# 1NC – NDT Round the Seventh – Texas HN

## 1

### 1NC – Kritik

#### Blackness exists as a metaaporia that interrogates the cyclical ways violence onto blackness is morphed and ultimately appropriated. The 1AC relies on a redemptive narrative of humanity that is fundamentally inaccessible for black people. Their project is ultimately meant to hide and recreate moments of black death for the sake of redeeming Human life.

**Wilderson 20** [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 13-17, JMH]

For most critical theorists writing after 1968, the word aporia is used to designate a contradiction in a text or theoretical undertaking. For example, Jacques Derrida suggests an aporia indicates “a point of undecidability, which locates the site at which the text most obviously undermines its own rhetorical structure, dismantles, or deconstructs itself.” But when I say that Black people embody a meta-aporia for political thought and action, the addition of the prefix meta- goes beyond what Derrida and the poststructuralists meant—it raises the level of abstraction and, in so doing, raises the stakes. In epistemology, a branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge, the prefix meta- is used to mean about (its own category). Metadata, for example, are data about data (who has produced them, when, what format the data are in, and so on). In linguistics, a grammar is considered as being expressed in a metalanguage, language operating on a higher level of abstraction to describe properties of the plain language (and not itself). Metadiscussion is a discussion about discussion (not any one particular topic of discussion but discussion itself). In computer science, a theoretical software engineer might be engaged in the pursuit of metaprogramming (i.e., writing programs that manipulate programs). **Afropessimism**, then, **is** less of a theory and more of **a metatheory: a critical project that, by deploying Blackness as a lens of interpretation, interrogates the unspoken, assumptive logic of Marxism, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, and feminism through rigorous theoretical consideration of their properties and assumptive logic, such as their foundations, methods, form, and utility; and it does so, again, on a higher level of abstraction than the discourse and methods of the theories it interrogates.** Again, Afropessimism is, in the main, more of a metatheory than a theory. **It is pessimistic about the claims theories of liberation make when these theories try to explain Black suffering or when they analogize Black suffering with the suffering of other oppressed beings. It does this by unearthing and exposing the meta-aporias, strewn like land mines in what these theories of so-called universal liberation hold to be true.** If, as Afropessimism argues, Blacks are not Human subjects, but are instead structurally inert props, implements for the execution of White and non-Black fantasies and sadomasochistic pleasures, then this also means that, at a higher level of abstraction, the claims of universal humanity that the above theories all subscribe to are ~~hobbled~~ [constricted] by a meta-aporia: a contradiction that manifests whenever one looks seriously at the structure of Black suffering in comparison to the presumed universal structure of all sentient beings. Again, Black people embody a meta-aporia for political thought and action— Black people are the wrench in the works. Blacks do not function as political subjects; instead, our flesh and energies are instrumentalized for postcolonial, immigrant, feminist, LGBTQ, transgender, and workers’ agendas. These so-called **allies are never authorized by Black agendas predicated on Black ethical dilemmas. A Black radical agenda is terrifying to most people on the Left**—think Bernie Sanders—**because it emanates from a condition of suffering for which there is no imaginable strategy for redress—no narrative of social, political, or national redemption**. This crisis, no, this catastrophe, this realization that I am a sentient being who can’t use words like “being” or “person” to describe myself without the scare quotes and the threat of raised eyebrows from anyone within earshot, was crippling. I was convinced that if a story of Palestinian redemption could be told . . . its denouement would culminate in the return of the land, a spatial, cartographic redemption; and if a story of class redemption could be told . . . its denouement would culminate in the restoration of the working day so that one stopped working when surplus values were relegated to the dustbin of history, a temporal redemption; in other words, since postcolonial and working-class redemption were possible, then there must be a story to be told through which one could redeem the time and place of Black subjugation. I was wrong. **I had not dug deep enough to see that though Blacks suffer the time and space subjugation of cartographic deracination and the hydraulics of the capitalist working day, we also suffer as the hosts of Human parasites, though they themselves might be the hosts of parasitic capital and colonialism**. I had looked to theory (first as a creative writer, and only much later as a critical theorist) to help me find/create the story of Black liberation—Black political redemption. What I found instead was that **redemption, as a narrative mode, was a parasite that fed upon me for its coherence. Everything meaningful in my life had been housed under the umbrellas called “critical theory” and “radical politics.”** The parasites had been capital, colonialism, patriarchy, homophobia. And now it was clear that I had missed the boat. My parasites were Humans, all Humans—the haves as well as the have-nots. If critical theory and radical politics are to rid themselves of the parasitism that they heretofore have had in common with radical and progressive movements on the Left, that is, if we are to engage, rather than disavow, **the difference between Humans who suffer through an “economy of disposability” and Blacks who suffer by way of “social death,” then we must come to grips with how the redemption of the subaltern** (a narrative, for example, of Palestinian plenitude, loss, and restoration) **is made possible by the (re)instantiation of a regime of violence that bars Black people from the narrative of redemption**. This requires (a) an understanding of the difference between loss and absence, and (b) an understanding of how the narrative of subaltern loss stands on the rubble of Black absence. Sameer and I didn’t share a universal, postcolonial grammar of suffering. Sameer’s loss is tangible, land. The paradigm of his dispossession elaborates capitalism and the colony. When it is not tangible it is at least coherent, as in the loss of labor power. But how does one describe the loss that makes the world if all that can be said of loss is locked within the world? **How does one narrate the loss of loss? What is the “difference between . . . something to save . . . [and nothing] to lose”?** Sameer forced me to face the depth of my isolation in ways I had wanted to avoid; a deep pit from which neither postcolonial theory, nor Marxism, nor a gender politics of unflinching feminism could rescue me. Why is anti-Black violence not a form of racist hatred but the genome of Human renewal; a therapeutic balm that the Human race needs to know and heal itself? Why must the world reproduce this violence, this social death, so that social life can regenerate Humans and prevent them from suffering the catastrophe of psychic incoherence— absence? Why must the world find its nourishment in Black flesh?

#### The 1AC’s focus on language as liberation reproduces the same racial hierarchies that they seek to dismantle- not only are their politics not able to capture to true magnitude of antiblackness, but they always assume language as a life force rather than an impossibility.

**Marriott 21** [David Marriott, Professor in the Histories of Consciousness at UC Santa Cruz, 2021, “Lacan Noir, Lacan and Afro-pessimism”, The Palgrave Lacan Series, <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-74978-1#authorsandaffiliationsbook>, Pages 6-10, JMH]

What does a “psychoanalysis of the signifier mean”? Not, primarily, a Saussurean theory of the sign, a grammatology, nor a rhetoric of tropes. Lacan, at the beginning of the Seminar, thus introduces the following algorithm (of the signifier (S)): not to think representation or writing; but to conceive of an entirely new topology; of the signifier as the crossing (of a bar) which also bars any access to its signified (s).7 But this also implies that the bar is the differential principle of resistance. Conversely, **only resistance can decline the signifier, and makes its difference an object of jouis-sens (‘enjoy-meant’) and misrecognition**. This is what the signifier is; the genetic element that reveals how difference is subjected to value. But the subject, even when it submits to the bar, limits active resistance, imposes limitations and partial restrictions on it and is already controlled by the x that (the signifier) represents. For the subject is merely represented in the set of signifiers. I say merely because the signifier is always a false witness to what the Other asks of me, for it is not really there. What the bar makes thinkable as resistant is nothing more than the restoration, without consolation, of a mirage (of a difference synonymous with the segregation of S1 from S2 ) to which the Other bears witness. With this in mind imagine the following illustration: This is not meant to be a parody of Lacan’s famous “image of two twin [toilet] doors”, but is a refection on what is at stake (E, 417). When discussing the image of the twin doors, and their identical appearance, Lacan is of the opinion that the segregation of the twin nouns (“man” and “woman”) is purely nominal, or arbitrary. To conceive of these signs as a naïve nominalism which confuses the signifier with the this, that, here, now of a recognition—like a Hegelian child pointing at the ruins of spirit—does not allow us to enter into gender, insofar it is permissible to write above either door with the appropriate modesty of symbolic law. As if gender had only one referential concept and one representation and all one had to do is choose the right door for its corresponding recognition to take place. But this is what the knowledge of difference is: an imaginary freedom to choose or reject what one believes to be different. **This is why Lacan refers to an imperative which is the signifier’s greatest achievement, but also its conquest as hoax, in its teleology and normative renunciation of failure and non-meaning. For the evaluation of this law, the delicate weighing of each signifier in its pure differentiation, Lacan says it depends on a subjugation and a segregation which the West shares with supposedly “primitive communities” (**E, 417). To interpret the algorithmic function of the signifier is always to weigh that which segregates. (But how are we meant to read the logic by which the primitive is used—that is, segregated—as an illustration of segregation? How are we to read the presumed equality of a universal equivalence? That we are all duped by the need for a fundamental difference whose sign gender is? But such a notion already presumes a universal desire for difference that the signifier represents as sex’s representative and the universal’s represented. But what would it mean to say that the signifier “goes” in the same way as that of gender? That it, too, is subject to the same arbitration, same atavism?) **The notion of (racial) hierarchy does not simply appear here but takes on a rhetorical significance, for not every subjugation has the same value of segregation or of referential difference.** What is the relation, then, between subjection and segregation? Are they synonymous? If segregation operates as a law, that is, as something forcibly enjoined on the speaking subject, are there differences in how different subjects take possession of it and are subjugated by it? There are seemingly forces which can only get a grip on something by giving it a segregated sense and a negative value. Consider the mania over choosing the right door or restroom. If it is a direct product of arbitrariness, why does choosing the wrong door signify the worst, recognized or not? But here again, who can conceive of the signifier as simply the acquisition of formally assignable values? Blackness, on the other hand, will be defined as that one, among all the senses of a right choice, which gives the being of what is said the form with which it has a segregating value. Of therefore being the wrong choice in general. Thus, segregare, meaning to set apart, isolate, divide; a word that shifts from a religious to a racist meaning in 1908 suggests an obvious difference in how modern subjects are subjected to the signifier; it also gives rise not only to the enigmatic question of arbitrary difference as such, but also of the racist historicity of such ordering. But which order has the maximum afinity with the symbolic? Which is the one where we can no longer know who subjugates, since it is subjugated by the force that segregates it? For all things this is a question of weighing, the delicate but rigorous art of knowing the imaginary object of blackness from the ab-sens by which it is necessarily taken away, cast down, served gall rather than the meat of a universal equivalent. Indeed, segregation shows how racial difference is inscribed (Lacan uses the word enters) across the two spaces, but also how the segregation of linguistic values that we find in the illustration is made to symbolize (Lacan uses the words complement, reinforce) racial difference in “the lived experience of truth” (E, 417). Does the image above allow a better understanding of what is being presupposed? **Everything about that illustration that, from the very beginning, was taken up with a linguistic explanation of the signifier, with Saussure, with signification, suggests that its importance resides solely in how difference is inscribed in language**. And yet. Even if we think that the placing of race here is a precarious pursuit, the sign of an inability to read properly, and one that risks being tripped up by the purely formal question of difference—nevertheless, the form in which signifiers are symbolically subjugated does suggest that there is something more going on here than how subjects are placed in language. Why? In the perspective of Lacan’s original reading, the signifier’s autonomy is equally caught between what it metaphorically affirms and at the same time metonymically denies, an ambiguous ambiguity in relation to which all linguistic values are deemed arbitrary. This is why Lacan is so fond of saying that the signifier reveals a hole in meaning. It is not that the signifier makes these holes appear, or that it reveals actual gaps: the signifier veils over a more primordial lack out of which meaning is woven and then draped over being like some discarded pelt. What people want from the signifier is thus what allows them to know without knowing, those pleasures and adventures that allow us to take our minds away from the fact that the signifier signifies nothing but what it lacks. Even if we remain enslaved or chained to the ways in which the signifier insists—and consists—in the signification of the lack of this lack, meaning offers us nothing else other than the lure of its capture. What language teaches us, then, is how our being is burdened by sense and by its expectation. **What meaning offers us, in short, is neither truth nor consolation, but a desire for a certain mastery in which blackness is once again figured as something enslaved, dominated by its appearance**. **That is why its symbol is that of the non-moi, for what it connotes is so fearful as to be inexpressible, like a Jabberwock, or the insatiable savage nature of some mythical beast.** This great fearful thought has often served to show certain truths and thus to prove the symbolic efficacity of blackness. But at the same time, it is impossible to gain access to it, to prove absolutely that it exists, since its sense always seems to be less than its differential value. For what is at stake is not knowledge, or seeing, but the thought that makes blackness itself into a state of terror or wretchedness. It is therefore not surprising to come across the following curious sentence in Lacan’s meditation on the signifier: “[T]he phenomenon is no different, which – making her appear, with the sole postponement of a “but,” as comely as the Shulammite, as honest as a virtuous maiden – adorns and readies the Negress for the wedding and the poor woman for the auction block” (E, 419).

