# Afrofuturism 1AC

<https://soundsofnone.wordpress.com/tag/this-planet-is-doomed/>

The Damneded Air

around the earth

circles the infinity of the damneded air

the damneded inheritance of the earth

are the same vibrations it ever was

we need new air

we need the air that vibrates with the

sound of another kind of mind

we need the beam of the future to strike

the earth

like the lightning and the power of a

thunderbolt

in order that the dying embers of the past

should suddenly be extinct

there is no place for the past in the realm

of the future

except temporarily as an exhibit of that which is taboo

because the past is the past

and the future is the future

the eternity of the limited past

was for those who were taught the limited

darkness

the unlimited reach of the future is

another kind of forever

there is an inner darkness and there is an

outer darkness

those who become subjects of the inner

darkness dwell therein

those who become subjects of the outer

darkness shall dwell there out

out is the way of the outer

and in, the way of the inner

and in of the inner in

is different from the end of the outer in

because the outer in is the outer on

yes

out is the outer and in is the inner

the way out is the way to living, breathing

life

let’s blast the damneded air and claim the

right to be a part of the outer heavens and

outer space

that we might live and breathe and be

eternally alive

forever

let’s blast the damnded air

the imprisoning circle that bans the earth

with the echoes of the dead truth of the

damneded word

lets the light shine upon the darkness

that enchains the meaning of the

knowledge that has been used as the law

to destroy

#### Criminality is not a street phenomenon but is in the walls of the classroom. We need to raise critical consciousness of the ongoing disaster Black girls face with criminalization in and by the very places that should help them thrive.

**Morris 16 [Monique W. Morris, Award-winning author and social justice scholar with three decades of experience in the areas of education, civil rights, juvenile and social justice, Founder and President of the National Black Women’s Justice Institute (NBWJI), an organization that works to interrupt school-to-confinement pathways for girls, “Pushout: the criminalization of Black girls in schools” ] o $**

Call my mama!” This was the cry of fourteen-year-old Dejerria Becton, who in the summer of 2015 was thrown to the ground as well as physically and verbally assaulted by Corporal Eric Casebolt after she refused to leave her friends at the mercy of this law enforcement officer in Mc Kinney, Texas. A video, which later went viral, showed Casebolt pushing Dejerria’s face into the ground as she—a slight-framed, barefoot, bikini-clad teenager who presented no physical threat or danger—screamed for someone to call her mother for help. The video showed Casebolt grinding his knee into her bare skin and restraining her by placing the full weight of his body onto hers. The incident was violent and reeked of sexual assault—overtones that were later deemed inappropriate, “out of control,” and incon- sistent with the police department’s policies, training, and articu- lated practices.1 Though Casebolt resigned in response to the public outcry and internal scrutiny associated with his actions, **the image of her helpless, frightened body under his has become one of the snapshots that call our public consciousness to examine the over- zealous policing and criminalization of Black youth**. Though me- dia and advocacy efforts have largely focused on the extreme and intolerable abuse cases involving Black boys, such as seventeen- year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida or twelve-year-old Tamir Rice in Ohio, a growing number of cases involving Black girls have sur- faced to reveal what many of us have known for centuries: Black girls are also directly impacted by criminalizing policies and practices that render them vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, dehu- manization, and, under the worst circumstances, death. For example, eighteen-year-old Sheneque Proctor died in police custody after she was arrested for disorderly conduct in Bessemer, Alabama.2 Even in high-profile cases involving boys, **we often fail to see the girls who were right there alongside them**. After the fatal shooting of Tamir Rice, the officers tackled his fourteen-year-old sister to the ground and handcuffed her. Not only had she just watched her little brother die at the hands of these officers, but she was forced to grieve his death from the backseat of a police car.3 Addressing these problematic narratives has proved difficult in the current social and political climate, one that embraces punitive responses to expressions of dissent and increases the surveillance of the homes where our families live, the communities where our chil- dren play, and the schools where our children are educated**. The result has been an increasing number of girls in contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems**. Since 1992, girls’ share of delinquency cases resulting in detention (the most com- mon form of confinement for girls) has increased, often for charges such as prostitution, simple assault, or status offenses.\* For a host of reasons—paternalistic juvenile courts and a lack of community- based, culturally competent, and gender-responsive services among them—diversion away from these systems has been underutilized with girls. These are mostly girls of color (a disproportionately high percentage of girls are Black and/or Latina), and many of them (by some estimates 40 percent) identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans- gender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ), or gender-nonconforming. One of the most persistent and salient traits among girls who have been **labeled “delinquent” is that they have failed to establish a meaningful and sustainable connection with schools.** **This missing link is exacerbated by the increased reliance of public schools on exclusionary discipline, at present one of the most widely used measures to deal with problematic student behaviors.** Indeed, nearly 48 percent of Black girls who are expelled nationwide do not have access to educational services.5 Black girls are 16 percent of the female student population, but nearly one-third of all girls referred to law enforcement and more than one-third of all female school-based arrests.6 **The criminalization of Black girls is much more than a street phenomenon. It has extended into our schools, disrupting one of the most important protective factors in a girl’s life: her education.** In May 2013, Ashlynn Avery, a sixteen-year-old diabetic girl in Alabama, fell asleep while reading *Huckleberry Finn* during her in-school suspension. When she did not respond, the suspension supervisor allegedly threw a book at her and ordered her to leave the classroom. As she was leaving the room, a police officer alleg- edly slammed her face into a file cabinet and then arrested her.7 In April 2013, sixteen-year-old Kiera Wilmot was charged with a felony offense when what she said was a science experiment went wrong, leaving her subjected to a mandatory suspension and arrest following an unauthorized “explosion” on school grounds.8 The charges were later dropped after significant public objection and peti- tioning by advocacy groups; however, after the incident, Wilmot has feared being labeled a “terrorist.”9 In 2008, Marché Taylor was arrested in Texas after she resisted being barred from prom for wearing a dress that was considered too revealing.10 And in 2007, Pleajhia Mervin was harmed by a California school security offi- cer after she dropped a piece of cake on the school’s cafeteria floor and refused to pick it up.11 **Some of the most egregious applications of punitive school discipline in this country have criminalized Black girls as young as six or seven years old, who have been arrested for throwing tantrums in their school classrooms, yelling and screaming at a teacher, and being disruptive to the learning environment.** Six-year- old Salecia Johnson was arrested in Georgia in 2012 for having a tantrum in her classroom.12 In 2011, seven-year-old Michelle Mitchell was arrested with her eight-year-old brother after they got into a fight on an Ohio school bus.13 And six-year-old Desre’e Watson was hand- cuffed and arrested at a Florida school in in 2007 for throwing a tantrum in her kindergarten class.14 These cases were so extreme that they managed to capture considerable public attention—mostly through social media. However**, they were never pieced together to present a comprehen- sive, national portrait of how school responses to the disruptive behaviors of Black girls push them out and often render them vul- nerable to further victimization and delinquency.** It turns out that the incidents involving Ashlynn, Kiera, Marché, Pleajhia, Salecia, Michelle, and Desre’e were not isolated ones. Black girls from coast to coast tell stories of being criminalized and pushed out of schools. **For many Black girls, interactions between the justice system and schools often do not begin, or end, in school. The surveillance to which Black girls are subjected, and the punitive responses to either their (sometimes poor, sometimes typical) decision making or their reactions to perceived injustice have made contact with law enforcement a frequent occurrence.** The implementation of zero-tolerance policies, as I will discuss throughout this book, has become the primary driver of an unscrupulous school-based reli- ance on law enforcement and school security guards. People who often know little to nothing about child or adolescent develop- ment, and who often lack the appropriate awareness and training for the school environments they patrol, are responding to behav- iors that were previously managed by skilled teachers, counselors, principals, and other professionals. While there are plenty of numbers and statistics that paint a troubling picture, the harm done by this shift can hardly be quantified. **Black girls are being criminalized in and by the very places that should help them thrive.**

#### Black youth’s are criminalized throughout the educational system. Their skin is transcribed with a negative imagery of criminality.

**Wun 15** [Connie Wun, Founder and Director of Transformative Research: An Institute for Research + Social Transformation, Ph.D. in education from UC Berkeley, “The Anti-Black Order of No Child Left Behind: Using Lacanian psychoanalysis and critical race theory to examine NCLB”, pgs 9-10] ac

Researchers are also beginning to ﬁnd that the national rates of suspensions and expulsions have increased since the implementation of NCLB. According to the Advancement Project (2011), since the passage of NCLB, the role of police in schools has expanded and the ‘school to prison pipeline’ has grown. Their study argues that the shift toward high-stakes testing, school measurement and evaluation has contributed to the development of harsh school discipline policies and the criminalization of youth of color in schools. The report asserts that NCLB has not only facilitated an environment that narrows the curriculum and stigmatizes its students, it has also propelled schools to progressively ﬁlter out students who fail to meet rigidly ascribed school standards. According to a recent report issued by the Department of Education Ofﬁce of Civil Rights, from 2009 to 2010, while Black youth make up 18 percent of the student population, they constitute 42 percent of the referrals to law enforcement, 35 percent of school-related arrests, 35 percent of the population of students suspended once, 46 percent of those suspended more than once and 39 percent of all students expelled. Students with disabilities, who are also disproportionately Black,11 represent 12 percent of students in the sample, but nearly 70 percent of students physically restrained by adults (CRDC, 2012). These numbers provide some insight into the ways that the current public education system manages its Black students. Taken together, these critical reports have helped to challenge NCLB and its claims to reform educational disparities in public education. Evaluating the mandated reforms is beyond the scope of this article. Although I have referred to the work that policy analysts and scholars have done to examine the disparate effects of NCLB, the objective of this article is to highlight the paradigmatic and structural implications of this educational policy and its ﬁxation on marginalized youth for the purpose of ‘closing the achievement gap’. Despite its beneﬁcent claims to equalizing educational opportunities and outputs, the race-conscious mandate, according to Leonardo (2007), is an instrument of Whiteness. The color-blind educational policy may claim intentions to redress racial inequalities, but its underpinnings and outcomes demonstrate otherwise. Contrary to the articulated claims of closing the achievement gap, NCLB naturalizes social inequalities. **For** instance, although schools do not receive adequate funding to meet NCLB mandates these students are blamed for failing to meet the standards because theoretically they were given ample opportunities to succeed. In addition, students who fail to meet the policy’s racialized academic standards are stigmatizated and further alienated (Leonardo, 2007). Despite an apparent commitment in its language, the Act is unable to meet its goals of addressing and redressing racial disparities. This, I argue, is not a paradox or indicative of the policy’s failure. Instead, it is a symptom of its fantasies of Black youth as deﬁcient, Other, and perennially behind. In lieu of providing a structural critique including the racism of US educational policies, NCLB ﬁxates on marginalized students as problems. Even if the language of the policy is essentially to provide equal opportunities and high standards for historically neglected students, the emphasis is that these students are academically deﬁcient, if not fetishized as such. Here, Lacanian psychoanalytic theory may help to investigate the formation of the racialized subject (and its society) through educational policy as a violent act (Gillborn, 2005). Given that racial fantasies and language shape subjectivities and inform law, I argue that NCLB is a formative signiﬁer that shapes how Black students are recognized within the law, social institutions and language. It almost goes without saying that these students will be stigmatized, as Leonardo discussed in his essay (Leonardo, 2007). However, given the power of language to shape human subjects, their sense of each other and themselves, imagining Black students as deﬁcient and problematic produce effects that extend beyond stigma. I argue that NCLB helps to constitute the Black subject to reify the illusion of a complete society premised upon anti-Blackness. It is important to recall Lacanian psychoanalysis’ theory of language existing before its subjects. While current academic standards and measurement systems may highlight important educational disparities, the anti-Black world fantasizes the existence of the deﬁcient, evil, problematic Black other. NCLB institutionalized these fantasies of the phobogenic other. This does not mean that achievement gaps are not a fact or that educational disparities do not exist. It is important, however, for race-conscious scholars to analyze more than empirical evidence for what informs these mandates, their discourses and their effects. As part of the formative Symbolic the Act has marked these students as problems for the entire educational system to be refashioned around. Studies show that this restructuring is failing to rectify the problem. In fact, as mentioned earlier, some studies show that NCLB has not only been unsuccessful in redressing educational inequalities, but also created more disparities, especially in the areas of school discipline and punishment. This may be because the problem lies not with the students, schools, teachers or funding, but with the pre-existing anti-Black fantasies that shape the Symbolic, the law and its institutions.

#### **Black girls are constantly denied access to injury, dehumanized, subject to school discipline politicies, and shuttled through the school-to-prison-pipeline.**

Wun 15 (Connie Wun, PhD holds degrees in Women’s Studies and Asian American Studies from San Francisco State University and UC Berkeley [“Against Captivity: Black Girls and School Discipline Policies in the Afterlife of Slavery”])

 Since then, organizations including the Black Youth Project 100 and the African American Forum have organized campaigns to highlight state violence against Black girls and women. According to the policy brief, “SayHerName: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women,” by the African American Policy Forum and the Columbia Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies (2015), Dajerria is one of many Black women and girls in the United States who are subject to police violence. While most attention surrounding anti-Black state violence has historically focused on Black men and boys, scholars and activists are also examining the ways that Black women and girls are affected by surveillance, harassment, and brutality (Crenshaw, 2012; M. Morris, 2012; Roberts, 2011). According to Roberts (2011), Black women (and girls) are not only criminalized and punished by the police and prison system, they are also subject to criminalization and policing by a myriad of state institutions including the foster care system and schools. Recently, the African American Policy Forum and Columbia Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies (2014) and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and National Women’s Law Center (2014) issued reports that examined the ways schools have simultaneously over policed Black girls while neglecting their complex needs. Their studies demonstrate that, in addition to the criminal justice system, school discipline policies also criminalize Black girls. This qualitative study, based in a suburban high school in northern California, examines the narratives of Black girls disciplined in accordance with school policies. Drawing from the stories of six Black girls regarding their experiences with school discipline, the article provides narratives about race, gender, surveillance, criminalization, and punishment in schools. The girls’ narratives extend discourses about anti-Black police violence by identifying the way school discipline policies construct conditions of captivity for them. Drawing from Hartman’s 1997 (1997) theory of the “afterlife of slavery” and the ways that Black people are positioned as “captives,” this study highlights the ways school discipline policies help to construct the conditions of captivity for Black youth and specifically for Black girls.Within the past decade, school discipline researchers have reported on the disproportionate rates by which Black youth and other students of color across rural, suburban, and urban communities are overrepresented in school discipline data (Advancement Project, 2011; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Nocella, Parmer, & Stovall, 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003). These studies have largely focused on the ways that suspensions and expulsions help to funnel students into prison. Calling this the school to prison pipeline (STPP), scholars and advocates contend that students who have been excluded from school are more likely to fall behind their peers. This subsequently “pushes students out of school and into the criminal justice system. Other studies contend that school discipline policies help to create militarized “prison-like” conditions for students (Fuentes, 2012; Nolan, 2011; Saltman & Gabbard, 2011). In these spaces, students of color are constantly subject to security systems and profiling by school administrators and police officers for drug use and weap-ons possession. These students are policed and monitored in ways that create a punitive “hostile” environment (Meiners, 2007, 2011). School discipline research has also examined the specific effects that these discipline policies and practices have on boys of color, particularly Black boys (Davis & Jordan, 1994; Ferguson, 2001; Monroe, 2006; Noguera, 2008). Recognizing the impact of school discipline policies on the lives of students of color, specifi-cally Black students, this article examines the punitive dimensions of school discipline with a specific focus on its implications for Black girls. hese school discipline policies, which are integral to U.S. policing technolo-gies, create conditions of captivity for Black youth. As captives, this author contends, they are perpetually watched but are simultaneously denied access to their humanity, including rights and privileges over their lives and bodies. More specifically, they do not have “access to injury” (Hartman, 1997), or rights to self-defense or autonomy. This study identifies school discipline policies as mediums by which Black people, particularly Black girls’, are under constant surveillance but the complexitities of their lives, pain, and suffering are negligible. Although the value of Black life is beyond the scope of this article, a thorough exploration of this issue can be found on the Society for Cultural Anthropology (2015) website.

#### Thus, we advocate a radical imagination through Sun Ra’s performance of afrofuturism in order imagine a future free of the criminality of blackness.

#### Afrofuturism imaginings if able to counter-hegemonic imaginations of the world and create a space for marginalized groups to reclaim their identity.

Matthews 17 (Matthews, Shanelle, Director of Communications for the Black Lives Matter Global Network. "This Black Futures Month, Give Yourself Permission To Dream." The Huffington Post. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 02 Feb. 2017. Web. 30 June 2017. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/black-imagination-vital-way-forward\_us\_5891dc4fe4b0522c7d3e1467>.)

We do all of this because we have to, but also because we know the goodness and rightness of our own dreams, even when it feels impossible to dream. I learned the hard way that people with power can tell a story about you, about who you are and what you’re capable of, about your worth – and whether the story is true or not, it shapes the way people treat you. And that’s something Black people are forced to contend with every single day. But our best weapon against the attempted sabotage of our dreams has always come from within – our self-love. Our self-love tells us that our imagination can never actually be taken from us. Though the world has tried. White people have long tethered the humanity of Black people to the whim of white imagination. The stories policymakers and racists tell about people like us and the places from which we come are predicated on assumptions imagined long before we were born by people who meant us harm. Those stories may be true for some individuals, but are untrue for whole communities. Those stories may have shaped the way people understand our place in the world, our trajectory and our value – but we do not assent. And those stories may have shaped people’s expectations of us, our desirability and our abilities – but they have never shaped us. To combat the oppressive hegemony of white storytelling, imagination – our biggest aspirations and most precious dreams, whatever they may be – will always be the fundamental first step to self-actualization and freedom. In recent years, we have gained ground in telling new stories, from Afrofuturism to Black imagination to contemporary re-imaginations of “the incredible myths and world-views of Black people and the Black diaspora,” Black people in these times may be more ready than ever to dream a world that is just for everyone. And that does not mean ignoring realities of the journey ahead. While we must guard our imagination fiercely, more of us – all of us – must dare to spread what we dream up. For many of us, doing so is a direct action of one, courageously creating a large, spacious place to be expansive with ourselves and to take up space, to call in a bastion of Black joy and abundance where the affirmation of our dignity and humanity are not up for debate, but acknowledged, lengthened, widened and nurtured. This is a place of unabashed desire and satisfaction. And when we find spaces to dream and imagine, what we once understood to be merely possible becomes exponentially more real. When we use dreaming and radical imagination as a strategy – like organizing, like communications, like fundraising – we can set concrete goals based in our highest visions and work in tandem to realize them. Through dreaming and radical imagination, we can manifest and develop the communities and build power to create the conditions that we need and want for our lives. The prejudicial legislation, biased and deadly policing and interpersonal and intra-community violence Black people experience at the hands of law enforcement, officers of the courts, prison workers and vigilantes are all consequences of imagined ideas, assumptions and perceptions about who we are inherently. Because oppression is so limiting to our physical and psychological well-being, we must commit to making space to dream – to making space for the wellbeing of our desire and our spirit to flourish. I have come to understand our obligation to dream and radically imagine the world we want and need as one with deep-seated moral and ethical implications as well. We have a duty to dream and radically imagine with fervor and passion and to embrace creativity, innovation and a fail-fast-to-learn-fast approach – a duty to yield ego and build collective power. We have a duty to have intimate and human conversations with people with different political opinions without compromising our integrity or our own imagination, the kind of conversations that can realize real improvements in all of our lives, conversations that start movements and facilitate the process of organizing our country into a safe place for all people. It’s a dreamy process – as it should be – and it’s a process and a space that leads with inclusivity and a commitment to justice, not intimidation and fear. Black people deserve dream space. We deserve to laugh and to delight, to muse and to meditate. We are a deeply rich and imaginative people, and we are more than what happened to us. In many ways we have long been creating the world we need and the spaces that we deserve. Now is the time to make a commitment to dream even bigger and more audaciously than ever before.

#### We can find places where it is possible to combat both the white denial of black history and access to the future it is found within the performance.

**Lupro**, Micahel Mooradian ,**2009** ( BA in intermedia studies at San Fransico State University, MA in Geography at Portland State University, PHD in American Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University and lecturer at North Carolina A &T State Universiy)  ’Space Oddities for The Age Of Space

No mere coping strategy, making **a place in space was also a means of actively combating both “white denial of black history** (e.g., Egypt) **and white denial of access to the future** (e.g. outer space)” (Lock 61). Sun Ra’s assertions of alien-ness are read by Lock “as a deliberate riposte to the history of white American refusal to treat black Americans as human beings” and **likens terrestrial Herman Blount’s transformation into the extraterrestrial Sun Ra as akin to coming out of slavery,** “**an experience that entailed not only a change in status but virtually a whole new way of being**” (Lock 5). Ajay Heble concurs with Lock in regards to the assessment that, far from the product of insanity, Sun Ra’s space **is produced to strategically counteract oppression**. […] his wigged-out space themes all suggest **a desire to opt out of the very codes of representation and intelligibility, the very frameworks of interpretation** and assumption, **which have legitimized the workings of dominant culture.** Ra’s space-age futurism, [may] mark a shift in postcolonial struggles for identity formation: rather than critically interrogating the dominant ideology’s misrepresentation of black history (and consequently seeking to correct the historical record), Ra’s space sounds, philosophy, and paraphernalia invite us to envision new models for an aesthetic of resistance, **to generate a space outside the very framework of domination**. (Heble 125) Corbett concurs, suggesting that **treating Sun Ra as insane rather than taking him seriously “may indicate the *insanity* of its maker, it also cuts back the other direction, suggesting the fundamental *unreality* of existence for people imported into the New World servitude and then disenfranchised into povert**y” (Corbett *Extended Play* 8, emphasis in original). This helps explain the earth/space dichotomy deployed by Sun Ra wherein tradition and reason are associated with earth from which flights of fancy depart when going “out there.” Corbett further suggests that Sun Ra’s space metaphors are thinly veiled references to the slave trade: Referring to the destruction of diverse, distinct African histories and their subsumption in the “melting pot” of miscegenation and history-without-genealogy, he [Sun Ra] suggests a creative alternative: “**We came from nowhere here, why can’t we go somewhere there**?” (Corbett *Extended Play*, 17). Sexton suggests that Sun Ra’s vision of “outer space utopias” (199) works in concert with what Sun Ra’s biographer John Szwed terms his ‘black cosmic vision’ and links it directly to […] the theme of travel, of journey, of exodus, of escape which dominates African-American narratives; of people who could fly back to Africa, travel in the spirit, visit or be visited by the dead; of chariots and trains to heaven, the Underground Railroad; Marcus Garvey’s steamship line, Rosa Parks on the Mobile Bus, freedom riders. (Szwed 134) Mark Dery concurs, elaborating on the double meaning of *alien* in African American culture and suggesting that history easily explains the use of alien metaphors in African American cultural production. […] the fact that African Americans, in a very real sense, are the descendants of alien abductees; they inhabit a sci-fi nightmare in which unseen but no less impassable force fields of intolerance frustrate their movements; official histories undo what has been done; and technology is too often brought to bear on black bodies (branding, forced sterilization, the Tuskegee experiment, and tasers come readily to mind). (Dery 180) Following this connection between alien metaphors and the African American experience, Davis suggests that Sun Ra’s proselytizing about outer space is equally as Afrocentric as his songs of mythic Egypt since “Both came from his conviction that he was from somewhere else and had little in common with most of those around him – a sense of cultural displacement shared by many African-Americans, but taken to extremes by Ra” (Davis 161). 108 Heble posits a relationship between performances of Sun Ra’s “mythology and uninhibited vision” and empowering post-colonial signification, representation, and production practices (123). In this system of knowledge production, “**Space becomes a site for the recovery and the articulation of other histories, epistemologies, identities, and possibilities”** (Heble 132). And in this post-colonial configuration of black history and culture, **Sun Ra looks to space as a site of a new and radically revised model of knowledge production that counters the “dominant myths, values, and behaviors that have become institutionalized, authorized, and naturalized in American society**” (Heble 132). Creating a ‘living myth’ that revises the past and redeems the future is, according to Eshun, why Sun Ra’s “poetics of autonomy, conceived in sonic, social, aesthetic and economic terms, … continues to resonate with musicians today” (“Interstellar Overdrive”). Sun Ra’s myth-making also ties him to the use of Science Fiction by the Astrofuturists. In an interview with Mark Dery outlining the concerns of Afrofuturism, Greg Tate explains that the genre devices typically and generally deployed by science fiction writers – incongruous and disorienting travel from past to future, characters that find themselves dropped into an alien culture – mimics the alienating experienced of being black in America concluding that “Black people live the estrangement that science fiction writers imagine” (Tate in Dery 212). There is a consistent strain in discussions of Sun Ra that suggest **he actively inverted traditional, naturalized, dominant views on race and technology to counter the sentiment** shared by Dery **that “the unreal estate of the future [is] already owned by the technocrats,** futurologists, streamliners, and set designers – white to a man [sic] – **who have engineered our collective fantasies**” (Dery 180). Or as Younquist suggests, Sun Ra’s astro-black mythology “[…] is a sophisticated political response to a techno-scientific culture he viewed as primitive, destructive, 109 benighted” (Youngquist 341). Furthermore, **this mode of rendering** and **referencing the future is** a popular motif **deployed “in order to counter assumptions that blackness equals opposition to progress**” (Sexton 203).

**Affirmation of our historical counter-future is a gesture of defiance that heals and creates new growth and new life via transgressive epistemologies**

**Morris 2012**(Susana, Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Auburn University) Fall/Winter “Black Girls Are from the Future: Afrofuturist Feminism in Octavia E. Butler's "Fledgling"” Women's Studies Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 3/4, ENCHANTMENT (FALL/WINTER 2012), pp. 146-166)//KM

Speculative fiction, that is, science fiction, fantasy, horror, and futurist fiction, has largely been (mis)understood as a genre written only by whites (mostly men) about whites (again, mostly men). However, by the end of the twentieth century black writers such as Samuel Delaney, Octavia E. Butler, Steven Barnes, Tananarive Due, and Nalo Hopkinson, among others, reflected a tradition of black speculative fiction known as Afrofu turism.6 My use of the term "Afrofuturism" is particularly informed by Afrofuturist scholars Mark Dery, Alondra Nelson, Lisa Yaszek, and Kodwo Eshun. Dery coined the term "Afrofuturism" in 1994 to "describe African American cultures appropriation of technology and SF imagery" (2008, 6). He further notes that "speculative fiction that treats African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of tech nology and a prosthetically enhanced future ... might, for want of a bet ter term, be called Afro-Futurism" (8). Dery s portmanteau of "afro" and "futurism" denotes the important connection between race and futurist fiction, a circumstance that tends to go unacknowledged in mainstream speculative fiction.7 In addition to Dery's definition, Alondra Nelson's groundbreaking work—including editing the special issue of Social Text devoted to Afrofuturism and founding the Afrofuturism Listserv and website—has been vital to the development of Afrofuturism criticism and scholarship. Nelson contends that Afrofuturism forwards "takes on digital culture that do not fall into the trap of the neocritics or the futurists of one hundred years past. These works represent new directions in the study of African diaspora culture that are grounded in the histories of black com munities, rather than seeking to sever all connections to them" (2002, 9). Likewise, Afrofuturist scholar Lisa Yaszek suggests, "While early Afrofuturists are concerned primarily with the question of whether or not there will be any future whatsoever for people of color, contemporary Afrofuturists assume that in the future race will continue to matter to individuals and entire civilizations alike. In doing so, they expand our sense of the possible and contribute to the ongoing development of science fiction itself" (2006). My use of Afrofuturism is also informed by Kodwo Eshun's asser tion that Afrofuturism is "concerned with the possibilities for interven tion within the dimension of the predictive, the projected, the proleptic, the envisioned, the virtual, the anticipatory and the future conditional" (2003, 293). Furthermore, it is important to note, as Eshun contends, that "Afrofuturism may be characterized as a program for recovering the histories of counter-futures created in a century hostile to Afrodiasporic projection and as a space within which the critical work of manufacturing tools capable of intervention within the current political dispensation may be undertaken" (301). Thus, Afrofuturism is an epistemology that both examines the current problems faced by blacks and people of color more generally and critiques interpretations of the past and the future. Ulti mately, Dery, Nelson, Yaszek, and Eshun illuminate that one of Afrofuturism's foremost guiding tenets is the centrality of African diasporic histories and practices in sustaining progressive visions of the future. Put another way, not only does Afrofuturism posit that blacks will exist in the future, as opposed to being harbingers of social chaos and collapse, but in "recovering the histories of counter-futures" Afrofuturism insists that blacks fundamentally are the future and that Afrodiasporic cultural practices are vital to imagining the continuance of human society. Because much of Afrofuturism's transgressive politics align with the fundamental tenets of black feminist thought, I argue that it is critical to understand these epistemologies not only as related but as, in fact, in conversation with one another and potentially even symbiotic. Just as Afrofuturism underscores the centrality of blacks to futurist knowledge and cultural production and resistance to tyranny, so does black feminist thought contend that black peoples experience, knowledge, and culture are vitally important. Black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins claims, "Black feminist thought affirms, rearticulates, and provides a vehicle for expressing in public a consciousness that quite often already exists" (2000, 32). Moreover, just as Afrofuturism seeks to liberate the possibilities that open up when blackness is linked to futurity, so does black feminist thought seek to uncouple dominance from power as blacks assert their agency, for as bell hooks declares, "Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back,' that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice" (1989, 9). This movement toward a liberated voice, as hooks suggests, is not about simply replacing the dom inant voice with the voice of the marginalized; rather, liberation is cast in terms of coalition and power sharing, methodologies that would incite a future quite different from the hegemony of present structures. I want to consider the synthesis of Afrofuturism and black feminist thought as Afrofuturist feminism. Afrofuturist feminism is a reflection of the shared central tenets of Afrofuturism and black feminist thought and reflects a literary tradition in which people of African descent and transgressive, feminist practices born of or from across the Afrodiaspora are key to a pro gressive future. Ultimately, I argue that recognizing Afrofuturist feminism offers a critical epistemology that illuminates the working of black speculative fiction in vital ways. Octavia Butler is certainly among the authors whose works exemplify Afrofuturist feminism. In her essay "Positive Obsession," Butler asserts that speculative fiction has the potential to catalyze progressive political change and that, for black people, this is a particularly significant project. She writes: What good is any form of literature to Black people? What good is sci ence fictions thinking about the present, the future, and the past? What good is its tendency to warn or to consider alternative ways of think ing and doing? What good is its examination of the possible effects of science and technology, or social organization and political direction? At its best, science fiction stimulates imagination and creativity. It gets reader and writer off the beaten track, off the narrow, narrow footpath of what "everyone" is saying, doing, thinking—whoever "everyone" happens to be this year. And what good is all this to Black people? (2005b, 135). Butlers rhetorical questions and subsequent answers reject the notion that speculative fiction is a "whites only" enterprise, arguing instead that the genre can incite d for a variety of people. Also, Butlers emphasis on the transformative potential of speculative fiction underscores her Afrofuturist work as being defined by a feminist sensibility. That is, her works of speculative fiction not only adhere to the tenets of Afrofuturism but also are self-consciously interested in the con nections between race, gender, sexuality, and ability that are at the core of black feminist thought. Indeed, as Marilyn Mehaffy and AnaLouise Keating note, "Octavia Butler s work is thematically preoccupied with the potentiality of genetically altered bodies—hybrid multispecies and multi ethnic subjectivities—for revising contemporary nationalist, racist, sexist, and homophobic attitudes" (2001,45). Thus, Butler s work is Afrofuturist feminism in several ways. Her texts are committed to portraying compli cated (and sometimes vexed) histories of people of color and visions of the future with people of color at the center, with a particular emphasis on women of color. Butlers fiction is also fundamentally interested in critiquing conventional systems of power and dominance and offering futurist solutions based on cooperation and egalitarian ethics. Thus, Butlers writing consistently advocates transgressing repressive social norms and rejecting heteropatriarchy, while centering (or creating) a variety of experiences from across the Afrodiaspora. Nonetheless, while Butler's Afrofuturist work underscores a commitment to an equitable vision of society, it does not resort to simply offering up Utopias. Butler s visions of the future are often ambivalent ones that reveal an ongoing struggle for peace and justice. To that end, while contemporary vampires (and other principle figures and tropes of speculative fiction) are often illustrated as a way to crystallize and affirm whiteness and Western values, Butlers Afrofuturist feminism radically challenges these tenets. She (re)configures vampires as power ful beings not outside of the history of racism, but as powerful, enchant ing beings that are both vulnerable to the constraints of racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism (and their attendant violence) and committed to creating futures for them and those they love that reject these ways of knowing. Nevertheless, I am not arguing that Fledgling is (simply) a reac tionary text. As Kimberly Nichelle Brown argues, "Contemporary African American female writing is a product of choice, of agency, rather than solely a reaction to victimization" (2010, 64). 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Although not magical creatures, Butlers vampires are, nevertheless, enchanted because of the power that they wield, despite their various flaws and vul nerabilities and their ability to radically alter their surroundings and chal lenge normative notions of how to be.

# Afrofuturism Aff Supplements

## Best Black Fem cards (more down further under Afrofuturist Black feminism)

#### Affirmation of our historical counter-future is a gesture of defiance that heals and creates new growth and new life via transgressive epistemologies

**Morris 2012**(Susana, Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Auburn University) Fall/Winter “Black Girls Are from the Future: Afrofuturist Feminism in Octavia E. Butler's "Fledgling"” Women's Studies Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 3/4, ENCHANTMENT (FALL/WINTER 2012), pp. 146-166)//KM

Speculative fiction, that is, science fiction, fantasy, horror, and futurist fiction, has largely been (mis)understood as a genre written only by whites (mostly men) about whites (again, mostly men). However, by the end of the twentieth century black writers such as Samuel Delaney, Octavia E. Butler, Steven Barnes, Tananarive Due, and Nalo Hopkinson, among others, reflected a tradition of black speculative fiction known as Afrofu turism.6 My use of the term "Afrofuturism" is particularly informed by Afrofuturist scholars Mark Dery, Alondra Nelson, Lisa Yaszek, and Kodwo Eshun. Dery coined the term "Afrofuturism" in 1994 to "describe African American cultures appropriation of technology and SF imagery" (2008, 6). He further notes that "speculative fiction that treats African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of tech nology and a prosthetically enhanced future ... might, for want of a bet ter term, be called Afro-Futurism" (8). Dery s portmanteau of "afro" and "futurism" denotes the important connection between race and futurist fiction, a circumstance that tends to go unacknowledged in mainstream speculative fiction.7 In addition to Dery's definition, Alondra Nelson's groundbreaking work—including editing the special issue of Social Text devoted to Afrofuturism and founding the Afrofuturism Listserv and website—has been vital to the development of Afrofuturism criticism and scholarship. Nelson contends that Afrofuturism forwards "takes on digital culture that do not fall into the trap of the neocritics or the futurists of one hundred years past. These works represent new directions in the study of African diaspora culture that are grounded in the histories of black com munities, rather than seeking to sever all connections to them" (2002, 9). Likewise, Afrofuturist scholar Lisa Yaszek suggests, "While early Afrofuturists are concerned primarily with the question of whether or not there will be any future whatsoever for people of color, contemporary Afrofuturists assume that in the future race will continue to matter to individuals and entire civilizations alike. In doing so, they expand our sense of the possible and contribute to the ongoing development of science fiction itself" (2006). My use of Afrofuturism is also informed by Kodwo Eshun's asser tion that Afrofuturism is "concerned with the possibilities for interven tion within the dimension of the predictive, the projected, the proleptic, the envisioned, the virtual, the anticipatory and the future conditional" (2003, 293). 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Black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins claims, "Black feminist thought affirms, rearticulates, and provides a vehicle for expressing in public a consciousness that quite often already exists" (2000, 32). Moreover, just as Afrofuturism seeks to liberate the possibilities that open up when blackness is linked to futurity, so does black feminist thought seek to uncouple dominance from power as blacks assert their agency, for as bell hooks declares, "Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back,' that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice" (1989, 9). 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#### The affirmative’s criticism, and re-articulation of education practices functions as an Afrofuturist, feminist epistemology – voting aff is the basis for a pragmatic model for cooperation and change

Susana **Morris** (Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Auburn University) Fall/Winter **2012** “Black Girls Are from the Future: Afrofuturist Feminism in Octavia E. Butler's "Fledgling"” Women's Studies Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 3/4, ENCHANTMENT (FALL/WINTER 2012), pp. 146-166) //KM

Black Girls Are from the Future In an early study of Butler s works, Ruth Salvaggio contends, "Though Butler s heroines are dangerous and powerful women, their goal is not power. They are heroines not because they conquer the world, but because they conquer the very notion of tyranny" (1984, 8l).10 This sentiment also describes the dynamics at the heart of Fledgling, Butler s final novel. Fledgling strips vampires of both their omnipotence and their universal izing whiteness. Instead, Butler insists that vampires' potential strength is not in their brawn, or speed, or seductiveness; rather, their strength can be found in symbiosis and hybridity, a transgressive Afrofuturist feminist stance dangerous to conservative notions of identity and community often found in vampire lore. De Witt Douglas Kilgore has suggested, "Black women who contribute to [science fiction/fantasy/horror] have reached the point where the history they recover can potentially become future history. It is now possible to identify a new pattern of expectation, one that emerges from long-suppressed voices" (2008, 127). Thus, the organizing principles of Ina life have the potential to stand as a sort of Afrofuturist feminist epistemology and become a pragmatic model of cooperation that, while a work in progress, does not simply reinforce racism, sexism, and compulsory heterosexuality and other hegemonic social ideals. Fur thermore, Butler s emphasis on symbiosis, enchantment, and the ways in which the novel's humans and Ina struggle to make sense of the evolu tion of their cultures and species reflects the challenges found in our own diverse, unenchanted world as we try to make feminist futures out of tren chant patriarchal realities. Octavia Butler is one member of a thriving cohort of Afrofuturist femi nist writers whose work is actively reconfiguring the contours of specula tive fiction. Her work stands alongside of and is in conversation with the work of writers such as Jewelle Gomez, whose pioneering work in queer speculative fiction has inspired more nuanced renderings of black sexuali ties; Tananarive Due, whose recent work in horror has revolutionized the genre by focusing on complex black heroines; L. A. Banks, whose dark fan tasy/horror novels rival Buffy s girl power but without the racist dynamics; Nalo Hopkinson, whose Afrodiasporic tales of fantasy and folklore skill fully blend tradition with a futurist vision; and Nnendi Okorafo-Mbachu, whose stories of precolonial Africa incite us to reenvision the continent s past and future. Their works stand as, in the words of Kimberly Nichelle Brown (2010), decolonizing texts that destabilize normative notions of what is possible by creating worlds in which black women not only have the power to transform their lives, communities, and even species but do so routinely and, often, unapologetically. Ultimately, while mainstream speculative fiction might depict women, and women of color, especially, as accessories or minor characters, these authors insist that black women and girls are in the present and can and do signify (on) the future.

