarity of “social practices of human embodiment,” which necessitate one to gamble with one’s own death in order to envisage the possibility of a future?50

Insofar as Tuana’s viscous porosity, Morton’s hyperobject, and Braidotti’s vitalist posthuman politics are mostly interested in giving an account of the ontological foundation of species entanglements, they cannot account for the violent foundational structures that make Summers’s indifference I mention above possible. In my opinion, this is the discursive gift that philosophical interventions in the study of anti-black racism have offered us in the past couple of decades, namely (and I quote Jared Sexton here): “A meditation on a poetics and politics of abjection wherein racial blackness operates as an asymptomtic approximation of that which disturbs every claim or formation of identity and difference as such.51 Unlike Braidotti, whose main concern is to reconfigure the boundaries of subjectivity so as to recompose, with a materialist politics of posthuman difference, a “missing people,” critical black philosophies interrogate the very foundation of becoming—of this “we” to come. In addition to its demystifying agenda, which unremittingly unsettles the self-aggrandizing gestures of Western theory, critical black philosophies consider black suffering to be a crucial site of interrogation. They question what it means to inhabit a structural position whereby by the black philosopher is always already forced to align herself with exclusionary terms in order to register antiblack violence as violence. They investigate, for instance, what using the general lexicon and terms of philosophy “insubordinately” entail for the black philosopher. What matters for this critical tradition is to assess the conditions of a world when blackness is, at last, understood to be a decisive organizing principle.

In his poignant essay “Onticide: Afro-Pessimism, Gay Nigger #1, and Surplus Violence,” Calvin Warren challenges us to think of those who fall “outside the cultural space of ethics, relationality, and the sacred.”52 In fact, he provides us with robust grounds to remain suspicious of the hasty impulses of an affirmative politics of life and relationality profoundly unequipped to recognize the mundane and persistent ways in which death and perhaps even extinction always already constitute existence for the “fungible” object/being. In this text, Warren returns to the brutal killing of Steen Keith Fenrich by his white stepfather. It is not the gruesome details surrounding Fenrich’s death that are at stake here; in the same ways the morbidly grandiose performances of anti-black violence across the globe do not necessarily hold explanatory power in and of themselves. Rather, Warren uses this story to show how the violent spectacularity of Fenrich’s death—its operation, protocols and structure - “indicate a certain ontological violation that preconditions physical injury.”53 This violence that shocks both in the simultaneity of its excessive gratuitousness and indiscriminate indifference, a violence that “exceeds the logics of utility,” to use Warren’s language, is indispensable for the constitution of the human self and necessary to maintain the coherence of its solipsistic contours and concomitant socio-political institutions.54

# 1NR

## K

### 1NR---AT Perm

#### The perm is a liberal corrective that interposes Black radical theorizing between genocidal logics.

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As an example of how the protocols, codes of conduct, and politesse of postcolonial “business as usual” unfold in the university, I reflect on my encounters as a student and now professor in the graduate classroom, reading scholarly texts, listening, and taking part in scholarly critique and the collegial repartee that occurs at academic conferences. Within these scenarios, I have observed the decorum of supposedly “engaged and rigorous” critique proceed in the following ways. Often postcolonial interventions into colonial or critical theory travel through phases, stages of progression, and levels of engagement with continental philosophy. First, in order to demonstrate your scholarly due diligence, capacity for rigor, and abstraction, you must learn and rehearse the origins of and become fluent in the language, idioms, and grammar of Deleuze and Guattari or whichever white scholar is in fashion. Second, you must figuratively inhabit and empathize with the white scholar’s very personal and particular existential and ethical questions (even if you cannot relate to her particular kind of situatedness or experience). It is often in graduate seminars where you have been asked—and we have been trained as faculty—to have you think about what it must have been like to be Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, or Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in the moment in which they lived. Imagine the trials and tribulations of being a European bourgeois male maverick in the academy and civil society. In other words, you must internalize and perform this worldview as if it applies to you. After you internalize and perform, the third thing that you are allowed but by no means required to do is list the problems with this theory or worldview. Once you have identified the problems, even irreconcilable ones, you are encouraged to make an intervention or slight adjustment to the discourse or theory by asserting that you will now put Indigenous or Black life at the center of this body of thought. The challenge or intervention usually reads as “what if we put Native or Black studies at the center of Deleuzoguattarian thought?”

Although we may become disillusioned with and challenge a metanarrative, we are rarely encouraged to do what Eve Tuck does when she “Break[s] Up with Deleuze.” We are often prevented from getting to this stage of exasperation or justified disgust because we are not allowed to stop, look at, and more importantly feel the violence of Western turns in critical theory. Because of academic respectability politics that impose a kind of bourgeois politesse on all “communicative acts,” be they in person or in writing, it is impolite and more importantly irrational to be rendered devastated, enraged, mute, or immobile by the violent terms on which continental theory proceeds. One must tolerate that Deleuzoguattarian rhizomatic movements require Indigenous genocide. In fact, it is a necessary evil in order for the West to model the kind of unfettered nomadic movement that Deleuze and Guattari privilege. The neoliberal temporality of productivity also requires that scholars keep moving unaffected in the midst of the violence. In fact, one is required to work through and repair or do damage control for Deleuze and Guattari. This is what a “good scholar” does: puts Black or Native studies at the center of rhizomes rather than contesting the very terms in which lines of flight become epistemic entities. But how do we perform or act otherwise in the face of this kind of violence?

I am not arguing that academics should not read Deleuze and Guattari. As scholars committed to decolonial thought, we should read their work and understand how genocide and colonialism flow through it. However, we can read without becoming seduced and attached to the work. I turn again to the writings of Black and Native feminists as an example of what this critical disinterest and refusal might look like.32 As Simpson and Tuck and Yang argue, refusal can reroute one set of concerns and questions and redirect them toward other pursuits. Better yet, disenchantment and pessimism can compel one to perceive or think about new questions. Refusal and misandry can move you out of the circuit that the corporate university imposes on critical thinking: know, internalize, perform, disagree, and then center yourself.