#### Their recentering of crip epistemologies within the structures of civil society is only the upending of a conflict within civil society that mystifies the fundamental antagonism that structures civil society and the world writ large: The non-being of blackness – Anti-blackness provides coherence to the “human” subject.

**Kim 13,[** Hyo K. Kim, an assistant professor of English at Medgar Evers College, City University of New York, where he teaches Asian American literature and literary theory. He is currently involved in two research projects; one editing a collection of critical essays on Theresa Cha’s Dictee; another is a book-length study exploring the connections between minor affects and the aesthetics of minority literatures in the United States, Published in Penumbra: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Critical and Creative Inquiry, <http://unionpenumbra.org/article/the-ruse-of-analogy-blackness-in-asian-american-and-disability-studies/>, JMH]

For instance, what at first glance seems merely naïve―that is **the observation that in the U.S. “[b]eing disabled is just like being black”―actually does index how disability cannot be synonymous with Whiteness.** For what is suggested through the forced parity between the construction of blackness and disability is that the disabled body or mind cannot properly embody Whiteness in toto. And that is what Anna Stubblefield demonstrates in “‘Beyond the Pale’: Tainted Whiteness, Cognitive Disability and Eugenic Sterilization,” which iterates how disabled white persons have historically been categorized as embodying a tainted form of whiteness. She convincingly argues that beginning from the 1800s in the U.S. those who were considered feebleminded, a form of cognitive disability, lost the full privileges attendant with white citizenship. As she writes, “… to grasp feeblemindedness fully as a signifier of tainted whiteness, it is important to understand that the state-sponsored, involuntary sterilization of tainted whites meant that they had, in effect, lost the full protection that whiteness conferred in a white supremacist society” (178; emphasis added). Not only did the so-called feebleminded whites come to embody a compromised form of whiteness but also the “ … white men [and women] labeled as criminal, sexually deviate, homosexual, … or insane … ” (Stubblefield 178). What Stubblefield emphasizes is that **disability as a social construct cannot easily be detached from its imbricated positioning within a network of material forces that include not only race but sexuality, class, and gender.** Her study foregrounds **the need for Disability studies to attend to racialization as not a tangential focus but central to its overall theoretical and political project.** Interestingly Stubblefield’s study of how disability can dispossess whites of their “full personhood” under U.S. law seemingly lends support to what “Dismodernism” authorizes, which is **the idea that the suffering of blacks can be made equivalent to not only what disabled whites come to embody but also to all those other Others represented under the category of “people of color.” In short, disability has the potential to democratize civil society by recalling how all citizens are common in their humanity―that is, equally exposed to disability.** Yet, if we read between the lines of Stubblefield’s summary of how “feebleminded whites” can become “tainted,” the singularity of “blackness’s grammar of suffering” emerges. For **what distinguishes “blackness grammar of suffering” is how it does not operate according to the assumptive logic of capability. In other words, to approach “blackness’s grammar of suffering,” Wilderson insists that one must be able to imagine “an ethicality … so terrifying that, as a space to be inhabited and terror to be embraced” (41), it resists language. It is a “grammar of suffering” based not upon the logic of a “lost” capacity but that of a deontologized property, the Slave that is not “exploited and alienated” but rather “accumulated and fungible.” The effect of this singular grammar on Asian American and Disability studies is significant, but the impact of Wilderson’s critique on the “scholarly and aesthetic production” of the “Black theorist” is radical by comparison.** As he writes: This [“blackness’s grammar suffering”] makes the labor of disavowal in Black scholarly and aesthetic production doubly burdensome, for it is triggered by a dread of both being ‘discovered,’ and of discovering oneself, as ontological incapacity. Thus, through borrowed institutionality―the feigned capacity to be essentially exploited and alienated (rather than accumulated and fungible) in the first ontological instance (in other words, a fantasy to be just like everyone else, which is a fantasy to be)―the work of Black film theory [and by extension Black studies] operates through a myriad of compensatory gestures in which the Black theorists assumes subjective capacity to be universal and thus ‘finds’ it everywhere. (42) Placed within the frame of “blackness’s grammar of suffering,” I want to examine the consequences of Davis’s attempt to render disability cosmopolitan. While the move has the virtual effect of equalizing all bodies around human capacity to suffer―such an ethical cum political strategy requires the disavowal of how concepts such as “human” and “civil society” in the U.S. have structurally depended on the production of social death, i.e. the Black (and the Red). As it should be obvious by now, what **is therefore unthinkable in Davis’s attempt to make civil society cohere around the universality of human suffering is the contingent nature of the term human itself.** This in fact is what Bells intuits but cannot name in his influential essay entitled “Introducing White Disability Studies: A Modest Proposal.” Bell’s hesitation is partly attributable to how pain or suffering is both social (that is communicable, sharable by all humans in equal measure) and incommunicable within Disability studies. That is, **Disability studies’ uneven attention to the incommunicability of suffering is seemingly capable of accommodating the unrepresentability that is constituent of “blackness’s grammar of suffering.”** As Siebers insists, “[i]ndividuality derived from the incommunicability of pain easily enforces a myth of hyperindividuality, a sense that each individual is locked in solitary confinement where suffering is the only object of contemplation. People with disabilities are already too politically isolated for this myth to be attractive” (176). Yet in an attempt to intervene in the poststructuralist tendency to idealize “physical pain” as site of either transcendent power or pleasure, Siebers also adds, “… [p]hysical pain is [at once] highly individualistic, unpredictable, and raw as reality. Pain is not a resource of political change. It is not a well of delight for the individual” (178). What is directly pertinent to the present essay is how the universal figure of the “individual”- human marks the critical horizon of Disability theory. Or, to put a finer point to it via Widerson’s reading of Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin, White Mask, “… the Negro … ‘is comparison,’ nothing more and certainly nothing less, for what is less than comparison? … [And as such] ‘No one knows yet who [the Negro] is, but he knows that fear will fill the world when the world finds out’” (42). We find in the most sophisticated Asian Americanist deployment of poststructuralist strategies of reading―such as the one advanced in the influential work by Kandice Chuh―a similar call to abandon politics based on social identity.6 While I am in agreement with both Davis’s and Chuh’s overarching critique of uniform identity, I find troubling their wholesale critique of all identity formation as a priori essentialist. For such framing of social identity as necessarily restrictive can only lead to the return of the repressed in our present era of colorblindness―the ideal of abstract citizenship. As she writes: “**‘Asian American’ … connotes the violence**, exclusion, dislocation, and disenfranchisement that has **attended the codification of certain bodies** as variously, Oriental, yellow, sometimes brown, inscrutable, devious, always alien. It speaks to the active denial of personhood to the individuals inhabiting those bodies” (Chuh 27). In this, **Chuh**―along with Davis and Siebers―unwittingly **announces the displacement and the erasure of “blackness’s grammar of suffering,”** as their strategies of reading the presence or absence of justice within U.S. civil society is predicated upon exploitation and alienation of the a priori human subject. Nevertheless, by embodying the self―Disability studies helps to shift (though only slightly) critical theory toward an alternative ethicality that does not programmatically endorse the idea