#### The reproduction of spectacles of violence obscure the stories of “Venus’”

**Hartman 08** (Saidiya, professor at Columbia University specializing in African American literature and history, 2008 “Venus in Two Acts” Pages 2-4)

What else is there to know? Hers is the same fate as every other Black Venus: no one remembered her name or recorded the things she said, or observed that she refused to say anything at all.2 Hers is an untimely story told by a failed witness. It would be centuries before she would be allowed to “try her tongue.”3 I could say after a famous philosopher that what we know of Venus in her many guises amounts to “little more than a register of her encounter with power” and that it provides “a meager sketch of her existence.”4 An act of chance or disaster produced a divergence or an aberration from the expected and usual course of invisibility and catapulted her from the underground to the surface of discourse. We stumble upon her in exorbitant circumstances that yield no picture of the everyday life, no pathway to her thoughts, no glimpse of the vul- nerability of her face or of what looking at such a face might demand. We only know what can be extrapolated from an analysis of the ledger or borrowed from the world of her captors and masters and applied to her. Yet the exorbitant must be rendered exemplary or typical in order that her life provides a window onto the lives of the enslaved in general. One cannot ask, “Who is Venus?” because it would be impossible to answer such a ques- tion. ere are hundreds of thousands of other girls who share her circumstances and these circumstances have generated few stories. And the stories that exist are not about them, but rather about the violence, excess, mendacity, and reason that seized hold of their lives, trans- formed them into commodities and corpses, and identi ed them with names tossed-o as insults and crass jokes. The archive is, in this case, a death sentence, a tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property, a medical treatise on gonorrhea, a few lines about a whore’s life, an asterisk in the grand narrative of history. Given this, “it is doubtless impossible to ever grasp [these lives] again in themselves, as they might have been ‘in a free state.’”5 But I want to say more than this. I want to do more than recount the violence that deposited these traces in the archive. I want to tell a story about *two girls* capable of retrieving what remains dormant—the purchase or claim of their lives on the present—without committing further violence in my own act of narration. It is a story predicated upon impossibility—listening for the unsaid, translating misconstrued words, and refashioning disfigured lives—and intent on achieving an impossible goal: redressing the violence that produced numbers, ciphers, and fragments of discourse, which is as close as we come to a biography of the captive and the enslaved. Yet how does one recuperate lives entangled with and impossible to differentiate from the terrible utterances that condemned them to death, the account books that identified them as units of value, the invoices that claimed them as property, and the banal chronicles that stripped them of human features? “Can the shock of [such] words,” as Foucault writes, “give rise to a certain effect of beauty mixed with dread?”6 Can we, as NourbeSe Philip suggests, “conjur[e] something new from the absence of Africans as humans that is at the heart of the text”?7 And if so, what are the lineaments of this new narrative? Put differently, how does one rewrite the chronicle of a death foretold and anticipated, as a collective biography of dead subjects, as a counter-history of the human, as the practice of freedom? How can narrative embody life in words and at the same time respect what we cannot know? How does one listen for the groans and cries, the undecipherable songs, the crackle of re in the cane elds, the laments for the dead, and the shouts of victory, and then assign words to all of it? Is it possible to construct a story from “the locus of impossible speech” or resurrect lives from the ruins? Can beauty provide an antidote to dishonor, and love a way to “exhume buried cries” and reanimate the dead? Or is narration its own gift and its own end, that is, all that is realizable when overcoming the past and redeeming the dead are not? And what do stories afford anyway? A way of living in the world in the aftermath of catastrophe and devastation? A home in the world for the mutilated and violated self?10 For whom—for us or for them? The scarcity of African narratives of captivity and enslavement exacerbate the pressure and gravity of such questions. ere is not one extant autobiographical narrative of a female captive who survived the Middle Passage. is silence in the archive in combination with the robustness of the fort or barracoon, not as a holding cell or space of con nement but as an episteme, has for the most part focused the historiography of the slave trade on quantitative matters and on issues of markets and trade relations.11 Loss gives rise to longing, and in these circumstances, it would not be far-fetched to consider stories as a form of compensation or even as reparations, perhaps the only kind we will ever receive. As a writer committed to telling stories, I have endeavored to represent the lives of the nameless and the forgotten, to reckon with loss, and to respect the limits of what cannot be known. For me, narrating counter-histories of slavery has always been inseparable from writing a history of present, by which I mean the incomplete project of freedom, and the precarious life of the ex-slave, a condition de ned by the vulnerability to premature death and to gratu- itous acts of violence.12 As I understand it, a history of the present strives to illuminate the intimacy of our experience with the lives of the dead, to write our now as it is interrupted by this past, and to imagine a *free state*, not as the time before captivity or slavery, but rather as the anticipated future of this writing.

#### Speculative fiction as a means of tending to trauma and reestablishing the archives

**Hartman 08** (Saidiya, professor at Columbia University specializing in African American literature and history, 2008 “Venus in Two Acts” Page 14)

My account replicates the very order of violence that it writes against by placing yet another demand upon the girl, by requiring that her life be made useful or instructive, by finding in it a lesson for our future or a hope for history. We all know better. It is much too late for the accounts of death to prevent other deaths; and it is much too early for such scenes of death to halt other crimes. But in the meantime, in the space of the interval, between too late and too early, between the no longer and the not yet, our lives are coeval with the girl’s in the as-yet-incomplete project of freedom. In the meantime, it is clear that her life and ours hang in the balance. So, what does one do in the meantime? What are the stories one tells in dark times? How can a narrative of defeat enable a place for the living or envision an alternative future? Michel de Certeau notes that there are at least two ways the historiographical operation can make a place for the living: one is attending to and recruiting the past for the sake of the living, establishing who we are in relation to who we have been; and the second entails interrogating the production of our knowledge about the past.42 Along the lines sketched by de Certeau, Octavia Butler’s *Kindred* offers a model for a practice.43 When Dana, the protagonist of Butler’s speculative fiction, travels from the twentieth century to the 1820s to encounter her enslaved foremother, Dana finds to her surprise that she is not able to rescue her kin or escape the entangled relations of violence and domination, but instead comes to accept that they have made her own existence possible. With this in mind, we must bear what cannot be borne: the image of Venus in chains. We begin the story again, as always, in the wake of her disappearance and with the wild hope that our efforts can return her to the world. The conjunction of hope and defeat define this labor and leave open its outcome. The task of writing the impossible, (not the fanciful or the utopian but “histories rendered unreal and fantastic”44), has as its prerequisites the embrace of likely failure and the readiness to accept the ongoing, unfinished and provisional character of this effort, particularly when the arrangements of power occlude the very object that we desire to rescue.45 Like Dana, we too emerge from the encounter with a sense of incompleteness and with the recognition that some part of the self is missing as a consequence of this engagement.

## Education Links/Aff Uniqueness

#### Criminality is not a street phenomenon but is in the walls of the classroom. We need to raise critical consciousness of the ongoing disaster Black girls face with criminalization in and by the very places that should help them thrive.

**Morris 16 [Monique W. Morris, Award-winning author and social justice scholar with three decades of experience in the areas of education, civil rights, juvenile and social justice, Founder and President of the National Black Women’s Justice Institute (NBWJI), an organization that works to interrupt school-to-confinement pathways for girls, “Pushout: the criminalization of Black girls in schools” ] o $**

Call my mama!” This was the cry of fourteen-year-old Dejerria Becton, who in the summer of 2015 was thrown to the ground as well as physically and verbally assaulted by Corporal Eri c Casebolt after she refused to leave her friends at the mercy of this law enforcement officer in Mc Kinney, Texas. A video, which later went viral, showed Casebolt pushing Dejerria’s face into the ground as she—a slight-framed, barefoot, bikini-clad teenager who presented no physical threat or danger—screamed for someone to call her mother for help. The video showed Casebolt grinding his knee into her bare skin and restraining her by placing the full weight of his body onto hers. The incident was violent and reeked of sexual assault—overtones that were later deemed inappropriate, “out of control,” and incon- sistent with the police department’s policies, training, and articu- lated practices.1 Though Casebolt resigned in response to the public outcry and internal scrutiny associated with his actions, **the image of her helpless, frightened body under his has become one of the snapshots that call our public consciousness to examine the over- zealous policing and criminalization of Black youth**. Though me- dia and advocacy efforts have largely focused on the extreme and intolerable abuse cases involving Black boys, such as seventeen- year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida or twelve-year-old Tamir Rice in Ohio, a growing number of cases involving Black girls have sur- faced to reveal what many of us have known for centuries: Black girls are also directly impacted by criminalizing policies and practices that render them vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, dehu- manization, and, under the worst circumstances, death. For example, eighteen-year-old Sheneque Proctor died in police custody after she was arrested for disorderly conduct in Bessemer, Alabama.2 Even in high-profile cases involving boys, **we often fail to see the girls who were right there alongside them**. After the fatal shooting of Tamir Rice, the officers tackled his fourteen-year-old sister to the ground and handcuffed her. Not only had she just watched her little brother die at the hands of these officers, but she was forced to grieve his death from the backseat of a police car.3 Addressing these problematic narratives has proved difficult in the current social and political climate, one that embraces punitive responses to expressions of dissent and increases the surveillance of the homes where our families live, the communities where our chil- dren play, and the schools where our children are educated**. The result has been an increasing number of girls in contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems**. Since 1992, girls’ share of delinquency cases resulting in detention (the most com- mon form of confinement for girls) has increased, often for charges such as prostitution, simple assault, or status offenses.\* For a host of reasons—paternalistic juvenile courts and a lack of community- based, culturally competent, and gender-responsive services among them—diversion away from these systems has been underutilized with girls. These are mostly girls of color (a disproportionately high percentage of girls are Black and/or Latina), and many of them (by some estimates 40 percent) identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans- gender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ), or gender-nonconforming. One of the most persistent and salient traits among girls who have been **labeled “delinquent” is that they have failed to establish a meaningful and sustainable connection with schools.** **This missing link is exacerbated by the increased reliance of public schools on exclusionary discipline, at present one of the most widely used measures to deal with problematic student behaviors.** Indeed, nearly 48 percent of Black girls who are expelled nationwide do not have access to educational services.5 Black girls are 16 percent of the female student population, but nearly one-third of all girls referred to law enforcement and more than one-third of all female school-based arrests.6 **The criminalization of Black girls is much more than a street phenomenon. It has extended into our schools, disrupting one of the most important protective factors in a girl’s life: her education.** In May 2013, Ashlynn Avery, a sixteen-year-old diabetic girl in Alabama, fell asleep while reading *Huckleberry Finn* during her in-school suspension. When she did not respond, the suspension supervisor allegedly threw a book at her and ordered her to leave the classroom. As she was leaving the room, a police officer alleg- edly slammed her face into a file cabinet and then arrested her.7 In April 2013, sixteen-year-old Kiera Wilmot was charged with a felony offense when what she said was a science experiment went wrong, leaving her subjected to a mandatory suspension and arrest following an unauthorized “explosion” on school grounds.8 The charges were later dropped after significant public objection and peti- tioning by advocacy groups; however, after the incident, Wilmot has feared being labeled a “terrorist.”9 In 2008, Marché Taylor was arrested in Texas after she resisted being barred from prom for wearing a dress that was considered too revealing.10 And in 2007, Pleajhia Mervin was harmed by a California school security offi- cer after she dropped a piece of cake on the school’s cafeteria floor and refused to pick it up.11 **Some of the most egregious applications of punitive school discipline in this country have criminalized Black girls as young as six or seven years old, who have been arrested for throwing tantrums in their school classrooms, yelling and screaming at a teacher, and being disruptive to the learning environment.** Six-year- old Salecia Johnson was arrested in Georgia in 2012 for having a tantrum in her classroom.12 In 2011, seven-year-old Michelle Mitchell was arrested with her eight-year-old brother after they got into a fight on an Ohio school bus.13 And six-year-old Desre’e Watson was hand- cuffed and arrested at a Florida school in in 2007 for throwing a tantrum in her kindergarten class.14 These cases were so extreme that they managed to capture considerable public attention—mostly through social media. However**, they were never pieced together to present a comprehen- sive, national portrait of how school responses to the disruptive behaviors of Black girls push them out and often render them vul- nerable to further victimization and delinquency.** It turns out that the incidents involving Ashlynn, Kiera, Marché, Pleajhia, Salecia, Michelle, and Desre’e were not isolated ones. Black girls from coast to coast tell stories of being criminalized and pushed out of schools. **For many Black girls, interactions between the justice system and schools often do not begin, or end, in school. The surveillance to which Black girls are subjected, and the punitive responses to either their (sometimes poor, sometimes typical) decision making or their reactions to perceived injustice have made contact with law enforcement a frequent occurrence.** The implementation of zero-tolerance policies, as I will discuss throughout this book, has become the primary driver of an unscrupulous school-based reli- ance on law enforcement and school security guards. People who often know little to nothing about child or adolescent develop- ment, and who often lack the appropriate awareness and training for the school environments they patrol, are responding to behav- iors that were previously managed by skilled teachers, counselors, principals, and other professionals. While there are plenty of numbers and statistics that paint a troubling picture, the harm done by this shift can hardly be quantified. **Black girls are being criminalized in and by the very places that should help them thrive.**

#### The school-to-prison-pipeline ignores the racialized, criminalized violence for black girls. It is a myopic analytic failing to interrogate punitive discipline policies that Pushout black girls into the peripheries. Prefer our framework of confinement to interrogate violences on black girls.

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In a 2012 report, *Race, Gender, and the “School to Prison Pipeline”: Expanding Our Discussion to Include Black Girls*,25 I argued that **the “pipeline” framework has been largely developed from the conditions and experiences of males.** **It limits our ability to see the ways in which Black girls are affected by surveillance (zero-tolerance policies, law enforcement in schools, metal detectors, etc.) and the ways in which advocates, scholars, and other stakeholders may have wrongfully masculinized Black girls’ experiences**. It encourages a kind of myopia that leaves everyone involved without a proper un- derstanding or articulation of the school relationships and other factors that put Black girls in “the system” and on paths toward incarceration. **Literature exploring the school-to-prison pipeline is domi- nated by an investigation of discipline, and in particular, the use of exclusionary discipline** (i.e., suspensions and expulsions) among Black males, and largely obfuscates the ways in which Black females and males experience this phenomenon together *and* differently. While leading a series of focus groups in New York to inform a report by the African American Policy Forum, *Black Girls Matter*, I encountered Tamara, who described her first experience with sus- pension as follows:\* \* Tamara is a pseudonym. Descriptive details and the names of group mem- bers and research participants have been changed to protect the privacy and ensure the safety of all students whose stories appear in this book. I was in the 5th grade, and this boy, he kept spitting them spitballs through a straw at me while we was [*sic*] taking a test. I told the teacher, and he told him to stop; but of course, he didn’t. He kept doing it. So, I got up and I yelled at him, and he punched me in my face, like in my eye...my eye was swollen and everything...I don’t even remember if I fought him, ’cause that’s just how it ended, I think. **But I remember that we both got suspended, and I was like, why did I get suspended**? I was, like, a victim . . . all the girls rushed to my side, they took me down to the nurse and then, it was just a mess.26 Tamara described this incident as the first of many subsequent suspensions**. It sent her a powerful signal about whether or not she would be protected in school—and how she needed to behave moving forward. As she understood it, she was likely going to face suspension under most circumstances involving conflict, no matter the particular circumstances.** The common approach in schools and outside of them for discussing this scenario would prioritize responding to *his* suspension, rather than equally responding to both. While patterns of exclusionary discipline have been found to produce similar outcomes between Black girls and Black boys, narrative-based research—the sort drawn on throughout this book—**uncovers a more nuanced picture.27** Through stories we find that Black girls are greatly affected by the stigma of having to participate in identity politics that mar- ginalize them or place them into polarizing categories: they are either “good” girls or “ghetto” girls who behave in ways that exacer- bate stereotypes about Black femininity, particularly those relat- ing to socioeconomic status, crime, and punishment.28 When Black girls do engage in acts that are deemed “ghetto”—often a euphe-mism for actions that deviate from social norms tied to a narrow, White middle-class definition of femininity—**they are frequently labeled as nonconforming and thereby subjected to criminalizing responses.29** It has also been speculated that to respond more harshly to the negative behaviors of Black girls.30 For exam- ple, a 2007 study found that **teachers often perceived Black girls as being “loud, defiant, and precocious” and that Black girls were more likely than their White or Latina peers to be reprimanded for being “unladylike.”**31 Other research has found that the issuance of summonses and/or arrests appear to be justified by students’ dis- play of “irate,” “insubordinate,” “disrespectful,” “uncooperative,” or “uncontrollable” behavior.32 **These labels underscore the use of discipline, punishment, and the juvenile justice system to regulate identity and social status.** They also reflect a consciousness that refuses to honor the critical thinking and leadership skills of Black girls, casting them as social deviants rather than critical respondents to oppression—perceived and concrete. Notwithstanding these trends, the narrative arc of **the school- to-prison pipeline has largely failed to interrogate how punitive discipline policies and other school-related decision-making affect the well-being of girls. Ignoring their unique pathways to confine- ment and other contact with the criminal legal system that result from school dropout and delinquency has lasting and transgen- erational impacts, particularly for those who have experienced vic- timization.3**3 Being abused and/or neglected as a child **increases the risk of arrest among children by 59 percent and among adults by 28 percent.**34 And female foster youth are at a higher risk of arrest (34 percent) by the age of nineteen than females and males in the general population (3 percent and 20 percent, respectively)— **a reality that facilitates a “way of life” that is more likely to include surveillance, substance abuse, and participation in underground economies.35 Failing to interrupt pathways to delinquency for girls has lasting effects not just on their own adult lives but also on the lives of future generations of girls and boys, who are more susceptible to being involved with the judicial system as a result of their *mother’s* incarceration**.36 There have been some notable programs and moderate support for the daughters, part- ners, and mothers of criminalized men and boys; still, **exploring the deficiencies and investing in the education of Black girls and the women they become must be about more than whether their father, brother, son, or partner is struggling or incarcer- ated. The full inclusion of Black girls in the dominant discourse on school discipline, pushout, and criminalization is important simply because it affects *them*—and their well-being is worthy of investment.** Toward this end, it has to be acknowledged that most Black girls experience forms of confinement and carceral experiences be- yond simply going to jail or prison. Broadening the scope to include detention centers, house arrest, electronic monitoring, and other forms of social exclusion allows us to see Black girls in trouble where they might otherwise be hidden. Therefore, in this book and in general, I refer to **“school-to-confinement pathways” as opposed to a “school-to-prison pipeline” when describing the educational factors that impact a girl’s risk of confinement. The criminalization of Black girls in schools is more than just a function of arrests on campus, or even the disparate use of exclu- sionary discipline—though those outcomes are certainly impor- tant to mapping the impact of punitive policies**. Paramount to shifting our lens is understanding the convergence of actions with **a prevailing consciousness that accepts an inferior quality of Black femininity. This is what underlies the exploitation and criminal- ization of Black girls**. Historic representations of Black feminin- ity, coupled with contemporary memes—about **“loud” Black girls who talk back to teachers, “ghetto” Black girls who fight in school hallways, and “ratchet” Black girls** who chew dental dams like bubble gum in classrooms—have rendered Black girls subject to a public scrutiny that affects their ability to be properly situated in the racial justice and school-to-confinement narrative. **They are rendered invisible or cast as deserving of the mistreatment because of who they are misperceived to be. What suffers is not only their ability to shape their identities as young scholars but also their ability to develop agency in shaping professional and personal futures where they can live with dignity, respect, and opportunity**. The colored woman of to-day occupies, one may say, a unique po- sition in this country. In a period of itself transitional and unset- tled, her status seems one of the least ascertainable and definitive of all the forces which make for our civilization. She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both. . . . May she see her opportunity and vindicate her high prerogative. *—Anna Julia Cooper,* ***1892*37 This book presents narratives that I hope will inspire us all to think about the multiple ways in which racial, gender, and socio- economic inequity converge to marginalize Black girls in their learning environments—relegating many to an inferior quality of education because they are perceived as defiant, delinquent, ag- gressive, too sexy, too proud, and too loud to be treated with dig- nity in their schools.**

#### Inequalities in schools cannot be understood through normative gender means, but rather on the basis of class and race.

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In principle, **access to a quality public education is not a gendered right**. While the privileges of all women and girls are up against entrenched patriarchy, **the selection of *which* girls are privy to a formal education has always been informed by race and class**. Globally, education is by and large recognized as a key pathway out of poverty. However, not every type of education opens up that path, and the quality of education has everything to do with being prepared to thrive as an adult. School resources, the quality of teaching and curriculum, the quality of relationships with par- ents, and the community network to support all these elements shape the character of formal education. It should be no surprise that low-performing schools are also high-poverty schools that produce higher rates of dropout (as it is traditionally understood) and underperformance among its students, and that high per- forming schools are often low-poverty ones.\* High-poverty schools are often churning out—or tacitly ignoring—children who are expected to remain poor. Nationwide, about **sixteen hundred “dropout factories” are responsible for nearly half of all students who leave high school before earning a diploma and about two-thirds of the students of color who do so**.34 About 58 percent of Black students and 50 percent of Latino students who made the decision to leave school were being edu- cated in one of our nation’s high-poverty, low-performing schools.35 This suggests that a higher percentage of Black girls who dropped out of school—and who were likely struggling in school—were \* A dropout is traditionally understood as a person who has made the deci- sion to leave school. While in this book I am challenging how we under- stand this decision in the context of other conditions, data and other reports cited here refer to “dropouts.” also likely to have been attending a low-performing school. **Such a path has grave implications for the economic opportunity for these girls**. Destiny, a Black and Latina girl from California, noticed that **in many of these low-poverty schools, girls were searching for pathways out of poverty that were not made clear by their educa- tional community.** “I noticed that girls who get caught up in prostitution, they feel like *working* is more important than anything else,” Destiny said. “So, like, the girls that **I know who are prostitutes, I hardly ever see them because they are, like, working all the time . . . It’s better to go to school and get a career, but it’s like, if you can get money, like right then and there, then why would I want to go to school for however many years**?” What is often lost on girls is that the more education a person (of any race) has, the more likely she or he is to be employed in higher-paying jobs.36 The unemployment rate of Black women with less than a high school diploma is 20 percent, while the rate for Black women with a bachelor’s degree or higher is 6 percent.37 Quality education matters. Since the time when Linda Brown, Daisy Bates, and other Black women and girls stood on the frontlines of the battle to end racial segregation in schools, the educational story of Black girls has become more convoluted—largely *because* education plays such an important role in the economic opportunity for women and girls. **When girls get access to a quality education, they tend to do well. But that is only part of the story**. The educational history of Black girls and how it is understood to this very day reflects an inconsistent and dichotomous narrative. In 1970, only 33 percent of Black women had graduated from high school. Today that proportion of Black women with a high school diploma or higher is 90.5 percent.38 Black women and girls have made tremendous gains in educational attainment—a fact that has been and should continue to be widely celebrated. However, this statistical **narrative of progress obscures other narratives that reveal a continued struggle for both academic achievement and anything resembling equality.** CARD

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So what’s the real story? Are Black girls performing at an unprecedented high level, or are they failing and being marginal- ized? The answer is: both. And the reason for these competing narratives is complex. Caricatures of Black femininity are often deposited into dis- tinct chambers of our public consciousness, narrowly defining Black female identity and movement according to the stereo- types described by Pauli Murray as “ ‘female dominance’ on the one hand and loose morals on the other hand, both growing out of the roles forced upon them during the slavery experience and its aftermath.”45 As such, in the public’s collective consciousness, latent ideas about Black females as hypersexual, conniving, loud, and sassy predominate, even if they make it to college and beyond. Public presentations of these caricatures—via popular memes on social media, in advertising, or in entertainment—prescribe these traits to Black women. However, age compression renders Black *girls* just as vulnerable to these aspersive representations. As children or as adults, Black girls are treated as if they are sup- posed to “know better,” or at least “act like” they know. The assign- ment of more adultlike characteristics to the expressions of young Black girls is a form of age compression.46 Along this truncated age continuum, Black girls are likened more to adults than to children and are treated as if they are willfully engaging in behaviors typi- cally expected of Black women—sexual involvement, parenting or primary caregiving, workforce participation, and other adult be- haviors and responsibilities. This compression is both a reflection of deeply entrenched biases that have stripped Black girls of their childhood freedoms and a function of an opportunity-starved social landscape that makes Black girlhood interchangeable with Black womanhood. It gives credence to a widely held perception and a message that there is little difference between the two. Thirteen-year-old Mia from California echoed this when she described her own experiences avoiding truancy arrest. “Half of us look older than our age,” she said nonchalantly. By whose standards? The legacy of slavery and segregated opportunity socialized punishment and discipline (as opposed to, say, love and opportu- nity) as an appropriate response to “bad” Black girls who rebelled against normative ideas about proper feminine behavior. The cur- rent practices and prevailing consciousness—in homes, neighbor- hoods, schools, and other places young people occupy—regularly respond to Black girls as if they are fully developed adults. And in turn, the responses to their mistakes follow a similar pattern. Society treats them this way, and our girls believe the hype. And when they do, adults ignore the power dynamics that affect youth- ful decision making. They also miss the specific ways in which Black girls learn adaptive behaviors—ways of responding to op- pressive conditions defined by race, sexuality, class, and gender. Any or all of these may come into play as girls confront growing pains within structures where (their) age is ultimately nothing but a number. Black women and girls in America are subjected to dormant assumptions about their sexuality, their “anger,” or their “attitude.” They have long understood that their way of engaging with the world—how they talk, how they walk, how they wear their hair, or how they hold their bodies—is subject to scrutiny, especially by those in positions of relative power. They feel the gaze. They intuit its presence. They live with this knowledge in their bodies and subconsciously wrestle with every personal critique of how they navigate their environments. Poverty matters, too. The idea that Black girls in ghettos behave in ways that cast them as “low-class” places a glass ceiling on their opportunity—a stained glass that obscures their vision of what is possible. The interactions between race, gender, and poverty may block a young woman’s ability to even see her success, particularly if she has been conditioned to respond to her poverty by selling “fruit cocktail.” If Black girls do manage to locate their dream and partner it with an opportunity, the lack of Black female role models in certain professions and the active way in which Black girls are discouraged from pursuing certain professions (e.g., those in the STEM fields) make visioning their futures difficult. A poor or low-income Black girl might be enrolled in school, but she may not be encouraged to demonstrate her leadership skills on a school sports team or in other areas of school leader- ship. She may be the first face that greets you in the office or the voice you hear when you call to make an appointment, but her opportunities to break through to the next level or to become a leader are all too often limited or nonexistent. Her senses might even intuit that upward mobility is possible, but if she manages to crack through the ceiling, her mobility will likely be impaired. And, impaired or not, she will still have to navigate the misin- formed gaze of Black femininity. She will still feel the pressure to work twice as hard to be respected for her contributions. Sixty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, our nation re- mains in the throes of defining what a quality, desegregated edu- cation looks like for all children. But one thing is certain—the civil rights movement was not about our girls (or our boys) being assigned to racially integrated yet structurally unequal high-poverty and low-performing schools. That struggle was about expanding opportunity, not limiting it. The real and perceived experience of being a Black female stu- dent is informed not only by historical ideas about girls attempt- ing to navigate spaces that have underserved their educational needs but also by how well Black girls have performed against the odds. When asked to describe public school in their own words, girls routinely say that their schools are filled with classrooms and hallways where people “fight” and are disciplined, where security personnel roam the halls, and where they learn about a democracy they don’t experience in school. Many of the Black girls that I have spoken with perceived their district or community schools as chaotic and disruptive learning spaces in which fighting and arguments were the norm and where adolescents were vying for attention and social status. These con- ditions led some—like Mia, who was in middle school—to con- sider going to school a waste of time.

#### Schools codify the construction of the ghetto, rachet black girl to cause internalized oppression resulting in forms of resontemonte and accepting inferiority.

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“I think the Black girls, they just dress more ratchet,” she said. “Not trying to say it like that, but they be dressing in all those wild colors and just trying to be seen. I’m a more conservative girl, like I don’t gotta wear all that to be cute, but they don’t care what they got on. They just want to be [in] ghetto fashion, and that affects them. . . . But they grew up with that mentality, so it’s like, we don’t know what make them think like that.” **Internalized racial oppression is “the process by which Black people internalize and accept, not always consciously, the domi- nant White culture’s oppressive actions and beliefs toward Black people (e.g., negative stereotypes, discrimination, hatred, falsifica- tion of historical facts, racist doctrines, White supremacists ideol- ogy), while at the same time rejecting the African worldview and cultural motifs.”50 For Black women and girls, internalized racial oppression is also gendered.** Black women and girls, especially those in fragile circum- stances, absorb widely accepted distortions of Black American feminine identity (that they are less intelligent, hypersexual, loud, sassy, “ghetto,” or domestic), and it undermines their healthy development and performance in school.51 In combination with oppressive patriarchal ideologies, internalized *gendered* racial oppression acknowledges that **Black women and girls may appro- priate behaviors and ideologies that reflect self-loathing or degra- dation, reinforcing the very notions of Black feminine inferiority that deny their full humanity.**52 Black girls are quickly cast as un- disciplined deviants who reflect the most negative stereotypes of Black femininity. The punitive and marginalizing responses from teachers and others with Black girls under their charge go unchal- lenged as justified or even necessary. **The ways that internal and external oppression play out in intimate spaces—in families, friendships, and relationships—is a book unto itself.** This book fo- cuses primarily on how **learning institutions and the people working in them don’t recognize this dynamic, how this results from a wide- spread lack of awareness, and how all of us might reimagine and construct different paths for Black girls by listening to them and learning from their experiences**. For Jazzy, while school was “easy,” she carried a belief that her teachers did not have a vested interest in her success. This made her feel that she needed to pursue other options. She described her “normal school” as a rowdy place where children regularly fought, teachers were distracted, and she and her friends were tempted to do harmful things to themselves and to others for money. That year, the school Jazzy had attended before being sent to the juvenile detention center had a student population that was 29 percent African American, 55 percent Latino, 8 percent Asian, and less than 2 percent White. The school’s physical con- dition, according to its School Accountability Report Card, was “poor,” with gas leaks and mechanical and sewer conditions that required repair. More than 85 percent of the students in this school were classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. Only 62 percent of Black students in the senior class completed their high school graduation requirements. The school’s suspen- sion rate was more than twice that of the district, and its expul- sion rate was three times higher than that of the district or the state. “I don’t know, all my friends . . . we’re all addicted to fighting,” she said. “We got to rob somebody so we can have money in our pockets, ’cause it’s not a lot of opportunities out there for us. Like, we could get jobs at [the youth outreach programs] and stuff, but it’s only going to last so long, and it takes so long to get that job. What we going to do in the meantime?” Jazzy’s statement “it’s not a lot of opportunities for us” brings to life the experience behind the numbers. Nationwide, in 2013 the unemployment rate for Black youth was the highest of all groups, and it remained so through 2014.53 In California, Black youth had the lowest high school graduation rate (59 percent), which seemed to have an overall negative impact on their employment opportuni- ties: The unemployment rate for Black Californians in 2014 was 14.6 percent, much higher than rates for White (8.3 percent) and Latino (9.9 percent) Californians.54 Notwithstanding her illegal grind for money, Jazzy wanted to lead a productive life, and she knew that education was an important element of that journey. “I honestly can say that when I was on the run from the system, I really wanted to go to school,” she said.\* “It was upsetting me that I couldn’t go to school ’cause I cut my [electronic ankle monitor] off.” Jazzy admitted that when she wasn’t in school, there were greater temptations that would occupy her time. “All I did was go rob or fight somebody, and [it took] up so much time to do all that,” she said. “You gotta go meet up with the person you fighting, you gotta call your friends . . . that takes all day!” Violence produces violence. If she was fighting, it was likely in response to not feeling safe herself. So I asked her, “Did you feel safe in school?”

#### Black girls are disciplined in a fashion that ignores their identities. Teachers grant “permission-to-fail” to black students because of a lack to believe in the capabilities of black females.

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Mia described behavior in the classroom, such as playing music in class and cursing at the teacher, that would be unacceptable to me and to most educators. But I could not help reflecting upon her words: “We are doing things that [put] us in that category [ratchet].” Her willingness to embrace personal accountability (“we give ourselves a bad rep”) can be read as an asset, but I considered the other factors that lead teenagers to push limits. Mia’s under- standing didn’t consider the way in which Black girls’ actions are particularly subject to scrutiny and public judgment. When Mia said, “Everybody say that White people think that Black girls is ratchet,” she was accepting society’s marginalization of Black girls as valid—but she was obviously conflicted about it. **Her conflict seemed nestled in the idea that she and her peers *had* to accept as truth this automatic characterization of them as “ratchet”—that they had to behave in ways that provided evidence for this claim just because “everybody” said or believed it was true. Absent a lens that factors in the forces constructing and rein- forcing a “ratchet” identity, the adults charged to care for and educate Black girls may only see them as “self-harmers” who bring drama upon themselves.**62 **And as a function of their own internal- ized, gendered racial oppressions, Black girls who are rarely offered any alternative conception may also believe this of themselves. The ghetto’s impact on the student identity of Black girls also plays out in the classroom as neglect, or what Gloria Ladson- Billings has referred to as granting Black children** **“permission to fail.”**63 In writing about Shannon, a young Black girl in the first grade, Ladson-Billings reflected on seeing Shannon routinely and intentionally refuse to complete a writing assignment. “I ain’t writin’ nuttin’!” Shannon had declared, to which her teacher responded, “That’s okay. Maybe you’ll feel like writing tomorrow.” But it was not okay. To this point, Ladson-Billings wrote, “Although most students were encouraged to write each day, Shannon was regularly permitted to fail. **Her refusal to write was not just stubbornness but a ploy to cover up her inability to read, or more specifically, her lack of phonetic awareness.**”**64 Black girls in classrooms across the country have been granted permission to fail by the implicit biases of teachers that lower ex- pectations for them.** I doubt this teacher intended to lower her expectations for Shannon or treat her differently than her peers. It is safe to assume that this teacher likely believed that she was responding to Shannon with patience and respect. Indeed, teach- ers, like the one leading Shannon’s class, are likely committed to supporting the education of all of their students, but their uncon- scious associations between Black girls and underperformance might lead them to assume that these girls are not capable of performing. This is speculative; there is a dearth of research that actually explores the implicit bias and attributional stereotyping affecting Black girls in schools. Still, it is important to remember that implicit bias is often inconsistent with a person’s stated val- ues, so a teacher may believe that he or she treats all students the same even while aspects of their engagement are reflecting latent biases. The belief that it was “okay” for Shannon not to participate in the activities was facially just a decision to allow her to engage when she was “ready.” However, the determination of her readi- ness was a function of how the educator read her behavior and in- terpreted her attitude toward learning. Once again, the external is compounded by reflex: internalized, gendered racial oppressions give Black girls permission to lower expectations for themselves. Today, Black girls across the country are struggling to make mean- ing of their status as Black, female, and disproportionately repre- sented in high-poverty, low-performing schools. **They use terms like “ghetto” or “ratchet” to describe their condition and are ac- tively engaged in the creation of counternarratives that allow them to move through life with dignity**—but it’s not easy. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron note in *Reproduction in Society, Education and Culture*, “Every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by conceal- ing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations.”65 **Schools serve a greater social function than simply developing the rote skills of children and adolescents. As Black girls become adolescents, the influence of schools is critical to their socializa- tion.** This is especially important given that **schools often serve as surrogates for influences that might otherwise be lacking in the lives of economically and socially marginalized children**. Coupled with increasingly rampant suspensions and expulsions and a minimal emphasis (in both curriculum and school climate) on cultural competency, trauma sensitivity, or gender responsiveness, **too many of our schools—both those in the community and those operating in penal environments—marginalize Black girls, espe- cially if their curiosity and critical thinking are misconstrued as a challenge to authority.**

#### Just being a black women subjects her to violence and prone to the “Angry” Black women.

**Morris 16 [Monique W. Morris, Award-winning author and social justice scholar with three decades of experience in the areas of education, civil rights, juvenile and social justice, Founder and President of the National Black Women’s Justice Institute (NBWJI), an organization that works to interrupt school-to-confinement pathways for girls, “Pushout: the criminalization of Black girls in schools” pgs ]**

The angry Black woman meme—a neck-rolling, finger-in-your- face, hands-on-hips posturing—is at the center of the public misunderstanding of what it means to be Black and female in America. **In schools, this misunderstanding sometimes manifests when girls speak their opinion, especially when it is unsolicited, or if they stand up for themselves when they feel that they have been disrespected by peers or by adults.** When relationships between students and teachers are poor, Black girls may exhibit any num- ber of behaviors that openly signal their dissatisfaction, including yelling at or using profanity with the teacher. Marcus, an adminis- trator at a California high school, commented on a scenario in which girls could and do receive a disciplinary referral. “I get referrals for the simplest reasons,” he said. “For a girl yelling, ‘I don’t understand!’ a teacher replying, ‘Did you come to school to learn?’ earning the retort, ‘You come to school to teach?’ . . . You know, our babies can be kind of snappy, so the way [they] say it, you know, it might have an expletive in there somewhere. And I mean, just overall, it’s just that . . . The sisters bring a lot of attention to themselves. . . . They’re not docile.” ***Our babies can be kind of snappy.* By itself, this statement re- flects the assumption that Black girls communicate in a way that is biting and provocative**. The suggestion that girls’ tones must be mediated and their questions made less incisive in order to be tol- erated in the classroom is both problematic and sexist. That the comment was made by a well-meaning African American admin- istrator reflects the **pervasive and internalized nature of the “angry Black woman” cliché, which serves no one particularly well. Most often in this type of exchange, we’re left with a stand-off that leaves both the student and teacher harmed.** It usually ends with the removal of the student from the classroom, thus beginning or continuing a negative school experience that can have lasting effects on her relationship with teachers, her faith in her ability to perform well academically, and her commitment to school. In this case, the young woman was removed from the classroom, but should her learning really be interrupted because of her sarcasm? Because of her “attitude”? Because she is not docile?