and ideals of abstract citizenship. For contrary to the liberal model of the political subject that achieves “hyperindividuality” through social and material detachment, the alternative model of subjectivity that is afforded through the disabled body is a self that is always already in the process of negotiating complex relations to the materiality of the social. Thus, the embodied model of subjectivity helps to re-imagine “personhood” as relation itself, leading not to the reification or essentialization of self, this relational model of subjectivity demands that any identity whatsoever be thought not as autonomous substance but rather as a site, comprising of unfinished, mobile, heterogeneously constituted relations across an embodied hermeneutic horizon. It bears mentioning here that it is this interconnected and radically open vision of “personhood” as relation that is foreclosed in the liberal model of abstract citizenship. For in the liberal model of the self, the ideal is to attain singular indeterminacy through the negation of such social relations, without which no self can hope to attain intelligibility. As Alcoff’s important work suggests: Social identities … are more properly understood as sites from which we perceive, act, and engage with others. These sites are not simply locations or positions, but also hermeneutic horizons comprised of experiences, basic beliefs, and communal values […] . We are not boxed in by them, constrained, restricted, or held captive―unless … it makes sense to say that we are boxed in by the fact that we have bodies . … (287) Interestingly **it is by attending to how the self is embodied and embedded in social reality that clarifies the radical singularity of the Black’s structural non-relationality, which in turn helps to bring into focus not only what Wilderson calls the “structural antagonisms” that contour U.S. civil society but also unexplored ethico-political limits and possibilities of sub-fields such as Disability and Asian American studies.** For according to Wilderson’s Red, White & Black what gives internal coherence to such terms as “human” and “civil society” in the U.S. is the disavowal of the structural (historical) relation blacks have with what is essentially non-human, a form of social death known as slavery. As he summarizes: During the emergence of new ontological relations in the modern world, from the late Middle Ages through the 1500s, many different kinds of people experienced slavery. … But African, or more precisely **Blackness, refers to an individual who is by definition always already void of relationality. Thus modernity marks the emergence of a new ontology because it is an era in which an entire race appears, people who, a priori, that is prior to the contingency of the ‘transgressive act’** (such as losing a war or being convicted of a crime), **stand as socially dead in relation to the rest of the world.** (17-8) Wilderson’s intervention therefore hinges on isolating and exposing this dual operation by which civil society makes sense of itself to itself―the simultaneous disavowal of and parasitic dependency on the Black. In other words, **the desire to make blackness an analogue of disability amounts to denying the structural relevancy of slavery to the formation of U.S. civil society. Wilderson’s reading of Fanon helps to articulate the radical singularity of “blackness’s grammar of suffering,” as it emphasizes how “… the gratuitous violence of the Black’s first ontological instance, the Middle Passage, ‘wiped out [his or her] metaphysics … his [or her] customs and sources on which they are based.’ Jews went into Auschwitz and came out as Jews. Africans went into the ships and came out as Blacks” (38). What Wilderson calls the “blackness’s grammar of suffering,” consequently, has no analogue in either the assumptive figure of the “individual” that subtends Disability studies and those other Others within U.S. civil society that have become included within the frame known as “people of color.” In this, “blackness’s grammar of suffering” gestures toward what is unnamable, a form of suffering that is in excess of any ethical language which is based upon the universal figure of the human. This is how Wilderson radically undermines the desire to transpose “blackness’s grammar of suffering” into the ethico-political language upon which civil society’s depends to make suffering (physical, psychic or otherwise) intelligible.** As he writes: The ruse of analogy erroneously locates Blacks in the world―a place where they have not been since the dawn of Blackness. This attempt to position the Black in the world by way of analogy is not only a mystification, and often erasure, of Blackness’s grammar of suffering (accumulation and fungibility or the status of being non-Human) but simultaneously also a provision for civil society, promising an enabling modality for Human ethical dilemmas. It is a mystification and an erasure because … their grammars of suffering are irreconcilable. (37) Such is the logic that animates Bell’s critique of Disability studies but it does not, cannot obtain the force of Wilderson’s intervention because Bell cannot or dare not disarticulate the Black from the world. Nevertheless both Wilderson and Bell help foreground the important fact that even suffering obtains a “grammar,” that is, has a way of indexing―whether positively in the form of identification or negatively through dis- or even through non-identification, the presence or absence of a world. What Bell’s and especially Wilderson’s critique bring into sharp relief is that anti-blackness is part and parcel of the episteme that gives internal coherence to U.S. civil society. To approach “blackness’s grammar suffering” is therefore to contemplate, albeit always indirectly, not the paradigm of disability which is always already predicated on agency but a radical non-capacity. Wilderson’s illumination of how the **“antagonism” that obtains around blackness is structural to the formation of U.S. civil society has the effect of clarifying the positioning of sub-fields such as Disability and Asian American studies, especially when their protocols aim toward establishing some form of political justice based upon “exploitation and alienation,” which is at odds with “blackness’s grammar of suffering.” As previously mentioned, Wilderson draws a sharp distinction between “conflict” and “antagonism.” And this is key, as it is only when anti-blackness is positioned as an “antagonism” that the residual and structural effects of the Slave (the non-human) can be allowed to erupt into the living present of U.S. civil society.** As such, though by comparison far more optimistic than Wilderson’s study, Alexander’s The New Jim Crow (2010) gives powerful evidence to Wilderson’s theory of the “structural antagonisms” that contour U.S. civil society. This is how a critical theory based upon advancing a colorblind world or an ethicality based upon the universal human effectively silences the suffering of the Black. As Alexander argues: Far from being a worthy goal … colorblindness has proved catastrophic for African Americans. It is not an overstatement to say that the systematic mass incarceration of people of color in the United States would not have been possible in the post-civil rights era if the nation had not fallen under the spell of a callous colorblindness. … Saying that one does not care about race is offered as an exculpatory virtue, when in fact it can be a form of cruelty. … Our blindness also prevents us from seeing the racial and structural divisions that persist in society: the segregated, unequal schools, the segregated, jobless ghettos, and the segregated public discourse―a public conversation that excludes the current pariah of caste [the incarcerated black males in U.S. civil society]. (228) In this, Wilderson’s Red, White, & Black and Alexander’s The New Jim Crow bring into sharp focus why the **framing of blackness within U.S. civil society cannot do without the ruse of analogy which effectively puts under erasure a “… violence which turns a body into flesh, ripped apart literally and imaginatively, destroy[ing] the possibility of ontology because it positions the Black in an infinite and indeterminately horrifying and open vulnerability, an object made available** (which is to say fungible) for any subject” (Wilderson, 38). Put otherwise, **this “violence” which is in excess of that ideologically saturated term called Humanity demands the infinitely difficult yet necessary encountering with what gives U.S. civil society the simulacrum of ethical and political decency.**

#### Only the alternative’s unflinching interrogation into the continual enslavement of blackness can overcome the failures of past, present, and future systems of reform that describe enslavement as a contingent event and not a flat lined existence.

**Wilderson 20** [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 100-104, JMH]

When in Dr. Zhou’s office, Stella had said, “What’s the matter, Frank? Are you afraid we’ll tarnish your father’s reputation?” she had put her finger on the pulse of a desire to be special that beat inside my heart. In my unconscious I wanted to latch on to an element of Whiteness, or Humanness (since Dr. Zhou wasn’t White), that would set me apart from other Blacks. But this desire was deeper than Stella or I suspected at the time. An unconscious wish for my father’s prestige (which was as faux as the prestige Solomon thought he had accrued from his skills as an engineer and his talents as a musician) to seep into my being by osmosis. I had dropped his name to get us the appointment. I would drop his name in the weeks and months to come to open other doors as well. This kind of reasoning is universal. But what is not universal, what belongs to Black people and Black people alone, is a deeper desire sparked by a deeper structure of oppression**. When you intuit for the first time in your life that you live in a soup of violence that is prelogical,** a kind of violence that is as legitimate if it’s wielded by “ordinary” citizens, such as Josephine, as it is if wielded by sanctioned enforcers of the law, and that your father’s position and prestige are no more the keys to a sanctuary than the position and prestige of someone who is Black and orphaned, **you are faced with two choices: stare unflinchingly at the abyss as it stares unflinchingly at you, or take it out on the Black person near you who won’t leave you to your fantasy of being truly alive.** Anything to not have to face the fact that your sense of presence is no more than “borrowed institutionality.”\* This dynamic, this intra-Black imbroglio, is harder to discern in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, for the simple fact that the personas of the master class are no longer solidified in evil White men and evil White women who wield real whips on a real plantation. The master has been dispersed across the entire racial spectrum of people who are not Black. Dr. Zhou is as much a master as Edwin and Mary Epps, the antagonists in *12 Years a Slave*. In fact, the twentieth century shot the Eppses through a prism—they are not just people, they are ideas. They are ideas and personas that a young middle-class Black man like me had consciously fought against to the point of being kicked out of college, while deep in my unconscious I was a loyal supplicant who cared more about not simply the master’s feelings, but the stability of the master’s world, than I did about my own suffering and the suffering of Stella. It is hard to be a slave and feel that you are worthy, truly worthy, of your suffering as a slave. One hundred twenty-seven years before Josephine, before Cody, before Urban Risers, and before Dr. Zhou, the riff between Stella and me would have been clearer to see. We wouldn’t have walked home in symptomatic silence; our discord would have been played out in the open. At times, Stella would throw her sense of herself as a being from a special, quasi-Black dimension at me the way I threw my father’s status and my Dartmouth pedigree at her. She would let me know of the competence exhibited by the White men she had been with and the Jew she had married; she held them up as object lessons that I could never be or learn. That’s how most Black couples fight and argue, by firing White and non-Black people at each other. No, it’s more subtle than that. The bullets aren’t the White or non-Black people themselves but the ambience of recognition and incorporation in a world beyond the plantation. **We load our guns with deadly intangibles and shoot straight for the heart. Anyone who thinks nineteenth century slave narratives are reports on the past isn’t paying attention.** **Such a person will experience the analysis of Afropessimism as though they are being mugged, rather than enlightened; that is because they can’t imagine a plantation in the here and now.** But Afropessimism is premised on a comprehensive and iconoclastic claim: **that Blackness is coterminous with Slaveness: Blackness is social death**: which is to say that **there was never a prior metamoment of plenitude, never equilibrium: never a moment of social life**. Blackness, as a paradigmatic position (rather than as a set of cultural practices, anthropological accoutrements**) is elaborated through slavery. The narrative arc of the slave who is Black** (unlike Orlando Patterson’s generic Slave, who may be of any race) **is not an arc at all, but a flat line, what Hortense Spillers calls “historical stillness”: a flat line that moves from disequilibrium, to a moment in the narrative of faux-equilibrium, to disequilibrium restored and/ or rearticulated.** This kind of change, the transformative promise of a narrative arc, belongs to White men and their junior partners in civil society (non-Black immigrants, White and non-Black people who are queer, and non-Black women) but only in relation to each other. By transformative capacity I mean that, through struggle, non-citizens (in the legal and libidinal sense of the word—legal being Latinx undocumented immigrants, for example, and libidinal being anyone from a documented immigrant of color to a gay person to a nonBlack woman) can become citizens, because they are still Human; they are simply oppressed and therefore not so fully vested. But their transformative capacity stems not from their positive attributes but from the fact that they are not Black, they are not slaves. These fully vested citizens and not-so-fully vested citizens live through intra-communal narrative arcs of transformation; but where the Black is concerned, their collective unconscious calls upon Blacks as props, which they harness as necessary implements to help bring about their psychic and social transformation, and to vouchsafe the coherence of their own Human subjectivity. Nevertheless, the slave is a sentient being. Therefore, an existence void of transformative promise, which narrative holds out to human subjects, is a painful lesson for the slave to learn, much less accept. **I am not suggesting that Black people should resign themselves to the inevitability of social death—it is inevitable, in the sense that one is born into social death just as one is born into a gender or a class; but it is also constructed by the violence and imagination of other sentient beings**. Thus, like class and gender, which are also constructs, not divine designations, **social death can be destroyed. But the first step toward the destruction is to assume one’s position** (assume, not celebrate or disavow), and **then burn the ship or the plantation, in its past and present incarnations, from the inside out**. However, as Black people we are often psychically unable and unwilling to assume this position. This is as understandable as it is impossible. I was a lot like that when I met Stella. Stella was skeptical about the willingness of the FBI to help us unravel the skeins of aggression that were coming our way (from Josephine and Cody’s violence to the violence of whoever did not want Stella to bring her evidence against Urban Risers to court). Looking back, I realize that I believed that my father had standing in the community, that his position on multiple boards and his vice presidency at the university had somehow imbued us both with Human capacity, the capacity to be recognized and incorporated as something other than Black. I had no idea that the FBI had tracked me for four years, that there was a file on me; nor did it dawn on me that Stella’s social-change activism, especially her civil disobedience against the war and her plethora of counterculture and revolutionary friends, would militate against our being helped. But those aren’t even the fundamental reasons why I should have been skeptical: If the FBI has been tracking Black creative writers since 1919, if the FBI has been constantly updating and revising its list of Black writers earmarked for preventative detention (concentration camps**?),\* if the FBI, like every law enforcement agency in the United States, is organically anti-Black, then where is the line between prison and home?**

## Case

### 1NC – Case

#### Vote neg on presumption---

#### a---Pornotroping---the 1AC speaks on instances of debilitating violence without any material way to solve it---that makes the violence fungible, which turns the case

#### b---This is offense. Symbolically affirming their method despite its lack of ties to material resistance strengthens power.

**Rigakos and Law, 9**—Assistant Professor of Law at Carleton University AND PhD, Legal Studies, Carleton University (George and Alexandra “Risk, Realism and the Politics of Resistance,” Critical Sociology 35(1) 79-103, dml)

McCann and March (1996: 244) next set out the ‘justification for treating **everyday practices** as significant’ suggested by the above literature. First, the works studied are concerned with proving people are not ‘**duped**’ by their surroundings. At the level of consciousness, subjects ‘are **ironic**, **critical**, **realistic**, even **sophisticated**’ (1996: 225). But McCann and March remind us that earlier radical or Left theorists have made similar arguments **without** resorting to stories of **everyday resistance** in order to do so. Second, everyday resistance on a discursive level is said to **reaffirm the subject’s dignity**. But this too causes a **problem** for the authors because they:

**query** why subversive ‘**assertions of self**’ should bring dignity and psychological **empowerment** when they produce **no greater material benefits** or **changes in relational power** … By standards of ‘realism’, … subjects given to avoidance and ‘lumping it’ may be the most sophisticated of all. (1996: 227)

Thus, their criticism boils down to two main points. First, everyday resistance **fails** to tell us any more about so-called **false consciousness** than was **already known** among earlier Left theorists; and second, that a focus on discursive resistance **ignores** the role of **material conditions** in helping to shape identity.

Indeed, absent a **broader political struggle** or chance at **effective resistance** it would seem to the authors that ‘**powerlessness is learned** out of the **accumulated experiences of futility** and **entrapment**’ (1996: 228). A lamentable prospect, but nonetheless a source of closure for the governmentality theorist. In his own meta-analysis of studies on resistance, Rubin (1996: 242) finds that ‘discursive practices that neither **alter material conditions** nor **directly challenge broad structures** are nevertheless’ considered by the authors he examined ‘the stuff out of which power is **made** and **remade**’. If this sounds familiar, it is because the authors studied by McCann, March and Rubin found their claims about everyday resistance on the same understanding of power and government employed by postmodern theorists of risk. Arguing **against** celebrating forms of resistance that **fail to alter broader power relations** or **material conditions** is, in part, **recognizing** the continued ‘**real**’ existence of **identifiable**, **powerful groups** (classes). In downplaying the worth of everyday forms of resistance (arguing that these acts are **not as worthy** of the label as those acts which bring about **lasting social change**), Rubin appears to be taking issue with a **locally focused vision** of power and identity that **denies the possibility** of opposing domination at the level of ‘**constructs**’ such as class.

Rubin (1996: 242) makes another argument about celebratory accounts of everyday resistance that bears consideration:

[T]hese authors generally **do not differentiate** between practices that **reproduce** power and those that **alter** power. [The former] might involve pressing that power to **become more adept at domination** or to **dominate differently**, or it might mean **precluding alternative acts** that would **more successfully challenge power**. … [I]t is **necessary to do more** than show that such discursive acts **speak to**, or **engage with**, power. It **must also be demonstrated** that such acts **add up to** or **engender broader changes**. In other words, some of the acts of everyday resistance **may** in the **real world**, through their **absorption into mechanisms of power**, **reinforce the localized domination** that they **supposedly oppose**. The implications of this argument can be further clarified when we study the way ‘resistance’ is dealt with in a risk society.

Risk theorists already understand that every administrative system has holes which can be exploited by those who learn about them. That is what **makes governmentality work**: the supposed governor is in turn governed – in part through the **noncompliance** of subjects (Foucault, 1991a; Rose and Miller, 1992). For example, where employees demonstrate unwillingness to embrace technological changes in the workplace, management consultants can create:

a point of entry, but also a ‘problem’ that their ‘packages’ are designed to resolve. … In short, consultants readily constitute certain forms of conduct as ‘resistance to technology’ as this gives them some purchase on its reform by identifying a space in which expertise can be brought to bear in the exercise of power. Resistance consequently plays the role of **continuously provoking extensions**, **revisions** and **refinements** of those **same practices** which it confronts. (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994: 80)

This appears to be a very different kind of resistance from that contemplated by Rubin, but perhaps not so different from that of the authors whom he and McCann and March critique: those whose analysis **ends** at the **discursive production of noncompliance**. Instead, the above account is of a resistance that **almost invariably helps power to work better**. A conclusion in the present day that ominously foreshadows the futuristic, dystopic risk assemblage described by Bogard (1996).

Another example of the ‘resolution’ of resistance proposed above is the institution of a tool library described by Shearing (2001: 204–5). In this parable, a business deals with the issue of tool theft on the part of workers by installing a ‘lending library’ of tools instead of engaging in vigorous prosecution and jeopardizing worker morale. While the parable is meant to indicate a difference between actuarial and more traditional (moral) forms of justice, it also demonstrates how an act that may be considered ‘**resistant**’ is **incorporated without conflict** into the workplace loss-prevention scheme – an **eminently preferable**, ‘**forward-looking**’ solution within the logic of risk management. The same is possible in the case of more discursive forms of resistance. If I do not see myself as a Guinness man, for example, market researchers will do their best to adapt Guinness to the way I do see myself (Miller and Rose, 1997). The end result, of course, is that I purchase the beer. As manifested in a form of justice (Shearing and Johnston, 2005), it always consolidates, tempers emotions, cools the analysis, reconciles factions, and always relentlessly moves forward, assimilating as it grows. In this sense, therefore, Bogard’s ‘social science fiction’ actually pre-supposes and logically extends Shearing’s (2001) rather cheery and benevolent rendering of risk thinking. In this context of governmentality theory – as self-described and **lauded** for its **political non-prescription** by its own pundits – the **acts** or **attitudes described as resistant** are, **in the end**, **absorbed by those who govern**. Resistance as an **oppositional force** – that **pushes against** or has the potential to **take power** – is **theoretically** and **politically neutralized**. In the neutralization process, **power is reproduced**.