#### Schools are active sites of captivity for black female.

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Nationwide, the number of girls (of any racial and ethnic affiliation) who experienced one or more out-of-school suspensions decreased between 2000 and 2009 from 871,176 to 849,447.21 Still, the racial disparities remain. While Black girls are 16 percent of girls enrolled in school, a figure that has declined only slightly in the last decade, their rate of discipline has remained elevated. In 2000, Black girls were 34 percent of girls experiencing an out-of- school suspension. In 2006, Black girls represented 43 percent of out-of-school suspensions among girls. By the 2009 academic year, Black girls without a disability were 52 percent of all girls with multiple out-of-school suspensions.22 In the 2011–12 school year, there were eighteen states with out-of-school suspension rates for Black girls higher than the national average (12 percent).23 Across southern states, **Black girls are particularly vulnerable to the use of exclusionary discipline**, representing 56 percent of girls suspended and 45 percent of girls expelled in this region. In ten southern states, **Black girls were the most suspended among all students—an un- usual and noteworthy problem**.24 Over the course of this decade, there was an important shift in the public and policy interpreta- tion of how to secure school campuses, and it’s had a largely negative impact on Black girls. In the 2009–10 school year, Black girls without a disability were 31 percent of girls referred to law en- forcement and 43 percent of girls with school-based arrests; in the 2011–12 school year, Black girls remained 31 percent of girls re- ferred to law enforcement and were 34 percent of school-related arrests.25 Since 2000, the rate at which Black girls are harshly disci- plined has remained disturbingly and disproportionately high.26 In Wisconsin, which produced the highest suspension rate for Black girls in 2011–12, no Black girls were referred to law enforce- ment directly.27 However, digging a little deeper into the numbers reveals a dire situation. During that time, the truancy rate for the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS)—the metropolitan area with the highest incidence of African American poverty in the United States—was 81 percent.28 In 2013–14, Black students were 56 percent of students enrolled in MPS, and 83 percent of students considered habitually truant.29 The truancy rate for fe- male students in MPS was nearly 53 percent and for Black female students, it was 68 percent—the highest rate among all students.30 In Madison, where more than 74 percent of Black children live in poverty, **where Black females are almost six times more likely to be unemployed than their White counterparts, and where Black youth are more than nine times more likely to be habitually truant than their White counterparts, the arrest rate for Black youth is six times the rate for White youth**.31 In the twenty years that followed the implementation of the GFSA, **Black girls have become the fastest-growing population to experience school suspensions and expulsions, establishing them as clear targets of punitive school discipline.** The National Women’s Law Center and NAACP Legal Defense Fund released *Unlocking Opportunity for African American Girls: A Call to Action for Educational Equity*, a 2014 report that explored not only the dis- parities in school discipline but also the extent to which other obstacles undermine Black girls’ ability to fully engage as learners in schools. According to that report, “Decades after legal battles were fought to dismantle legalized racial segregation in education, African American students are still disproportionately enrolled in schools without access to quality resources, credentialed teachers, rigorous course offerings, and extracurricular activities.32 In *Black Girls Matter: Pushed-Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected*, a re- port by the African American Policy Forum, **it was noted that Black girls are expelled from New York schools at fifty-three times the rate for White girls and resort to acting out (using profanity, fighting, having tantrums, etc.) when their counseling needs are ignored.33 Why?**

#### The mere presence of black bodies in schools necessitates criminalization and punishment under its policies. White students don’t face these problems.

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“I graduated in 2010,” Michelle continued. “**It felt like you were always being watched, like, as if we were going to do something, and I felt like it was favoritism with people in the schools— especially coming from security guards. . . . The same actions would take place, but different people would get different conse- quences. . . . And the whole police station in the school, and every- thing . . . it wasn’t the space for that, and I just didn’t understand why they would put something like that in place.”** “I went to [that school] too,” said eighteen-year-old Leila. “**The crazy thing for me is, school [in a more affluent neighborhood] was *not* like jail. I could walk the halls. I was going outside. I was cool with all the police. When the counselor took me in, I was making good grades, so she was just like, ‘Just go to class.’ I went to [another school]—an all-Black school as well, but it’s in [a high-poverty neighborhood] and they had stricter security. Everybody was in class because we couldn’t just roam the halls. . . . At [the high-poverty school], they had metal detectors. At this [more affluent] school, we didn’t. I could have more freedom.**” Metal detectors, security guards checking bags, and police pa- trolling the hallways of high schools might have become the norm for the young women who were in conversation with me that sum- mer, but it wasn’t always this way. Since the mid-1990s, police of- ficers have been increasingly assigned to schools, expanding the role of school resource officers (SROs) into a part of the educational climate. Seen as a “new type of public servant; a hybrid educational, correctional, and law enforcement officer,” SROs were defined as “law enforcement officers who engage in community-oriented polic- ing activities and who are assigned to work in collaboration with schools and community-based organizations.”44 Under the best circumstances, says a Congressional Research Service report, SROs help develop community justice initiatives for students and train them in conflict resolution, restorative justice, awareness of crime, and problem-solving with regard to criminal activity. Over time, the number of SROs has grown tremendously—in 2007, there were about 6,700 more SROs than in 1997.45 According to the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program, **White males between the ages of thirteen and eighteen are the most likely to initiate a school-based shooting.46 However, schools in which the student population is largely composed of youth of color have the highest degree of implementing metal detectors, security officers, SROs, and other police forces.47 While only 1 percent of schools in 1975 had police that were stationed in schools, the latest Crime Victimization Survey (2014) shows that 43 percent of students reported the presence of one or more police officers and/or security guards in their schools.48** Additionally, 88 percent of U.S. public schools in the 2011–12 academic year “reported that they controlled access to school buildings by lock- ing or monitoring doors during school hours.”**49 Though the implementation of zero-tolerance policies was largely a response to a moral panic surrounding male aggression (particu- larly that which involved gun violence), girls were targeted under the new policies as well, principally because they were attending schools that emphasized punishment and removal from school, rather than the repair of relationships or addressing the root causes associated with the violence.** Research on the impact of SROs has found that the presence of SROs in schools has contributed to the formal processing of youth into the justice system. A 2011 study by criminologists Chongmin Na and Denise Gottfredson found that schools with SROs record more crimes that involve weapon and drugs, but they also report more nonserious crimes to law enforcement—thereby expanding the reach of the criminal justice system, a practice that is referred to as “net-widening”: “For no crime type was an increase in the presence of police significantly related to decreased crime rates. The preponderance of evidence suggests that, to the contrary, more crimes involving weapons possession and drugs are recorded in schools that add police officers than in similar schools that do not. The analyses also showed that as schools increase their use of police officers, the percentage of crimes involving non-serious vio- lent offenses that are reported to law enforcement increases.”50 Police in schools may not be responsible for an increase in the use of exclusionary discipline, but they nevertheless reinforce the idea that youth of color need surveillance. Where law enforce- ment is present on the school campus, they are sometimes chal- lenged to shift their own punitive thinking—a transition that takes time. For example, Victor, a dean of students for a school in California, spoke with me about having to work with officers on his campus to get them to understand that the school was trying to operate as a family. Victor described how one officer would rou- tinely tell students who misbehaved, “It’s time”—a phrase that was intended to communicate with students, for whom enroll- ment at this alternative school was one of their last chances to sal- vage a high school experience, that it was time to drop out of school. Victor made several efforts to remind this officer that on their campus, his role was to secure the location and ensure that students were not presenting a physical threat—not to advise them of when to drop out. Still, this officer, according to the dean, resorted to the use of verbal threats that reflected his desire to re- move certain students from the school for good.

#### Aff Uniqueness RETAG Black girls responding to feeling of disrespect results in “Attitudes”, “bad”, while ignoring their social conditions that contribute to their reactions.

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In the Crescent City, these monumental shifts have come with new rules, but old attitudes about how to treat Black girls. This was of particular concern to eighteen-year-old Gina in New Orleans, who felt that adults in her school were inclined to “talk to you any ol’ kind of way”—which triggered her own “bad behavior.” “One time I was in the computer lab,” she said. “So I raised my hand, and I’m like . . . ‘Can I go to the restroom?’ He said, ‘Yeah, go ’head. You’re gonna get your education in the hallway anyway.’ So I’m like, ‘What?’ Like, I clicked out . . . I clicked out.” Suggesting to Gina that her education was “in the hallway” elicited the same reaction that it did for the girl in the Bay Area who was asked if she had come to school to learn. Gina’s teacher’s suggestion that she was not equipped to learn in the classroom and would be better served in the hallway was insulting; she re- sponded using the tools she had available to her at that moment. “Did you curse at him?” I asked. She laughed and said, “Yeah . . . I said I was going to call my mama. He said, ‘Call your mama, ’cause we can get it on too. I don’t care! I don’t care!’ So I called my mama. My mama came up there and then it was, ‘See, ’cause I ain’t even say it like that . . .’ You know, the whole script done flipped once my mama came up there.” “I feel like teachers try to be on the same level with teenagers sometimes,” fifteen-year-old Francine said. “Sometimes you need to just understand that you’re the adult. Like, let them say what they have to say, and you handle it like an adult. That’s why I don’t like certain teachers like that. That’s why they get attitude, because they try to come back at you. Like, you’re not going to seem cool, you’re just going to seem immature and childish, and I’m not going to want to learn from you because you’re trying to be on the same level as me and I don’t want that. And then they want to be, ‘Oh, I’m the teacher, you got to listen to me’ . . . If you’re going to be a teacher, be a *teacher*.” **Gina and Francine were not the only girls to express feeling triggered by their instructors. In discussions in New Orleans, Chicago, New York, Boston, Northern and Southern California, and other places where I have spoken with girls about “bad” behavior, Black girls have shared that their “attitude” is often a re- action to feeling disrespected. At times that reaction is verbal, and at other times the reaction is physical. However, it is important to understand these reactions in context. People who have been harmed are the ones who harm others. When Black girls are perceived to be lashing out against others and themselves, what’s happening can’t be understood without an illumination of what brought them to that place. While teacher- student relationships are paramount and teachers taking time to know their students as whole people can make all the difference, not every teacher or school official can possibly be expected to be familiar with the particular journeys and backgrounds of each student. What can (and should) be developed and nurtured in educational settings, but almost never is, is a deeper awareness of the numerous social factors—related to race, gender, sexuality, disability status, or other identities—that have the power to trigger Black girls and shape their interactions with people in schools.** Every girl is unique, but understanding widely shared experiences connected to structural forces bigger than us all would go a long way toward supporting the success and education of Black girls. In my conversations with girls and young women across the country**, it became clear Black girls interpreted their attitude not as a stagnant expression of anger and dissatisfaction.** Rather, it lived along a continuum of responses to disrespectful or degrading trig- gers in their lives—many of which were present in their learning environments. **From the hundreds of scenarios that were collected as part of this exploration, specific themes emerged about what was triggering an “attitude” among Black girls.** Most common was the notion that an “attitude” was provoked by incidents of disrespect. In other words, these girls saw the “attitude” as a response to sug- gestions (overt or implicit) that their identity was an inferior one. This was shared with me in different cities, by very different young women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-three, but the theme was consistent. Card

“Girls are ride or die for their boyfriend,” Diamond said. “So [the police] try to get her too. . . . Usually, Black girls, they have older boyfriends . . .’cause their boyfriends have a car and they hanging out all day and driving around and stuff like that.” Diamond’s eyes were wide and flanked with cascading false eyelashes. Combined with her long hair weave, they might sug- gest that she was a little older than she actually was. But when she smiled, there was a youthful quality. Her skin, her teeth, her mannerisms—they belonged to a child, one who had been through too much, too soon. After a few months of truancy and being “on the run,” law enforcement finally found her. She was arrested and confined to a secure detention facility. “The pimp or ‘boyfriend’ that is keeping you from going to school, does he have an education?” I asked. “Mm-hmm,” Diamond said, nodding. “My boyfriend, he grad- uated from college.” She looked proud. “So why wouldn’t he support that for you?” I asked.“Well,hetriedto...liketellme,goback...gobackhome.But I stayed with him because I love him . . . Now look at me,” she said, looking around the juvenile detention classroom where we were seated. Then she collected her thoughts, raised her head, and said, “My boyfriend’s different.” *Different*, I thought. *Really?* Her eyes really tried to convince me—and herself—until they started to well up. “Well, okay,” I said, in an admittedly halfhearted tone. “But in general, if you see a dude who’s got his education, but he’s like, ‘No, you can’t have yours,’ how does that make you feel?” “I don’t know,” she said, lowering her eyes to the table. “Do you think that’s fair?” I asked. “Well, not really. But like, I’ve known girls who still go to school and do the sex industry. In the beginning, she’ll probably still go to school for a couple of months, but when the students start finding out she’s doing it . . .’cause people find out. . . . They’re on the bus. They see you on the track.” “Like people from your school can see you?” “Yeah,” she said. “After [kids] find out, [girls] just stop going to school ’cause they feel like, ‘Oh, nobody needs to know.’ . . . They see your face. They know you.” What Diamond had to say about what keeps girls like her out of school was insightful. Her own experience with bullying cer- tainly informed her reaction to school—and why she might think that it was necessary to avoid seeing other students who may have spotted her “working.” My conversations with other girls who were victims of sex trafficking revealed that the primary motivating factor for being in the sex industry was the need for money. For many girls who were actively “on the street,” school stopped being a priority, especially if they had an older man reinforcing the idea that her greatest attribute was her sexuality. If a girl attends school, there is another influence in her life. In general, it’s a game of con- trol, and only one person can have it: the pimp. Diamond’s use of the phrase “if he lets you” was evidence of that. She, like other girls I’d spoken with, was relatively clear that in addition to not having full control over her time when she’s on the street, there was a financial incentive—something school doesn’t immediately provide. “It’s the money,” Diamond said. “ ’Cause we think like, ‘Oh . . . if I go out to work today, I can get this, this, and this. If I go out to work today, I can get my nails and stuff done.’ . . . It’s usually about clothes and hair done and stuff.” Diamond, like other girls who come from poverty, understood that education is a tool for economic success, but she was also feel- ing pressured to find a way out of poverty sooner rather than later, one of many outcomes associated with being prematurely cast as an adult. **Along with “working” came an immediate gratification of material goods that otherwise seemed far out of reach—hair and nails done, new shoes or clothes, and in some cases a much better living environment. Staying in school, even if it could produce these things later in life, required a longer investment of time in order to reap these sorts of benefits. Children from middle-class or higher-income families often take for granted the social and material investments (manicures, new shoes, new clothes, extra- curricular activities) that reflect the inherent commercialism of a capitalist society. These are influences that reach all children. Choosing a life on the street is ultimately about survival—and that’s what schools are up against. When girls in the sex trade are removed from school or sent the signal that their presence in school is problematic, they are being handed over to predators. Essentially, schools are throwing them away.**

#### The incarceration of Black Women creates a lifelong pathway to trauma and leads to the sexualizationa and traumatization fof black women through trafficking

**Morris 16 [Monique W. Morris, Award-winning author and social justice scholar with three decades of experience in the areas of education, civil rights, juvenile and social justice, Founder and President of the National Black Women’s Justice Institute (NBWJI), an organization that works to interrupt school-to-confinement pathways for girls, “Pushout: the criminalization of Black girls in schools” pgs ]**

A recent report, *The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline*, highlighted the way in which girls, particularly girls of color, are criminalized as a result of their sexual and physical abuse. Nationwide, girls who are victims of sex trafficking are routinely in contact with the criminal legal system for truancy and placed in detention and/or child welfare facilities.4 This report was an important contribution to the public narrative on pathways to confinement and incarceration and broadened the lens on what has otherwise been a narrow critique of discipline practices. **It has become commonplace to talk about truancy, discipline, and bullying as ways that children are pushed out of school, but quite often ignored is how sexual violence can also become a pathway to confinement.** We flag chronic absenteeism as an indicator of underperformance and alienation from school, but not necessar- ily as a pathway to (and symptom of) exploitation, delinquency, and incarceration. Under these circumstances, it’s not a stretch for a girl to see only what her pimp or much older “boyfriend” sees. **Diamond may have bragged about her boyfriend’s college de- gree, but just like sex traffickers, she perceives limited options for herself. The lucrative nature of the commercial sex industry pro- vides a perverse and immediate financial incentive for sex traffick- ers, regardless of their educational attainment, to keep a girl or young woman out of school. This manipulated worldview often furthers her exploitation and facilitates a dynamic in which she is neither a dropout nor a pushout but instead a pullout—not of her own volition, but rather by someone who is already “out” himself or herself.**

#### Black girls in classrooms

**Wun 16** (Connie, PhD from Mills College, Director at Transformative Research: An Institute for Research and Social Transformation, 2016, *Unaccounted Foundations: Black Girls, Anti-Black Racism, and Punishment in Schools*, Pages 738-740)

Exclusionary discipline practices are used to punish black students for nonviolent infractions, and often times regardless of whether or not infractions have taken place. In addition to the formal types of punishment that constituted the girls’ experiences with school discipline, girls from this study contend that there are other unaccounted forms of policing and surveillance that did not reg- ister under the current conceptualizations of ‘zero tolerance’, nor were they considered institution- alized forms of discipline. These actions are not considered egregious forms of suspension, expulsion or arrest. Yet, according to these girls’ stories, they are still punitive encounters that shape their experiences at school. During an observation of a 9th-grade all-black girls’ course that was created and taught by a black female teacher, students were being asked to assess their experience with the class. This class, which started two years ago, was developed to support black girls at the school. Based upon teacher and administrator observations and school discipline data, black girls were becoming increasingly disciplined. In response, the school created a class for black girls to learn about black history, contemporary black issues, black feminism and issues of self-esteem. When the teacher asked why the students liked the class, they clamored to answer: ‘Because this class if fun’ and ‘I can be with my friends’. One student expressed that ‘in this class, I don’t get in trouble for *every- thing*’. Ms Jones asked her to elaborate. The young woman explained that in all of her other classes it seemed as though any time she did anything, she would get into trouble. She claimed that her Spanish teacher would get mad at her for ‘chewing gum’, ‘laughing’, and ‘talking’, or for acting as if she was talking. Although she did not get a referral for these infractions, she was sent out of class. A number of other students echoed her experience. They shared stories about getting sent out of the classroom for chewing gum or for getting up out of their seat to go to the trash. Students claimed that they were sometimes excluded from the class for entire periods. These frequent expe- riences with punishment were not archived in school data despite the fact that they constituted another level of punishment. These practices are not generally traced within school discipline research in large part because they are not exceptional forms of discipline. Instead they are com- monplace and embedded within the fabric of the girls’ everyday lives, a condition of schooling. At the end of the class, Simone, a black girl in the 11th grade, stayed to discuss her experiences with school discipline. Simone explained that while her school was characterized as ‘diverse’, black students were often subject to hypersurveillance and punishment. Simone explained that sometimes her experiences with school discipline were not recorded. As an example, she recalled that her advanced placement (AP) chemistry teacher once accused her plagiarizing her assignment. As the only black person in the honors class, Simone contended that her teacher’s accusation car- ried racial undertones. [She thought] I had someone else do it. [She said] I wrote you a referral. She thought I got it off an Asian girl. I said, ‘This is my handwriting.’ She said, ‘I thought it wasn’t yours.’ She could have at least asked. Did she ask every student about their handwriting? Her teacher’s assumption was that Simone had someone else do her homework. The teacher’s purported evidence was that her writing looked ‘Asian’. Not only did the teacher accuse Simone of plagiarism, but she also brought her to the principal to test her handwriting in front of another adult. Simone was asked to write sentences and compare her writing to the assignment under investiga- tion. Although this encounter was not archived as a referral, suspension or arrest, it was a form of policing and punishment that negatively affected her. Simone’s experience with her teacher’s accu- sation provides an example of the racialized suspicion that she felt her teachers had of her and other black youth about their academic abilities and veracity as students. In response to this encounter, Simone explained that she became withdrawn in class. She did not ask for assistance when she needed it and attempted to render herself invisible to her teacher. The underlying logic behind her response was that she wanted to finish the class with minimal encounters with her teacher. Despite completing her work and excelling as an honor roll student, Simone was still policed by her teacher. Her experience was not archived in school discipline data, particularly because it did not count as any formal type of punishment or disciplinary action. Getting sent to the office to demonstrate the authenticity of one’s work is not a formal consequence that is listed in the school handbook. However, it was a part of Simone’s experience with punishment at school. Subsequently, Simone tried to distance herself from the teacher and classroom. Her objective was to get through school without having to engage with her teacher. When asked what she thought about her experi- ence at the school, Simone expressed that she ‘hated’ her ‘diverse’ high school. She disliked the school despite the fact that she was an honor roll student who was recently accepted to several universities. In other words, while Simone was going to be graduating with honors, her experience with school discipline, particularly racialized school discipline, affected her perspective about the school and her entire high school career. Therefore, despite her academic achievements, Simone’s narrative demonstrated that a black female student who succeeds in school can also be subject to gratuitous punishment. While it is useful to examine the uneven rates of suspension, expulsion and arrest, only examin- ing formal discipline policies as the locus for disciplinary discrepancies misses other everyday occurrences of punishment to which black students, particularly young black women, are subject. Hartman writes about the need to chronicle the ‘mundane and quotidian’ that exists beyond the ‘shocking spectacle’ of violence (1997: 4) in order to understand the ‘diffusion of [anti-black] ter- ror’ that characterizes civil society. Focusing only on racial disparities in suspensions, expulsions, referrals and arrests steers observations away from even more common forms of discipline and punishment that are enacted upon black youth, particularly on young black school-aged girls, in school settings – and those that are executed by peers as well. Two 17-year-old black girls, who were teaching assistants for the Lifeskills class, explained that faculty were not the only ones who punished black girls and that punishment extended beyond handcuffs or exclusion from school. Punishment also included perpetual neglect and humiliation. The girls detailed the different layers of emotional and physical challenges that afflicted them, including the ways in which they were policed and rendered structurally vulnerable to authorities and their peers. They shared a story about an anonymously created faux Instagram account that was being circulated around campus. According to these students, there were at least 30 young women featured in this online mon- tage of photos, most of which were of black female students. Although it is already a major concern that pictures of these adolescent girls were circulated online without their consent, each picture was accompanied by a caption that detailed personal details of the student’s life. In one case, one of the pictures included a caption that detailed intimate stories about her family and experience with sexual violence. The girls explained that many black female students were extremely upset by this social media account, especially because they were unable to hold anyone directly responsible. Meanwhile, images of their bodies circulated throughout the internet for their peers to see and scrutinize. The online exhibition of the girls’ images became the impetus for searing tensions among many of the girls they knew on campus. The young women featured in the account tried to find the owner, sometimes wrestling with each other and becoming suspicious of one another. There were at least three fights that ensued because of this account. Girls with pictures posted online began confronting other girls they suspected of unscrupulously ‘posting photos’ of them. According to the girls, friends who were involved in these fights were suspended, and those who actively confronted other students in search of the Instagram account holder found themselves threatened with suspen- sion (and arrest) by administrators. Granted these threats were to deter students from fighting or threatening one another, the impending fear that students would be reprimanded for purportedly asserting their agency disempowered the girls. In addition, although the administrators and teachers purportedly did their best to identify which students might have created the account, the anonymity provided by social media made it difficult to hold anyone responsible. After a few weeks, a principal was able to contact the social media company to ask that the page be removed. While the immediate removal of the page did help alle- viate tensions between students, the fact that youth were able to exploit one another through social media left these young girls feeling helpless. There were few options, if any, for how they could defend themselves and assert their agency. Thus, at the same time that the girls were being exposed on social media, sometimes confronted by peers searching for the Instagram account holder while they confronted others, they were also confronted with the constant threat of school discipline policies. One week later, as a former high-school teacher, I was asked to guest-lecture in an 11th-grade history class on gender, discipline and violence. There were 33 students in this diverse classroom. Most were Latino, Filipino/Filipino-American, and Asian-American. In this classroom, white and black students were the minority. I asked the students to tell me why girls got in trouble on campus. They believed that girls were generally disciplined for fighting. A young male explained: ‘Girls fight on campus the most. Boys fight off campus.’ According to the young men, who initially dominated the classroom discussion, girls fought because they were‘dramatic’ and ‘thirsty’ for attention.

#### Black girls in classrooms

**Wun 16** (Connie, PhD from Mills College, Director at Transformative Research: An Institute for Research and Social Transformation, 2016, *Unaccounted Foundations: Black Girls, Anti-Black Racism, and Punishment in Schools*, Page 747)

Suddenly, one black female student, who was the teacher’s assistant, retorted quietly and defen- sively: ‘It’s not a big deal to you because you’re not involved.’ Her assertion seemed to indicate that she and the women from previous interviews existed in a separate sphere from those of their peers. Her proclamation was left unaddressed by the other students. Instead, her peers ignored her and continued to say that the Instagram issue was over ‘drama’ – ‘Girls like drama.’ The wave of accusations about girls and their need for attention circulated until a young South Asian man casually yelled out, ‘They get into fights to pull out each other’s weaves.’ His neighbor- ing classmates burst into laughter. It was the first and only racial signifier that was used in class to describe the generalized girls who liked drama. That is, they wanted excessive attention. According to this racial signifier, the girl who liked drama and was often in trouble for fighting was imagined as a black girl, ‘thirsty for attention’. Instead of considering fights as a means of self-defense, especially in light of the recent Instagram upheaval, the students insisted on characterizing their peers as being engaged in dramatics. The rest of the class appeared to share the perception, which was that the girls who got in trouble the most on campus were black girls who sought drama. A young black woman who had been quiet up until the last 10 minutes of class intervened: ‘Maybe the girls fight because they’re vulnerable.’ I asked her to expound on her comment. ‘Maybe something is happening at home, somewhere, and they’re angry.’ She explained that the girls were vulnerable to judgment and violence at home and in society. Her response was an attempt to explain this imagined ‘thirst for attention’. Recognizing her efforts to explain desire for attention, I turned to the rest of the class to ask, ‘What do you think makes a girl vulnerable?’ The once clamorous classroom stayed silent. It was as if imagining, engaging, or even empathizing with the vulnerabil- ity of their young black female peers had been an unfathomable option to this predominantly non- black student population. These girls existed in another part of the world, a sphere of vulnerability that was peripheral to their classmates’ but could operate as a premise for joint, social laughter. This desire to characterize their black female peers as ‘dramatic’ without analyzing the causes behind their actions extended beyond any logic of empathy or understanding. The fantasy that girls who get into trouble do so for fighting and for being dramatic misrepresents the reality, which is that most girls are disciplined for subjective reasons and nonviolent infractions. On the one hand, they not only implicated the girls instead of their teachers or administrators, but they also failed to see their black female peers as victims or peers who were trying to defend themselves and their dishonor.

#### School Discipline mark black female bodies as necessarily derelict and deviant to white norms and behavior- marking them as subjects for expulsion and imminent failure

#### Wun 2015

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Sojoyner’s research highlights the ways that schools and discipline policies have historically been used not only to punish students for committing infractions but also to undermine, if not neutralize, the possibility for Black political education. In this sense, school discipline policies, including sus-pensions and expulsions, help to construct not only an environment where Black youth are disproportionately disciplined compared with their White peers but also one that confines their political and social identities. School discipline policies have a history in containing Black youth and their com-munities, particularly in relationship to Black political mobilization. School discipline literature that has examined the effects of school discipline has often focused on boys of color (Ferguson, 2001; Monroe, 2006; Noguera, 2008). These studies have provided a necessary framework for understanding the racialized and criminalizing effects of discipline policies. For example, in her landmark ethnographic study, Ferguson explores the experiences that Black boys had with discipline at an elementary school in California. According to her research, Black boys were more likely to be treated as adults and punished than their White peers. Ferguson’s analysis helps us to understand the ways that teachers and administrators police Black youth through discipline policies. Together, the studies on Black boys and school discipline highlight the punitive conditions that shaped the experiences of Black boys. In recent years, there has been a growth in attention to the ways that school discipline excludes and punishes Black girls (Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darensbourg, 2011; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). According to the U.S. Department of Education’s Civil Rights Office (2014), 12% of school-aged Black girls across the country have experienced out of school suspensions, compared with 7% for Native American girls, 4% for Latinas, and 2% for White girls. Nineteen percent of Black girls with disabilities have experiences with out of school suspensions. In another study conducted by the African American Policy Forum and the Columbia Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies (2014), which examined Black girls’ experiences with school discipline in Boston and New York, 12% of Black girls across the city’s public schools had been suspended in 2013 compared with 2% of their White counterparts. The study also found that 90% of girls expelled from New York Schools in 2011-2012 were Black, whereas none of the girls expelled were White. Based upon the study, most of the girls’ infractions are for disobedience and deviance. Other research has found that Black girls are twice as likely as their White counterparts to be sent to the office and are five times as likely to be suspended or expelled (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). This study finds that Black girls are not only more likely to be sus-pended and expelled, they are more likely to be under constant surveillance by school administrators and disciplined for **“disobedience” and “defiance”** (E. W. Morris, 2007). In fact, according to the NAACP and National Women’s Law Center (2014), during the 2011-2012 school year, 12% of African American girls, from pre-K through 12th grade, were suspended. The rate is 6 times higher than that of White girls and is also higher than for White, Asian, and Latino boys. These numbers provide some insight into the condi-tions affecting Black girls’ experiences in schools.

#### Many statistics and information about how black girls are affected in schools by disciplinary rules and zero-tolerance policies.

Wun 16 (Connie Wun (2016): Angered: Black and non-Black girls of color at the intersections of violence and school discipline in the United States, Race Ethnicity and Education, DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2016.1248829. < http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248829>.)

According to school discipline research, students of color are disproportionately affected by harsh school discipline policies (Losen and Gillespie 2012; Wallace et al. 2008). Reasons for these disparities range from macro-level racial, social economic trends to micro-level school and classroom biases. Research shows that racial climates in schools, including the relationships between adults and students, affect suspension rates (Meiners and Winn 2010; Nasir et al. 2013). Most gender-based school discipline research narrows in on the experiences of boys of color (Ferguson 2001; Heitzeg 2009; Noguera 2008; Rios 2011). For instance, Ferguson (2001) found through her research in an elementary school that stereotypes of Black criminality were signi cant factors in who and how Black boys were punished at school. She found that Black boys were more likely to get into trouble for behaviors that were seen as permissible when committed by their white peers. Similarly, in Rios’ (2011) ethnographic study of East Oakland, Black and Latino teenage boys were regularly policed and criminalized in schools and their neighborhoods. In both studies, the boys were subject to perpetual surveillance based upon racialized suspicions of their potential or inherent criminality. These studies have helped to highlight the underlying problems related to the disproportionate rates by which boys of color are disciplined. Increasingly, studies have also examined the experiences and logics behind the overrepresentation of Black girls in discipline data (Crenshaw, Ocen, and Nanda 2014; Morris 2012; Wun 2014, 2016). According to the US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2013), from 2011 to 2012, Black girls in public elementary and secondary schools across the nation were suspended at a rate of 12%, compared to the rate of 2% for white girls. Black girls were suspended more than girls of any other race or ethnicity and more than white and Asian boys. Studies that examine girls’ experiences suggest that girls of color are being disciplined for reasons that differ from their male peers. In particular, girls are more likely to be disciplined for failing to meet dominant cis-gendered expectations of femininity (Sharma 2010). Black girls, in particular, are more likely to be disciplined for ‘talking back’ (Henry 1998) and being ‘unladylike’ (Morris 2007). Black girls are also likely to be arrested for being ‘disrespectful’ and ‘uncontrollable’ (Morris 2012). These charac- terizations and subsequent disciplinary actions are characterized by underlying racial stereotypes and assumptions about appropriate behaviors, which often indicate that girls are expected to be obedient and docile. At the same time that girls are being disciplined for reasons that differ from their male counterparts, studies also suggest that girls of color are being increasingly criminalized and heavily policed in similar ways to boys (Chesney-Lind and Jones 2010). That is, in addition to experiencing their own gender-specific forms of policing, the girls experience what boys do as well. According to another study conducted by the African American Policy Forum and the Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies at Columbia University (2014), which examined Black girls’ experiences with school discipline in Boston and New York, 12% of Black girls across the city’s public schools had been suspended in 2013 compared to 2% of their white peers. The study also found that 90% of girls expelled from New York Schools in 2011–2012 were Black, while none of the girls expelled were white. Black teenage girls represent less than 17% of all female students, they account for 31% of school children referred to law enforcement and 43% of girls who experience school-related arrests. With the development of zero tolerance policies, girls are more likely to be arrested for assaults than they were before the mandates were enacted. ‘In decades past, this violence would have been ignored or labeled a status offense, like being ‘incorrigible’ or a person in need of supervision. Now, an arrest for assault is made’ (Chesney-Lind and Jones 2010, 60). In addition to experiencing criminalization, the girls are also subject to violence outside of school. According to research, schools are criminalizing and arresting girls who have histories of violence at home (Chesney-Lind 1997; Sharma 2010). In research that focuses on adult women, according to a study by Green (2005), 98% of women in a jail study were exposed to a traumatic event. Ninety percent of the women reported at least one interpersonal trauma and 71% were exposed to domestic violence. National statistics demonstrate that 85% of young women in detention have experienced sexual or emotional abuse before incarceration (Krisberg 2005). Many female prisoners have experienced various forms of violence, not limited to sexual assault or domestic violence (Chesney-Lind 2004; Richie 1996) and many are from low-income families and communities (Alleyne 2006; Moe and Ferraro 2006). In her qualitative study of a theater program in a girls’ detention center, Winn (2010) identifies the complex worlds that the girls were forced to navigate through prior to their incarceration. She interviews students and explores the manuscripts that students write for the theater program. Noticing that the plays were often autobiographical, she finds that incarcerated girls’ lives are characterized by intersectional stories of sexual and domestic violence; school and parental neglect; poverty and racism. By situating the students’ narratives and their experiences in the wider contexts in which they live, Winn demonstrates that the girls are multiply marginalized (Crenshaw 1997) and consistently criminalized for the ways in which they navigate through structural inequalities. In a qualitative study of girls and boys from St. Louis, Missouri, Miller (2008) examines reasons behind Black girls’ experiences with violence in their communities, school and neighborhood. Based upon in-depth interviews, surveys and neighborhood observations, Miller finds that violence against Black girls in St. Louis is shaped by the intersections of normative gender expectations – for both girls and boys – and the effects of structural disadvantages on their neighborhoods and schools. Her study shows that the girls are constantly navigating through the effects of racialized gender expectations of Black masculinity. As boys make unwanted sexual advances, the girls are forced to ‘stand up’ for themselves. Throughout her study, she provides evidence that the girls do not passively acquiesce to gender-based violence, but instead resist the violence against them. Most studies that examine school discipline data and the impact on females have found that girls of color, particularly Black girls, are disproportionately disciplined compared to their peers (Mendez and Knopf 2003; Morris 2007). Findings show that Black girls are disciplined for behaviors such as disruption, profanity, defiance and fighting. Many of these infractions are subjective, and violation is determined by the opinions of school teachers and administrators. Literature that has evaluated the effects of the ‘school to prison pipeline’ on girls has also examined their histories with violence (Simkins et al. 2004). e ndings from the Simkins et al. (2004) study, which interviewed incarcerated girls and adult women with criminal records, indicate that schools have failed to provide adequate services to young women with violent personal lives. Most schools have not only failed to address the girls’ needs but also punished them for acting out in response to the violence in their lives. At times, girls of color, specifically Black girls, can be susceptible to discipline policies regardless of their behaviors (Wun 2014). Drawing from research that examines the relationship between girls of color, violence, and criminalization, this article explores the narratives of girls of color who have discipline records to understand the conditions that shape their disciplinary experiences at school.