So, along with McCann and March’s observations that everyday resistance adds little to our understanding of false consciousness and that it denies the role of material factors in shaping identity, we can add Rubin’s two main criticisms of everyday resistance: it relies on an **inaccurate understanding** of power, and acts of resistance which supposedly emancipate **actually may reinforce domination**. All four of these criticisms demand the **same thing**: to **know what is really going on**, to get an **adequate grasp** of the social.

#### c---Debatability---they provide no concrete or new strategy that hasn’t already been done---that makes them undebatable because we can never predict what the 2AC spin will be---vote neg on presumption

#### Self-expression within the academy and the debate space will always be confined to what white politics wants and expects of black subject. Not only is the 1AC not radical but ultimately seeks to further appease and conform to the expectations of white debate.

**Wilderson 20** [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 46-48, JMH]

My parents carried their rage like vials of nitroglycerin packed in straw. Unlike me, they knew the fallout of Black rage. My parents knew, and taught the people who were being gunned down and the students who fled to Canada to avoid the draft. And they knew that they themselves were being watched by the FBI. I, knowing little of the anvil that weighed on them, thought they were simply sellouts. I thought they held their tongues when their White colleagues made racist statements because they didn’t care about the revolution that was raging around them. Slowly, after years of being at odds with them, my view of them changed when I went into academia and was hit, firsthand, with what Jared Sexton calls “the hidden structure of violence that underwrites so many violent acts, whether spectacular or mundane.” **Dissemblance had been a survival tool**, an implement they used to stay alive and put food on our table. They knew that **Black intellectuals could push the envelope only as far as their non-Black interlocutors were willing to accommodate**. They also knew that they needed to know the limits of what their White colleagues and interlocutors could handle, especially if those interlocutors didn’t know where their own breaking point was. My parents had to know on their behalf. **“Imagine the black man the white man wants you to be . . . and be him (or, at least, mime him),”** David Marriott writes in his treatise on lynching. **“[O]ur unconscious . . . is given over to that work of secondguessing, of dare and double dare. There’s no place here for what the black man wants, or for a black unconscious driven by its own desire and aggression.”** I watched the world put my parents’ desire on lockdown, while I marveled at my grandmother and her jailbreak conversation. Black desire is a runaway crime. America no longer needed Grandmother for nurturing, for confirmation, for a woman to blame as the nation split at the seams—the way it still needed my mother. “I am a marked woman,” Hortense Spillers writes, “but not everybody knows my name. ‘Peaches’ and ‘Brown Sugar,’ ‘Sapphire’ and ‘Earth Mother,’ ‘Aunty,’ ‘Granny,’ ‘God’s Holy Fool,’ a ‘Miss Ebony First,’ or ‘Black Woman at the Podium’: I describe a locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasury of rhetorical wealth. My country needs me and if I were not here, I would have to be invented.” America was finished with my grandmother as its invention. She was free to kick back and kill them, if only in her dreams, or with me, when we watched the riots in 1968. But America was not finished with my mother, a thirty-six-year-old Black woman in her prime. Just three years earlier, in 1965, Daniel Moynihan had named the imago of my mother as the source of a destructive vein in “ghetto culture,” and in the Black family. She didn’t enter a room as a woman with a Ph.D. She entered as the foremost reason men feel castrated; as a drag, greater than anti-Blackness, on the Black man’s dream of a far horizon. My outbursts of joy at the sight of a looter would only confirm what the world already knew about her. For Moynihan, I was a monster of my mother’s making

#### The university, including debate, is only a sight of social death---that turns case.

**Occupied UC Berkeley 09** ~"The Necrosocial: Civic Life, Social Death, and the UC.

**Yes, very much a cemetery. Only here there are no dirges, no prayers, only the repeated testing of our threshold for anxiety, humiliation, and debt. The classroom just like the workplace just like the university just like the state just like the economy manages our social death, translating what we once knew from high school, from work, from our family life into academic parlance, into acceptable forms of social conflict.** Who knew that behind so much civic life (electoral campaigns, student body representatives, bureaucratic administrators, public relations officials, Peace and Conflict Studies, ad nauseam) was so much social death? What postures we maintain to claim representation, what limits we assume, what desires we dismiss? And in this moment of crisis they ask us to twist ourselves in a way that they can hear. Petitions to Sacramento, phone calls to Congressmen—even the chancellor patronizingly congratulates our September 24th student strike, shaping the meaning and the force of the movement as a movement against the policies of Sacramento. He expands his institutional authority to encompass the movement. When students begin to hold libraries over night, beginning to take our first baby step as an autonomous movement he reins us in by serendipitously announcing library money. He manages movement, he kills movement by funneling it into the electoral process. He manages our social death. He looks forward to these battles on his terrain, to eulogize a proposition, to win this or that—he and his look forward to exhausting us. He and his look forward to a reproduction of the logic of representative governance, the release valve of the university plunges us into an abyss where ideas are wisps of ether—that is, meaning is ripped from action. Let’s talk about the fight endlessly, but always only in their managed form: to perpetually deliberate, the endless fleshing-out-of—when we push the boundaries of this form they are quick to reconfigure themselves to contain us: the chancellor’s congratulations, the reopening of the libraries, the managed general assembly—there is no fight against the administration here, only its own extension. Each day passes in this way, the administration on the look out to shape student discourse—it happens without pause, we don’t notice nor do we care to. It becomes banal, thoughtless. So much so that we see we are accumulating days: one semester, two, how close to being this or that, how far? This accumulation is our shared history. This accumulation—every once in a while interrupted, violated by a riot, a wild protest, unforgettable fucking, the overwhelming joy of love, life shattering heartbreak—is a muted, but desirous life. A dead but restless and desirous life. **The university steals and homogenizes our time yes, our bank accounts also, but it also steals and homogenizes meaning. As much as capital is invested in building a killing apparatus abroad, an incarceration apparatus in California, it is equally invested here in an apparatus for managing social death. Social death is, of course, simply the power source, the generator, of civic life with its talk of reform, responsibility, unity. A ‘life,’ then, which serves merely as the public relations mechanism for death: its garrulous slogans of freedom and democracy designed to obscure the shit and decay in which our feet are planted. Yes, the university is a graveyard, but it is also a factory: a factory of meaning which produces civic life and at the same time produces social death.** A factory which produces the illusion that meaning and reality can be separated; which everywhere reproduces the empty reactionary behavior of students based on the values of life (identity), liberty (electoral politics), and happiness (private property). Everywhere the same whimsical ideas of the future. Everywhere democracy. Everywhere discourse to shape our desires and distress in a way acceptable to the electoral state, discourse designed to make our very moments here together into a set of legible and fruitless demands. Totally managed death. A machine for administering death, for the proliferation of technologies of death. As elsewhere, things rule. Dead objects rule. In this sense, it matters little what face one puts on the university—whether Yudof or some other lackey. These are merely the personifications of the rule of the dead, the pools of investments, the buildings, the flows of materials into and out of the physical space of the university—each one the product of some exploitation—which seek to absorb more of our work, more tuition, more energy. The university is a machine which wants to grow, to accumulate, to expand, to absorb more and more of the living into its peculiar and perverse machinery: high-tech research centers, new stadiums and office complexes. And at this critical juncture the only way it can continue to grow is by more intense exploitation, higher tuition, austerity measures for the departments that fail to pass the test of ‘relevancy.’ But the ‘irrelevant’ departments also have their place. With their ‘pure’ motives of knowledge for its own sake, they perpetuate the blind inertia of meaning ostensibly detached from its social context. As the university cultivates its cozy relationship with capital, war and power, these discourses and research programs play their own role, co-opting and containing radical potential. And so we attend lecture after lecture about how ‘discourse’ produces ‘subjects,’ ignoring the most obvious fact that we ourselves are produced by this discourse about discourse which leaves us believing that it is only words which matter, words about words which matter. The university gladly permits the precautionary lectures on biopower; on the production of race and gender; on the reification and the fetishization of commodities. A taste of the poison serves well to inoculate us against any confrontational radicalism. And all the while power weaves the invisible nets which contain and neutralize all thought and action, that bind revolution inside books, lecture halls. There is no need to speak truth to power when power already speaks the truth. The university is a graveyard– así es. The graveyard of liberal good intentions, of meritocracy, opportunity, equality, democracy. Here the tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. **We graft our flesh, our labor, our debt to the skeletons of this or that social cliché. In seminars and lectures and essays, we pay tribute to the university’s ghosts, the ghosts of all those it has excluded—the immiserated, the incarcerated, the just-plain-fucked. They are summoned forth and banished by a few well-meaning phrases and research programs, given their book titles, their citations. This is our gothic—we are so morbidly aware, we are so practiced at stomaching horror that the horror is thoughtless.**

#### Describing cripestemology as “competitive” reifies neoliberalism and reinjects neoliberal political ideology into this space

**Zuidhof, ’12** (P.W. Zuidhof, Zuidhof is assistant professor in European political economy in the European Studies program in the Department of History, European Studies and Religious Studies at the University of Amsterdam, “Imagining Markets: The Discursive Politics of Neoliberalism, pg. 7-11)JM