#### Harris talks about her experience being fem and lesbian, and Black and light-skinned.

Harris 96 (Harris, Laura Alexandra. “Queer Black Feminism: The Pleasure Principle.” Feminist Review, no. 54, 1996, pp. 3–30. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1395608.)

The queerness of being black but light, the shame of being light but black, the gendered mediation of the two, and the acted-out fantasies of the history of power relations embedded in the formation of these cate- gories bears resonance on my adult desires. Now certainly I am not trying to claim that all my desires have been clearly in place thanks to childhood games. More to the point I am trying to claim that interacting with one's history, with the desire, shame, and responsibilities embedded in that history, enforced through that history, should be a part of arriving at an understanding of the power of desire. It should enable a queer black feminist reclamation of that desire, a resistance to that shame. I have to comprehend, accept, and speak out about the certain position of advantage and disadvantage I have in the structures of oppression. I need to turn the shame of that position around and make use out of what it puts in my imagination to arrive at any sexual agency. Related to my experience of expressing myself to others as black is the more complicated experience of outing myself as a fem, an identity that denotes certain sexual desires, but doing one is embedded in doing the other. The necessity of my always having to say I am black to be identified as black marks my light appearance as both a privileged and silenced history of power relations and shame around interracial sexuality in the US. This has parallel roots in my always having to come out as fem to be identified as lesbian and then as a particular type of lesbian, one invested in an overtly gendered erotic relationship. Along with my fem investment in eroticizing lesbian differences I am often mistaken for straight, another history and set of power relations in this society. Concurrently, claiming my fem desires has given me access to my body, a light body that as black-identified I often am alienated from, by allowing me to find ways to take pleasure in it despite its racial and sexual perversities. This queer sexuality of mine then is engendered by and engenders my queer racial identity. This puts my history at my service, this places my race as central to my gender and desire, and this places my sexual fantasies to my advantage. In those devastating moments when feminists defined practice as an elimination of all power-tainted sexual fantasies their own 'overt' racial bias is most certainly established as they shape practice on white middle-class empowerment - not to mention, prescribe a sexual practice as oppressive and boring as it gets.

## Methods

### Black Mothering

#### Black mothering is a form of resistance to a world that seeks to destroy what they have created – narrative of a black mother.

Matti 16 (Matti, Dominique, Writer/ Ruminator/ Editor/ Cool Mom / Patreon.com. "Black Mothering Is A Means Of Protest – Dominique Matti – Medium." Medium. Medium, 27 July 2016. Web. 04 July 2017. <https://medium.com/@DominiqueMatti/black-mothering-is-a-means-of-protest-e54b89b2063f>.)

Lucia McBath, the mother of murdered teen Jordan Davis, stood before the DNC tonight and said solemnly, “I lived in fear that my son would die like this. I even warned him.” I know the fear she mentions, intimately. Every Black mother knows this terror. We are lucky every day that we don’t wind up living it. It’s enough to make a body quit birthing. It’s enough to quell the urge to continue ourselves. Some of us refuse mothering because of it, as a painful and hard act of mercy. They want to spare their hypothetical children all of the inevitable suffering, and I don’t blame them one bit. In America, Black mothering can feel as futile as Sisyphus’ mission. The system pushes against our dreams, like gravity against the Greek myth’s boulder. But we push back. As in every era of American summers, the summer I became a mother was a summer drenched in Black blood. I spent many nights clutching my belly, trying to will my son to stay where I could still protect him. Two summers later, and Black blood still flows with no signs of slowing. My veins thicken and bulge again, one of the early tells of pregnancy. Making a life is a slow crawl to the miraculous. Every cell in my body prioritizes this life making labor. And while it works, my Twitter feed floods with the latest recordings of the end of somebody’s Black baby. And another mother’s baby watches from the back seat. Where do Black mothers put all that terror when we have to mother through it? How do we rise to roll the rock uphill? Despite the evidence, we resist the narrative that Black lives are born simply to suffer. We mother as a means of protest against a world that says we shouldn’t exist. Lesley McSpadden stood silently on stage, tonight, in honor of her son, Mike Brown. But I hear her in my head, like the first time I heard her, in the summer of 2014. “You took my son away from me. Do you know how hard it was for me to get him to stay in school and graduate? Do you know how many Black men graduate? Not many. Because you bring them down to this level where they feel like they don’t got nothing to live for anyway. ‘They going to try to take me out anyway.’” My son’s not even two yet, so I know only a minuscule amount of the work she’s speaking of. Most of the heavy lifting is ahead of me. But already, I ask myself the hard questions. By day we gear up for the hurdle of potty training. By night my husband and I try to tackle problems there aren’t tutorials for. Problems like: How are we going to raise a Black child who isn’t destroyed by a world that can so easily destroy him? How do we teach him his worth in a place so eager to undermine us? How do we hand him the map of the many traps laid for him, without breaking his will to navigate life at all? As my son grows, so does my resolve to fight for solutions. I watch the seed he once was sprout into a tiny bud, and from a bud he will bloom into something the world will deem dangerous. But I see his softness. And society’s refusal to see the full scope of him charges me to fight for him to keep all of who he is. Society’s determination to deny him a full life compels me to do everything I can to give him the one he’s entitled to. The Mothers of the Movement wear red flowers on their lapel for their children. They preserve what this country tried to crush in its fist. In my mind I see gravity move backwards. I see the boulder halt from falling, I see it rewinding itself uphill. I watch the reverse bloom of these Black mothers’ babies, back into buds, back into seeds. Back into dreams their mothers had of what could’ve been. I fight for the dreams of these mothers, for my mother’s dreams, and for mine. I mother as a means of protest. I push back. My spirit rallies against the narrative that all hope is lost for us. I give birth to the future. I demand a place for us. I demand for my children the fully lived lives that they deserve. And in my home I create a new world, one where my son can live at ease. In my home Black babies are nurtured, safe, and loved. And in the legacy of Black moms before me, I work to change the place outside these walls. I trudge uphill, against the weight of man-made gravity.

#### Perm – the epistemology of black mother activists can include activists who don’t speak for the communities.

Rocha 14 (Rocha, Luciane De Oliveira, doctor of Philosophy. "OUTRAGED MOTHERING:." The University of Texas at Austin, Aug. 2014. Web. 6 July 2017. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/25886/ROCHA-DISSERTATION-2014%5b1%5d.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.)On the opposite side, the mothers who speak for their communities, are the protagonists of the struggle against the state. Internalization of racist, patriarchal, and capitalist ideologies create the sense of powerlessness among many residents of the favelas, which make them approach the ideas of those who are not their peers and create internal differences among the population of the favelas regarding their view of the state. In addition, Black mothers in struggle highlight that many police officers are from the communities, which make them either hide their identities or terrorize the population through the formation of militias. Therefore, it is necessary that mothers teach, through their experiences, that it is possible to cope with this machine and gather some results. At the base of these relationships is racism, which is fed by a patriarchal capitalist structure. This result, among other things--like poverty and damaged social representation of the communities, especially towards Black women--becomes evident. Whereas state action toward the communities is based on anger and fear and aims to maintain the status quo, the mothers’ reactions of anger and grief due to the continuous attachment to their motherline . This relationship creates a sadistic connection where the state needs to show 266 power using the communities, and the communities seek justice to such actions using the state. They use their gender to act and their positionality as mothers as privileged position to raise their voices. Black mothers who have had children killed and developed outrage are the protagonists in the communities against police violence. To pursue their luta, they develop a relationship with social movements and activists to support their actions. They use their anger and grief as a source of power to raise their voices to talk about their cases, and to address the general concerns of the communities. They see that the state delays to solve their cases are principally due to internal structures, but also because of racism and class discrimination, a failed state structure around the rights of the communities, and police officers who can no longer serve the structure. In their epistemology there is room for activists and research collaborators, such as myself, who do not speak for the communities. We must directly collaborate with them. Their struggles are here, in the present, now. There is no possibility of an imagination, a futurism, a pure theoretical demand. Thus, they work with what they have in hand, which is the machine that is already there--the state. However, in “their operationalization of the machine,” even though they do not accomplish personal success and sometimes die without seeing a resolution to their cases, their luta teaches us that another step is possible. The luta is individualized, but above all, it is collective, which is shown through their mutual support.

#### Mothering in the African world view and African-American communities is a community effort linked to the survival of the black community.

James and Abena 07 (James, Stanlie M., and Abena P. A. Busia. Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women. London: Routledge, 2007. Print.)

The acceptance of responsibility for the welfare of non-blood related children in their community shown by my grandmother and her fictive daughter is hardly unique to the African-American community. While western conceptualizations of mothering have often been limited to the activities of females with their biological offsprings, mothering within the Afro-American community and throughout the Black diaspora can be viewed as a form of cultural work or what Bernice Johnson Reagon calls “the entire way a community organizes to nurture itself and future generations” (Reagon, 1989: 167—80). Thus my grandmother and her fictive daughter were upholding a tradition which enlarges upon limited conceptualizations of mothering. This chapter will examine Afro-American and West African concepts of the othermothering and its importance to the survival of the Black community. My thesis is that these forms of mothering, which have their roots in a traditional African world-view, may serve as an important Black feminist link to the development of new models for social transformation in the twenty-first century. Othermothers can be defines as those who assist blood mothers in the responsibilities of childcare for short- to long-term periods, in informal or formal arrangements. They can be, but are not confined to, such blood relatives as grandmothers, sisters, aunts, cousins or supportive fictive kin. They not only serve to relieve some of the stress that can develop in the intimate daily relationships of mothers and daughters but they can also provide multiple role models for children (Troester, 1984; Collins, 1987). This concept of the othermothering which has its roots in the traditional African world-view and can be traced through the institution of slavery, developed in response to an ever growing need to share the responsibility for child nurturance.

#### An understanding of othermothering can be a useful way to dispel feelings of impotence that occur due to social issues that plague African-American communities and can change conceptualizations of power.

James and Abena 07 (James, Stanlie M., and Abena P. A. Busia. Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women. London: Routledge, 2007. Print.)

Because of their lack of access to traditional sources of power, especially those mentioned above, African-Americans have had to rely on their abilities to develop power out of nontraditional resources and forms of intervention. Historically othermothering and community othermothering have been critical to the survival of Black communities. Not only have forms of othermothering nurtured and sustained African-American communities, but they were also powerful nontraditional resources utilized to intervene creatively in situations or conditions that threatened the survival of the community. Thus they exemplify Ramphele’s conceptualization of power as a range of interventions that achieve outcome and should be viewed as potentially effective agencies for social transformation. Contemporary African-American communities must continue to struggle around the dual themes of survival and social change while also confronting such critical problems as drug addiction, gang-related violence, the AIDS epidemic, rising numbers of hate crimes, depression and unemployment, and concerted attacks on hard-won civil rights legislation and affirmative action policies. These and other problems not only threaten the survival of the African-American community in the twenty-first century, but may also foster disempowering feelings of impotence. The development of an understanding of othermothering and community othermothering is useful in a number of ways. First it is helpful in dispelling feelings of impotence through illustrating historical nontraditional patterns of empowerment of Black women. Second through examining the activism of such women as Daisy Bates and Ella Baker emphasis is placed on the conceptualization of power as a verb as opposed to a noun. Finally the abilities to analyze, critique and strategize around issues developed through community othermothering are critical resources that can and should be creatively utilized to address contemporary needs. This in turn becomes what R.J.B. Walker refers to as a transformative assault…that carr[ies] the possibility of reconstructing the conditions of a decent life from the bottom up” (Walker, 1988: 8).

#### The emotions of black mother’s can be channeled to create an aesthetic that challenges the way civil society invisibilizes their struggles.

Rocha 14 (Rocha, Luciane De Oliveira, doctor of Philosophy. "OUTRAGED MOTHERING:." The University of Texas at Austin, Aug. 2014. Web. 6 July 2017. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/25886/ROCHA-DISSERTATION-2014%5b1%5d.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.)P – The idea for the activity came up in a conversation between Marilene, Daniela Duque and myself. Someone said, ‘In Argentina people do this.’ Let’s do it! But, how? Let's schedule a date and time and we'll do it. What will we do? Let's make some large dolls stuffed with styrofoam packaging flakes. We will make as many dolls as the number of people he murdered. And how do we do it? Let's make the pattern of the doll from newspaper. We asked the girl to lay on the floor, we sketched, cut, then we found a seamstress in Vila Cruzeiro. I went to Madureira, bought the flakes, and Mauricio picked me up in his car. Where would we fill the dolls? It had to be at a place nearby. Someone had to figure out where Sergio Cabral lives. Let's find out. We found out. Then we found a friend who lived nearby and filled them in her garage. The secretariat’s security wanted to stop us, but we said that the road was public and we did the activity. L – How was it? Did it go as planned? P – It all worked out. We planned to begin at midnight and finish at 8 am, so when people leave the house for work, they could see the bodies there. We stayed the whole night on the street. We bought pizza and stayed there. It was a very good activity. In the end, we left some dolls there and the military police gathered inside the police van. L – Wow, that’s symbolic... P – It was! We have pictures of that, them taking the styrofoam bodies and putting them inside the car. L – Wow! That is impressive! Did you arrange that with them? [I joked]. P – It seems like it was, right? But it wasn’t. We made the dolls and they collected them, it was very interesting. After that, the car followed us to the bus stop and kept circling around the block until our bus came. The political act referred to above relocates Black people’s daily encounters with violence in spaces such as the favelas, to an area where the same practices become a performance with a different meaning. This shift, as discussed in chapter 2, exemplifies how police practices in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas and peripheries are different from the ones performed in the mostly white Zona Sul, where Sergio Cabral lives. The display of practices directed towards the Black body in the Zona Sul became what Saidiya Hartman 269 calls the “invocation of the shocking and the terrible” (2007, p. 4). The three women organized an exhibition of Black suffering that reproduced the daily displays of Black bodies lying on the ground in order to create a socio-racial-political fact. Patricia’s narration also shows Black women’s activism, planning strategies, organizing skills, and performing abilities in a way that forces the oppressor to perform as its own character caught in the act (Taylor, 1997). In other conversations with Patricia, she had urged the Rede to get organized and prepare more demonstrations and performances. She said, “I doubt if we put 300, 400, 500, or even more people, because we have a lot of favelados, at Sergio Cabral’s door or at Palacio Guanabara, [and have them] do nothing, just lie down on the floor, I don’t know ... I doubt that he would receive us and do what we tell him to do.” Patricia’s loss of the “combat breathing”62 unveils a courageous longing that uses anger as a tool. In my collaboration with mothers in struggle, I could participate in events that deployed the same strategies with the aims of being heard, expressing their outrage, and demanding justice. In this chapter, I engage with Black feminist aesthetics and Samba and Jazz aesthetics through the work of scholars Omi Jones, Lisa Moore, and Sharon Bridgforth (2010), Angela Davis (1998), João Vargas (2006), and Jurema Werneck (2007). This scholarship allows me to understand Black mothers’ public appearances and political acts as performances where the use of suffering and sorrow is part of the Black mother’s aesthetic, aiming to create a the concept of Hollering Place (Cleage, 1994). They create performances and acts to exchange strength with other families in sorrow, as well as to make their demands visible in society.

#### Black mother’s channel their emotions as a strategy for survival and visibility.

Rocha 14 (Rocha, Luciane De Oliveira, doctor of Philosophy. "OUTRAGED MOTHERING:." The University of Texas at Austin, Aug. 2014. Web. 6 July 2017. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/25886/ROCHA-DISSERTATION-2014%5b1%5d.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.)

While conducting fieldwork and participating in Black mothers’ in resistance political appearances, I interacted with them as if I was in a performance. Not the kind of performance where the audience is only a spectator of suffering (Hartman, 1997), but one in which I tried to be present, breathing, listening, improvising, hearing the simultaneous truths, collaborating with virtuosity, body-centered, and, thus, metamorphosing myself through these interactions as stated in Jones’s jazz practice foundational precepts (2010, p. 6). The difference between their performance and the ones problematized by Hartman is that Black women’s performance of suffering is a way to protest and a strategy of survival; it diverges from performances of suffering as a “spectacle” of Black subjection or as Black vulnerability facing white power and attempts of domination. In their condemning cultural productions, Blackness, poverty and consciousness are performed alongside the emotions they evoke. Their performances contradict what Vargas observed while working with CAPA [Coalition Against Police Abuse] in Los Angeles, where the CAPA manual generated “the notion that Blacks are overly emotional, idealistic, and incapable of being pragmatic” (2006, p. 118). On the contrary, these women use their emotion as a tool to induce their audience to feel and act the way they want. In this sense, their performances transform their audiences into witnesses to power. Black women need to create strategies in their performances to be visible. Soares, due to her limited ability to move at 73 years old, uses a chair as a support in her performance to denounce the interrupted motherline, I engage with author Pearl Cleage’s (1994) concept of a “hollering place” in order to read the March 31st walk as a stage where sorrow and activism is performed. Cleage says, “[t]he Theater is, for [her], one of the few 277 places where we [Black women] have a chance to get an uninterrupted word in edgewise” (1994, p. 13). For Black mothers in sorrow, public manifestations are one of the few spaces where they can raise their voices and talk aloud about their problems and the demands of society. Those are the moments to cry aloud revealing how the pain produced when their children were killed is still alive. Cleage explains that theater is her hollering place, “a place to talk about our Black female lives, defined by our specific Black female reality to each other first, and then to others of good will who will take the time to listen and understand” (1994, p. 13). In the public manifestations discussed below, the streets are the hollering places for Black mothers in sorrow. Improvisation holds a particular place in black mothers’ performance, similarly to black people’s daily strategies to survive and thrive in the midst of life’s barriers.

#### The black female standpoint is not only a survival strategy but is a way to counter the dominant stereotypical images produced during the slave era and continued after it.

O’Reilly 04 (O'Reilly, Andrea, writer on women's issues and currently a Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University. Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart. N.p.: State U of New York, 2004. Print.)

The black female standpoint develops in opposition to and in resistance against the dominant view or what Collins calls the controlling images of black womanhood. Collins argues that “the dominant ideology of the slave era fostered the creation of four interrelated, socially constructed controlling images of Black womanhood, each reflecting the dominant group’s interest in maintaining Black women’s subor- dination” (71). The four controlling images that Collins examines include the mammy, the matriarch, the welfare mother, and the Jezebel. By way of controlling images, as Collins explains, “certain assumed qualities are attached to Black women and [then] used to justify [that] oppression” (7). “From the mammies, Jezebels, and breeder women of slavery,” Collins writes, “to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pan- cake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes, and ever-present welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture, the nexus of negative stereotypical images applied to African-American women has been fundamental to Black women’s oppression” (7). Black women, according to Collins, may resist these derogatory stereotypes through the creation of a distinct black female standpoint that is based on black women’s own experiences and meanings of womanhood. The black female standpoint, Collins argues, develops through an interplay between two discourses of knowledge: “the commonplace taken-for granted knowledge” and the “everyday ideas” of black women that are clarified and rearticulated by black women intellectuals or theorists to form a specialized black feminist thought. In turn, as Collins explains, “the consciousness of Black women may be transformed by [this] thought” (20). She elaborates: Through the process of rearticulation, Black women intellectuals offer African-American women a different view of themselves and their world from that forwarded by the dominant group. . . . By taking the core themes of a Black women’s standpoint and infusing them with new meaning, Black women intellectuals can stimulate a new consciousness that utilizes Black’s women’s everyday, taken-for granted knowledge. Rather than raising con- sciousness, Black feminist thought affirms and rearticulates a consciousness that already exists. More, important, this rearticulated consciousness empowers African-American women and stimulates resistance. (31–32) a politics of the heart 3 In other words, the black female standpoint, emerging from black women’s everyday experiences and clarified by black feminist theory, not only provides a distinct “angle of vision on self, community and society” but also, in so doing, enables black women to counter and interrupt the dominant discourse of black womanhood. The formation and articulation of a self-defined standpoint, Collins emphasizes, “is [thus] key to Black women’s survival” (26). As Audre Lorde argues, “[I]t is axiomatic that if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others—for their use and to our detriment” (as quoted in Collins, 21, 1991). However, as Collins emphasizes the importance of self- definition, she recognizes that black women, as an oppressed group, inevitably must struggle to convey this self-definition, positioned as they are at the periphery of the dominant white, male culture. Collins writes: “An oppressed group’s experiences may put its members in a position to see things differently, but their lack of control over ideological apparatuses of society makes express- ing a self-defined standpoint more difficult” (26). The black female stand- point is thus, in Collins’s words, “an independent, viable, yet subjugated knowledge” (13).

#### Othermothering is a form of empowerment for black women that was crucial for the survival of Africans during the slave era.

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Stanlie James, in “Mothering: A Possible Black Feminist Link to Social Trans- formations” defines othermothering “as acceptance of responsibility for a child not one’s own, in an arrangement that may or may not be formal” (45). Oth- ermothers usually care for children. In contrast, community mothers, as Njoki Nathani Wane explains, “take care of the community. These women are typi- cally past their childbearing years” (112). “The role of community mothers,” as Arlene Edwards notes, “often evolved from that of being othermothers” (88). James argues that othermothering and community mothering developed from, in Arlene Edwards’s words, “West African practices of communal lifestyles and interdependence of communities” (88). Consequently, as Patricia Hill Collins has observed, “[m]othering [in West Africa] was not a privatized nurturing ‘occupation’ reserved for biological mothers, and the economic support of chil- dren was not the exclusive responsibility of men” (1993: 45). Rather, mother- ing expressed itself as both nurturance and work, and care of children was viewed as the duty of the larger community. Collins argues that these comple- mentary dimensions of mothering and the practice of communal mother- ing/othermothering give women great influence and status in West African societies. She elaborates: First, since they are not dependent on males for economic support and pro- vide much of their own and their children’s economic support, women are structurally central to families. Second, the image of the mother is cultur- ally elaborated and valued across diverse West African societies. . . . Finally, while the biological mother-child bond is valued, childcare was a collective responsibility, a situation fostering cooperative, age-stratified, woman cen- tered “mothering” networks. (45) These West African cultural practices, Collins argues, were retained by enslaved African Americans and gave rise to a distinct tradition of African American motherhood in which the custom of othermothering and community mothering was emphasized and elaborated. Arlene Edwards, in her article “Community Mothering: The Relationship Between Mothering and the Community Work of Black Women,” explains: The experience of slavery saw the translation of othermothering to new set- tings, since the care of children was an expected task of enslaved Black women in addition to the field or house duties. . . . [T]he familial instabil- ity of slavery engendered the adaptation of communality in the form of fos- tering children whose parents, particularly mothers, had been sold. This tradition of communality gave rise to the practice of othermothering. The survival of the concept is inherent to the survival of Black people as a whole . . . since it allowed for the provision of care to extended family and non blood relations. (80) The practice of othermothering remains central to the African American tradi- tion of motherhood and is regarded as essential for the survival of black people. Bell hooks, in her article “Revolutionary Parenting” (1984), comments: Child care is a responsibility that can be shared with other childrearers, with people who do not live with children. This form of parenting is rev- olutionary in this society because it takes place in opposition to the idea that parents, especially mothers, should be the only childrearers. Many people raised in black communities experienced this type of community- based child care. Black women who had to leave the home and work to help provide for families could not afford to send children to day care centers and such centers did not always exist. They relied on people in their communities to help. Even in families where the mother stayed home, she could also rely on people in the community to help. . . . Peo- ple who did not have children often took responsibility for sharing in childrearing. (144) “The centrality of women in African-American extended families,” as Nina Jenk- ins concludes in “Black Women and the Meaning of Motherhood,” “is well known” (Abbey and O’Reilly 1998: 206). The practice of othermothering, as it developed from West African tradi- tions, became in African American culture a strategy of survival in that it ensured that all children, regardless of whether the biological mother was present or avail- able, would receive the mothering that delivers psychological and physical well- being and makes empowerment possible. Collins concludes: Biological mothers or bloodmothers are expected to care for their children. But African and African-American communities have also recognized that vesting one person with full responsibility for mothering a child may not be wise or possible. As a result, “othermothers,” women who assist blood- mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities, traditionally have been cen- tral to the institution of Black motherhood. (1993: 47) Community mothering and othermothering also emerged in response to black mothers’ needs and served to empower black women and enrich their lives. “His- torically and presently community mothering practices,” Erica Lawson writes, “was and is a central experience in the lives of many Black women and partici- pation in mothering is a form of emotional and spiritual expression in societies that marginalize Black women” (26). The self-defined and created role and iden- tity of community mother also, as Lawson explains, “enabled African Black women to use African derived conceptions of self and community to resist neg- ative evaluations of Black women” (26). The practice of othermothering/community mothering as a cultural sus- taining mechanism and as a mode of empowerment for black mothers has been documented in numerous studies. Carol Stack’s early but important book All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community (1974) emphasizes how crucial and central extended kin and community are for poor urban blacks. “Black families in The Flats and the non-kin they regard as kin,” Stack writes in her conclusion, “have evolved patterns of co-residence, kinship-based exchange networks linking multiple domestic units, elastic household boundaries, lifelong bonds to three-generation households, social controls against the formation of marriages that could endanger the network of kin, the domestic authority of women, and limitations on the role of the husband or male friend within a woman’s kin network” (124).2 Priscilla Gibson’s recent article, “Developmental Mothering in an African American Community: From Grandmothers to New Mothers Again” (2000), provides a study of grandmothers and great-grand- mothers who assumed the caregiving responsibilities of their (great) grandchil- dren as a result of the parent being unable or unwilling to provide that care. Gibson argues that “[in]creasingly grandmothers, especially African American grandmothers, are becoming kinship providers for grandchildren with absent parents. This absent middle generation occurs because of social problems such as drug abuse, incarceration, domestic violence, and divorce, just to name a few” (33). In “Reflections on the Mutuality of Mothering: Women, Children, and Othermothering,” Njoki Nathani Wane explores in her research study of women in Kenya how precolonial African beliefs and customs gave rise to a communal practice of childrearing and an understanding that “parenting, espe- cially mothering, was an integral component of African traditions and cultures” (111). “Most of pre-colonial Africa,” explains Wane, “was founded upon and sustained by collectivism. . . . Labour was organized along parallel rather than hierarchical lines, thus giving equal value to male and female labour. Social orga- nization was based on the principle of patrilineal or matrilineal descent, or a combination of both. Mothering practices were organized as a collective activ- ity” (108). Today, the practice of othermothering, as Wane notes, “serves[s] to relieve some of the stresses that can develop between children and parents [and] provides multiple role models for children; [as well] it keeps the traditional African value systems of communal sharing and ownership alive” (113). Other- mothering and community mothering, Wane concludes, “can be understood as a form of cultural work or as one way communities organize to nurture both themselves and future generations” (113).

#### Othermothers are social activists in their communities. They educate and nurture in order to strengthen their communities for resistance. Conceptualization of motherhood as social activism also serves to empower Black women in their communities.

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The practices of othermothering and in particular community mothering serve, as Stanlie James argues, “as an important Black feminist link to the development of new models of social transformation” (45). Black women’s role of community mothers, as Collins explains, redefines motherhood as social activism: Black women’s experiences as other mothers have provided a foundation for Black women’s social activism. Black women’s feelings of responsibility for nurturing the children in their extended family networks have stimulated a more generalized ethic of care where Black women feel accountable to all the Black community’s children. (49) In Black Feminist Thought Collins develops this idea further: Such power is transformative in that Black women’s relationships with chil- dren and other vulnerable community members is not intended to domi- nate or control. Rather, its purpose is to bring people along, to—in the words of late-nineteenth-century Black feminists—“uplift the race” so that vulnerable members of the community will be able to attain the self- reliance and independence essential for resistance. (132) Various and diverse forms of social activism stem from and are sustained by the African American custom of community mothering. Community mothering, as Arlene Edwards explores it in her article “Community Mothering: The Relation- ship Between Mothering and the Community Work of Black Women,” has been expressed in activities and movements as varied as the Black Clubwomen and Civil Rights movements and black women’s work in the church. Drawing upon the research of Gilkes, Edwards elaborates: “In reporting on Black community workers, Gilkes found that these women often ‘viewed the Black Community as a group of relatives and other friends whose interest should be advanced, and pro- moted at all times, under all conditions, and by almost any means’” (88). Bernard and Bernard theorize black women’s work as educators as a form of social activism. “Education,” they argue, “is considered a cornerstone of Black com- munity development, and as such Black women, as community othermothers, have placed a high value on education and have used it as a site for activism” (68). Academic mothers, they continue, “also value education, and use their location to facilitate the education of others. [As well] academic othermothers who oper- ate within an Africentric framework, are change agents who promote student empowerment and transformation” (68). They go on to elaborate: Collins’ definition of othermothers extends to the work we do in the acad- emy. Othermothering in the community is the foundation of what Collins calls the “mothering the mind” relationships that often developed between African American women teachers and their Black female and male stu- dents. We refer to this as mothering in the academy, and see it as work that extends beyond traditional definitions of mentorship. It is a sharing of self, an interactive and collective process, a spiritual connectedness that epito- mizes the Africentric values of sharing, caring and accountability. (68) Collins argues that this construction of mothering as social activism empowers black women because motherhood operates, in her words, as “a sym- bol of power.” “A substantial portion of Black women’s status in African-American communities,” writes Collins, “stems not only from their roles as mothers in their own families but from their contributions as community othermothers to Black community development as well” (51). “More than a personal act,” write Bernard and Bernard (1998), “Black motherhood is very political. Black mothers and grandmothers are considered the ‘guardians of the generations.’ Black mothers have historically been charged with the responsibility of provid- ing education, social, and political awareness, in addition to unconditional love, nurturance, socialization, and values to their children, and the children in their communities” (47). Black motherhood, as Jenkins concluded, “is a site where [black women] can develop a belief in their own empowerment. Black women can see motherhood as providing a base for self-actualization, for acquiring sta- tus in the Black community and as a catalyst for social activism” (Abbey and O’Reilly 1998: 206).

#### The home is a site of political resistances where Black children and children of color can learn to challenge and defy racist practices.

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The fourth way that African American mothering differs from the dominant model is the way in which nurturance of family is defined and experienced as a resistance. In African American culture, as theorist bell hooks has observed, the black family, or what she terms homeplace, operates as a site of resistance. She explains: Historically, African-American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack), had a radical political dimension. Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one’s homeplace was one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist. Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where one could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation, where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied to us on the outside in the public world. (1990: 42) Hooks emphasizes that when she talks about homeplace she is not speaking merely of black women providing services for their families; rather, she refers to the creation of a safe place where, in her words, “black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domina- tion . . . [a place where] [they] had the opportunity to grow and develop, to nur- ture [their] spirits” (42).5 In a racist culture that deems black children inferior, unworthy, and unlovable, maternal love of black children is an act of resistance; in loving her children the mother instills in them a loved sense of self and high self-esteem, enabling them to defy and subvert racist discourses that naturalize racial inferiority and commodify blacks as other and object. African Americans, hooks emphasizes, “have long recognized the subversive value of homeplace and homeplace has always been central to the liberation struggle” (42). Like hooks, Collins maintains that children learn at home how to identify and challenge racist practices and it is at home that children learn of their heritage and com- munity. At home they are empowered to resist racism, particularly as it becomes internalized. Collins elaborates: Racial ethnic women’s motherwork reflects the tensions inherent in trying to foster a meaningful racial identity in children within a society that den- igrates people of color. . . . [Racial ethnic] children must first be taught to survive in systems that oppress them. Moreover, this survival must not come at the expense of self-esteem. Thus, a dialectal relationship exists between systems of racial oppression designed to strip a subordinated group of a sense of personal identity and a sense of collective peoplehood, and the cultures of resistance extant in various ethnic groups that resist the oppres- sion. For women of color, motherwork for identity occurs at this critical juncture. (1994: 57) The empowerment of minority children through resistance and knowledge occurs at home and in the larger cultural space through the communal mothering and social activism spoken of earlier. This view of mothering differs radically from the dominant discourse of motherhood that configures home as politically neutral space and views nurturance as no more than the natural calling of mothers.

#### As opposed to Western conceptions of motherhood as a patriarchal institution, black conceptions of maternal identity paint it as a site of power for black women.

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The above five themes provide the foundation for Morrison’s theory of mother- hood as a site of power for black women and motherwork as concerned with the empowerment of children. Building upon the traditions of matrifocality, cultural bearing, social activism, providing a home place, and othermothering discussed above, Morrison defines motherhood, and in particular maternal identity, as a site of agency and authority for black women. More specifically these practices and beliefs in Morrison become elaborated and refined as particular characteris- tics, which she calls the ancient properties and the funk, that together make motherhood a site of power for black women. In an interview with Bill Moyers (1989), Morrison describes motherhood as the most liberating thing that ever happened to me. . . . Liberating because the demands that children make are not the demands of a normal “other.” The children’s demands on me were things that nobody ever asked me to do. To be a good manager. To have a sense of humor. To deliver something that somebody could use. And they were not interested in all the things that other people were interested in, like what I was wearing or if I were sensual. All that went by. You’ve seen the eyes of your children. They don’t want to hear it. They want to know what you are going to do now—today. Some- how all of the baggage that I had accumulated as a person about what was valuable just fell away. I could not only be me—whatever that was—but somebody actually needed me to be that. It’s different from being a daugh- ter. It’s different from being a sister. If you listen to your children and look at them, they make demands that you can live up to. They don’t need all that overwhelming love either. I mean, that’s just you being vain about it. If you listen to them, somehow you are able to free yourself from baggage and motherhood and vanity and all sorts of things, and deliver a better self, one that you like. The person that was in me that I liked best was the one my children seemed to want. Not the one that frowned when they walked in the room and said “Pull your socks up.” Also, you could begin to see the world through their eyes again—which are your eyes. I found that extraordinary. (Taylor- Guthrie 1994: 270–71) In this statement Morrison defines mothering, in the words of Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey, and Meryle Mahrer Kaplan, “as a freeing, generative experi- ence” (2). Such a view, they emphasize, contrasts sharply with “the predominant image of the mother in white Western society [which assumes mothers are] ever- bountiful, ever-giving, self-sacrificing . . . not destroyed or overwhelmed by the demands of [their] child[ren]” (2–3).11 Motherhood in a Western context, as numerous Anglo-American feminist theorists on motherhood have pointed out, is organized as a patriarchal institution that is deeply oppressive to women. When white middle-class mothers write about motherhood, as Elizabeth John- son explains, “they write about their own struggles for identity in the institution of motherhood” (33). Morrison, in contrast, states that motherhood liberated her and gave her a “better self.” Motherhood, for Morrison, is a site of libera- tion and self-realization, because her standpoint on motherhood is developed from black women’s everyday practices and meaning of motherhood wherein motherhood is a site of power for black women. More specifically, Morrison takes traditional conceptions of black womanhood—what Morrison terms “the ancient properties”—and traditional black values—what she calls the funk— and makes them central to her definition of motherhood as a site of power for black women. Black women, Toni Morrison commented in an Essence interview with Judith Wilson (1981), [need to] pay . . . attention to the ancient properties—which for me means the ability to be “the ship” and the “safe harbor.” Our history as Black women is the history of women who could build a house and have some children and there was no problem. . . . What we have known is how to be complete human beings, so that we did not let education keep us from our nurturing abilities . . . [t]o lose that is to diminish ourselves unnecessarily. It is not a question, it’s not a conflict. You don’t have to give up anything. You choose your responsibilities. (Taylor-Guthrie 1994: 135) In a conversation with Gloria Naylor, Morrison elaborates further: [T]he point is that freedom is choosing your responsibility. . . . [It]’s choos- ing the ones you want. . . . A lady doctor has to be able to say, “I want to go home.” And the one at home has the right to say, “I want to go to med- ical school.” That’s all there is to that, but then the choices cause problems where there are no problems because “either/or” seems to set up the con- flict, first in the language and then in life. . . . I tried hard to be both the

#### Queer black feminism takes an intersectional lens to the politicization of pleasure and helps relieve the oppression that happens within earlier feminist circles.