Many critics of neoliberalism have tried to capture the exuberance of the market imagery in neoliberalism. The cultural critic Thomas Frank for instance, documents in One Market under God (2001) how the market has become an important cultural icon which invaded public discourse and our cultural imaginations. Frank (2001, 29) for instance points out how a variety of cultural techniques, ranging from advertising, business journalism, management books, to cultural studies have created a brand of **“market populism”** – he cites Newsweek columnist Robert Samuelson’s locution “the Market ‘R’ Us” – in which ‘the market’ is equated with ‘the people’ to the point that the market became to be seen as more democratic than conventional institutions of a democracy. In an attempt to address the **excessive market imagery** of neoliberalism, critics resort to all sorts of market-based neologisms. Like Thomas Frank, one turns for instance to religious imagery to speak of neoliberalism as a **“market theology,” or the gospel of “freemarket religion**” (e.g. Cox 1999). In secular terms, one invokes the image of a “free market mythology” (viz. Perelman 2006) or “The Cult of the Market” (Boldeman 2011). **The market is especially concatenated with political images**, as in Frank’s “market populism,” or when neoliberalism is put down as a form of “market democracy” (Chomsky 1999), “market liberalism,” or instead described as a form of “market dictatorship” (Attali 1997). The specter of terrorism is once more raised to bring out the character of neoliberalism, for instance by Henry Giroux in his book, The Terror of Neoliberalism (2004). It has especially become fashionable to refer to neoliberalism and its policies as a form of “market fundamentalism,” a depiction that has been popularized by the likes of George Soros (e.g. 1998) and notably Joseph Stiglitz (2002) in his critique of the IMF. These examples indicate that with neoliberalism, the market has emerged as a powerful image that spectacularly altered our thought and speech not only in political and policy discourse but public discourse at large. I imagine that major market philosophers from the past such as Adam Smith, Karl Marx and even Friedrich Hayek or Milton Friedman would have great difficulties understanding what is meant by some of these terms. The perceived exuberance of neoliberalism can therefore be traced to how **the image of the ‘market’ was mobilized and developed into a powerful signifier to re-imagine and rearticulate many important spheres of life.** The New Yorker cartoon pointedly makes clear that neoliberalism relies on the work of metaphor. Rather than straightforwardly instructing the participants in the boardroom that terrorism should be fought at the market, the message is to fight terrorism as if it were a market. **Neoliberalism**, I would claim, **always entails mobilizing the market in a metaphorical sense.** The message of neoliberalism is **consistently a metaphorical one**: think of … as a market, (and govern it accordingly).6 **Neoliberalism invites us to imagine virtually everything as a market, ranging from health care, universities to the military, pensions, personal relationships, families, ethics, aesthetics and the state and politics itself.** The excessive quality of neoliberalism is therefore found in its use of the market as a metaphor and its ability to displace the state. The assessment in this thesis of the challenge of neoliberalism and its politics of the market, will therefore begin by distinguishing literal references to the market from metaphorical ones. Others pointed out before that in assessing the politics of markets **it is important to recognize that we often speak of markets in metaphorical terms**. In Contested Commodities, the legal philosopher Margaret Radin (1996) begins her analysis of what goods can properly be bought and sold, by distinguishing literal from metaphorical markets. As against literal markets where goods are exchanged for money, at metaphorical markets there are no actual exchanges involving money but entails interactions that “are talked about as if they did” (3). Radin employs the term market rhetoric to refer to the vocabulary or discourse in which metaphorical markets emerge. Radin claims that on a theoretical level for instance, Chicago scholars such as Becker and Posner engage in market rhetoric, and “in doing so they extend the market, metaphorically at least, beyond what we are conventionally comfortable with” (4). In her view, by conflating literal and metaphorical markets, market rhetoric may give way to what she calls **universal commodification**. It means that goods are solely viewed as alienable market goods and only have exchange value. In her book, Radin argues for the importance of incomplete commodification. This is the view that complete commodification is not, and should not be applicable to most cases of goods. Without further engaging with the details of Radin’s account, her conceptual distinction between literal and metaphorical markets raises an important insight. Among other things, her book analyzes some of the normative implications of the metaphorical extension of the market. While she exclusively concentrates on the metaphorical extension of the market in (mostly economic) theory, I would argue that neoliberalism is founded on an analogous use of metaphorical markets, but in political discourse. **Neoliberalism relies on metaphorical markets and market rhetoric to rearticulate our political understandings**. Without her calling it as such, Radin’s book could be read as a normative analysis of the metaphorical politics of neoliberalism. By drawing attention to the fact that neoliberalism relies on metaphorical markets and market rhetoric, the intellectual challenge posed by neoliberalism is to further specify the nature of its political project. Apart from the question which will be addressed in chapter 3, whether neoliberalism should be construed as either ideology, policy agenda or rather something else, it needs to be determined what kind of political project it amounts to. The hypothesis of this thesis is that neoliberalism is best understood as a kind of discursive politics. By discursive politics, I broadly mean a type of politics that achieves its goals discursively, by rearticulating a prior structure of understanding. Every form of politics of course avails itself of discourse, for example when ‘neoliberals’ call for the liberalization of certain markets. The concern here is however not with this more narrowly defined discourse of politics, but rather with the politics of discourse (viz. Connolly 1993, 221). Put very schematically – although the dividing lines are ultimately hard to draw – my idea of neoliberalism as a discursive politics differs from conventional conceptions of politics in claiming that in important respects **neoliberalism depends on language and discursive means to attain political effects. The basic idea is that discursive interventions impact the way we perceive the organization of the social world and how we conceive of the good life.** Where traditional, for instance liberal conceptions of politics take the organization of social life largely as given and view politics as a contest of preferences and opinions, discursive politics affects the constitution of our social world and our conceptions of the good life. Rather than asking for the liberalization of markets, **the discursive politics of neoliberalism mobilizes the metaphor of the market to rearticulate how we to think of a certain area of life.** The idea of discursive politics as pursued in this thesis, is not unique but inspired by a longer tradition within poststructural political thought and discourse theory as found with Laclau and Mouffe (2001), Butler (1993, 1997), Shapiro (1981, 1984), or Connolly (1993). One of its insights is that **discourse is inherently political because discursive constructions inevitably privilege certain aspects over others.** The flip-side of this insight is however that any discursive construction is fundamentally unstable and subject to rearticulation. Laclau (e.g. Laclau 1996, 2000, 2008) at times emphasizes that rhetorical displacements or “tropological substitutions” are indispensable in mediating the rearticulation of existing discursive structures. Shifts in discourse are always tropological as they allow for the making and breaking of the discursive field. The political power of metaphor then is its capacity to rearticulate a certain discursive field. Since the market metaphor performs such a function in neoliberalism, it seems particularly relevant to approach neoliberalism as a discursive form of politics. **Neoliberalism is then best characterized as the discursive politics of the market metaphor.** Not all politics surrounding neoliberalism is always necessarily discursive in this strong sense and no doubt also amounts to conventional contests over preferences and opinions. Our first brush with neoliberalism here however suggests that its most important challenge is its discursive politics. This thesis studies the discursive politics of neoliberalism, both theoretically and empirically. Since the discursive politics of the market continues to have a tremendous impact on contemporary political discourse, it is relevant to assess its effects. As the discursive market politics of neoliberalism particularly challenges our traditional views of the interrelation between the market and the state, the main question is to determine how the discursive politics of neoliberalism **re-imagines the way this relation is perceived.** This way, neoliberalism calls for a re-evaluation of the intersections between economics and politics**. How do the manifold ways of spreading market metaphors displace and destabilize existing understandings of the relation between markets and states?** What is at stake in the invitation of neoliberalism to imagine markets for everything and especially as a substitute for the state? As we will see, the central issue behind neoliberalism’s rewriting of the relation between the market and the state is that the latter challenge our traditional view of how to govern and how to conceive of government. The argument of this thesis is that the discursive market politics of neoliberalism inaugurates new ways of conceiving of government. The main task of this thesis is to assess exactly how neoliberalism is rewriting our view of government, and to determine what its political consequences are.

#### That creates false hope that they can actually remove themselves from the neoliberal metaphors of debility forwarded in every 1ac piece of evidence

**Goodley, Liddiard, and Runswick-Cole 18** (Dan Goodley - Professor of Disability Studies in the School of Education at the University of Sheffield. Kirsty Liddiard – Research Fellow in the School of Education at the University of Sheffield. Professor in the School of Education at the University of Sheffield. “Feeling disability: theories of affect and critical disability studies” *Disability & Society*, 33:2, 197-217. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09687599.2017.1402752>, DOA: 3/25/21, kbb)