Harris 96 (Harris, Laura Alexandra. “Queer Black Feminism: The Pleasure Principle.” Feminist Review, no. 54, 1996, pp. 3–30. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1395608.)

What are the purposes in this queer black feminism being claimed out of creating a sexual politics of pleasure? Abstractly, the answer is a cultural analysis and reclamation of queer black female sexualities: sexualities that have had a long history of being denied pleasure. But this queer black feminism may seem to be consumed by sexuality while other issues are laid by the wayside. What about equality of wages, opportu- nity, and rights? I will risk arguing that the feminization of poverty is an issue of the right of women to define their own pleasure as much as it is an issue of wage earnings precisely because it is the same body being sub- jected to service and circumspection, because one type of oppression inheres the other. When public discourse and legal legislation define single black mothers receiving public aid as sexually immoral and irre- sponsible in order to enforce the use of birth control technology and even sterilization as a condition of their public aid, then sexual agency is clearly at stake. Queer black feminism can best be understood to take up sexuality in ways that make it simultaneously about race, class, and I gender- in ways that politicize pleasure - not just personalize it as a politics of being. The constituency for queer black feminism may alter daily, may be organized differently around class or race, and may carry agendas from welfare activism to academic cultural analysis. It should exhibit the methods for a changing agenda by changing the concept of the feminist body and its pleasure and its history. Queer black feminism's attention to pleasure will not be viable for all feminist agendas. But queer black feminism understands pleasure and sexuality as bodies seeking rights and wages in a way earlier feminism was unable to do: in a way that does not require a conformity to 'ideal' models of gender and pleasure in order to demand political rights. Queer black feminism does not extract one type of identity from the other by containing and silencing markers of identity within boundaries of gender. The category of woman has been sexualized precisely by mark- °m ings of class and race, and inner-circle feminist oppression has occurred precisely by attempting to eliminate these markings with gender. Hence, straight women who understand the liberty to fuck as emancipation might have found feminism more accessible if their desires had been recognized. Black lesbians might have found it more accessible if raced 3 and classed constructions of sexuality had informed the theories. Since this resulted in an area of contention for mainstream feminisms, queer black feminisms can now take the opportunity of historically locating, analysing, and redrawing the bodies at stake.

#### Black women authors are able to use the oppositional gaze to trouble the strict binaries in Western society through speculative fiction.

Brooks 11 (Brooks, Kinitra. "Finding the Humanity in Horror: Black Women’s Sexual Identity in Fighting the Supernatural." Poroi 7, Iss. 2 (2011): Article 7. https://doi.org/10.13008/2151-2957.1098)

In her article, “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators” bell hooks posits the existence of an oppositional gaze possessed by black women in the realm of film theory. This theory is in contrast to the filmic theory of the white male gaze, which aggressively penetrates the image of the passive white female upon the screen. hooks insists that black women have much to offer film theory for they occupy a unique position, neither possessing the penetrative power of the phallic gaze nor the passivity allowed the construction of white womanhood, their gaze may exist as oppositional to both constructions (hooks 57). Yet, I suggest that this oppositional gaze has the ability to go far beyond the realm of film. Black women writers, popularized in their literary Renaissance of the 70s and 80s, have occupied this oppositional gaze within the written format. The writers that most pique my critical interests, Tananarive Due and L.A. Banks, continue this tradition of the oppositional gaze within speculative horror fiction. Speculative fiction operates as a catchall term for science fiction and fantasy fiction that includes such themes as horror, supernatural, apocalyptic, and dystopian/utopian fiction. These texts privilege the reclamation of the black woman’s body. The black female body in these books demonstrates a power that allows for personal explorations of pleasure and pain and the possibilities for socio-political change within the black community. For Octavia Butler insists that “science fiction is not about the problems of the world, but also about solving the problems of the world (Pough ix).3 These women are staring back at the genre of vampire fiction through the medium of print. They are talking back and changing their own reality with the agency of words in a surreal world. In this piece, I wish to further Gwendolyn Pough’s exploration articulated in the groundbreaking issue of FEMSPEC focused on black women’s speculative writing. I posit that Banks and Due “rewrite, re-visit and re-envision history in ways that connect them to black women’s legacies of struggle” (Pough and Hood). L.A. Banks has created a speculative world of vampires, slayers, shifters, angels and demons in her twelve-volume Vampire Huntress Legend series. The novels center on the protagonist Damali Richards, a spoken word artist and Millenium Neteru (Banks’ term for the divinely chosen vampire hunter) and her boyfriend/lover/vampire antagonist/divine partner Carlos Rivera. Tananarive Due pushes the boundaries of Christianity, blood cults, and goddess worship in her African Immortals series. The trilogy examines the adventures of Jessica Jacobs-Wolde and her husband, the Immortal, Davit (or David) Wolde, and their daughter, the goddess-like, Fana. Pough believes that “Black women have been writing speculative visions of the world for some time. Black women have in a sense always had to speculate and envision other ways of being, other ways the world can be” (Pough 165). I contend that Tananarive Due and L.A. Banks rewrite and revamp history by focusing on black women’s bodies as sites of reality-changing power, and that their characters occupy multiple positions as complexly constructed lovers, and as both protector and protected. Speculative fiction allows Banks and Due to explore the complexities of their female protagonists in a lengthy format, a series of written novels. Ultimately, these authors employ the oppositional gaze in order to articulate the complexities of black women by constructing their characters in fantastical speculative worlds. The journeys of Damali Richards and Jessica JacobsWolde privilege the idea that their personal growth as individual women and work as community leaders stand as an example of the struggle to achieve balance. Both women serve their communities without sacrificing their own agency and individual worth. Banks and Due illustrate how the growth of the personal self aids the political, for it is only when their characters come into their own as women/sisters/daughters/wives/mothers/lovers that make up their multi-faceted identities that they truly begin to aid the community at large. This is a direct assault on the stereotypical, harmful, and reductionist stereotype of the strongblackwoman who sacrifices their personal self and their vulnerability for the gain of the black community (Morgan). What remains dynamic about this literature is that these women are re-writing the often fossilized genre of vampire fiction, a genre that revels in that which is dead, rotten, and abject (Hutchings). Yet, this reimagining of the vampire lore makes a specific sort of sense. The realm of horror often blurs the binaries that define Western culture, those between living/dead, good/evil, natural/supernatural, normal/ abnormal sexual desire, and masculine/feminine (Creed; Clover). No figure of horror embodies this blurring of the lines like the vampire. The vampire is a living corpse who subsists off of the religiously loaded elixir of blood whose desirability factor ameliorates the socially taboo act of necrophilia. Black women writers of the horror fiction genre seize the opportunity to continue to act as shifting signifiers who worry the lines Western society has used to contain their images (Wall; Boyce-Davies).

#### Looking is political – black people possess in oppositional gaze that is in resistance to white people’s attempts to keep them from looking.

Hooks 15 (Hooks, Bell. Black Looks: Race and Representation. New York: Routledge, 2015. Print. <https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/pg/masters/modules/femlit/bell_hooks.pdf>>.)

When thinking about black female spectators, I remember being punished as a child for staring, for those hard intense direct looks children would give grown-ups, looks that were seen as confrontational, as gestures of resistance, challenges to authority. The “gaze” has always been political in my life. Imagine the terror felt by the child who has come to understand through repeated punishments that one’s gaze can be dangerous. The child who has learned so well to look the other way when necessary. Yet, when punished, the child is told by parents, “Look at me when I talk to you.” Only, the child is afraid to look. Afraid to look, but fascinated by the gaze. There is power in looking. Amazed the first time I read in history classes that white slaveowners (men, women and children) punished enslaved black people for looking, I wondered how this traumatic relationships to the gaze had informed black parenting and black spectatorship. The politics of slavery, of racialized power relations, were such that the slaves were denied their right to gaze. Connecting this strategy of domination to that used by grown folks in southern black rural communities where I grew up, I was pained to think that there was no absolute difference between whites who had oppressed black people and ourselves. Years later, reading Michel Foucault, I thought again about these connections, about the ways power as domination reproduces itself in different locations employing similar apparatuses, strategies, and mechanisms of control. Since I knew as a child that the dominating power adults exercised over me and over my gaze was never so absolute that I did not dare to look, to sneak a peep, to stare dangerously, I knew that the slaves had looked. That all the attempts to repress our/black peoples’ right to gaze had produced in us an overwhelming longing to look, a rebellious desire, an oppositional gaze. By courageously looking, we defiantly declared: “Not only will I stare. I want my look to change reality.” Even in the worse circumstances of domination, the ability to manipulate one’s gaze in the face of structures of domination that would contain it, opens up the possibility of agency. In much of this work, Michel Foucault insists on describing domination in terms of “relations of power” as part of an effort to challenge the assumption that “power is a system of domination which controls everything and which leaves no room for freedom.” Emphatically stating that in all relationships of power “there is necessarily the possibility of resistance,” he invites the critical thinker to search those margins, gaps, and locations on and through the body where agency can be found. Stuart Hall calls for recognition of our agency as black spectators in his essay “Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation.” Speaking against the construction of white representations of blackness as totalizing, Hall says of white presence: “The error is not to conceptualize this ‘presence’ in terms of power, but to locate that power as wholly external to us—as extrinsic force, who influence can be thrown off like the serpent sheds its skin. What Franz Fanon reminds us, I *Black Skin, White Masks,* is how power is inside as well as outside: “…the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the Other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together again by another self. This “look,” from—so to speak—the place of the Other, fixes us, not only in its violence, hostility and aggression, but in the ambivalence of its desire. Spaces of agency exist for black people, wherein we can both interrogate the gaze of the Other but also look back, and at one another, named what we see. The “gaze” has been and is a sit of resistance for colonized black people globally. Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that “looks” to document, one that is oppositional. In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating “awareness” politicizes “looking” relations—one learns to look a certain way in order to resist. When most black people in the United States first had the opportunity to look at film and television, they did so fully aware that mass media was a system of knowledge and power reproducing and maintaining white supremacy. To stare at the television, or mainstream movies, to engage its images, was to engage its negation of black representation. It was the oppositional black gaze that responded to these looking relations by developing independent black cinema. Black viewers of mainstream cinema and television could chart the progress of political movements for racial equality *via* the construction of images, and did so. Within my family’s southern black working-class home, located in a racially segregated neighborhood, watching television was one way to develop critical spectatorship. Unless you went to work in the white world, across the tracks, you learned to look at white people by staring at them on the screen. Black looks, as they were constituted in the context of social movements for racial uplift, were interrogating gazes. We laughed at television shows like *Our Gang* and *Amos ‘n’ Andy*, at these white representations of blackness, but we also looked at them critically. Before racial integration, black viewers of movies and televisions experienced visual pleasure in a context where looking was also about contestation and confrontation.

#### Mother as a cultural carrier.

O’Reilly 04 (O'Reilly, Andrea, writer on women's issues and currently a Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University. Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart. N.p.: State U of New York, 2004. Print.)

The motherline, the fifth and final theme, considers the role black mothers play as cultural bearers and tradition keepers. Anglo-American feminist writer Naomi Lowinsky, author of The Motherline: Every Woman’s Journey to Find her Female Roots (1992), defines the motherline: When a woman today comes to understand her life story as a story from the Motherline, she gains female authority in a number of ways. First, her Motherline grounds her in her feminine nature as she struggles with the many options now open to women. Second, she reclaims carnal knowledge of her own body, its blood mysteries and their power. Third, as she makes the journey back to her female roots, she will encounter ancestors who strug- gled with similar difficulties in different historical times. This provides her with a life-cycle perspective that softens her immediate situation. . . . Fourth, she uncovers her connection to the archetypal mother and to the wisdom of the ancient worldview, which holds that body and soul are one and all life is interconnected. And, finally, she reclaims her female perspective, from which to consider how men are similar and how they are different. (13) Writing about Lowinsky’s motherline in her book Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss (1994), Hope Edelman emphasizes that “Motherline stories ground a . . . daughter in a gender, a family, and a feminine history. They transform the experience of her female ancestors into maps she can refer to for warning or encouragement” (201). Motherline stories, made available to daughters through the female oral tradition, unite mothers and daughters and connect them to their motherline. Naomi Lowinsky argues that many women today are disconnected from their motherline and have lost, as a consequence, the authenticity and authority of their womanhood. For Lowinsky, female empowerment becomes possible only in and through reconnecting to the motherline. In African American society the motherline represents the ancestral memory, traditional values of African American culture. Black mothers pass on the teach- ings of the motherline to each successive generation through the maternal func- tion of cultural bearing. Various African American writers argue that the very sur- vival of African Americans depends upon the preservation of black culture and history. If black children are to survive they must know the stories, legends, and myths of their ancestors. In African American culture, women are the keepers of the tradition: they are the culture bearers who mentor and model the African American values essential the empowerment of black children and culture. “Black women,” Karla Holloway continues, “carry the voice of the mother—they are the progenitors, the assurance of the line . . . as carriers of the voice [black women] carry wisdom—mother wit. They teach the children to survive and remember” (1987: 123). Black mothers, as Bernard and Bernard conclude, “pass on the torch to their daughters, who are expected to become the next generation of mothers, grandmothers, or othermothers, to guard future generations” (47). The above five themes demonstrate that mothers and motherhood are val- ued by and regarded as central to African American culture; as well mothers and mothering are recognized as that which makes possible the physical and psycho- logical well-being and empowerment of African American people and the larger African American culture. The following section will detail how the centrality and significance of black motherhood gives rise to the empowerment of daugh- ters. Black women, in connection with powerful mothers, become empowered as daughters. “I come from / a long line of / Uppity Irate Black Women” begins Kate Rushin’s poem, “Family Tree.” “And [when] you ask me how come / I think I’m so cute,” Kate Rushin replies, “I cultivate / Being uppity, / It’s something / My Gramon taught me” (Bell-Scott 1993: 176–77).

#### Speech by a black woman transcribed in the form of poetry.

Rocha 14 (Rocha, Luciane De Oliveira, doctor of Philosophy. "OUTRAGED MOTHERING:." The University of Texas at Austin, Aug. 2014. Web. 6 July 2017. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/25886/ROCHA-DISSERTATION-2014%5b1%5d.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.)

Scholar D. Soyini Madison (1993) suggests that Black women’s speeches need to be transcribed as poetry, with an indication of when they raise their voices, talk fast or slow, speak up or low. Here I accept the challenge and present Marcia’s speech in a way that her emotions and outrage are revealed also in the written form. In that sense, the italicized words between parentheses indicate body language, and the bold words indicate 283 when she raises her tone in a speech that already has a high tone. Similar to the lyrics of Strange Fruit, her speech, her song, “is about hate, indignities, and eruptions of violence that threatened Black people” (Davies, 1998, p. 182). She sang,

I found out their names,

I found out the number placards of their cars, (as if counting with her fingers)

even the information about the lieutenant who was there at the time killing my

son...

all with my fighting,

crying and thinking, ‘I gotta do something.’

And not knowing

the physical location where my son was shot,

nor what they had planted on him.

I knew nothing.

I only had one certainty:

that something bad had happened and that my son was not a criminal. Not to say

that the villain must die.

If they did not exchange shots [with the police], they have to be arrested.

At the moment they commit crimes, they are equal to bandits. To me they are also

bandits.

They only are on opposite sides. [They] are uniformed and are representatives of

the state and should represent us.

They are also bandits.

If I did not do what I did ... (looking up as if wondering)

Honestly…

Even with that pain that I have today

anything would have happened.

If today I do, it is that other mothers have courage. I was not only a mother who

put a child in the world.

It was a terrible pain to put my son in the world.

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I raised my son without ever having benefits from the state, (lowering her upper

body forward)

but I paid for the bullet that killed my son.

We paid.

That bullet that took the life of my boy, who would be 25 years old today (shaking

her head left and right, as if to say no).

I wonder why these monsters ... (putting her right hand in her forehead)

[they] were nine police officers (keep moving right hand up and down)

against a 16 year old boy with a set of keys in hand.

He was raised in Minas Gerais, a silly boy, quiet. Why did they do that?

To show to the [drug] traffickers who is the boss of the community?

Because trafficking did not pay the arrego [bribe]?

What does my son’s life have to do with this brigandage? With the agreement that

they have with the traffic? Why did my son, or any other innocent, have to do with

it?

I asked the prosecutor why they did it; he replied that it is because they are

monsters.

They do not know the pain they caused in my soul for the rest of my life (Hitting

her right hand three times to her chest).

And they still have the right to be free?

If my son had stolen a mobile phone, a sausage, he would be arrested.

If I had to appeal, I would appeal with him arrested.

They took a life, and they had the right to lie? (Crying)

They all fell into contradiction.

I do not believe that police investigate police.

And the judiciary was similarly silent when, in 2008, they did not condemn Marcos

and did not put him in jail.

10 years after [the death of Hanry] how many other people has he killed?

10 years later, I’m here again.

9 years and 5 months after the death of my son.

The lives of young people that are there in the community are not worth anything.

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Most of them [the police officers involved in the case] have a criminal record.

(At this point, the camera zooms in only showing her face to show her tears, as if

this was the only way to show her emotion)

The lieutenant who killed my son keeps going up in the hills [favelas] and

committing atrocities, why? Because the bomb explodes on minors [the officers

below in the hierarchy]. If it was not them [who killed Hanry], they should

denounce them [the real killers]. Sometimes people on the Internet criticize me

saying ‘how do you know that these were the two that killed your son if you said

there were 9 in the operation?’ They said who it was. They were there.

[They] were nine, one shot, my son was shot dead at close range to the heart. So

they talk to who it was, because I would not assume [the crime]. If the lieutenant

would have ordered me to kill, I wouldn’t, much less assume the guilt. If the

sergeant killed, let them speak. Silence is consent. If they assumed [the

responsibility], they will have to stay in jail even. The state is appealing to my

claim [for reparation].

Do you know why the state is appealing? (Drying her tears) Because I should have

requested a pension [as a reparation to her loss] before 3 years after the death and I

entered one close to 5 years. They have no basis for appeal.

By federal law, I have a five-year [deadline to request a pension].

(Talking very loudly, in despair) I would not go because I thought I would live the

blood of my son. I did not sell my child to the state, I never asked for anything from

the state. I did not want compensation; I wanted my son here.

Today he would be 25 years [old].

I raised my son,

I loved,

I was a fully responsible mother.

I knew very well the steps of my son and who he was. And the state will tell me

that he was a drug dealer and did not know that these two [police officers] were

criminals? (Yelling) The department of public safety did not know these two were

criminals? (Yelling) One is accounting for 157 [the federal penal code to thievery]

and sentenced!

The other for homicide! And the judiciary ... (putting her fingers together

questioning the lack of the condemnation)

and the dealer was my son? (putting her hand on the chest in the direction of her

heart)

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I do not accept that, (drying her tears)

I do not accept.

I do not accept it!

#### The Black mother’s womb is always a cite of death

**Sexton 15** (Jared, is associate professor and director of African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, 2015, “Unberable Blackness” pages 169-175)

To approach the matter of Ferguson through the conceptual lens of reproductive justice and to understand it more generally as a question of black feminist politics not only draws attention to the fact that black women and girls *also* suffer the forms of state-sanctioned violence typi- cally associated with black men and boys—that is, they are killed directly by police officers, security guards, and vigilantes. It also holds in place the understanding that every time these same forces kill black men and boys they are *also* victimizing, directly and indirectly, those black women and girls who raise and care for them. One of the overarching advan- tages of this critical perspective is its ability to shift away from a narrow emphasis on the attack on black masculine empowerment—what used to be called “manhood rights”—to a far more expansive formulation of assault on black reproductive freedom. What might it mean to stand on its head the patriarchal assumption that black women’s suffering is a disgrace to black men and rethink the gendered violence against black men as a component of gendered violence against black women? This violence, properly understood, encompasses the broad capacity of black people to reproduce *as a people,* including the freedom from structural violence that might constitute conditions of livability, but it is aimed most precisely at the nullification of black female sexual auton- omy—“the right to have children, not have children, and to parent the children we have in safe and healthy environments” (McClain). On that score, many will recall that in the 2004 U.S. presidential elec- tion season, President George W. Bush signaled his pro-life voter base during a televised debate with Senator John Kerry when he offered that the principle criterion for selection of Supreme Court justice nom- inees should be “the *Dred Scott* case, which is where judges years ago said that the Constitution allowed slavery because of personal prop- erty rights. That’s personal opinion. That’s not what the Constitution says. The Constitution of the United States says we’re all—you know, it doesn’t say that. It doesn’t speak to the equality of America. And so I would pick people that would be strict constructionists.”10 Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Paul Greenberg writes, more clearly, that, for this generation, “our own Roger Taney,” chief justice of the United States Supreme Court in 1857, is Justice Harry Blackmun, “author of [the majority opinion in the 1973 case] *Roe v. Wade*, the *Dred Scott* decision of our time.” As these examples indicate, the contemporary pro-life movement claims *Dred Scott v. Sanford* as its legal and political touch- stone, through which it mines a metaphorical lode in attempts to gen- erate what historian Milton Sernett calls “public ethics by similitude” (461). In his examination of the “loop-back” tactic that draws a reac- tionary political movement as a parallel to or extension of “the whole Black freedom and civil rights struggle,” Sernett argues: In retrospect, the campaign for Black freedom appears as an untarnished good, and the names of such evangelical zealots as Wilberforce, Woolman, and Weld echo down the corridors of history. In retrospect, the abolition- ist impulse, which fostered tactics of moral suasion and political action, is seen as having opposed a moral blight gravely threatening to the high- est Christian ideals and the social and moral order which was to be mod- eled on them. (474) We might debate the idea that “in retrospect, the campaign for Black freedom appears as an untarnished good” to all concerned parties, but it does seem clear that the pro-life movement—like so many other post– civil rights campaigns left, right and center—is attempting rhetorically to establish “Black freedom” as “an untarnished good” insofar as their identification with or citation of such an ideal might afford the moral high ground. But when applied with some rigor, the analogy between the denial of legal personhood to the fetus and the denial of legal person- hood to the slave, alongside the identification of the pro-life movement “with the moral forces generated by the social and political revolution of . . . the whole Black freedom struggle,” produces a number of per- verse effects. Taken at its most basic, the analogy of the fetus and the slave recasts the womb as a slave estate and the state of fetal development as a condition of servitude or, better, a state of captivity—fetal space is transmogrified into fatal space as the pro-life movement reveals its hostility not simply to abortion, but to pregnancy per se. It is on the basis of this misunderstanding that the Reverend Clenard Childress (2011), founder of the New Jersey–based Black Genocide Project, can transpose the conventional pro-life message for a presumptively black audience: “The most dangerous place for an African American to be is in the womb of their African American mother.”11 On first blush, the right to life for the fetus is conflated in this discourse with the right to liberty of the slave. However, to maintain consistency, or allow for mutual contamination, we must see that both rights would apply in both cases, such that the right to liberty for the fetus unfolds as a mat- ter of *escape*, a liberty for infants with a fugitive status that will charac- terize their duration of residence in the free territory of the postnatal world—birth canal as Underground Railroad. The more radical pros- pects of the cessation of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery in this event would entail the total destruction of female reproductive capacities, sterilization performed by political obstetricians in the very place otherwise idealized and defended as the origin of life. In fact, the abolition of fetal slavery, as it were, would be secured only by the transcendence of sexual difference altogether. If we reverse the direction of the metaphoric transfer, things become even more peculiar. The slave estate in its turn becomes a nurturing, presumptively white womb wherein the civilizing mission is incorpo- rated into the innermost membrane, or intima, of the uterine lining. Racial blackness as the sine qua none of enslavement is devolved into a form of prenatal animation—“stuff floating,” as one advocate terms it, in amniotic fluid somewhere between the embryonic and the fetal, between swelling and sucking, “a terrifying excess which, although it negates what we understand as ‘humanity,’ is inherent to being-human” (Badiou and iek, 82). Yet because the proslavery arguments of a Jus- tice Taney would assert not only the perpetual servitude of the slave but also the perpetuity of the slave estate, the resultantly interminable pregnancy blurs the line between the womb and the tomb, deranges the space and temporality of birth and death, and produces an unviable gestation that never comes to term. It produces, in a word, an *unbearable blackness*. Emancipation in this schema could only take the form of vio- lent intervention, a caesarian birth, so named from the ancient Roman *Lex Caesarea* permitting the procedure for the sake of preserving the life of a royal child against complications fatal to the mother. For the slave power, the inevitably pre-term delivery of immaculately conceived interracial issue could only result in infant mortality (aka “the extinc- tion thesis”) or adoption (aka “the repatriation thesis”).12 In this scenario, then, sexual reproduction is not transcended; it is suspended indefinitely. But whereas the authors of this analogy declare prenatal blackness to be unbearable because it is *unable* to leave the womb, the crossracial identification of a presumptively white pro-life activist inhabits the figural space of the unborn because it is *unwilling* to leave the womb. That is to say, a political initiative that in every respect betrays pro- found negrophobia turns out to be, at its most vulnerable and most strident moment, beholden to a repressed *desire to be black*, to be that indeterminate “stuff floating,” sustained by a ubiquitous and omnip- otent force whose enveloping presence is directly sensed. The refusal thus lodges itself in a fantasy of *prenatal nonmortality*, a form of animate existence impervious to what Jacques Lacan (1998) alluded to as a cas- tration *prior* to sexual difference; this is a hallucinatory projection of the primordial, elemental, undifferentiated vita that blacks, in the rac- ist imagination, are supposed to enjoy. If, in her *Life as Surplus,* Melinda Cooper is correct in suggesting that dominant symbolic activity figures America as “the unborn born again” (152), then her analysis of the coalition of the institutions of finance capital, science and technology, and the religious right must be augmented to account for the darkness at the heart of this “lust for unalloyed life . . . a death drive that wishes death away” (Eigen, 81). And if the dehumanizing conditions of enslave- ment are defined, in part, by “the end of traceable beginnings” (Brand 2001, 5), then the political fantasy of a nondescript unborn sensuous *thing* is no less inhuman. Pro-life advocates, much like their proslav- ery progenitors, accuse the opposition of the “alienation of (natural) affections”—whether among members of the white race generally or between mother and child specifically—but their archaic minstrel dream fixates on a force greater than the putative threats of a desire that is wayward (i.e., miscegenation) or unfruitful (i.e., abortion). The true preoccupation of the pro-life movement, its central object of dread and fascination, is the total *cancellation* of desire and, hence, the elimination of pleasure and pain, by an uninterrupted enjoyment. In a provocative essay on the relationship between photography and lynching in his book *On Black Men* (2000), Marriott describes the production of racial blackness in the white imagination as an “afflicted,” “fatal way of being alive”: a figure reduced through captivity and mutilation to something that “don’t look human.” In the current con- juncture, as the violence of an authentic upheaval now turns in the void and the floating stuff of reactionary dreams is backlit by the diag- nostic imaging of the three-dimensional sonogram, racial blackness reappears as an affected, fetal way of being alive, both unborn and undead: blackness unbearable and unburiable. In his later text *Haunted Life* (2007), Marriott, in a rather direct line of thought, maintains: Blackness has become a right to death that sees in death its most essential property. The essence of blackness, its origin or its possibility, would be this right to death; but a death denuded of that . . . sovereignty that gains from death its own sacrificial mastery . . . and maintains itself in it. This is life as the work of death, a work born of fidelity to death, but death without transcendence. (226) The pursuit of this right to death—which is not to be confused with a right or a willingness or even a wish to *die*—poses an ethical question, posed most famously by Fanon, about whether “this death, which tes- tifies to a lawless violence almost beyond representation, can be re- deemed, in turn, by black revolutionary violence” (230–31), a violence set loose by nothing less than an affirmation of a tear in the world itself. And so I offer in closing one last contribution from Ricks, a fable about a day in the life of an Africanized honeybee. I preface it with a para- graph from the *Wikipedia* entry about the notorious species: Africanized honey bees, known colloquially as “killer bees,” are some hybrid varieties of the Western honeybee species, (*Apis mellifera*), produced originally by cross-breeding of the African honey bee *A. m. scutellata*, with various European honeybees such as the Italian bee *A. m. ligustica* and the Iberian bee *A. m. iberiensis*. The hybrid bees are far more aggressive than any of the various European subspecies. Small swarms of African- ized bees are capable of taking over European honeybee hives by invad- ing the hive and establishing their own queen. She swung at me with her open left hand. I had been deeply ensconced in my work—as workers must be—and I didn’t execute quickly enough. She grazed me with her pinky, and I felt the crushing pain of a broken wing as I spun a corkscrew across the back corner of the kitchen and rico- cheted off of a rare, intact portion of the torn screen through which I had grown accustomed to entering. When I touched a pulsating, translucent strand of hair that had emerged prematurely (and unattractively) from her 27-year-old chin, she hissed through her nostrils and twitched in her smug chauvinism at the merest hint of cross-species contact, causing me to slip and land with a thump near the wrist of her resting forearm. It all took me by surprise. I had harassed many humans. None but those temporary squatters had dared take a swing at me in all my days— and certainly no one with such good hand-eye coordination had lived in this old bungalow since the days of the Originals. And so I had not been accustomed to landing so hard. In the course of my twenty-three-day life as a worker, I had always been able to land with careful grace, where and when would best please the Queen. And I had avoided these kinds of Wghts with the same grace. But this human was different. She appeared to feel a deep sense of entitlement to this space, our space. And since our concerns could not be reconciled with hers, we couldn’t coexist here, and I surmised that she must be possessed of a pas- sionately felt will to annihilate all my kind. Against this I would be *abso- lutely powerless*. And I faced the terrifying reality that I could not reason with her. It was all going to end here at the terminus of her slender, auburn-freckled arm. I felt all my days collapse into this moment and decided for the only Last Act of Glory afforded me. I plunged my barbed stinger into an open pore. The last thing I heard was a roar, probably an obscenity in some human language. To me, it was *Gospel Music.* I had wanted to die pretty much like this. Not old and full of weeks, and abandoned beneath some creeping vine where I had been compet- ing with those fucking hummingbirds for all eternity. And not from the disoriented starvation of that dreadful electromagnetic Weld near the cell phone tower. This was the way to go. Locked in struggle with an organ- ism that had directly threatened the hive. *For the Queen.* And so I shifted what remained of my weight forward and felt the sublime *jouissance* of self-evisceration just milliseconds before the Scream- ing One squished the only body I had ever known.

#### The slave ship marked a point of natal alienation where the relationship between mother and child was dangerously warped

**hooks 81** (bell, an American author, feminist, and social activist, 1981, *ain’t i a woman*, pages 18-20)

The nakedness of the African female served as a constant reminder of her sexual vulnerability was common method of torture slavers used to subdue recalcitrant black women. The threat of rape or other physical brutalization inspired terror in the psyches of displaced African females. Robert Shufeldt, an observer of the slave trade, documented the prevalence of rape on slave ships. He asserts, "In those days many a negress was landed upon our shored already impreg­ nated by someone of the demonic crew that brought her over.” Many African women were pregnant prior to their capture or purchase. They were forced to endure pregnancy without any care given to their diet, without any exercise, and without any assistance during the labor. In their own communities, African women had been accustomed to much pampering and care during pregnancy, so the barbaric nature of childbearing on the slave ship was both physically harmful and psychologically demoralizing. Annals of history record that the American slave ship Pongas carried 250 women, many of them pregnant, who were squeezed into a compartment of 16 by 18 feet. The women who survived the initial stages of pregnancy gave birth aboard ship with their bodies exposed to either the scorching sun or the freezing cold. The numbers of black women who died during childbirth or the number of stillborn children will never be known. Black women with children on board the slave ships were ridiculed, mocked, and treated contemptuously by the slaver crew. Often the slavers brutalized children to watch the anguish of their mothers. In their personal account of life aboard a slave ship, the Weldons recounted an incident in which a child of nine months was flogged continuously for refusing to eat. When beating failed to force the child to eat, the captain ordered that the child be placed feet first into a pot of boiling water. After trying other torturous methods with no success, the captain dropped the child and caused its death. Not deriving enough satisfaction from this sadistic act, he then commanded the mother to throw the body of the child over­ board. The mother refused but was beaten until she submitted. The traumatic experiences of African women and men aboard slave ships were only the initial stages of an indoctrina­ tion process that would transform the African free human being into a slave. An important part of the slaver’s job was to effectively transform the African personality aboard the ships so that it would be marketable as a "docile” slave in the American colonies. The prideful, arrogant, and independent spirit of the African people had to be broken so that they would conform to the white colonizer’s notion of proper slave demean- or. Crucial in the preparation of African people for the slave market was the destruction of human dignity, the removal of names and status, the dispersement of groups so that there would exist no common language, and the removal of any overt sign of an African heritage. The methods the slaver used to de-humanize African women and men were various tortures and punishments. A slave might be severely beaten for singing a sad song. When he deemed it necessary, the slaver would slaughter a slave so as to inspire terror in the enslaved on­ lookers. These methods of terrorization succeeded in forcing African people to regress. their awareness pf themselves as free people and to adopt the slave identity imposed upon them- Slavers recorded in their log-books that they were sadistically cruel to Africans aboard the slave ships as a way of "breaking them in” or "taming” them. African females received the brunt of this mass brutalization and terrorization not only because they could be victimized via their sexuality but also because they were more likely to work intimately with the white family than the black male. Since the slaver regarded the black woman as a marketable cook, wet nurse, housekeeper, it was crucial that she be so thoroughly terrorized that she would submit passively to the will of white master, mistress, and their children. In order to make his product saleable, the slaver had to ensure that no recalcitrant black female servant would poison a family, kill children, set fire to the house, or resist in any way. The only insurance he could provide was based on his ability to tame' the" slave. Undoubtedly, the slave ship experience had a tremendous psychological impact on the psyches of black women and men. So, horrific was the passage from Africa to America that only\_ those women and men who could maintain a will to live despite their oppressive conditions survived. White people who ob­ served the African slaves as they departed from the ships on American shores noted that they seemed to be happy and joyful. They thought that the happiness of the African slaves was due to their pleasure at having arrived in a Christian land. But the slaves were only expressing relief. They believed no fate that awaited them in the American colonies could be as horrific as the slave ship experience.

#### Black mothers and black lives matter

Smith 16 (Christen, Associate Professor of Cultural and Social Anthropology at University of Texas, 2016, “Sorrow as Artifact: Radical Black Mothering in Times of Terror—A Prologue”)

Detroit, Michigan, 2010, 7-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones fatally shot by officer Joseph Weekley as she lay sleeping on her grandmother's couch. Sanford, Florida, 2012, 17-year-old Trayvon Martin shot and killed by George Zimmerman as he walks, unarmed, in his own neighborhood. Staten Island, New York, 2014, Eric Garner strangled to death by police with an illegal chokehold at 44-year's old for trying to sell cigarettes. Ferguson, Missouri, 2014, 17-year-old Michael Brown shot dead by officer Darren Wilson.Cleveland, Ohio, 2014, 12-year-old Tamir Rice shot in a playground near his home by officers’ Timothy Loehmann and Frank Garmback for playing with a toy gun. Fairfax, Virginia, 2015, Natasha McKenna “violently restrained and tased with four 50,000-volt shocks that ultimately killed her” while in police custody inside the county jail at 37-years old.Charleston, South Carolina, 2015, Walter Scott, fifty year-old father of four chased, shot, and then killed by officer Michael Slager after being pulled him over for a broken taillight and running away from police.Baltimore, Maryland, 2015, 25-year-old Freddie Gray dies after his neck is severed eighty percent at the spine due to injuries sustained in the back of a police van on the way to booking.Waller County, Texas, 2015, Sandra Bland, a 28-year old arrested for failing to signal to change lanes, mysteriously dies by hanging in her cell.On Wednesday December 3, 2014, a Staten Island grand jury decided not to indict officer Daniel Pantaleo for killing Eric Garner in an illegal chokehold.[4](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12061/full#traa12061-note-0004) That same night hundreds of protestors took to the streets as a wave of grief swept the nation. These demonstrators chanted the phrase “I can't breathe,” the last words uttered by Garner seven times before he died. Lying down in the streets #BlackLivesMatter demonstrators activated a symbolic protest that came to be known as “die-ins.” Staged around the country, die-in's blocked highways, and filled city-centers and conference hotel lobbies,[5](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12061/full#traa12061-note-0005) where demonstrators refused to be silent in the face of the obtuse absence of “justice” in the so-called “American justice system.” The morning after the non-indictment verdict, contributors to this special issue presented our panel, “Sorrow as Artifact: Radical Black Mothering in Times of Terror” at the 2014 American Anthropological Association annual meetings in Washington, DC. As we sat in the sterile conference rooms of the Marriott the mood was solemn and reflective. Temporarily “inside” of the “safe haven” of *the* conference/discipline (a false safety that is precarious if not utterly fantastical), we were still haunted by the grief of the “outside” world. Many of us were struck by the fortuity that our discussion was scheduled on this fateful day. Moved, we took a brief moment to acknowledge the socio-political tornado that was whirling outside and its relationship with our topic. All of us felt a collective need to make our panel a space of healing and reflection, and not just of scholarly interrogation. Many who attended the panel felt the same way. Multiple people broke down and cried during our paper presentations and discussion period.

As Black anthropologists implicated by the impunity of anti-Black state terror, our work is often about healing. For decades within African Diaspora anthropology, the question of transnational anti-Black violence and its relationship with the state has been a central epistemological concern (Harrison [**1991**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12061/full#traa12061-bib-0002)). Anthropologists note that the transnational experience of anti-Black violence not only dehumanizes Black people but also erases Black subjectivity. Within this context, the researching and archiving of violence are also a politics of survival and healing. This is particularly the case for Black feminist anthropologists who seek to demystify the intersectional politics of gendered racial oppression. In the discipline of anthropology Black women's precarity is palpable (Navarro et al. [**2013**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12061/full#traa12061-bib-0003); Bolles [**2013**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12061/full#traa12061-bib-0001)). Ours is a discipline that cannot rid itself of the ghosts of the indigenous peoples around the world who haunt its genocidal tendencies. Yet, while anthropology is both alienating and oppressive, in it we also find tools: the fragmented pieces and artifacts sitting around the Master's House[6](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12061/full#traa12061-note-0006) that allow us to piece together our transnational counter-stories living in the aftermath of the genesis of the Black Atlantic. This special issue is a collection of such counter-stories.

To think of sorrow as artifact is to consider the way that sorrow, as grief, as mourning, as longing, as suffering—is the residue, that is, the trace left behind in the wake of tragedy. As anthropologists, we typically think of artifacts as those cultural relics that we investigate from the past or present. They are things that people leave behind that leave clues as to who we are and what life means to us. Thus, to think of sorrow as artifact within the context of a discussion of Black mothering is to consider sorrow as something more than just an emotion of sentience; it is the aftermath of our social moment. Sorrow as artifact thus provides clues into what it means to mother as Black women in times of terror.

What are these times of terror? They are times when police officers gun down 12-year-old boys and 7-year-old girls, and no one is indicted or ever punished. We are living in the midst of a new Black political moment in the United States. The Black Lives Matter movement continues to rivet the nation as city after city erupts in protest over the mistreatment and killing of Black youth by the police. Black mothers have become an iconic symbol of the grief that punctuates this police terror. It is often the mothers of the dead who rally protestors to seek justice for their slain children. Yet the wave of political uprisings in the United States is not isolated. In places like Brazil (discussed in this special issue), Black people face a similar epidemic of police killings of Black youth and similarly protest this violence. Again, mothers are often at the forefront of the movement for justice, and the emblematic representations of grief. However, although Black mothers are often the symbolic faces of Black protests against state violence, radical Black mothering in times of terror expands far beyond these times and these places. This special issue reflects on the obvious and not-so-obvious implications of Black mothering in the midst of violence, addressing the mundane and the spectacular simultaneously.

“Sorrow as Artifact” therefore focuses on Black mothers’ experiences with the violent loss of a child in anti-Black violence. Black mothers (social and biological) throughout the diaspora are uniquely and deeply impacted by violence and terror. The process of losing a child is often overwhelming and too much to bear. Black women are forced to engage in a diverse range of political and social processes, while they attempt to cope and try to heal from their unspeakable pain. This collection of essays reflects on this politics of death and explores the methodological trials of researching black mothers’ experiences with violence, pain and terror in African diasporic contexts. Within a broader scope, it queries the epistemological understandings of sorrow as artifact and the often unspeakable space of suffering and grief that we must occupy in order to produce an ethics of solidarity with the people with whom we work. As part of this discussion, we critically engage with the role of archiving, recording, and relating ethnographic stories of grief and loss, and the implications of this work for anthropology at the height of a new Black political moment.

#### Black mothers existence in the wake of trauma

#### Smith 16 (Christen, Associate Professor of Cultural and Social Anthropology at University of Texas, 2016, “Facing the Dragon: Black Mothering, Sequelae, and Gendered Necropolitics in the Americas”)

**This brilliant poem penned by Cara Page**[**3**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12056/full#traa12056-note-0003) **captures the complexities of the sorrows, traumas and possibilities of Black mothering. It acknowledges and praises the ways in which we Black mothers become memorializers, movement makers, martyrs, missionaries, model citizens in the face of atrocities, and mourners. Page wrote the poem as a performance-tribute to critical Black feminist writer and activist Toni Cade Bambara.**[**4**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12056/full#traa12056-note-0004) **Among Bambara's many works is her book documenting the Atlanta murders of over 40 children:** *Those Bones Are Not My Child: A Novel* **(Bambara** [**2000**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12056/full#traa12056-bib-0002)**). *Those Bones* chronicles the gruesome murders between 1979 and 1981 of predominantly Black boys living in Atlanta.**[**5**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12056/full#traa12056-note-0005)

**To be sure Black mothering can be sorrowful when we lose our children but also just the** *threat* **of losing our children can precipitate an almost constant state of sorrow. We have been losing our children for centuries: through the slave trade, the plantation system, and as a result of infant mortality. We have lost our children as a consequence of the “war” on drugs, stop and frisk policies, and to the prison industrial complex. We lose our straight children, and our LGBTQ children. For instance, what of the mothers of the increasing number of trans women of color murdered in the U.S. (See NCAVP 2015; Kellaway** [**2015**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12056/full#traa12056-bib-0027)**)? What grief have they sustained, in part because there has been so little coverage of the murders? The frequency with which our children's lives are interrupted and lost, is almost normalized. That normalization may also be viewed as a form of violence. Our children's legibility often comes in the form of death; they are known in their afterlife. What a horror that the structural terrors they experience are frequently manipulated by the media and enumerated in studies positioning them as threats. What is often illegible but needs to be made legible is the trauma of Black motherhood and mothering; the trauma is wrapped tightly around our bodies but does nothing to keep us warm. Grieving, sorrow, and terror, as Page's poem suggests, produce various spaces for the creation of radical Black mothering. The papers in this special issue, originally presented on a panel at the 2014 AAA, contribute to the growing scholarship on Black motherhood, pointing out that it exists in contexts of unequal power relations, gender relations and racial hierarchies. As Black feminist scholars, the authors make race a category of analysis—because race, in the U.S. and in the Caribbean and Latin and South America, figures so prominently in nation making. Further, to focus on Black women is to focus on all people. For as the** [**Combahee River Collective**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12056/full#traa12056-bib-0010)**wrote in 1983:If Black women were free it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression.What these essays reveal is that Black motherhood and mothering cannot escape being a site of political struggle animated by the emotional labor of pain and terror. Is Black motherhood and mothering only to be understood in terms of terror? If that is so, it could be useful to craft this part of the conversation around** [**Mbembe's**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12056/full#traa12056-bib-0031) **discussion of necropolitics (2003), where the politics of life is mediated by the politics of death. The Black bodies of children are persistently killed—riddled with bullets, left bleeding in the street, or gasping for air—and reflect how Black people exist without the sanctity of being human. Following Mbembe's argument to a logical conclusion, there would be no need to have a conversation about the situation of Black people's death because one can really only engage in debate and discussion on humanity if the subject is human. That is one way to frame this discussion. However, the essays in this issue reveal another possibility; that radical Black mothering challenges the erasure of Black children and their exclusion from societal concern. Examples of Black mothers’ refusal to accept the terrors perpetrated against our children abound, and we work diligently to ensure that our children are not viewed as objects. Just think back to the choice Emmett Till's mother made. She held an open casket service for the world to see her son's unrecognizable body after he was taken from his uncle's home in 1955 and brutally beaten for supposedly whistling at a White girl. By creating a space for witnesses to see her son, she refused to silently accept the terror of his death. Smith's paper underscores how Black bodies occupy spaces of both interest and disinterest by the state in Brazil and the United States. She draws our attention to the ways that the violence of the state not only affects the bodies of Black children, but also, in its reverberation, devastatingly impacts Black mothers emotionally, psychologically, and sometimes physically. The stories of two Black women whose families have been affected by police killings illustrate this point. The “sequelae” that state violence produces for Black mothers, according to Smith, signals the uniquely gendered impact of necropolitics on Black women. This gendered impact situates Black women in a perilous space and is epitomized by the story of Aurina Rodrigues Santana. Santana was a Black mother from Brazil who publicly called out the state for torturing her children. Santana knew she was likely to be silenced through assassination, but one reading of her public denunciation is that she made a** *choice***. Santana chose to vocalize her opposition to the tortures and was unwilling to back down from the state's flagrant ability to kill without question. Santana did what so many Black mothers do and have done—she refused to be silent. In so doing Santana joined mothers like Camille Bell who in 1979 refused to be silent when the murders of mostly Black boys plagued Atlanta. Her son Yusef was one of 29 children murdered, but there was little effort to investigate the murders as more than isolated incidents. Bell publicly demanded that police and Mayor Maynard Jackson investigate the deaths of the murdered children. Likewise, Sybrina Fulton joined Bell and Santana in her refusal to be silent about the death of her son Trayvon Martin after he was fatally shot by George Zimmerman in Florida. Santana, Bell, and Fulton are radical Black mothers, who like other radical Black mothers, wonder why their children were not protected. Because so many of our children are taken away from us, many Black mothers live with uncertainty—never quite sure if our children will return home. Sometimes out of our sorrow, we fight back, facing down the systems designed to shut us up and shut us out. These essays forcefully reveal the sorrows and the hopes of Black mothering. But it is the question of ability and inability that also strikes me. I am interested in how the papers convey various ways in which ability and inability are marked; the inability to bring a pregnancy to term (Barnes), the ability to love (Williams), and the ability to survive (Smith). Riché Barnes’ paper focuses on Black women's inability to reach term during their pregnancies. It is interesting to consider this inability, which Barnes narrates by exploring the circumstances leading to Black women giving birth prematurely and having low birth weight infants. This fact exists despite the proliferation of neonatal and prenatal services. Over the last several decades, studies have shown that U.S.-born Black women are more likely than White women to have premature infants (Mullings and Wali** [**2000**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12056/full#traa12056-bib-0039)**). Being a Black woman is one of the primary factors the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has identified as a risk for pre-term birth. But, it is not** *just race* **that is the risk. According to Barnes, and other researchers,**[**6**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12056/full#traa12056-note-0006) **it is** *racial discrimination***, working long hours, and women knowing that they are having a baby boy that are contributing factors to premature birth. All of these issues raise stress levels in pregnant women. One fatal outcome of premature births is the increased likelihood of infant mortality, which disproportionately affects Black women. Notable in this discussion is that the Black–White infant mortality rate disparity in the U.S. is the same in the 21st century as it was in the 1890s; Black infants are still twice as likely to die as White infants. Despite the challenges of being Black and the obstacles facing Black infants, one way to read Black radical mothering in this circumstance is that Black women continue to have children, bringing them as gifts. Rhaisa Williams’ essay marshals us to consider notions of ability and variations of radical Black mothering. Although some mothers’ pain and anger motivate them to work for public activism, Williams describes another way of dealing with a child's death: making the decision to takes one's life. Williams’ essay shows how a child's death does not always compel a mother to become an activist, as was the case with Santana. Using her grandmother's suicide after the death of her daughter (Williams’ aunt) as the example, Williams argues that some mothers are too grief-stricken to continue living. In fact, to do so may be the ultimate “scene of subjection” (Hartman** [**1997**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/traa.12056/full#traa12056-bib-0022)**). While some mothers are able to turn what is left of their existence into armor as they struggle for justice, others are not. I want to offer another possibility between the poles of activism motivated by anger and suicide. There are some mothers who neither take up the mantle of activism nor end their lives. They just move through their days—finding breath between tears and work; awaiting relief from the flooding memories of their children and how a child's cheek felt against their lips. These women settle uncomfortably into boxes of suspended reality—needing reminders that they are still alive. Being the mother of slain child animates nothing but unbearable weight.**

### Black Feminist Epistemology

#### For black women, education allows for a disruption to the logics of slavery. She understands the potential risks and liberation tactics borne with such power. But, in order to properly deal with the nature of criminality, we need to reinvent a new epistemology designed to deal with the intricate nature of criminalization of young black girls.

**Morris 16 [Monique W. Morris, Award-winning author and social justice scholar with three decades of experience in the areas of education, civil rights, juvenile and social justice, Founder and President of the National Black Women’s Justice Institute (NBWJI), an organization that works to interrupt school-to-confinement pathways for girls, “Pushout: the criminalization of Black girls in schools” pgs ]**

Long before the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Black women were clear about the liberative power of education. Under slavery, the education of people of African descent was illegal and considered a punishable offense under state slave codes.\* In Georgia, enslaved Africans or other free people of color were fined or whipped, at the discretion of the court, if discovered reading or writing “in either written or printed characters.”15 **In this society, to read challenged the oppressive, controlling logic of slavery and the presupposed inferiority of Black people.** For many enslaved Black women, **learning to read represented a reclamation of human dignity and provided an opportunity to ground their challenges to the institution in scholarship, literature**, and biblical scripture. Many **a Black woman’s commitment to education was so strong that she risked incarceration or other penalties just to attain it.** Why take the risk? Because Black women understood the re- ward. **Having an education would make it much harder for Black people to be relegated to servitude and poverty**. Those Black women who became educators and generally learned people were able to renegotiate power relationships that had previously held them in bondage, and recast themselves as directors of their own destinies. **Education provided an alternative—and it was tangible**. It was tan- gible in 1793, when Catherine Ferguson, a formerly enslaved young woman, committed her life to corralling “poor and neglected” Black and White children for religious instruction on Sunday.16 \* States with slave codes that delineated the status of enslaved persons and the rights of their “owners” included Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Maryland, Louisiana, Texas, and parts of Missouri, among others. Though she could not read or write herself, as the founder of New York’s first Sunday school, Ferguson was hungry to pass on her faith practice and the important educational lessons that she knew would provide tools for others to secure a better future.17 It was tangible in 1853 when Sarah Mapps Douglass, an aboli- tionist and passionate educator, led the girls’ preparatory de- partment for the Philadelphia Institute for Colored Youth.18 It was tangible in 1904 when Mary McLeod Bethune opened the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School; with just five students, she built the foundation for what would eventu- ally become a co-ed institution of higher learning, Bethune- Cookman College.19 In each of these cases, **Black women understood that education was a core civil and human right. It was the foundation upon which a life of opportunity stood.** **It was a critical tool for advance- ment in a society that regularly practiced discrimination against women and against people of color. But the road was neither easy nor straight. Black women’s efforts to establish educational pathways encountered significant backlash**. In the South, where efforts to restrict opportunity followed the emancipation of enslaved Black people, education was embraced as a tool for the upward mobility of freemen and freewomen—**which meant that to be educated remained a threat to the power structure.** Fear of retaliation was warranted and quite palpable. In October 1871, thirty-five-year-old Carolyn Smith, in testi- mony before Congress, described the terror that Black commu- nities in Atlanta, Georgia, **felt from the Ku Klux Klan in response to their quest for education**. In her testimony, she was asked about a beating that she and her husband endured one night from a group of men who identified as **Ku Klux Klan members: “They said we should not have any schools . . . They went to a colored man there, whose son had been teaching school, and they took every book they had and threw them into the fire; and they said they would dare any other nigger to have a book in his house.**”20 Historically, to be a scholar was a dangerous proposition for Black Americans and countless Black women and men have died to be able to read and write. **The lingering barriers to a quality ed- ucation and the transgenerational trauma associated with inter- nalized ideas about performance in school have yet to be exhaustively measured**. However, the systematic denial of equal access to edu- cation for African American children has been documented and successfully challenged in the judicial system,21 in the social sci- ences,22 and in the court of public opinion.23 **While White students and students of color have continued to experience separate and unequal learning environments over the past six decades, most legal and educational reform advocates recognize** *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) as the landmark case that ended legal segregation in our society.\* *Brown* was both a pre- cursor to civil rights laws designed to guarantee equal protection and eliminate de jure segregation as well as an important exten- sion of a growing public will to reimagine the promise of American democracy.† However, while de jure segregation may have ended in many ways with the *Brown* decision, affecting public policy well beyond the issue of education, it did not address the ways in which enduring xenophobia, tribalism, and the intersections between race and poverty would sustain de facto segregation—expanded \* The Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was actually a combination of five cases from five different jurisdictions: Delaware (*Gebhart v. Belton*, 1952), Kansas (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1951), South Carolina (*Briggs v. Elliott*, 1952), Virginia (*Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, 1952), and the District of Columbia (*Bolling v. Sharpe*, 1952). residential racial isolation that by extension kept schools highly segregated. The decision also did not anticipate future proxies for race (including class and criminal conviction history) that would later facilitate a resegregation of several public learning spaces that had in fact managed notable progress on integration. Since the elimination of de jure segregation, Black girls have been subjected to harmful stereotypes about Black femininity that have at least shaped and at worst defined their experi- ences in classrooms and schools around the country. The ways in which Black girls’ educational experiences would be con- structed according to a hierarchy that favors White middle-class norms has been floating under the national radar for six decades. As Patricia Hill-Collins wrote, “All women engage an ideology that deems middle-class, heterosexual, White femininity as nor- mative. In this context, Black femininity as a subordinated gen- der identity becomes constructed not just in relation to White women, but also in relation to multiple others, namely, all men, sexual outlaws (prostitutes and lesbians), unmarried women, and girls.”**24 While not referring specifically to educational environments, these norms permeate and shape how Black women and girls are understood and treated in innumerable aspects of public and pri- vate life**. The purpose of this book is to interrogate the racial and gender inequality that still prevails in education more than sixty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*. In setting forth some truths that have heretofore been ignored or obscured, my aim is **to chart a new path and advocate for efforts that move beyond the “delib- erate speed” rhetoric that has for too long underserved low-income girls of color, Black girls in particular**. The central argument of this book is that **too many Black girls are being criminalized (and physically and mentally harmed) by beliefs, policies, and actions that degrade and marginalize both their learning and their humanity, leading to conditions that push them out of schools and render them vulnerable to even more harm. We can counter the criminalization of Black girls in schools by first understanding what their criminalization looks like, and then by building a common language and framework for making sure that struggling Black girls are not left behind**. We can all get behind a fair and effective education strategy that provides a qual- ity education for every young person.

#### Teachers are a part of the problem, insofar, as their attempts of control and criminalization only codify the conception of “Rachet” black girl. Our perfomative act of (AFF/K) brings into QUESTION and breeds a deeper awareness of the hsitrocial, peculiar violences black girls face with their teachers.

**Morris 16 [Monique W. Morris, Award-winning author and social justice scholar with three decades of experience in the areas of education, civil rights, juvenile and social justice, Founder and President of the National Black Women’s Justice Institute (NBWJI), an organization that works to interrupt school-to-confinement pathways for girls, “Pushout: the criminalization of Black girls in schools” pgs ]**

“Well, my [art] school was different,” she said in reference to a school she’d attended previously. “It wasn’t like all the other schools. Like, they wasn’t so much focused on disciplining you, because they wanted you to express your creativity, like, they wanted you to teach them the way that you wanted to learn . . . We used Khan Academy on our computers . . . we had those com- puters and stuff [and] it brought us up to the level we on . . . so the teacher knew what level we was on. The other school, they be cuss- ing at the teacher, throwing stuff around in the class. Like, really, I was the only girl that was doing my work in class. Everybody else was arguing [and] about . . . to fight. I’m like, ‘Oh my God. I gotta be *here*?’ ” “Like, in class?” I asked. “In class, yeah,” she replied. **It’s not uncommon for educators, parents, and community stake- holders to argue that girls (of any racial or ethnic affiliation) who get into trouble in school and end up leaving “bring it on them- selves.”** For example, they may say that these girls are “unruly,” “talk back” to teachers and principals, fight each other, show up to school “half dressed,” and display an overall lack of self-respect or respect for others. These are the “bad girls.” “These girls are out of control,” adults say. ***Control* is an operative word that carries great meaning and consequences for the girls who are deemed to lack it. Girls who challenge authority are often told that they are “wild” or problematic—sometimes to the point that they will internalize these ideas and echo them as if they were born of their own con- sciousness**. Like Jazzy, who struggled to “**other**” herself out of “**ratchetness**,” or Destiny, who tried to make sense of being called annoying for wanting to learn. What does it mean to suggest that Black girls dress more “ratchet” or that they ascribe to an aesthetic that negatively im- pacts how they are received when they go to school? What is the mentality (e.g., taking on an oppositional gaze or posture) that makes being seen so important to them? Listening to Jazzy and Destiny with **a deeper awareness of the historical and social fac- tors at work, school leaders just might conclude that policies that fail to interrogate what is “disruptive” behavior in class, overtly marginalize so-called ghetto fashion, or mandate other punitive actions in response to Black girls’ expression of cultural norms are harmful.** They might begin to ponder what would happen if par- ents and schools worked together to construct a set of norms that wouldn’t confuse or mislead girls, but would instead elevate every- one’s consciousness. Mia explained that in her experience, sometimes **schools don’t reach out to parents or address the learned behavior of students because they’re afraid to do so**. “A lot of times, the teachers are scared to send you to the princi- pal’s office,” she said. “It’s not like back in the day. [Kids will] throw a chair at you. They’ll come and punch you if they really feel like it. One girl spit on a lady ’cause she was like, ‘Go to the princi- pal’s office’ and whoop-tee-whoop. She didn’t, like, spit in her face, but she spit on her. That’s just hella nasty, but . . . other times, they’ll be like, ‘Sit out until you’re calm, and then you can just come back in’ because they’re just too scared of you.” “Why do you think the teachers are scared?” I asked her. “Because sometimes...I mean, our parents is like us, you know? Our parents get down just like us. This is how we’re raised. So if we see them come after school, we could easily just beat her up. Somebody could just jump her, even shoot her if it got that se- rious, you know? Like anybody could see her in her car, see where she live, and follow her home. I mean, it ain’t that hard, you know?” Again, Mia was harking back to a familiar concept. Children emulate the behavior of parents, who somewhere along the way made an observation that this behavior yields results, or at least the one they might be looking for at the moment: perceived re- spect that is in fact fear, whether provoked or latent. **Black students’ academic achievement differs on the whole, a result of institutions and curricula that have historically reinforced unequal opportu- nity, racism, and oppression, as well as a result of peer pressure and other factors**.55 Parental expectations regarding the academic suc- cesses of their children are also important to a student’s high per- formance.56 While there is little consensus on how to define or measure “parental involvement,” those who have researched the topic agree that parental impact can be felt in the school as well as at home.57 Most parents, regardless of racial or ethnic affiliation or eco- nomic status, want their children to succeed in school. Black par- ents have expectations for their children’s academic achievement that are similar to those of White parents.58 Structural inequali- ties (underfunded schools, fewer resources to support positive ed- ucational outcomes, less access to quality early education), past negative school experiences, and their children’s current expe- riences may negatively impact their confidence in their child’s ability to be a high performer.59 Black parents who actively talk about school at home may have children who perform better in schools, as opposed to those who just engage directly in the school or simply place a high value on academic achievement, but paren- tal involvement *by itself* is not a predictor of positive student outcomes.60 **While it has been found that Black parents who are more involved in their children’s education have children who perform better in school, Black student achievement is largely a function of the expectations and interactions th**

### Anticap

#### The alt fails – too totalizing and can’t articulate the intricacies of class relations for black women historically or currently – your starting point means your ending point is always predicated on exclusion of the black feminized body. The perm dissolves the links and proves that the methods are not only compatible but always already interrelated

McDonald 97 [Katrina Bell, Associate Professor of Sociology and Faculty Board Member for the Center for Africana Studies at John Hopkins] Black Activist Mothering: A Historical Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class, Gender and Society, Vol. 11, No. 6 (Dec., 1997), pp. 773-795, Sage Publications, Inc.

BLACK ACTIVIST MOTHERING A Historical Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class KATRINA BELL McDONALD Johns Hopkins University The prevalence of poor health among young disadvantaged Black mothers and their children has prompted a revival of maternal activism among Black middle-class urban women. A study of the California-based "Birthing Project, "founded in 1988, reveals that such activism is best understood as a modern-day version of Black activist mothering practiced by African American clubwomen from the time of slavery to the early 1940s. This article demonstrates the legacy of "normative empathy" as a significant motivator for middle-class maternal activism and as a basis for a middle-class critique of Black mothering among the disadvantaged. For more than 20 years, reformative social policy and technological advances have done little to curb the unyielding threat of Black infant mortality. Although the overall infant mortality rate in the United States has been on the decline for many years, recent figures show that Black babies continue to die at more than twice the rate of those of Whites (Fullilove 1993; Rowley et al. 1993; Singh and Yu 1995). This crisis, one of the most vexing problems for African America, was precipitated by a host of interrelated medical, sociodemographic, and psychosocial problems suffered primarily among the most vulnerable population: young African American mothers of the "underclass" (Boone 1989; Fullilove 1993; Rowley et al. 1993). Whereas the root cause of elevated poor pregnancy outcomes among African Americans lies in the historically oppressive conditions of Black women's lives, a popular argument is that this crisis, like many others, has been exacerbated by the restructuring of Black social capital. The persistence of poor birth outcomes for Blacks is often linked to the recent "Black flight" of the middle class from urban areas (Anderson 1990; Baca Zinn 1990; Wilson 1987, 1989). The resultant spatial concentration of disorganized, unskilled, and alienated "underclass" populations in urban neighborhoods is said to worsen the most negative features of Black mothers' lives by effectively severing the long-standing link between Black middle-class maternal support and disadvantaged women. Claims about the significance of the social class schism in the Black community are not easily dismissed. For example, Black feminist theory has addressed, although scantily, the class polarization of the Black community and its potential to dismantle gender/ethnic solidarity. Some authors openly admit that the strong Black maternal activist tradition is not immune to the problems of urbanization and the dislocation of women from the "once familial" character of social relationships within the community (Ladner 1986, 17). As Collins explains, "The entire commu- nity structure of bloodmothers and othermothers is under assault in many inner-city neighborhoods, where the very fabric of African-American community life is being eroded" (1991, 122). Nonetheless, while there has been a reorganization of social relations among African American urban women, the exodus of middle-class women from urban areas has not necessarily resulted in an exodus of care, in the total removal of "an important 'social buffer' that could deflect the full impact of the kind of prolonged and increasing poverty that plagues [the inner city]" (Wilson 1987, 56). Modern Black activist women are concerned that the social degradation and isolation of young Black mothers has led to the perception that Black pregnancy and mother- hood is not celebrated among the disadvantaged and that the Black community has failed to attend to the contemporary needs of African American childbearing. They understand that social support that was common to Black pregnancy and childbear- ing among the poor and working classes from which they came is uncommon for many mothers today; strong, cross-class maternal support-at least in the form they call to memory-is not characteristic of modern Black urban life. In assessing the damage, Black middle-class maternal activists have sought to rescue disadvantaged mothers from their increasing social isolation. They have found it necessary to evoke a sense of gender/ethnic solidarity in creatively crossing class lines to positively affect Black pregnancy outcomes. Their main objective is to exploit the empathy of upwardly mobile community women to re-create maternal support for the disadvantaged of the urban community and help thwart the escala- tion of poor pregnancy outcomes. Contemporary "new" middle-class (Landry 1987) Black women believe that they possess a unique empathic motivation and ability to maintain ties with poor and working-class women. Furthermore, their strategy for intervention, born from a conscious, collective need to resist racist and sexist oppression, is one passed down for many generations by their Black activist foremothers. This article revolves around two main tasks. First, it seeks to highlight socio- logically cross-class maternal support of urban Black women and to politicize the community mothering practices of those from the middle class. My analysis of this tradition is guided by a theory- and data-driven framework, "normative empathy," constructed as a way of interpreting middle-class Black maternalist motivations to maintain cross-class networks among Black women in the 1980s and 1990s. The data were drawn via intensive interviews with volunteers from "The Birthing Project," an organization established to service the needs of young and poor Black mothers. Second, this article argues that the struggle of Black activist women to evoke a sense of cross-class gender/ethnic solidarity in the provision of maternal support stems from a long tradition of maternal activism among middle-class Black women. One feature of this tradition has been the tailoring of activism to meet the needs of unique historical periods. Today, the women of the Birthing Project must confront an epidemiological crisis of Black childbearing qualitatively different from that which embattled the Black community 50 years ago. The dislocation of urban Black women from one another has reached unimaginable new heights, resulting in an often difficult, frustrating struggle for gender/ethnic solidarity among the activist women. The research reported herein further elaborates a theory of social support (Cramer and McDonald 1996) that helps to expose the often unforeseen and unanticipated political and practical problematics of such support. More specifically, this article examines the contours of maternal activism among middle-class Black women, the ideological precedent for this activism, and how the consciousness of social class difference shapes the middle-class Black activist discourse and experience.

#### Black women experience class based oppression unequally, but through common gendered experiences of slavery and antiblackness. Only a black feminist lens allows for a re-examination of cross-class solidarity and makes it possible to conceptualize the motivations and actions of the maternal activist – the aff is a prerequisite to class based analysis

McDonald 97 [Katrina Bell, Associate Professor of Sociology and Faculty Board Member for the Center for Africana Studies at John Hopkins] Black Activist Mothering: A Historical Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class, Gender and Society, Vol. 11, No. 6 (Dec., 1997), pp. 773-795, Sage Publications, Inc.

NORMATIVE EMPATHY: FRAMING BLACK ACTIVIST MOTHERING Social psychologists have identified two basic types of social helping behavior differentiated by the source of motivation. An actor, they contend, can be motivated to empathic helping behavior by a feeling for another's affective experiences; a personal, emotional response is summoned by a sense of connectedness to the condition of another person (Henderson 1984; Wood 1994). The actor's empathy is apparently not necessarily thought to jeopardize the selflessness with which activism is carried out and, therefore, it is possible for activism to fulfill nonegoistic and egoistic needs. An actor can also be motivated to normative helping behavior by general social norms-the moral and ethical principles generated by members of a community who share a common social history and vision for social develop- ment (Montada and Bierhoff 1991). This distinction between types of activism and their motivation, however, fails to capture the unique and historically driven experiences that have fed the Black activist mothering tradition. The analyses of Black women's maternal activism conducted for this study suggest that normative empathy, a synthesis of both personal and social motivation, is a more appropriate framework for analyzing the community mothering practices of African American women. Black women's activist motivations derive from a conjunction of empathy for other Black women who suffer or have suffered similar social disadvantages and of African American norms of solidarity, responsibility, and accountability. That this moral obligation to enhance gender/ethnic survival inherently has egoistic as well as other-oriented bases demonstrates that existing frameworks for interpreting their activism are too simplistic for a full appreciation of this tradition. Scholarship on Black women's social history is laced with references to Black women as important intergenerational resources in the African American commu- nity (Christian 1985; Collins 1991; DuBois 1939; Giddings 1984; Gilkes 1989; Joseph and Lewis 1981; McDonald 1995; Rodgers-Rose 1980; Sudarkasa 1988). According to Giddings, educator and clubwoman Julia Cooper identified the special role of women's activism as "the fundamental agency under God in the regeneration ... of the race, as well as the groundwork and starting point of its progress upward" (1984, 81). From a very young age, Black women are reportedly socialized to yield to the call of responsibility to "hold the Black community together" (Joseph and Lewis 1981, 106) and preserve the race and gender. Central to the sociological framing of Black women's community activism is a unique gender/ethnic motivation. Black women's gender identities help distinguish their motivations for social activism from that of Black men; their community activism is driven by their shared, gendered experience of slavery and has devel- oped primarily out their mothering practices (Jones 1990). Furthermore, Black women's motivations for activism are distinguishable from White women's moti- vations. Their unique race/gender status has strongly influenced how they define family and community and how they determine which political strategies are best suited to meet the needs of Black women, their families, and the race as a whole (Gilkes 1988; Hine 1990; Morgen 1988; Morgen and Bookman 1988; Naples 1991, 1992). This norm of solidarity and collective survival through community mother- ing practices has been characterized as Black "activist mothering" (Naples 1992) or community "othermothering,"' a transplantation of traditional African tribal principles (Peterson 1992). The community work of Black women, like that of other women of color, is a complex practice of biological mothering, community other- mothering, and political activism (Naples 1992). Normative empathy also emphasizes the significance of social class in politiciz- ing the task of Black women to serve their community. It is frequently noted that middle-class status compounds Black women's sense of "social debt" to the community (Higginbotham and Weber 1992, 430; McDonald 1995; Naples 1992). The "races as families" analogy promoted by the "race school" of sociology for decades, and founded on the philosophies of W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington (Dawson 1994), strongly elevates race obligations over those of class. Individual women of the middle class are said to be held "morally culpable" (Lawson 1992, 94) if they do not live up to the expectation that successful Black women should help their less fortunate "sisters." Every woman's middle-class success story must also be a tale of how she fulfilled her moral obligation to uplift others of the race less fortunate than she (Collins 1991; Dawson 1994). The analyses of Higginbotham (1993) and Boris (1993) speak instead to an intersection of social class and Black activism that produces a variety of maternal activist strategies operating at different levels of class and reflecting varying, class-based expressions of normative empathy. Normative empathy appears more likely to find expression among the middle class as an obligation and duty to the disadvantaged; by virtue of belief in their superior moral upbringing, middle-class women would be inclined to teach lower-class women to be more like themselves. Normative empathy among middle-class women serves not only as motivation for social activism but also as a basis for critiquing the mothering practices of the disadvantaged. Far less attention is paid to how class intersects with the community practices of disadvantaged Black women. Whereas it could be understood that their access to fewer material resources would place restrictions on what poor Black women offer as community othermothers, the historical literature suggests that their rever- ence for, and political commitment to, solidarity is no less than that of their middle-class counterparts. In contrast to that among the middle class, normative empathy among the disadvantaged appears more likely to be formed from a view of all Black women and mothers as the source of uplift and to take the form of intraclass social support. In addition, the practice of normative empathy is temporally sensitive to the conditions of Black women's lives. The form and content of Black activist moth- ering have changed somewhat with the increasing polarization of Black social classes. As the problems suffered by the most disadvantaged women of the community worsen, middle-class Black activists step up their efforts to lift them up, and perhaps in doing so overshadow the maternal activism still operating among the disadvantaged and focus a biased lens on the mothering practices of poorer Black women. This study seeks to understand the motivations of the Birthing Project volunteers who are overwhelmingly middle class. No data were collected from disadvantaged populations or about them other than those that are offered from the perspective of the middle class and, therefore, this particular study does not speak to the experience of being the recipient of middle-class maternal care. It demonstrates how strongly middle-class Black women cling to the legacy of their foremothers and to a middle-class display of normative empathy.

#### A black feminist ethic of caring is in itself an act of radical mothering, affirming black existence and cutting across class lines – the Birthing Project is a specific example of how the aff is a necessary first step in interrogating neoliberalism at the personal level

McDonald 97 [Katrina Bell, Associate Professor of Sociology and Faculty Board Member for the Center for Africana Studies at John Hopkins] Black Activist Mothering: A Historical Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class, Gender and Society, Vol. 11, No. 6 (Dec., 1997), pp. 773-795, Sage Publications, Inc.