Disability can and should be **an entry point** into studies of **affect**. We might want to think about the ways in which **affect economies** draw disabled people and those close to them into **particular ways of feeling and emoting**. Like Ahmed (2004) and Pedwell and Whitehead (2012) we are wary of those affect theorists who claim that their work constitutes a brand-new field on inquiry in relation to emotion and feeling. Just as feminism can claim a long historical alignment with affect through ‘the personal is political’, so critical disability studies can also point to a body of literature that has been engaged with the affective experiences of disability (Goodley 2016). Critical disability studies is a nascent field of scholarship and activism that explicitly engages with transformative fields of inquiry including queer, postcolonial, indigenous and feminist studies. Theories of affect sit at the intersections of these different spaces of theorisation. In the following, we make some novel connections of theoretical orientations and trajectories from affect theory and critical disability studies. How come you are in a wheelchair? What happened to you then? I never think of you as disabled? You are so brave, you know. (Common comments and questions made by non-disabled people to disabled people; see Goodley 2016). It must be so difficult for you, having a disabled child, but it’s a good job it happened to you, I don’t think I could cope. (Personal comment made to one of the authors, no date) A lot of people [friends] will ask, ‘Does Shaun’s willy work?’ (Hannah, non-disabled wife of Shaun, a man with Spinal Cord Injury [SCI]; see Liddiard 2017) The British feminist disability scholars Thomas (1999, 2001, 2002, 2007) and Reeve (2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) have created a theoretical space for thinking creatively about the psyche. As Goodley (2016) argues, both are sceptical about psychologisation but share an interest in what Reeve describes as the **‘barriers in here’** that are often ignored by radical structuralist sociologists who are more focused on the **‘barriers out there’** (2008, 1). The psycho-emotional register is progressive because it seeks to consider what ‘disabled people can be’ rather than what ‘disabled people can do’. But this approach is also sensitised to an exploration of indirect and direct forms of psycho-emotional disablism.4 Direct forms can be found in discriminatory interactions, acts of invalidation, patronising responses of others and hate crimes such as the destruction of group symbols and hate literature (Sherry 2000). **Indirect** forms of psycho-emotional disablism are less overt but just as damaging. They may emerge as side effects of structural disablism (**a feeling of dislocation** in a building that is largely inaccessible) or **unintended actions**, **words** or **deeds** (such as stares of curious others, patronising attitudes, need-freak requests for assistance) (see Liddiard 2014). How are disabled people, their partners, families and allies meant to respond emotionally to these questions? By accommodating non-disabled people, perhaps offering a smile, a short answer and a response that will not make the non-disabled person even more uncomfortable. Anger, violence or rejection on the part of the disabled person would no doubt be understood by the non-disabled inquisitor as a rude emotional response of someone with a ‘chip on their shoulder’. Ironically, it would at the same time serve to embody the stale ableist trope of the angry, bitter crip. Liddiard (2014, 124) recognises both **the complex management of feeling and the relational politics inherent to responding** in the right ways **as forms of skilled emotional labour**, as disabled people come to take on the diverse roles of teacher, negotiator, manager, mediator, performer and educator’ in negotiating their reactions and responses – enacting forms of skilled inter-personal labour desired by the very western labour markets from which they are largely excluded (see Exley and Letherby 2001). Hochschild (1983) is clear: **there are appropriate affects to display in these moments of interaction**. Families with disabled children and disabled children themselves have described the affective labour that they are forced to engage with to manage the emotions of others (Runswick-Cole 2013). Disabled people have articulated the emotional work and labour required within their loving and sexual relationships with close others, showing that **such labour can reach the most intimate spaces of life and self** (Liddiard 2014). In our respective work, each of us has previously drawn on Hochschild’s work to explain the ways in which disabled people engage in disabling forms of emotional labour (Goodley 2016; Liddiard 2014; Runswick-Cole 2010, 2013); as disabled people, their partners and their families find themselves caught up in interactions with non-disabled people that are **governed by a number of well-known social scripts** (Goodley 2016; Runswick-Cole 2013). These scripts invite non-disabled people to interact with disability that permits, for example, the asking of inappropriate, demeaning and highly personalised questions and commentaries we outlined at the start of this section. **Affect is deeply embedded in cultural norms**. Hughes (2009, 2012, 2015) points out that disabled people are associated with a cultural history of disgust, pity and fear. This renders disabled people as objects of ambivalent feelings from wider non-disabled society such as resentment and hatred. Disabled people risk being ontologically invalidated by the disabling worlds that they inhabit. Hughes (2009, 408) argues that: The role of fear … is hugely underplayed in personal tragedy theory. So to is the role of disgust, a mediating emotion in the relations between disabled and nondisabled people that is in need of considerable development. Hughes’ work builds sociologically on the psychological and psychoanalytic analysis of Marks (1999a, 1999b, 2002) that sought to probe unconscious responses to disability. Marks powerfully argued that being subjected to the **damaging pathologising projections** of others **risked being internalised** by disabled people: where the projections of societal norms of dependency and bodily imperfection are internalised, only to sit ambivalently, often shamefully, with one’s psychical position in a disabling world. (Marks 1999a; 21) Such feelings of emotional and ontological invalidation risk self-harm and self-hatred (Marks 1999b, 615, also see Hughes 2009). Goodley too has deployed social psychoanalytic concepts to explain further the generation of fear, disgust but also attraction in relation to disability displayed by non-disabled culture (Goodley 2011, 2014, 2016). This analysis was indebted to the writings of Marks (1999a, 1999b, 2002) and Watermeyer (2013) who as therapists trained in the psychoanalytic tradition are far more skilled in deploying this theoretical language. Both were keen to understand the ontological damage done to disabled people whilst living in a society that veers from not recognising disabled people as valued members of society to conceptualising disability solely in terms of deficit and lack. Marks and Watermeyer are keen to take seriously the emotional lives of disabled people and do so with a keen interest in the socio-cultural conditions in which one’s psycho-emotional life thrives or fails. Clearly, living in such a dismissive atmosphere risks causing feelings of invalidation. Also, we know that a precarious sense of self becomes heightened in times of austerity (Flynn 2017). Goodley’s (2011, 2016) interest in deploying psychoanalysis was less with disabled people and more with non-disabled people. In particular, he played around with the idea of the psychopathology of the normals, which considers the ways in which the precarious nature of living with **being non-disabled** (or able-bodied or able-minded) inevitably plunges individuals into emotional turmoil (Goodley 2014). One easy route out of any psychic trouble is projection: finding failings in others. We therefore might understand feelings of disgust or fear (or attraction for that matter) as symptoms of the underlying neurosis on the part of non-disabled people. Hence, disability **becomes disavowed** by normative culture: it is **rejected** (because it symbolises lack) and **adored** (because of its association with **dependency** which is the human condition desired by most of us caught in the terrors of adult autonomy). While some affect theorists consider the field to be in part a rejection of the psychoanalytic ownership of the affective register, psychoanalysis may be critically reappropriated to make sense of wider cultural formations of emotion. Indeed, Gorton (2008) and Duschinsky, Greco, and Solomon (2014) draw on related concepts of attachment and fantasy in their interrogation of affective culture. Duschinsky, Greco, and Solomon (2014, 232) note that the idea of **attachment** might well be the best way to engage with a vital question left behind by Foucault: why we **emotionally invest** in the cultures and institutions which **discipline our identities** and **limit our potential to flourish**. For Duschinsky, Greco, and Solomon (2014) **this is the root of Berlant’s affective notion of cruel optimism**: ‘an optimistic attachment is cruel when the object/scene of desire is itself an obstacle to fulfilling the very wants that bring people to it: but its life-organising status can trump interfering with the damage it provokes’ (Berlant 2011, 227). The consequence of such **cruel optimism risks causing emotional distress**, as one **fails** to match up to the **labour and consumption demands** of late capitalism. One route out of such distress is to unconsciously view and locate failure in others. This might help us explain the cultural disavowal of young people with LL/LTIs and their families. **We might understand the broader cultural politics of emotion or affect economy** (Ahmed 2004) – against which interactions such as those already described take place – **as one being framed by ableism** (Campbell 2009; Goodley 2014). **Ableism is associated with the broader cultural logics of autonomy, self-sufficiency and independence**. These logics are **unquestionably** and uncritically linked to psychological contentment and the **affect of happiness**. Ahmed ([2007] 2008) urges us to shake up our taken-for-granted ideas around happiness. Indeed, her critique of the pursuit of happiness, which is promulgated by psychological therapies and the self-help industry, fits well with a critical disability studies rejection of neoliberal-ableism. The latter discourse similarly propels the individual citizen towards an end of point of supposed contentment through the never-ending performances of labour and consumption. Happiness is to be bought, and so is able-bodied and able-mindedness. Here we can see further connections with Berlant’s (2007, 2010, 2011) cruel optimism: the mistaken desire and belief that we will reach personal fulfilment and happiness through working and shopping hard enough. Happiness, for Ahmed ([2007] 2008), can be understood as a promise or aspiration, a habit, a narrative, a memory, as well as an emotion, feeling or affect.5 We would want to consider ability (and the desire of autonomy tied up within ableism) in similar ways. Neoliberal-ableism is the elision of individual and national economic independence with an individual and cultural celebration of autonomy (Goodley 2014). This particular cultural economy ties individual and national progress to independence and, by virtue of this, associates happiness with self-sufficiency. Young people with LL/LTIs risk being threatened with what Flynn (2017, 155) describes as a ‘lived experience of shock and disappointment’ that can further devalue their identities as young disabled people. **We would want to understand and contest the affective consequences of neoliberal-ableism.**

#### Their args about technologies overcoding desires are wrong.

**Beardsworth, 10**—Head of the School of Politics and International Studies and Professor of International Politics at the University of Leeds (Richard, “Technology and Politics: A Response to Bernard Stiegler,” Cultural Politics (2010) 6 (2): 181–199, dml)

Just as Stiegler gives us a technological reading of political economy, so he also gives a technological reading of **libidinal economy**. (They are obviously one and the same reading given his synthesis of both to describe the specificity of cognitive capitalism; I have broken them down here for analytical purposes.) Since the 1990s Stiegler re-thinks the Freudian problematic through technics (see Stiegler 1996b). Technics constitutes the condition of sexuality qua desire. This critique of Freud inscribes the whole of the psychical apparatus within the technical history of epiphylogenesis. It is clear that human sexuality has both evolved and is altered through technical developments. Stiegler is right to insist, with the paleontologist Leroi-Gourhan and Gilles Simondon, that hominization is a technical process of evolution and psychic and collective individuation. That said, sexuality is **not reducible** to technics. Human sexuality, together with the problematic of desire that it underpins, both **transcends** technological determination and is itself dependent on **many variables**. There are depth psychological constants (for example, the Oedipus complex) that determine the transgenerational legacy of the id **beyond technical evolution**. To argue otherwise (as Stiegler does; see 1996b) is **not to engage** with the autonomy of the depth psychological. What with the **neuroscience**s' penetration into the mind–body complex, we are probably only now beginning to under stand this autonomy and multi-causality.

Stiegler is therefore correct, following Herbert Marcuse, to place technics within the evolution of sexuality and the vagaries of desire. There would be no Oedipus complex, specific to human animals, without the technological evolution of the human. But he **goes too far** when he makes the relation between technics and desire one of **unilateral determination**. The above argument that the “**psychotechnologies**” are attempting “to **control** the id,” if not “the **psychical apparatus** in general” (2009: 31), is one consequence of this unilateral determination. This is another **technologically determinist judgment**. It makes a **background condition** (technology) into a **radical determination** of the psychic apparatus as a **whole**. Such determinism tempts Stiegler into arguing for a general “crisis of spirit” at the moment of cognitive capitalism.