THE BIRTHING PROJECT: RE-CREATING MATERNAL SUPPORT The research site for the observation of contemporary, middle-class Black maternal activism was "The Birthing Project," a volunteer organization founded in Sacramento, California, in 1988. The Project grew out of a resurgence of African American women activist groups after their decline and suppression around the late 1940s (Giddings 1984), a decline that may have reflected the African American intelligentsia's failure to embrace the broad spectrum of racial uplift efforts in the Black community (Gaines 1996). A recent survey of 22 Black women leaders representing 11 different African American voluntary associations revealed that today there are many formal and informal Black organizations that claim to provide moderate or extensive support to Black women (Dickerson 1994). Founded by Kathryn Hall, a health administrator, the Birthing Project offers the opportunity for young pregnant African American women at risk of having children of low birth weight and of infant mortality to increase their chances for delivering healthy Black babies. It strives to re-create informal social support lacking or nonexistent for many young mothers and to do so in the spirit of their activist foremothers. Early Black clubwomen were well-known for having been instrumen- tal in laying a Black communal infrastructure to "re-create the intimacy of village life they left behind" (Mathews 1992, 192). In 1985, Hall became agitated by the statistical data circulated within the state health office where she worked, which showed that the mortality rate for Black infants (age one and younger) in California was 16 per 1,000 births; the rate for Whites was 9 per 1,000. Paralleling these statistics were the related figures on low birth weight, an equally disturbing phenomenon. Hall's experience in state health administration made her keenly aware of the limitations of maternal health and family research and policies in removing this peril from the African American community. Frequently, state and federal administrators concluded that the problem was related to the poor "viability of black genes"; therefore, nothing, they said, could be done to lessen the racial disparity. Hall, who had herself lost a child that she believed could have been saved with proper medical care, was understandably infuriated by this racist analysis, and she set out to warn the Black community of the widespread adoption of this perspective in the health community. Little assis- tance could be expected from within the official maternal health infrastructure; as earlier reformers had put it, the Black community had to be told not to wait for the deliverers (Gordon 1994). Hall explains that the mission of the Project is "to catch a [Black] baby and pay witness to the birth." The Project reestablishes a collective of witnesses to Black births to legitimate the children's existence and to ensure that elder women will be there to give them guidance.2 The Project relies on the willingness of middle-class "sister-friends" to offer intimate, informal social support to underprivileged young expectant mothers during their pregnancies and for a year or more postpartum. Its founders were confident that the capacity of activist women-upwardly mobile women from poor and working-class backgrounds-to restore gender/ethnic soli- darity across class could assist underprivileged young urban mothers and, in particular, reduce the severe risks to maternal health faced by this population. Hall put out a call to "the 10 toughest sisters" in the Sacramento area to work with her in combatting the Black infant mortality problem from within the Black community. Eventually, nine women (and one man) formed the original founding "sister-friends" (and "brother-friend") for the Project. Together, this group devised a plan to secure the future of the Black family and Black culture. They sought to use the maternal gifts of Black women by exploiting the resources and resource- fulness of middle-class women who were better situated socioeconomically to tend to the maternal needs of other African American families and who could relate to the social disadvantage suffered in those families. As is true for most charismatic founders of community organizations, Hall personifies the Project's ideals. Her word and tone are almost theological, resonat- ing with that of many of her famous foremothers like Mary Church Terrell, who once proclaimed that Black women's "peculiar status in this country" called them to "the great firm of progress and reform."3 Hall's concern for the witnessing of a child's birth, literally and figuratively speaking, is a concrete demonstration of what Collins contends is a Black feminist "ethic of caring": "Nurturing children in the Black extended family networks stimulates a more generalized ethic of caring and personal accountability among African-American women who often feel account- able to all the Black community's children" (1991, 129). It is familiar folk talk among African Americans that historically anyone witnessing a child's birth (i.e., either being attentive to the mother around the time of the pregnancy, physically present at the birth, or involved in some way with the christening/blessing) assumed the right later in that child's life to intervene in any way he or she felt was appropriate, Hall explains. This included rightfully disci- plining the child when necessary, thereby showing community love and concern. Community members of all social class backgrounds accepted and desired this intervention and saw it as a natural extension of the family. When there are no witnesses to a marriage, the union is not valid; when there are no witnesses to a baptism, one's salvation is not recognized by that church. Thus, Hall argues by analogy that when the only onlookers to a Black baby's birth are its mother, an impersonal county hospital staff, and perhaps a social worker or a prison guard, that child's life goes largely unattended. Hall feels strongly that by re-creating much needed maternal support in the African American community, the Birthing Project reestablishes an interclass collective of witnesses to Black births to legitimate the children's existence and to ensure that elder and more socioeconomically stable women will be available to give them guidance. Prospective sister-friends are introduced to the Project first through printed media, through a public presentation by Hall, or through word of mouth. The formal introduction is made when the volunteer attends one of the official training sessions typically managed by the Project's chief administrator. Training sessions primarily are meant to instruct the volunteer to regularly convey the importance of prenatal care to her "little sister,"4 to suggest ways to assist tangibly in her prenatal care, such as providing her transportation to medical appointments, and to emphasize the need for the volunteer to be readily available to assist her little sister in any other way she could, such as providing her referrals to other agencies for information and support. In the extreme, the volunteer is told, one could be called upon by the Project to intervene on the little sister's behalf should an authority's action (e.g., social worker, judge, teacher) pose a potential threat to the healthy progress of the pregnancy or to the little sister's personal development overall. During these sessions, volunteers are also informed about ways to minimize the stress involved in befriending the little sisters. What the Project can reasonably accomplish and certain limits on the relationships, such as not lending money, are explained in detail. These sessions were redesigned somewhat in the early 1990s to accommodate the volunteers' need to better understand the nature of the social class tensions that were likely to emerge. The training sessions are not only useful for dispensing practical materials and information; they are often one of the few opportunities, if not the only opportunity, for the administration to transmit the overall mission of the Project and its norms and values to the sister-friends. In some cases, however, volunteers bypass the training session to help meet the overwhelming, immediate need to service pro- spective little sisters. Still, the Project estimates that 100 trained sister-friends were active each year,5 probably fewer in the first five years. Although the Project is most frequently referred to as a mentoring program, its social service is better understood as one that provides young mothers a personal confidante. The sister-friends opt for a more meaningful, reciprocal, personal relationship with the little sisters that, although ultimately intended to help ensure an uneventful pregnancy and birth, is shaped by the unique personal and social circumstances of both the young mothers and the volunteers. In sum, this relation- ship is intended to extend the kinship bonds and networks of both parties and to politically empower all members of the community. The Birthing Project is but one component of a larger self-help effort by community women to supplement government agency programs or to provide services nonexistent in Sacramento County. This multifaceted enterprise addresses a wide range of social and political issues, revealing a Black feminist vision of welfare akin to Black women and other women activists of an earlier era (Gordon 1994; Hamilton 1978; Harley and Terborg-Penn 1978; Jenkins 1984; Lerner 1974; Neverdon-Morton 1989; Townes 1993). Under the umbrella of the Center for Community Health and Well-Being, Inc., are parallel programs: "Imani," which provides support to women who engaged in or who are potentially at risk of child abuse and/or substance abuse; the Economic Development Program, which trains and employs women to provide in-home support services to families; and the Comprehensive Perinatal Services Program, which offers maternal health care. The Birthing Project is acknowledged as the heart and soul of the Center, and in 1993 it became Birthing Project USA with its program replicated in 15 cities around the country. A program module produced by Hall has been used by social service agencies across the nation as well. Between 1988 and 1997, Project-related pro- grams were established in 48 U.S. cities and 1 Canadian city; thirty of these programs remain active.

#### Idk how to use this but it has first something historical then something that’s more like a negative cap link and then something that’s kinda a fwk indict so I have no idea if this would actually be useful

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Motivations Black maternal activism in the present day is ideologically grounded in a tradition begun by free, slave, and later newly emancipated Black women (Christian 1985; Collins 1991; Martin and Martin 1985; Sudarkasa 1988). Half a century ago, Black clubwomen were challenged by the devastating poverty and pervasive health problems that plagued the Black community after Reconstruction as its population became more physically mobile and scattered between the North and the South (Jones 1985). In recent decades, the urban dislocation of many African Americans from middle-class support has intensified. As Pam, a sister-friend, notes, "Before, we had the extended families. And with the moving around-people moving around-we don't have the extended families anymore." A sense of gender/ethnic consciousness that once fueled widespread political and social cooperation and support among Blacks has been largely supplanted by individualism, mistrust, and competition as strategies for survival in the cities (Anderson 1990). The breeding of these alternative strategies has paralleled the increasing disparity of urban social resources and life chances. Government inter- vention for poor inner-city Blacks has been implicated, although poorly supported empirically, as a contributor to the undermining of normative empathy in the Black community (Martin and Martin 1985).

#### Radical mothering practices through organizations like the Birthing Project are formed through shared experiences of black womanhood (this is a weak tag sorry, this can also be used as a supplement to the earlier cards about how the normative empathy of the Birthing Project works)

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Activist mothering at the Birthing Project is also fueled by personal histories of racist and/or sexist oppression that the volunteers use to help make the initial connection with their little sisters. The concrete experiences of confronting racist and sexist individuals and institutions inform the sister-friends' views about the need for strong maternal guidance of young Black women. Tales of the moments when Black womanhood was challenged, undermined, and distorted were recalled by the sister-friends. The dialectical relationship of oppression and activism re- flected in such tales were occasionally offered as a partial cause for choosing the Birthing Project as an avenue for educating young mothers about the need to demand respect for themselves and their families. For example, Doris, a 43-year-old divorced mother, had this tale to offer: [I'll tell you] what I said to brothers when I do workshops, I say, "You know, brothers, only problem I have is you cannot adopt the rules of the slave master when you have been part of the game. How can you inflict on me the same sets of standards and rules that he inflicted on me and his women when you are not part of the system. He has so little respect and regard for you, how can you turn around and be a part of his group? And you know you're not of his group." And they say to me, "Cause [you] had and can't do this, and you women need to know your place." And I say, "What place? What place? What is my place? How dare you!"

## Impact cards

#### Triple consciousness

**Morris 16 [Monique W. Morris, Award-winning author and social justice scholar with three decades of experience in the areas of education, civil rights, juvenile and social justice, Founder and President of the National Black Women’s Justice Institute (NBWJI), an organization that works to interrupt school-to-confinement pathways for girls, “Pushout: the criminalization of Black girls in schools” pgs ]**

In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W.E.B. Du Bois articulated the presence of a “double consciousness” among Black Americans—a “twoness” that he described as “an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings.”20 **For Black women, their unreconciled strivings and stirred consciousness are also in- formed by their other identities, including gender, sexuality, and class, among others. In fact, most people walk through life consciously unaware of their multiple identities** (no one is *just* Black, *just* a woman, *just* a parent, *just* a student, etc.). The interdigitation of sex and race create barriers to continued economic and intellectual advancement for Black girls and young women under eighteen years old. In modern ghettos, **Black girls are routinely expected to seamlessly reconcile their status as Black *and* female *and* poor, a status that has left them with a mark of double jeopardy that fuels intense discrimination and personal vulnerability.** Still, despite the intersection between these identities that shapes how people see themselves as much as how others see them, Black women and girls are often challenged to pick an allegiance. Many Black girls—whether in California, Georgia, or New York— pretend that they can isolate and prioritize their “competing” identities. “I’m Black first, female second,” I’ve heard many times over the years. Indeed, a failure to acknowledge one’s *whole* self silences a more sophisticated analysis about how race, gender, class, sexual iden- tity, ability, and other identities interact. Acknowledging the com- plexity of social identity has been termed “intersectionality,” a concept coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw.21 Her schol- arship advances the work of Anna Julia Cooper, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, and other Black feminist scholars who argued that **there is no hierarchy of oppressions.22 Each identity intersects with the other to generate a more complex worldview than the one that would exist if any of us were ever truly able to walk through life with a singular identity. Oppressed identities further complicate this experience. This assertion—that no single form of oppression is more important or dominant than another—is key to under- standing and combating the harmful and dehumanizing experi- ences faced by all manner of human beings, including all too many Black girls.** **Actively engaging this framework in daily life creates places to expose, confront, and address questions of privilege. In this practice and in those open places, freedom lives.** But the process of getting free is not easy. It demands a close look at the current **public construct of Black femininity and how that translates—or doesn’t—into opportunity for Black girls and women. Feminist scholar bell hooks writes and talks of an “oppo- sitional gaze,” a way to examine the presentations of Black femi- nine identities and confront the paralyzing stereotypes that undermine the well-being of Black women and girls.**23 She’s one of many critical minds whose work offers guidance for confronting such images, interrogating them, dismantling them, and rebuild- ing new images in a more perfect and complex representation of Black female identity. Yet one-dimensional stereotypes, images, and debilitating narratives persist, creating a pressing need to explore why the struggle for survival is a universally accepted rite of passage for Black girls. Most importantly, **individuals, communi- ties, and all sorts of institutions ha ve an obligation to understand why the pushout of Black girls—the collection of policies, prac- tices, and consciousness that fosters their invisibility, marginalizes their pain and opportunities, and facilitates their criminalization— goes unchallenged.**

#### This would be a good impact card: stpp, humanity, access to injury

#### Wun 2015

Connie Wun, PhD holds degrees in Women’s Studies and Asian American Studies from San Francisco State University and UC Berkeley [“Against Captivity: Black Girls and School Discipline Policies in the Afterlife of Slavery”]

 Since then, organizations including the Black Youth Project 100 and the African American Forum have organized campaigns to highlight state violence against Black girls and women. According to the policy brief, “SayHerName: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women,” by the African American Policy Forum and the Columbia Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies (2015), Dajerria is one of many Black women and girls in the United States who are subject to police violence. While most attention surrounding anti-Black state violence has historically focused on Black men and boys, scholars and activists are also examining the ways that Black women and girls are affected by surveillance, harassment, and brutality (Crenshaw, 2012; M. Morris, 2012; Roberts, 2011). According to Roberts (2011), Black women (and girls) are not only criminalized and punished by the police and prison system, they are also subject to criminalization and policing by a myriad of state institutions including the foster care system and schools. Recently, the African American Policy Forum and Columbia Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies (2014) and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and National Women’s Law Center (2014) issued reports that examined the ways schools have simultaneously over policed Black girls while neglecting their complex needs. Their studies demonstrate that, in addition to the criminal justice system, school discipline policies also criminalize Black girls. This qualitative study, based in a suburban high school in northern California, examines the narratives of Black girls disciplined in accordance with school policies. Drawing from the stories of six Black girls regarding their experiences with school discipline, the article provides narratives about race, gender, surveillance, criminalization, and punishment in schools. The girls’ narratives extend discourses about anti-Black police violence by identifying the way school discipline policies construct conditions of captivity for them. Drawing from Hartman’s 1997 (1997) theory of the “afterlife of slavery” and the ways that Black people are positioned as “captives,” this study highlights the ways school discipline policies help to construct the conditions of captivity for Black youth and specifically for Black girls.Within the past decade, school discipline researchers have reported on the disproportionate rates by which Black youth and other students of color across rural, suburban, and urban communities are overrepresented in school discipline data (Advancement Project, 2011; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Nocella, Parmer, & Stovall, 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003). These studies have largely focused on the ways that suspensions and expulsions help to funnel students into prison. Calling this the school to prison pipeline (STPP), scholars and advocates contend that students who have been excluded from school are more likely to fall behind their peers. This subsequently “pushes students out of school and into the criminal justice system. Other studies contend that school discipline policies help to create militarized “prison-like” conditions for students (Fuentes, 2012; Nolan, 2011; Saltman & Gabbard, 2011). In these spaces, students of color are constantly subject to security systems and profiling by school administrators and police officers for drug use and weap-ons possession. These students are policed and monitored in ways that create a punitive “hostile” environment (Meiners, 2007, 2011). School discipline research has also examined the specific effects that these discipline policies and practices have on boys of color, particularly Black boys (Davis & Jordan, 1994; Ferguson, 2001; Monroe, 2006; Noguera, 2008). Recognizing the impact of school discipline policies on the lives of students of color, specifi-cally Black students, this article examines the punitive dimensions of school discipline with a specific focus on its implications for Black girls. hese school discipline policies, which are integral to U.S. policing technolo-gies, create conditions of captivity for Black youth. As captives, this author contends, they are perpetually watched but are simultaneously denied access to their humanity, including rights and privileges over their lives and bodies. More specifically, they do not have “access to injury” (Hartman, 1997), or rights to self-defense or autonomy. This study identifies school discipline policies as mediums by which Black people, particularly Black girls’, are under constant surveillance but the complexitities of their lives, pain, and suffering are negligible. Although the value of Black life is beyond the scope of this article, a thorough exploration of this issue can be found on the Society for Cultural Anthropology (2015) website.

#### this provides stats about black girls in schools

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Sojoyner’s research highlights the ways that schools and discipline policies have historically been used not only to punish students for committing infractions but also to undermine, if not neutralize, the possibility for Black political education. In this sense, school discipline policies, including sus-pensions and expulsions, help to construct not only an environment where Black youth are disproportionately disciplined compared with their White peers but also one that confines their political and social identities. School discipline policies have a history in containing Black youth and their com-munities, particularly in relationship to Black political mobilization. School discipline literature that has examined the effects of school discipline has often focused on boys of color (Ferguson, 2001; Monroe, 2006; Noguera, 2008). These studies have provided a necessary framework for understanding the racialized and criminalizing effects of discipline policies. For example, in her landmark ethnographic study, Ferguson explores the experiences that Black boys had with discipline at an elementary school in California. According to her research, Black boys were more likely to be treated as adults and punished than their White peers. Ferguson’s analysis helps us to understand the ways that teachers and administrators police Black youth through discipline policies. Together, the studies on Black boys and school discipline highlight the punitive conditions that shaped the experiences of Black boys. In recent years, there has been a growth in attention to the ways that school discipline excludes and punishes Black girls (Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darensbourg, 2011; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). According to the U.S. Department of Education’s Civil Rights Office (2014), 12% of school-aged Black girls across the country have experienced out of school suspensions, compared with 7% for Native American girls, 4% for Latinas, and 2% for White girls. Nineteen percent of Black girls with disabilities have experiences with out of school suspensions. In another study conducted by the African American Policy Forum and the Columbia Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies (2014), which examined Black girls’ experiences with school discipline in Boston and New York, 12% of Black girls across the city’s public schools had been suspended in 2013 compared with 2% of their White counterparts. The study also found that 90% of girls expelled from New York Schools in 2011-2012 were Black, whereas none of the girls expelled were White. Based upon the study, most of the girls’ infractions are for disobedience and deviance. Other research has found that Black girls are twice as likely as their White counterparts to be sent to the office and are five times as likely to be suspended or expelled (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). This study finds that Black girls are not only more likely to be sus-pended and expelled, they are more likely to be under constant surveillance by school administrators and disciplined for **“disobedience” and “defiance”** (E. W. Morris, 2007). In fact, according to the NAACP and National Women’s Law Center (2014), during the 2011-2012 school year, 12% of African American girls, from pre-K through 12th grade, were suspended. The rate is 6 times higher than that of White girls and is also higher than for White, Asian, and Latino boys. These numbers provide some insight into the condi-tions affecting Black girls’ experiences in schools.

## Afrofuturism in Education

#### The insertion of afro-futurism into teaching techniques such as art, music, and film, which aids in a collective reflection on the past as well as an orientation towards the future.

Womack 13 (Womack, Ytasha, award-winning filmmaker/author/journalist and choreographer, editor of [www.postblackexperience.com](http://www.postblackexperience.com), guest editor for NV Magazine, social media and pop culture expert, B.A in Mass Media Arts from Clark Atlanta University, studied Arts, Entertainment and Media Management at Columbia College. Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture. Chicago :Chicago Review Press, 2013. Print.)

One year, while teaching art to a group of students in a troubled inner-city area, Colleen Coleman wanted to discuss a made-for-TV film that had aired the night before. She felt the film, an apoca- lyptic tale where only a few suburbanites survived, would stimu- late an interesting discussion about survival and fortitude. To her surprise, the students resolved that if such a horror occurred, they would probably perish. She says, “I remember kids coming into the school saying, ‘We’re just going to die. It’s just going to be over.’ There was this certain apathy. They felt they had no control.” It’s a sentiment she felt intensified after 9/11 and is only com- plicated by the proliferation of drugs in many communities and returning soldiers and families who are wrestling with PTSD. However, Coleman, a recent graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, did her thesis on Afrofuturism. She believes that Afrofuturism can stimulate the imagination and give many kids the confidence to hope and expect more. “Afrofuturism allows you to play,” she says. Coleman was one of several teaching artists who worked with elementary and high school students to create art using Afrofuturism at the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts (MoCADA) in Brooklyn. Coleman found that many of her students over the years weren’t in touch with their imaginations. She says, “There’s a lack of creativity being germinated, and it has to do with being taught to the test. Teachers don’t have time to introduce young people to their imagination.” Coleman is now one of the teaching artists at the MoCADA, which is known for innovative workshops and exhibits. For the past twelve years, they have hosted a culminating art exhibit for the Artists-in-Schools Program, their twenty-to-thirty-week arts partnership with public schools in the neighborhood. They typically work with seven schools a year. “Most of our students’ schools don’t have art programs,” says Ruby Amanze, MoCADA director of education. The theme of the culminating art show changes from year to year, and the 2012 theme was a new one for the museum and the students: Afrofuturism. The children were asked to visualize the future and to create collective art projects. One group of students created a large door symbolizing a passageway into the future. Another used photog- raphy to depict how they wanted to be remembered in the future. Others recreated what black music would sound like. While the artwork was intriguing, the processes that led to the creation of the work were incredible. “Although it’s a visual art program, 80 percent of the focus includes a historical focus,” says Amanze. She adds, “At one school the teacher asked the boys how they would feel if the girls told their history and wrote out the boys. The boys were really upset at the thought of it.” But the discus- sion compelled many of the children to give some serious thought to the future, their connection to the future now, and the impact of the past. “I use Afrofuturism to get students to talk about their future,” says Coleman. “[Many] have a difficult time seeing a future. For some reason, the future is a blur, as if they live in the land where time stands still.” But she stimulates their minds. “I ask them why companies are building space stations. I ask them about the idea of people being intergalactic tourists and who will be able to afford it,” she says. “We talk about running out of water. I think they understand that there are dire issues that we have to address in the world. I’m hoping that by having these conversations, they will begin to think about what they can do for themselves as individuals and collectively how they can build a new society. I think it can open up a lot of possibilities.”

## Method Cards

#### We advocate a radical imagination through afrofuturism as a mechanism to counter hegemonic imaginations of the world and create a space for inclusivity and collective movements.

Matthews 17 (Matthews, Shanelle, Director of Communications for the Black Lives Matter Global Network. "This Black Futures Month, Give Yourself Permission To Dream." The Huffington Post. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 02 Feb. 2017. Web. 30 June 2017. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/black-imagination-vital-way-forward\_us\_5891dc4fe4b0522c7d3e1467>.)

We do all of this because we have to, but also because we know the goodness and rightness of our own dreams, even when it feels impossible to dream. I learned the hard way that people with power can tell a story about you, about who you are and what you’re capable of, about your worth – and whether the story is true or not, it shapes the way people treat you. And that’s something Black people are forced to contend with every single day. But our best weapon against the attempted sabotage of our dreams has always come from within – our self-love. Our self-love tells us that our imagination can never actually be taken from us. Though the world has tried. White people have long tethered the humanity of Black people to the whim of white imagination. The stories policymakers and racists tell about people like us and the places from which we come are predicated on assumptions imagined long before we were born by people who meant us harm. Those stories may be true for some individuals, but are untrue for whole communities. Those stories may have shaped the way people understand our place in the world, our trajectory and our value – but we do not assent. And those stories may have shaped people’s expectations of us, our desirability and our abilities – but they have never shaped us. To combat the oppressive hegemony of white storytelling, imagination – our biggest aspirations and most precious dreams, whatever they may be – will always be the fundamental first step to self-actualization and freedom. In recent years, we have gained ground in telling new stories, from Afrofuturism to Black imagination to contemporary re-imaginations of “the incredible myths and world-views of Black people and the Black diaspora,” Black people in these times may be more ready than ever to dream a world that is just for everyone. And that does not mean ignoring realities of the journey ahead. While we must guard our imagination fiercely, more of us – all of us – must dare to spread what we dream up. For many of us, doing so is a direct action of one, courageously creating a large, spacious place to be expansive with ourselves and to take up space, to call in a bastion of Black joy and abundance where the affirmation of our dignity and humanity are not up for debate, but acknowledged, lengthened, widened and nurtured. This is a place of unabashed desire and satisfaction. And when we find spaces to dream and imagine, what we once understood to be merely possible becomes exponentially more real. When we use dreaming and radical imagination as a strategy – like organizing, like communications, like fundraising – we can set concrete goals based in our highest visions and work in tandem to realize them. Through dreaming and radical imagination, we can manifest and develop the communities and build power to create the conditions that we need and want for our lives. The prejudicial legislation, biased and deadly policing and interpersonal and intra-community violence Black people experience at the hands of law enforcement, officers of the courts, prison workers and vigilantes are all consequences of imagined ideas, assumptions and perceptions about who we are inherently. Because oppression is so limiting to our physical and psychological well-being, we must commit to making space to dream – to making space for the wellbeing of our desire and our spirit to flourish. I have come to understand our obligation to dream and radically imagine the world we want and need as one with deep-seated moral and ethical implications as well. We have a duty to dream and radically imagine with fervor and passion and to embrace creativity, innovation and a fail-fast-to-learn-fast approach – a duty to yield ego and build collective power. We have a duty to have intimate and human conversations with people with different political opinions without compromising our integrity or our own imagination, the kind of conversations that can realize real improvements in all of our lives, conversations that start movements and facilitate the process of organizing our country into a safe place for all people. It’s a dreamy process – as it should be – and it’s a process and a space that leads with inclusivity and a commitment to justice, not intimidation and fear. Black people deserve dream space. We deserve to laugh and to delight, to muse and to meditate. We are a deeply rich and imaginative people, and we are more than what happened to us. In many ways we have long been creating the world we need and the spaces that we deserve. Now is the time to make a commitment to dream even bigger and more audaciously than ever before.

**Affirmation of our historical counter-future is a gesture of defiance that heals and creates new growth and new life via transgressive epistemologies**

**Morris 2012**(Susana, Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Auburn University) Fall/Winter “Black Girls Are from the Future: Afrofuturist Feminism in Octavia E. Butler's "Fledgling"” Women's Studies Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 3/4, ENCHANTMENT (FALL/WINTER 2012), pp. 146-166)//KM

Speculative fiction, that is, science fiction, fantasy, horror, and futurist fiction, has largely been (mis)understood as a genre written only by whites (mostly men) about whites (again, mostly men). However, by the end of the twentieth century black writers such as Samuel Delaney, Octavia E. Butler, Steven Barnes, Tananarive Due, and Nalo Hopkinson, among others, reflected a tradition of black speculative fiction known as Afrofu turism.6 My use of the term "Afrofuturism" is particularly informed by Afrofuturist scholars Mark Dery, Alondra Nelson, Lisa Yaszek, and Kodwo Eshun. Dery coined the term "Afrofuturism" in 1994 to "describe African American cultures appropriation of technology and SF imagery" (2008, 6). He further notes that "speculative fiction that treats African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of tech nology and a prosthetically enhanced future ... might, for want of a bet ter term, be called Afro-Futurism" (8). Dery s portmanteau of "afro" and "futurism" denotes the important connection between race and futurist fiction, a circumstance that tends to go unacknowledged in mainstream speculative fiction.7 In addition to Dery's definition, Alondra Nelson's groundbreaking work—including editing the special issue of Social Text devoted to Afrofuturism and founding the Afrofuturism Listserv and website—has been vital to the development of Afrofuturism criticism and scholarship. Nelson contends that Afrofuturism forwards "takes on digital culture that do not fall into the trap of the neocritics or the futurists of one hundred years past. These works represent new directions in the study of African diaspora culture that are grounded in the histories of black com munities, rather than seeking to sever all connections to them" (2002, 9). Likewise, Afrofuturist scholar Lisa Yaszek suggests, "While early Afrofuturists are concerned primarily with the question of whether or not there will be any future whatsoever for people of color, contemporary Afrofuturists assume that in the future race will continue to matter to individuals and entire civilizations alike. In doing so, they expand our sense of the possible and contribute to the ongoing development of science fiction itself" (2006). My use of Afrofuturism is also informed by Kodwo Eshun's asser tion that Afrofuturism is "concerned with the possibilities for interven tion within the dimension of the predictive, the projected, the proleptic, the envisioned, the virtual, the anticipatory and the future conditional" (2003, 293). Furthermore, it is important to note, as Eshun contends, that "Afrofuturism may be characterized as a program for recovering the histories of counter-futures created in a century hostile to Afrodiasporic projection and as a space within which the critical work of manufacturing tools capable of intervention within the current political dispensation may be undertaken" (301). Thus, Afrofuturism is an epistemology that both examines the current problems faced by blacks and people of color more generally and critiques interpretations of the past and the future. Ulti mately, Dery, Nelson, Yaszek, and Eshun illuminate that one of Afrofuturism's foremost guiding tenets is the centrality of African diasporic histories and practices in sustaining progressive visions of the future. Put another way, not only does Afrofuturism posit that blacks will exist in the future, as opposed to being harbingers of social chaos and collapse, but in "recovering the histories of counter-futures" Afrofuturism insists that blacks fundamentally are the future and that Afrodiasporic cultural practices are vital to imagining the continuance of human society. Because much of Afrofuturism's transgressive politics align with the fundamental tenets of black feminist thought, I argue that it is critical to understand these epistemologies not only as related but as, in fact, in conversation with one another and potentially even symbiotic. Just as Afrofuturism underscores the centrality of blacks to futurist knowledge and cultural production and resistance to tyranny, so does black feminist thought contend that black peoples experience, knowledge, and culture are vitally important. Black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins claims, "Black feminist thought affirms, rearticulates, and provides a vehicle for expressing in public a consciousness that quite often already exists" (2000, 32). Moreover, just as Afrofuturism seeks to liberate the possibilities that open up when blackness is linked to futurity, so does black feminist thought seek to uncouple dominance from power as blacks assert their agency, for as bell hooks declares, "Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back,' that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice" (1989, 9). This movement toward a liberated voice, as hooks suggests, is not about simply replacing the dom inant voice with the voice of the marginalized; rather, liberation is cast in terms of coalition and power sharing, methodologies that would incite a future quite different from the hegemony of present structures. I want to consider the synthesis of Afrofuturism and black feminist thought as Afrofuturist feminism. Afrofuturist feminism is a reflection of the shared central tenets of Afrofuturism and black feminist thought and reflects a literary tradition in which people of African descent and transgressive, feminist practices born of or from across the Afrodiaspora are key to a pro gressive future. Ultimately, I argue that recognizing Afrofuturist feminism offers a critical epistemology that illuminates the working of black speculative fiction in vital ways. Octavia Butler is certainly among the authors whose works exemplify Afrofuturist feminism. In her essay "Positive Obsession," Butler asserts that speculative fiction has the potential to catalyze progressive political change and that, for black people, this is a particularly significant project. She writes: What good is any form of literature to Black people? What good is sci ence fictions thinking about the present, the future, and the past? What good is its tendency to warn or to consider alternative ways of think ing and doing? What good is its examination of the possible effects of science and technology, or social organization and political direction? At its best, science fiction stimulates imagination and creativity. It gets reader and writer off the beaten track, off the narrow, narrow footpath of what "everyone" is saying, doing, thinking—whoever "everyone" happens to be this year. And what good is all this to Black people? (2005b, 135). Butlers rhetorical questions and subsequent answers reject the notion that speculative fiction is a "whites only" enterprise, arguing instead that the genre can incite d for a variety of people. Also, Butlers emphasis on the transformative potential of speculative fiction underscores her Afrofuturist work as being defined by a feminist sensibility. That is, her works of speculative fiction not only adhere to the tenets of Afrofuturism but also are self-consciously interested in the con nections between race, gender, sexuality, and ability that are at the core of black feminist thought. Indeed, as Marilyn Mehaffy and AnaLouise Keating note, "Octavia Butler s work is thematically preoccupied with the potentiality of genetically altered bodies—hybrid multispecies and multi ethnic subjectivities—for revising contemporary nationalist, racist, sexist, and homophobic attitudes" (2001,45). Thus, Butler s work is Afrofuturist feminism in several ways. Her texts are committed to portraying compli cated (and sometimes vexed) histories of people of color and visions of the future with people of color at the center, with a particular emphasis on women of color. Butlers fiction is also fundamentally interested in critiquing conventional systems of power and dominance and offering futurist solutions based on cooperation and egalitarian ethics. Thus, Butlers writing consistently advocates transgressing repressive social norms and rejecting heteropatriarchy, while centering (or creating) a variety of experiences from across the Afrodiaspora. Nonetheless, while Butler's Afrofuturist work underscores a commitment to an equitable vision of society, it does not resort to simply offering up Utopias. Butler s visions of the future are often ambivalent ones that reveal an ongoing struggle for peace and justice. To that end, while contemporary vampires (and other principle figures and tropes of speculative fiction) are often illustrated as a way to crystallize and affirm whiteness and Western values, Butlers Afrofuturist feminism radically challenges these tenets. She (re)configures vampires as power ful beings not outside of the history of racism, but as powerful, enchant ing beings that are both vulnerable to the constraints of racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism (and their attendant violence) and committed to creating futures for them and those they love that reject these ways of knowing. Nevertheless, I am not arguing that Fledgling is (simply) a reac tionary text. As Kimberly Nichelle Brown argues, "Contemporary African American female writing is a product of choice, of agency, rather than solely a reaction to victimization" (2010, 64). In other words, I see the novel participating in a tradition of feminist resistance in literature that also taps into the potential (albeit sometimes unrealized) that speculative fiction has to interrogate and challenge normative ideologies and practice. That is not to say that Butler s Afrofuturistic vampires are not enchanted or enchanting; however, they break from many of the traditional or con ventionally popular tropes. These vampires are a biological species, not a supernatural force. Some of them are "daywalkers " or, in other words, can move about in the sun. They have preternatural strength but they are not invincible. They have seductive powers of persuasion that they largely use for good, not evil. They live in nonnormative groups with or among human beings and are (generally) not antagonistic to humans. Although not magical creatures, Butlers vampires are, nevertheless, enchanted because of the power that they wield, despite their various flaws and vul nerabilities and their ability to radically alter their surroundings and chal lenge normative notions of how to be.

#### Using Afrofuturism in concordance with the power of imaginative mythos engages normative race and gender structures to create new epistemic forms of knowledge production, using stories that have been impossible to imagine.

**Barr 08** (Marleen Barr, pioneering work in feminist sci-ence fiction theory, teaches in the Department of Communication and Media Studies at Fordham University. She has won the Science Fiction Research Association Pilgrim Award for lifetime achievement in sci-ence fiction criticism. Barr is the author of Alien to Femininity: Specula-tive Fiction and Feminist Theory; Lost In Space: Probing Feminist Science Fiction and Beyond; Feminist Fabulation: Space/Postmodern Fiction; Genre Fission: A New Discourse Practice for Cultural Studies; and Oy Pioneer!: A Novel. She has edited many anthologies and coedited the special science fiction issue of PMLA. “Afro-Future Females: Black Writers Chart Science Fiction’s Newest, New-Wave Trajectory”, 2008, Ohio State University, Library of Congress)//KM

The central point of Afro-Future Females is that black women impact upon science fiction as authors, protagonists, actresses, and editors. I wish to create a dialogue with existing theories of Afro-Futurism in order to gen-erate fresh ideas about how to apply race to science fiction studies in terms of gender. Afro-Future Females at once applies Afro-Futurism to written and visual texts and offers something very different from existing scholar-ship. The volume’s contributors expand Mark Dery’s masculinist foundation for our understanding of Afro-Futurism by explaining how to formulate a woman-centered Afro-Futurism. Their essays and stories present a valu-able argument concerned with repositioning previously excluded fiction to redefine science fiction as a broader fantastic endeavor. These texts can be used as a platform for scholars to mount a vigorous argument in favor of redefining science fiction to encompass varieties of fantastic writing and, therefore, to include a range of black women’s writing that would otherwise be excluded.4 The anthology’s umbrella approach is not new in that it has for a long time been reflected by “speculative fiction” and by Eric S. Rabkin’s notion of a “super genre.”5 While presenting a complex method to redefine “science fiction” is certainly beyond the purview of this preface, I note that my term “feminist fabulation”6 encompasses black women’s science fiction. The big-tent rubric figures in this collection’s central argument which goes beyond the point that marginalized texts and authors have been excluded from the itself-marginalized science fiction genre. Instead, I emphasize that it is necessary to revise the very nature of a genre that has been constructed in such a way as to exclude its new black participants. It is necessary to rethink “science fiction” in light of Afro-Futurist fiction. For example, the stories by Octavia E. Butler, Andrea Hairston, Nisi Shawl, Sheree R. Thomas, and Nalo Hopkinson which I have included col-lectively indicate the ways in which science fiction should be reconceptual-ized. Traditional constructions of science fiction have divided the genre into a fantastic continuum that often excludes fantasy, women, and people of color. The claim that black people do not write science fiction is depen-dent upon defining science fiction as texts that black people do not write. **Expanding “science fiction” to include written and visual Afro-Futuristic imaginative visions changes the dynamic in which science fiction is always defined as inferior to mainstream realistic literature**.7 For this change to occur—in order to end the marginalization of sci-ence fiction which relentlessly relegates the genre to subliterary status—it is necessary to define the broad fantastic tendency in Afro-Futurist texts as science fiction. In their contributions to this volume, Madhu Dubey and DeWitt Douglas Kilgore describe a new enlarged fantastic tendency. Kilgore points to the intermingling of fantasy, time, and history: **I see their work** [stories written by Nnedi Okorafor-Mbachu, Nisi Shawl, and Jarla Tangh] **as part of a feminist tradition in African-American lit-erature that imaginatively engages mythic and historical pasts in order to describe livable futures.** These pasts have been visible but marginal in rela-tion to Anglo-American science fiction and fantasy. I argue that Okorafor, Shawl, and Tangh bring these pasts into contact with the conventions and expectations fantastic literature fosters. Having no desire to erase the read-ing pleasures associated with speculative fiction, these authors use story telling conventions inherited from the Anglo-American literary tradition in unintended ways. The writers venture beyond merely moving black female characters and their histories into previously white and male pre-cincts to create “diverse” versions of familiar tales. Instead, they directly engage genre conventions to change what and how we read. Thus, fantastic literature’s resources are used to tell stories that have been impossible to imagine. Black science fiction writers alter genre conventions to change how we read and define science fiction itself.