Let me recall in this context that, for Freud, sublimation (the turning of desire into law) constitutes a **complex process** that is dependent on **many contingent factors**. In distinction to all other animals, humans sublimate because they are diphasic: we undergo the latency period and, therefore, puberty—due, without doubt, to our technological specificity. As a result of this diphasic nature, the human animal turns its love of its protectors into an identification that, with the reversals of puberty, comes to structure and occupy the space of the superego. Identifying with our parents (and their parents, etc.) or taking distance from them constitutes, from the beginning, a complex process of love and hate that may lead, from puberty onwards, to too rigid a superego or too dissipated a one (or rather, to variations in-between). Freudian psychoanalysis suggests that it is **very difficult** to generalize with regard to this development. The absence of identifiable, recurrent, and protecting love can indeed create an uncoordinated psyche. It leads, in this case, to other forms of parental identification that are always ongoing in the infantile years precisely because the id transcends technically organized memory. Until the nuclear family is **literally dissolved** and **not replaced** by another form of social organization, we **cannot** consequently speak of a new generation that has **lost its primary identifications** and, therefore, following the Freudian logic of sublimation, lost a **sense of the future**, of law, and of justice. There are **too many variables** at play within the depth psychological dynamic of infantile protection and care for Stiegler to be so clear. Under new conditions of technology, one must be **proactive** and **prudently regulate** Internet flows (regarding collective security, obscenity, etc.). One must, however, wait to see what new forms of parenthood adopt the hyperindustrial support and what new forms of sublimation will come to structure the coming generations' sense of conscience. These new forms may be weaker than either traditional or modern forms of the close social bond. But this **cannot** be a cause of excessive concern—**unless** this polemical pitch is **judged** to be the right means to **attract political concern** and **change public policy** (and even here, I am unsure that it is). Ontologically speaking, these forms may lead to more innovative and creative behavior as much as to destructive and self-destructive behavior. I am arguing that we cannot know at this very early stage of our hyperindustrial age, although Stiegler is nevertheless right to call for critical synthesis. The political adoption of the hyperindustrial support will take time—as did monotheism to adopt non-orthographic writing and the social contract to adopt the alphabetical word.

The above uncertainty regarding the direction of the contemporary technology–human symbiosis constitutes, in Stiegler's terms, the “ambivalence” of technology. In Freudian terms, it is more simply the complexity of the human mind–body complex (on these themes, see Beardsworth 1996b). In these processes there is a constant dialectic between “negative” and “positive” sublimation: here, the reduction of law to capitalism on the one hand, and the embedding of capitalism within artistic and legal forms on the other. Stiegler cuts the knot of this ambivalence too quickly, or rather, generalizes too fast from almost exclusively French examples of de-sublimation (see Stiegler 2008a, esp. on the advertising techniques of Canal J.).

Regarding Freud, I would argue, in sum, that Stiegler gives a strong, original reading of contemporary affective life through the bridging of technology and the psyche. Conversely, it is a technological re-reading of Freud that **flattens** out the vagaries of human affect and human conscience, **preventing** a **nuanced**, **comparative account** of the relation between contemporary consumerism and normative thought and behavior. As a result, public education may be posited too quickly by Stiegler as the right political response.

This is not to deny the need for change in public education: far from it. The Internet clearly poses a problem. As the contemporary teacher knows, Internet-surfing produces a form of consciousness that is adept at “copy and paste,” but finds synthesis and judgment increasingly difficult. Stiegler's politics of critical reflection, with its emphasis on the vital role of education, is in this sense persuasive. That said, I would wish to keep a sense of global perspective. As is well-known, use of the Internet was crucial to the election of Barack Obama: it helped create a cultural transformation that proved strong enough to shift the American political landscape to the center. The use of mobile phones has transformed the electoral process in West Africa. The Internet is, in other words, already highly creative politically. Education must certainly help to supplement this emerging creativity with the art of judgment. Obama's domestic fate regarding healthcare reform since the campaign has shown, at the same time, how powerful the traditional media remain in shaping political perception and interests. Progressive liberal politics in one of the most technologically savvy of countries **depends** as much today on **restructuring** the **power-bases** of the traditional media as it does on providing an education in response to capitalist-led technological transformation of human memory. Stiegler would not disagree with this last point. As I said at the beginning of this paper, his political voluntarism was in the 1990s singular on the French theoretical continent. It means, to my mind, however, that philosophico-political reflection should consider the **political adoption** of technology at **several levels** of **analysis** and of **policy**, in a spirit of **prudence**, and with a sense of **intellectual limits**.

Conclusion

I have addressed the work of Stiegler through the names of Marx and Freud. In doing so, I have attempted to suggest that his work goes too quickly over what puts a break on the destructive side to capitalism. The future political project of democracy is, without doubt, to embed capitalism at the world level. And democratic freedom means that one must renounce gratifying one's immediate desires. This means political institution and self-restraint. Stiegler focuses rightly, and sometimes brilliantly, on the urgency of the political today, and on the importance of a political adoption of contemporary forms of industry within a general intellectual framework of retentional finitude. This latter framework of analysis is theoretically innovative and disciplinarily rich. Not to analyze the forms of **institutional change** at the appropriate level and not to give credit to the **specificities** of sublimation within capitalism tend, however, to make capitalism's field and dynamic **too uniform**, and Stiegler's responses to it **too unilateral** and **too general** (if not, **too French**). As a result, his theoretical world **turns too quickly**, at the precise moment when a **slower speed** and a **finer set of distinctions** are needed. Not that there is not **enormous danger** in our present world, not that a sense of urgency is not vital. Our description of it **requires**, however, theoretical terms that exposit it in its **complexity** so that theory can provide, precisely, the occasion for **suitable political adoption** and **decision**.

#### Only through our mode of analysis can we mobilize black debaters against the empty promises of civil society.

**Wilderson 20 [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 327-329, JMH]**

We dined al fresco on a marble terrace with tall terra-cotta columns on a cliff overlooking the sea in Newport Beach. Mom’s hair was well-coiffed and perched with sunglasses, which gave her a cool, just-back-from-Club-Med-for-Seniors look. Dad was better dressed than I had been even when I worked as a stockbroker. Alice and I were dressed in solid black, as though we had come not for lunch on a cliff above the sea, but to carry their bags. There were precious few guests on the terrace. It was spring. The summer-season droves of tourists had yet to arrive. A squadron of double-crested cormorants laid siege to a boulder a mile out from the shore; and when the conversation lulled one could hear the sound of suicide being practiced by waves on the rocks below. Soon the conversation ran aground as well. Alice and I had shown a little too much enthusiasm when we told them how high school students sometimes called us during the dinner hour to ask questions about Afropessimism. I think Mom was a bit incredulous at the idea that high school students were reading this material. But we explained that these students were high school debaters who read critical theory as part of their training. **College debate coaches were also calling the house to ask questions and request Afropessimist seminars ever since a Black debate team from Towson University in Maryland beat Harvard in a national debate tournament.** **They did so, I explained, by refusing the question of the tournament, rather than arguing pro or con within the logic of the question: It’s unethical to insist that Slaves argue within the logic of a world that defines itself in opposition to them. So they interrogated the question’s assumptive logic. Black students were mobilizing my claim that civil society was a murderous juggernaut for the Slave, not a terrain of consent balanced by coercion; and mobilizing Saidiya Hartman’s argument that “the slave is the object or the ground that . . . by negation or contradistinction, defines liberty, citizenship, and the enclosures of the social body.”** My parents, especially my mother, were impressed by the socialuplift narrative of Black students beating Harvard students in a game of wits. They were, however, underwhelmed by the strategies and, I suspect, were inwardly alarmed that this was becoming a national trend. Alice chuckled. “It’s gotten to the point where White parents want to hire Frank to teach Afropessimism to their White children so that they can beat Black students in future tournaments.” “Some professors and debate coaches,” I chimed in, “want to impose a rule that would disqualify students who interrogate the question. We’re witnessing the blackening of a major intercollegiate ‘sport.’ ” Mom sighed. “**I don’t see how Afropessimism can help these Black children become good citizens. What can it do to get Black people from point A to point B?”** she opined with her characteristic logic, not in the least dulled by age. Out at sea, a large skiff of whale watchers skipped across the water, alarming the double-crested cormorants. They scattered like buckshot off the boulder. The main plates were cleared and we ordered coffee and dessert. We were down to brass tacks, my mother and I. She said, **“What’s the use of Afropessimism? What practical use does it have?”** I said, “It’s not a tractor, it can’t mow your lawn, if that’s what you mean. But **it makes us worthy of our suffering.** She said, “How’s suffering going to make me a good citizen?” I said, “I can’t believe you’re a Black psychologist who’s read Fanon.” She said, “I read the funnies, but I don’t quote the funnies.” I said, “Don’t patronize me.” Dad tried to change the subject by noting how lush and green the headland looked. Alice said California had seven growing seasons. They chewed that bit of trivia like cud. I told Mom that it was common for most people to feel like they’d been mugged by Afropessimism. It was a shrewd move on my part, for I knew how she hated to think of herself as a victim. **“That’s why most people don’t take the time to understand it,” I said. “They’re too afraid.”** She scoffed. “Afraid of what?” “**Afraid of a problem in which everyone is complicit and for which no sentence can be written that would explain how to remedy it. Most people**, Mom, even profound intellectuals like you and Dad and Alice, and myself, if I’m to be honest, **are emotionally unable to wallow in a problem that has no solution. Black suffering is that problem. And a suffering without a solution is a hard thing to hold, especially if that suffering fuels the psychic health of the rest of the world. But that’s what it means to be a Slave, to be the host of that parasite called the Human.”** Mom rejoined that she wasn’t anybody’s slave, and that even when our ancestors were slaves they were Human beings. “Being Human isn’t anything to aspire to,” I said. “Just ask Alice.” Though we all laughed, the laughter was uneasy. This was the elephant in the room: my marriage to Alice; her presence and place in what the conversation implied. No one asked me to defend the thinly veiled claim that Alice was both my wife and my master. But everyone, including me, especially me, flinched when I told that joke. We all knew what I meant. We were all academics. And that’s how the conversation was supposed to stay, academic, if we were going to have it at all. Say what you want, but don’t bring it home. I had broken that unspoken rule, but it got their attention (and Obama had not been shot by them across the bow).