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Speculative fiction, that is, science fiction, fantasy, horror, and futurist fiction, has largely been (mis)understood as a genre written only by whites (mostly men) about whites (again, mostly men). However, by the end of the twentieth century black writers such as Samuel Delaney, Octavia E. Butler, Steven Barnes, Tananarive Due, and Nalo Hopkinson, among others, reflected a tradition of black speculative fiction known as Afrofu turism.6 My use of the term "Afrofuturism" is particularly informed by Afrofuturist scholars Mark Dery, Alondra Nelson, Lisa Yaszek, and Kodwo Eshun. Dery coined the term "Afrofuturism" in 1994 to "describe African American cultures appropriation of technology and SF imagery" (2008, 6). He further notes that "speculative fiction that treats African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of tech nology and a prosthetically enhanced future ... might, for want of a bet ter term, be called Afro-Futurism" (8). Dery s portmanteau of "afro" and "futurism" denotes the important connection between race and futurist fiction, a circumstance that tends to go unacknowledged in mainstream speculative fiction.7 In addition to Dery's definition, Alondra Nelson's groundbreaking work—including editing the special issue of Social Text devoted to Afrofuturism and founding the Afrofuturism Listserv and website—has been vital to the development of Afrofuturism criticism and scholarship. Nelson contends that Afrofuturism forwards "takes on digital culture that do not fall into the trap of the neocritics or the futurists of one hundred years past. These works represent new directions in the study of African diaspora culture that are grounded in the histories of black com munities, rather than seeking to sever all connections to them" (2002, 9). Likewise, Afrofuturist scholar Lisa Yaszek suggests, "While early Afrofuturists are concerned primarily with the question of whether or not there will be any future whatsoever for people of color, contemporary Afrofuturists assume that in the future race will continue to matter to individuals and entire civilizations alike. In doing so, they expand our sense of the possible and contribute to the ongoing development of science fiction itself" (2006). My use of Afrofuturism is also informed by Kodwo Eshun's asser tion that Afrofuturism is "concerned with the possibilities for interven tion within the dimension of the predictive, the projected, the proleptic, the envisioned, the virtual, the anticipatory and the future conditional" (2003, 293). Furthermore, it is important to note, as Eshun contends, that "Afrofuturism may be characterized as a program for recovering the histories of counter-futures created in a century hostile to Afrodiasporic projection and as a space within which the critical work of manufacturing tools capable of intervention within the current political dispensation may be undertaken" (301). Thus, Afrofuturism is an epistemology that both examines the current problems faced by blacks and people of color more generally and critiques interpretations of the past and the future. Ulti mately, Dery, Nelson, Yaszek, and Eshun illuminate that one of Afrofuturism's foremost guiding tenets is the centrality of African diasporic histories and practices in sustaining progressive visions of the future. Put another way, not only does Afrofuturism posit that blacks will exist in the future, as opposed to being harbingers of social chaos and collapse, but in "recovering the histories of counter-futures" Afrofuturism insists that blacks fundamentally are the future and that Afrodiasporic cultural practices are vital to imagining the continuance of human society. Because much of Afrofuturism's transgressive politics align with the fundamental tenets of black feminist thought, I argue that it is critical to understand these epistemologies not only as related but as, in fact, in conversation with one another and potentially even symbiotic. Just as Afrofuturism underscores the centrality of blacks to futurist knowledge and cultural production and resistance to tyranny, so does black feminist thought contend that black peoples experience, knowledge, and culture are vitally important. Black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins claims, "Black feminist thought affirms, rearticulates, and provides a vehicle for expressing in public a consciousness that quite often already exists" (2000, 32). Moreover, just as Afrofuturism seeks to liberate the possibilities that open up when blackness is linked to futurity, so does black feminist thought seek to uncouple dominance from power as blacks assert their agency, for as bell hooks declares, "Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back,' that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice" (1989, 9). This movement toward a liberated voice, as hooks suggests, is not about simply replacing the dom inant voice with the voice of the marginalized; rather, liberation is cast in terms of coalition and power sharing, methodologies that would incite a future quite different from the hegemony of present structures. I want to consider the synthesis of Afrofuturism and black feminist thought as Afrofuturist feminism. Afrofuturist feminism is a reflection of the shared central tenets of Afrofuturism and black feminist thought and reflects a literary tradition in which people of African descent and transgressive, feminist practices born of or from across the Afrodiaspora are key to a pro gressive future. Ultimately, I argue that recognizing Afrofuturist feminism offers a critical epistemology that illuminates the working of black speculative fiction in vital ways. Octavia Butler is certainly among the authors whose works exemplify Afrofuturist feminism. In her essay "Positive Obsession," Butler asserts that speculative fiction has the potential to catalyze progressive political change and that, for black people, this is a particularly significant project. She writes: What good is any form of literature to Black people? What good is sci ence fictions thinking about the present, the future, and the past? What good is its tendency to warn or to consider alternative ways of think ing and doing? What good is its examination of the possible effects of science and technology, or social organization and political direction? At its best, science fiction stimulates imagination and creativity. It gets reader and writer off the beaten track, off the narrow, narrow footpath of what "everyone" is saying, doing, thinking—whoever "everyone" happens to be this year. And what good is all this to Black people? (2005b, 135). Butlers rhetorical questions and subsequent answers reject the notion that speculative fiction is a "whites only" enterprise, arguing instead that the genre can incite d for a variety of people. Also, Butlers emphasis on the transformative potential of speculative fiction underscores her Afrofuturist work as being defined by a feminist sensibility. That is, her works of speculative fiction not only adhere to the tenets of Afrofuturism but also are self-consciously interested in the con nections between race, gender, sexuality, and ability that are at the core of black feminist thought. Indeed, as Marilyn Mehaffy and AnaLouise Keating note, "Octavia Butler s work is thematically preoccupied with the potentiality of genetically altered bodies—hybrid multispecies and multi ethnic subjectivities—for revising contemporary nationalist, racist, sexist, and homophobic attitudes" (2001,45). Thus, Butler s work is Afrofuturist feminism in several ways. Her texts are committed to portraying compli cated (and sometimes vexed) histories of people of color and visions of the future with people of color at the center, with a particular emphasis on women of color. Butlers fiction is also fundamentally interested in critiquing conventional systems of power and dominance and offering futurist solutions based on cooperation and egalitarian ethics. Thus, Butlers writing consistently advocates transgressing repressive social norms and rejecting heteropatriarchy, while centering (or creating) a variety of experiences from across the Afrodiaspora. Nonetheless, while Butler's Afrofuturist work underscores a commitment to an equitable vision of society, it does not resort to simply offering up Utopias. Butler s visions of the future are often ambivalent ones that reveal an ongoing struggle for peace and justice. To that end, while contemporary vampires (and other principle figures and tropes of speculative fiction) are often illustrated as a way to crystallize and affirm whiteness and Western values, Butlers Afrofuturist feminism radically challenges these tenets. She (re)configures vampires as power ful beings not outside of the history of racism, but as powerful, enchant ing beings that are both vulnerable to the constraints of racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism (and their attendant violence) and committed to creating futures for them and those they love that reject these ways of knowing. Nevertheless, I am not arguing that Fledgling is (simply) a reac tionary text. As Kimberly Nichelle Brown argues, "Contemporary African American female writing is a product of choice, of agency, rather than solely a reaction to victimization" (2010, 64). In other words, I see the novel participating in a tradition of feminist resistance in literature that also taps into the potential (albeit sometimes unrealized) that speculative fiction has to interrogate and challenge normative ideologies and practice. That is not to say that Butler s Afrofuturistic vampires are not enchanted or enchanting; however, they break from many of the traditional or con ventionally popular tropes. These vampires are a biological species, not a supernatural force. Some of them are "daywalkers " or, in other words, can move about in the sun. They have preternatural strength but they are not invincible. They have seductive powers of persuasion that they largely use for good, not evil. They live in nonnormative groups with or among human beings and are (generally) not antagonistic to humans. Although not magical creatures, Butlers vampires are, nevertheless, enchanted because of the power that they wield, despite their various flaws and vul nerabilities and their ability to radically alter their surroundings and chal lenge normative notions of how to be..

#### BOMB solvency card

**Rollefson 2008**( J Griffith, THE "ROBOT VOODOO POWER" THESIS: AFROFUTURISM AND ANTI-ANTI-ESSENTIALISM FROM SUN RA, Rollefson, J Griffith, Black Music Research Journal; Spring 2008; 28, 1; ProQuest pg. 83 )//KM

Does the fact that Sun Ra opted out of humanity in the mid-195os just as the civil rights movement was gaining steam in the United States cast him as a race traitor? Do Parliament's overindulgent "Spacepimps" undermine the project of racial equality? Can Keith's "Black Elvis" be considered anything more than a postmodern joke? In short, are Myth-Science, P-Funk, and Robot Voodoo Power signs of resignation and hopeless fantasy or "real" answers that have meaning in the material world—a world that cannot seem to escape the perpetuation of racism? I would like to assert that t**hey do have real political efficacy because they problematize the rigid binary of blackness/whiteness and the matrix of binaries that are inscribed upon this central set.** Remarkably, Afrofutur-ism performs this destabilization from a staunchly oppositional position that is decidedly black because it is rooted in the historical reality of white universalist racism and continuously works against that history. While Du Bois advises African Americans to maintain their race identity until the United States meets them on their terms, the Afrofuturists diversify black-ness while recuperating Du Bois's steadfastness. As Sun Ra explained in A Joyful Noise: "**I have to judge a tree by the fruit. I don't like what I see and I don't want to be a part of it.**" The materialist foundations of this seemingly idealist project are nowhere more evident. I would argue that the broadly defined Afrofuturist project takes its lead from this position. Although Afrofuturism draws on tropes of exodus and seems to promote an escape from reality, i**t instead does very real social and cultural work**. **Afrofuturism is itself a mode of meaning-making and historical production that navigates, counters, and ultimately transcends the history of African-American oppression while retaining a critical blackness.** While Afrofuturist dialectics recognize myths and collapse ossified binaries into dynamic unities, the episteme is grounded in its material opposition to white racist universalism. **By stepping outside of the white liberal tradition and rewriting blackness in all its complexity, Afrofuturism offers a novel form of revolution that is rooted in a long history of black opposition.** Indeed, the Afrofuturist project speaks to a very broad group of people and a broad range of material issues. The AfroFuturism listsery itself has over three hundred members and the music, literature, art, drama, and sports that are discussed in that forum reach countless millions. The recent success of Gnarls Barkley—the critically acclaimed collaboration of Cee-Lo and Danger Mouse—is indicative of Afrofuturism's continued popular appeal. On the track "Transformer," Cee-Lo speaks from the perspective of a "microchip off the old block," an identity-shifting robot who echoes De La Soul's "I Am I Be," rapping: "I'm just being myself / Plus I gotta be me too / Silly of me to think that / I couldn't bring myself to be you" (2oo6). Reporting on an August 2(306 concert in New York's Central Park, Billboard. corn's Michael Ayers wrote of the group: "What seemingly was a one-off side project has turned into mega-success, and will probably carry them right into Grammy nods galore. But on this night, the Gnarls camp was in good spirits and celebrating a newly confirmed platinum award for i mil-lion U.S. shipments of its debut, 'St. Elsewhere.' Part of the Gnarls Barkley shtick is their playful identity, where they never really assume themselves, but instead riff on past popular culture entities" (2oo6). Notably, this "shtick" is in fact part of a larger movement that employs the past to envision new futures. Yet whether critics or fans conceive of Afrofuturist culture as such seems beside the point. **By engaging people in an active appreciation of such fantastic visions, Afrofuturism primes the mind and body to both imagine and live in a world apart from that depicted in the rationalized histories of Western civilization.** Perhaps just as impor-tantly, the visibility of Afrofuturism in the African American artistic canon should offer some sense of the power of this project. Thoughtful authors such as Ralph Ellison, Amiri Baraka, and Ishmael Reed, brilliant artists such as13asquiat, Fatimah Tuggar, and the increased scholarly attention to street art, in addition to the countless musicians that are most visible in the field all attest to Afrofuturism's political and material power. It is no mistake that the Afrofuturist critique makes its case most poi-gnantly in the realm of the arts, for **aesthetic creation bypasses the strictures of rhetorical logic in favor of an embodied position**. For the literary and cultural theorist Fred Moten **the experience of double consciousness is intimately tied to the bifurcations and ruptures of Enlightenment thought and its central mind /body binary.** As he argues in his In the Break: The Aes-thetics of the Black Radical Tradition (2003), black artistic performance holds the potential of expressing an imminent critique of Western rationality and its systems of meaning from an embodied position. **Afrofuturism is in this regard a decidedly materialist rather than idealist project**. Indeed, the "break" that he speaks of is first and foremost a recognition of the rupture between language and the speech act that provides a site of opposition—**a place where counter-meanings can be constructed and (white) rationality can be critiqued.** Moten writes: "This disruption of the Enlightenment linguistic project is of fundamental importance since it allows a rearrange-ment of the relationship between notions of human freedom and notions of human essence" (2oo3, 7). Moten uses Frederick Douglass's reminiscence about his Aunt Hester's scream upon being beaten by her white slave master as a nexus upon which to focus his examination of the multiple valences of the break. Here, the central bifurcation that he highlights is actually a sutured rupture between the human and commodity. It is a mended break embodied in Aunt Hes-ter's screaming voice and her corollary in Marx's figure of the "speaking commodity" of which Marx writes: "Nevertheless the table continues to be wood, an ordinary, sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a com-modity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness . . . it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will" ([1867] 1990, 163). Marx continues in a later passage: "If commodities could speak they would say this: our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value. Our own intercourse as commodities proves it" (176). Moten's point, of course, is that Marx has one thing wrong here. Commodities do speak. Aunt Hester's scream proves it. That Marx's humanized commodity figure does not make sense reveals the fundamental flaw of the Enlightenment project. By the rules of Western subjectivity she/it should not exist, but we know she/it does exist because of the horribly embodied scream—and moreover because she/it does think, because she/it does dance, because she/it does make love. Further citing Marx, Moten argues for the performativity of the scream that: "It is a passion wherein 'the senses have . . . become theoreticians in their immediate practice.' The commodity whose speech sounds embod-ies the critique of value, of private property, of the sign" (2003, 11-12). Here Moten brilliantly illustrates that Marx's speaking commodity and the Hegelian master/slave dialectic are much more than metaphorical tools, they embody the historically violent realities of Western systems of signification. **In short, he illustrates the centrality of slavery to Enlighten-ment universalism and lays bare the processes by which the mind/body split was accomplished though the subjugation of the black body.** Here we see that the anomaly of the speaking commodity is a "theoretician in immediate practice" (Marx quoted in Moten, 2003, 11-12). Thus, Moten argues that the black radical aesthetic has become the critical—the artis-tic has become the scholarly—through its very existence and resistance. Indeed, he challenges the formal strictures of (white) scholarly discourse by delivering his argument in In the Break as a sort of poetic internal dia-logue rather than in the pseudo-objective style of conventional scholarly writing. It is this disjuncture or "break"—the glaring anomaly of material rac-ism at the heart of ideal universalism—that is seized upon by Afrofuturist critiques of Western rationalism and its white supremacy. Sun Ra, George Clinton, and Kool Keith embody their critique through the sights, sounds, and movements of their interplanetary presences and therefore move past the written rhetoric that has upheld the fallacies of liberty and equality—"rising up above what they call liberty and what they call equality" as Sun Ra put it (Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise 1980). Their very voices are an immanent critique of the Western hegemony of signification. In times such as these when the words "democracy" and "freedom" ring empty—when they are broken from their emancipatory potential by self-interested military indus-trialists and **when declarations of "humanitarian crises" are based more on considerations of race, class, and power than the universal value of human life**, it seems that **we might look for alternatives to this ancient and now co-opted rhetoric.** Cast by slaveholders and forged in the fires of colonialism this ossified ideology no longer moves people. By contrast Sun Ra, Clinton, and Keith also avoid the essentializing pit-falls of ethnic nationalism while recovering its emotional and embodied assets. These Afrofuturists do not subscribe to the narratives of scientific progress that forecast an end to ethnic nationalisms and racial strife nor do they see the current vision of a race-free future as a place they wish to live. But they are no more interested in a return to an idyllic, primordial, and racially pure motherland. Surely, no place will ever, nor has ever, existed. Instead, through their art Ra, Clinton, Keith, and a host of others involved in Afrofuturist and anti-anti-essentialist projects are working toward a place and time in which this polarized vision no longer makes any sense. And in a typically playful manner, they are all the while laughing at the very thought of such simplistically dualistic human notions. The Afrofuturist strategy thus carves out a new emancipatory potential—a fantastic but ethi-cal anti-anti-essentialist third way—by recovering the hope of the future and the solidarity of the past.

#### The paradox of the present is a black hole- it presents the black female body for continual nonblack consumption while simultaneously consuming her. The aff's creation of alternative realities is a fissure that breaks from the present and exists in a black future where our survival is possible.

**Turpin 2014** (Cherie Ann, Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of the District of Columbia) August “Strategic Disruptions: Black Feminism and Afrofuturism” <http://afrofuturismscholar.com/2014/08/24/work-in-progress-strategic-disruptions-black-feminism-and-afrofuturism-by-cherie-ann-turpin/> )//KM

The beginning of the 21st century marked a shift towards a shaping and attempts at cultivating an aesthetic and critical apparatus to respond to an emerging artistic movement within literature, music, and visual art called Afrofuturism. Afrofuturism opens possibilities of developing responses to ideas about where and how people of African descent could position themselves as intricate parts of human collectives and unknown futures, especially as we move towards realizing virtual and digitalized forms of cultural expression. Further, subjectivity and taking personal agency to create imagined worlds where Black people are leaders is a strong challenge to the weakened but still existing stereotypes of Black women and men as non-intellectual or limited in technological knowledge. Development of Afrofuturism as an aesthetic, theory, or as a process is fraught with the many of same critical debates and discursive tensions that continue to permeate through Black Feminism with regard to essentialism, identity politics, performativity, and aesthetic concerns. Parallel commentary regarding bodies, gender, and race have continued to impact critical responses to speculative and science fiction coming from Afro-Diasporic writers in the 20th and 21st century. “Ironically, African-American critical theory provides very sophisticated tools for the analysis of cyberculture, since African-American critics have been discussing the problem of multiple identities, fragmented personae, and liminality for more than 100 years” Tal (1996). Making connections between two flourishing movements is not so much the issue as it is negotiating the discursive tensions with regard to political and aesthetic concerns. In order to understand these discursive tensions permeating critical reception of gender and race in Afrofuturist culture, this essay will discuss the role of critical debates and critical tensions in Black Feminist theory, as well as its role in the development of Afrofuturism as critical theory. Stereotypes regarding Black women and intellectual abilities continue to be extremely difficult to unravel in the 21st century by Black feminists who seek to build a counter-text to them. However, as noted earlier, some Black feminist theorists have attempted to take on this difficult task in order to recover Black womanhood from degradation. “Women develop theories, characters, art, and beauty free of the pressures of meeting male approval, societal standards, color-based taxonomies, or run-of-the-mill female expectations. The results are works that some critics call uncategorizable” Womack (2013). Black feminists have persisted in creating fissures in these “bodies” of “knowledge” in order to question and unravel these stereotypes, while opening possibilities for critical inquiry that would traverse new terrain in Africana women’s speculative/science fiction. Black Feminist Theory Early Approaches Over the course of well over forty years, Black women intellectuals have engaged in theoretical debate and discussion as a means towards building a critical apparatus that would address both aesthetic and political concerns regarding the “place” and “position” of Black women writers, artists, in addition to our presence as academics in higher education. Barbara Smith’s “call to action” for a Black feminist theory during the 1970s, argued for a breaking of racial and gendered silence in understanding Black women writers’ work: “Black women’s existence, experience, and culture and the brutally complex systems of oppression which shape these in the in `real world’ of white and/or male consciousness beneath consideration, invisible, unknown” Smith (1978). For Smith, Black women struggled to be heard and acknowledged as contributors to literary traditions, and as “outsiders,” were subject to marginalization in academic discourse. During the 70s, 80s and 90s, Black Feminism as a form of literary inquiry, or what became known as “Black Feminist Theory,” came into the academic community through the work of Barbara Smith, the Combahee River Collective, Mary Helen Washington, Toni Cade Bambara, Audre Lorde, Michelle Wallace, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Angela Davis, bell hooks, Alice Walker, Evelynn Hammond, Barbara Christian, Deborah McDowell, Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, Valerie Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, June Jordan, and Hortense Spillers. Approaches to Black feminist theory during the 1980s were fraught with debates regarding politics of language, which in turn unfolded tensions between what some Black feminists saw as essentialism and what other Black feminists saw as articulation of what had been deemed by the hegemony as unspeakable and unacceptable in an overwhelming White, male, heteronormative academy: the Black female body. Barbara Christian warned of the dangers of becoming entangled in “academic language” that that could not only alienate and exclude, but miss engaging in crucial inquiries: “Academic language has become the new metaphysic through which we turn leaden idiom into golden discourse. But by writing more important thinking exclusively in this language, we not only speak but to ourselves, we also are in danger of not asking those critical questions which our native tongues insist we ask” Christian (1989). Christian’s concerns were in part a response to Hazel Carby, who debated and disagreed with Christian and McDowell’s critique regarding the direction of Black feminism towards a discursive body infused with dense, Eurocentric language designed to exclude: “For I feel that the new emphasis on literary critical theory is as hegemonic as the world which it attacks” (Christian, 1987). Hazel Carby, paraphrasing Elaine Showalter in her introduction to Reconstructing Womanhood, suggested a model of black feminist theory, which would occur in three phases: “(1) the concentration on the misogyny (and racism) of literary practice; (2) the discovery that (black) women writers had a literature of their own (previously hidden by patriarchal [and racist] values) and the development of a (black) female aesthetic; and (3) a challenge to and rethinking of the conceptual grounds of literary study and an increased concern with theory” Carby (1987). Carby rejected the notion of shared experience between black women critics and black women writers as ahistorical and essentialist. She did “not assume the existence of a tradition or traditions of black women writings and, indeed, is critical of traditions of Afro-American intellectual thought that have been constructed as paradigmatic of Afro-American history” (Carby, 1987). Carby saw “black feminist” and ‘black woman” as being signs; black feminist theory, in her view, must interrogate the sign as “an arena of struggle and a construct between socially organized persons in the process of their interaction [and] as conditioned by the social organization of the participants involved and also by the immediate conditions of their interactions” (Carby, 1987). Language in black women’s literature, in Carby’s view, was not some universal code of communication or an essentialist vision of communion between black women (Carby, 1987). Carby intersected critical and political aspects of reading which serve to modify poststructuralist models of criticism with the intention of moving black feminist criticism directly in the midst of “the race for theory.” Deborah McDowell noted the importance of the work completed and progress made by critics coming out of Black Arts Movement and the Black Feminist Movement to bring Black female writers into the larger academic discourse McDowell (1990). “ In isolating and affirming the particulars of black female experience they inspired and authorized writers from those cultures to sing in their different voices and to imagine an audience that could hear the song” (McDowell, 1990). Elizabeth Alexander views the 80-90s struggle for theoretical ground as counterproductive to transformation of academic inquiry and academic space: “As “race” became a “category,” and much intellectual energy was put into critiquing “essentialism,” the focus was lost on actual people of color, their voices and contributions, as well as, more practically, the importance of increasing their—out—empowered presence on campuses and in other workplaces. The extreme reaches are not unimaginable: a gender studies without women, “race” studies without black people and other people of color” (McDowell, 1990). Black Feminism and Marginality Politics Other Black feminists furthered the call for theory through series of reshaping and reimagining European theoretical apparatuses, borrowing discursive strategies introduced by Bahktin, Derrida, Freud/Lacan in order to do what Audre Lorde warned could not be done: use the Master’s Tools to dismantle the Master’s “House,” which could be considered as signified through imposition of “theoretical discourse.” For example, Wallace borrowed Houston Baker’s trope of the black hole, in which “black holes may give access to other dimensions…and object …enters the black hole and is infinitely compressed to zero volume…it passes through to another dimension, whereupon the object…reassumes…all of the properties of visibility and concreteness, but in another dimension” Wallace (1990). The dialectic of black women’s art is forced into the position of “other” by white women and black men, who are themselves other to white men (Wallace, 1990). The trope of the black hole described the dimensions of negation, and described the repressed accumulation of black feminist creativity as compressed mass, negated from existence in the race and production of theory (Wallace, 1990). “The outsider sees black feminist creativity as a hole from which nothing worthwhile can emerge and in which everything is forced to assume the zero volume of nothingness, the invisibility, that results from the intense pressure of race, class and sex” (Wallace, 1990). Here, Wallace attempted to address what Mary O’Connor considered to be “nothingness….as a place of origin for …much of black feminist writing…imposed from without, entity defined by the patriarchal and white world of power and wealth.” Mary Helen Washington declared that black women “have been hidden artists–creative geniuses…whose creative impulses have been denied and thwarted in a society in which they have been valued only as a source of cheap labor” Washington (1974). Through the margin of resistance black women writers encourage others to write, to create works of art, and to break through the “black hole”. During the early 1990s bell hooks theorized that art created in the margin as radical, saying that “[i]n this space of collective despair resistance to colonization becomes a vital component to the creativity at risk. Space is interrupted, appropriated and transformed through artistic and literary intervention” hooks (1990). Black women’s creative works reached back into the broken and silenced past and re-cover and re-claim the repressed words of their ancestors, while speaking of their experiences and beauty. bell hooks saw aesthetics as a means of inhabiting space or location, a way of looking and becoming (hooks, 1990). “African American discourse on aesthetics is not prescriptive…the location of white western culture is only one location of discourse on aesthetics.” (hooks, 1990). Aesthetics were also formed through encouragement of other black women to write and to express themselves artistically. “The realities of choice and location are confronted in the gesture of “re-vision,” shaping and determining the response to existing cultural practices and in the capacity to envision new alternative, oppositional aesthetic acts” (hooks, 1990). hooks also saw subjectivity in black women as a process towards political radicalness, and that black women writers should resist Western notions of subjectivity, which limit the ability to commit to political upheaval the structures which oppress black women (hooks, 1990). For hooks, although black women’s writing contained radical resistance to racist oppression, many black female writers limited black women characters’ progress after breaking away from oppression instead of becoming radical subjects of resistance (hooks, 1990). Contemporary black women writers linked subjectivity with emotional and spiritual health, ignoring the possibility of commitment to radical politics and the possibility of resisting unity concepts and accepting difference in female experience and in subjectivity itself, reinforcing dominant feminist thought and essentialist notions of black identity (hooks, 1990). Further, hooks viewed marginality as being more than a site of deprivation; for her the margin was a position of political possibility and a space of resistance, and a location of counter-hegemonic discourse which also came from lived experience (hooks, 1990). Black women writers have possibilities of multiple locations of expression. When black women as “other” speaks and writes in resistance, she is no longer a silent object of derision or object of degradation; she is a radical subject of resistance. As a speaking “other” she is not the muted other, but a subject of power, power which is used to deconstruct the structures of oppression. However, like Barbara Christian, hooks warned black feminists regarding slippage between the voice of the oppressed and the voice of oppressor, especially with regard to power relations and domination of the oppressed. (hooks, 1990). Language was “a politicization of memory” which explained the present while articulating the past (hooks, 1990). Mae Gwendolyn Henderson referred to this articulation as a sort of “speaking in tongues, ” an ability of black women through their location as marginalized to see and speak more than one language as reader Henderson (1989). Henderson proposed a discursive strategy that “seeks to account for racial difference within gender identity and gender difference within racial identity. This approach represents [her] effort to avoid ….the presumed `absolute and self-sufficient’ otherness of the critical stance in order to allow the complex representations of black women writers to steer use away from `a simple and reductive paradigm of otherness.’” (Henderson, 1989). To Henderson, critical theory in the dominant hegemony negated the multiplicity of voices of subjectivity within black women’s writing, which was in “dialogue with the plural aspects of self that constitute the matrix of black female subjectivity”, and was in “dialogue with the aspects of “otherness” within the self” (Henderson, 1989). Henderson’s critical model proposed the existence of heteroglossia in black women’s writing, borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin’s “notion of dialogism”, in which “voices of the other(s) `encounter one another and coexist in the consciousness of real people”…that speaks to the situation of black women writers in particular, `privileged’ by a social positionality that enables them to speak in dialogically racial and gendered voices to the other(s) both within and without” (Henderson, 1989). Henderson saw black female creative writers as “enter[ing] simultaneously into familial, or testimonial and public or competitive discourses….that….enter into testimonial discourse with black men as blacks, with white women as women and with black women as black women…..[and]…enter into a competitive discourse with black men as women, with white women as blacks, and with white men as black women” (Henderson, 1989). Henderson suggested the development of “an enabling critical fiction–that it is black women writers who are the modern-day apostles, empowered by experience to speak as poets and prophets in many tongues….signify[ing] a deliberate intervention by black women writers into the canonic tradition of sacred/literary texts” (Henderson, 1989). She argued that Black women were in a unique position of possibilities as prophets, as with the Hebrew prophets of old, who were in a unique position of being the mouthpiece of God. Conversely, Michelle Wallace offered the caveat that romanticizing or privileging marginality as a primary theoretical/political strategy would lead to a reaffirmation of the white hegemony through reinforcement of the image of the silent “strong matriarch” who is “already liberated” from her oppression (Wallace, 1990). These and other images could be used by the hegemony to silence the process of resistance (Wallace, 1990). “It seemed to me the evidence was everywhere in American culture that precisely because of their political and economic disadvantages, black women were considered to have a peculiar advantage” (Wallace, 1990). For hooks, a strategy of building a critical apparatus that would resist a fixed position or singularity of identity that could be co-opted; rather, it would open possibilities of opening inquiry on multiple experiences and voices. “A radical aesthetic acknowledges that because of changing positions and locations, there can never be one critical paradigm for evaluating African American art” (hooks, 1990). Still, other critics like Deborah Chay, whose essay “Rereading Barbara Christian: Black Feminist Criticism and the Category of Experience” constructed a strong theoretical rebuttal of the notion of “experience” or “representation” as theorized by Barbara Smith, Barbara Christian, and other early Black feminists, offered a blunt observation that the dilemma faced by Black feminist critics was one that was brought on their dependency on a paradigm that was itself self-evident of a need for them to transcend its limits and traps: “I would like to suggest that it is precisely to the extent that the grounds for their differentiation cannot be maintained that black feminists may make their strongest case for both the continuity and the importance of their critical project. That is, the conditions which continue to make an appeal to experience as a logical, appealing, and invisible foundation themselves constitute the most powerful argument for the continued need for “black feminist critics” to organize and inventively challenge the apparatus and terms of their representation Chay (1993).” In other words, the strategy of relying on “experience” or “representation” as a theoretical foundation exposed a theoretical flaw that would and did, in time, prove to become intellectual traps for Black feminists. In addition to critiques on the limits of identity-based theory that focused on race and gender, significant contributions were published by Black feminists who felt the need to address what Hortense J. Spillers and Evelynn Hammonds referred to as “silences” in mainstream feminism with regard to Black female bodies and sexualities. For instance, Spillers argued that mainstream feminism’s silence towards Black female tended to perpetuate dominant ideological paradigms that continued to perpetuate oppressive impressions of Black female sexuality. “I wish to suggest that the lexical gaps I am describing here are manifest along a range of symbolic behavior in reference to black women and that the absence of sexuality as a structure of distinguishing terms is solidly grounded in the negative aspects of symbol-making. The latter, in turn are wed to the abuses and uses of history, and how it is perceived.” Spillers (2003). Spillers asserted a need for Black feminists to pursue a discursive strategy to correct “official” histories of Black female sexuality that would reposition us as a disruptive force to counter hegemonic influence: The aim, though obvious, might be restated: to restore to women’s historical movement its complexity of issues and supply the right verb to the subject searching for it, feminists are called upon to initiate a corrected and revised view of women of color on the frontiers of symbolic action” (Spillers, 2003). In addition to Spillers’ call to Black feminists, Hammonds also proposed a much more decisive and unequivocal discursive strategy for Black feminists. She saw Black feminists’ reluctance to pursue a theoretical direction that included discussions on lesbian eros as an exclusionary tactic that exposed a privileging of heterosexual desire, as well as the presence of the excluded lesbian text: “Since silence about sexuality is being produced by black women and black feminist theorists, that silence itself suggests that black women do have some degree of agency. A focus on black lesbian sexualities, I suggest, implies that another discourse—other than silence—can be produced Hammonds (1994).” Hammonds believed such discourse to be crucial to the development of Black feminist criticism that would contend with Black women artists and writers articulating from a previously missed context that needed to be explored in order to address sexual difference and multiplicity. For Hammonds, breaking this silence was a decisive move that could not be ignored by Black feminists. “Disavowing the designation of black female sexualities as inherently abnormal, while acknowledging the material and symbolic effects of the appellation, we could begin the project of understanding how differently located black women engage in reclaiming the body and expressing desire (Hammonds, 1994). Black Feminism and Intersectionality In the 21st century Black feminism has continued to engage in a series of complex struggles to engage a rapidly changing academic and theoretical landscape challenged by instabilities and uncertainties with regard to political and cultural alliances. For some Black women, disengaging themselves from the limits of a feminism aligned with a singularity of racial identity while remaining committed to dismantling oppressive ideological frameworks entailed developing and encouraging a critical strategy that promised a much more complex engagement: intersectionality. Jennifer C. Nash defined intersectionality as “the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality, has emerged as the primary theoretical tool designed to combat feminist hierarchy, hegemony, and exclusivity” Nash (2011). Nash’s essay “rethinking intersectionality” criticized intersectionality’s tendency to persist in Black feminism’s theoretical problem of “continuously and strategically jamming the workings of binary thinking” by “continu[ing] in the tradition of black feminism with the addition of a new name for conceptualizing the workings of identity” (Nash, 2011). For Nash, intersectionality as a truly useful and progressive theoretical apparatus needed to undergo a critical overhaul that would correct its ambiguity as to how it distinguishes itself from previous versions of Black feminism, whether it remained a part of Black feminist theory as a revised or emergent version, or whether it served as a critical strategy that completely “departs” from it (Nash, 2011). Nash asserted that “[i]n conceiving of privilege and oppression as complex, multi-valent, and simultaneous, intersectionality could offer a more robust conception of both identity and oppression” (Nash, 2011). She suggested an intersectionality strategy that would study “race and gender as co-constitutive processes and as distinctive and historically specific technologies of categorization,” which would in turn allow a much more robust intellectual engagement that would result in “insights that far exceed imagining race and gender as inextricably bound up” (Nash, 2011). By 2011, Nash takes her call to reconsider intersectional analysis in a critical and political direction that seems to anticipate and invite what I would refer to as a theoretical “bridge” for those who would seek to engage in Black feminism beyond identity traps, especially for those who seek to connect Black feminism with Afrofuturism. Her essay “Practicing Love: ‘Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post-Intersectionality’” takes on Audre Lorde’s theory of the erotic in her (1983) essay “Uses of the Erotic” and remixes it with affective theory, proposing a Black feminist love politics that would expose “the existence—indeed, vibrancy—of multiple black feminist political traditions” through “a radical conception of the public sphere” and through “a new relationship to temporality generally, and to futurity” (Nash, 2011). Nash asserts what I would consider a theoretical bridge that invites an Afrofuturist vision of Black feminism when she theorizes that “love-politics practitioners dream of a yet unwritten future; they imagine a world ordered by love, by a radical embrace of difference, by a set of subjects who work on/against themselves to work for each other” (Nash, 2011). Bridge Towards Afrofuturism The rise of Afrofuturism in the 21st century, a name first articulated by Greg Tate in the mid 1990s, can be considered as an aesthetic and critical process existing at the side of and through the development of Black feminism and its critical companion intersectionality. It is inclusive of science fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction, as well as visual art, music, and technological infusion into Afro-Diasporic cultures. Jewelle Gomez refers to “speculative fiction,” as new landscapes and life experience are imagined beyond the limits of the so-called real: “[s]peculative fiction is a way of expanding our ideas of what human nature really is, allowing us to consider all aspects of ourselves; it is important that a diverse range of writers, Black lesbian writers included, participate in this expansion” Gomez (1991). D. Denenge Akpem, discussing the 2011 Afrofuturism Conference in Chicago Art Magazine, describes Afrofuturism as “an exploration and methodology of liberation, simultaneously both a location and a journey…[w]e are alchemists in this city of steel, akin to the Yoruba god Ogun, fusing metal to metal.” As “alchemists,” Afrofuturists invoke the past as a means towards imagining a future that is not only inclusive of us as participants but as shapers of worlds that embrace new permutations of existence, as well as new permutations of expression, artistically. “Afrofuturism as a movement itself may be the first in which black women creators are credited for the power of their imaginations and are equally represented as the face of the future and the shapers of the future” (Womack, 2012). Like Black Feminists, Afrofuturists engage in a recovery and retelling of the presence of people of African descent as contributors to cultural production and articulation. “Afrofuturism has evolved into a coherent mode not only aesthetically but also in terms of its political mission. In its broadest dimensions Afrofuturism is an extension of the historical recovery projects that black Atlantic intellectuals have engaged in for well over two hundred years” (Sdonline). Rather than following dominant cultural assumptions of Africana culture as being in opposition to a digitalized future or present, Akpem invokes an Orisha who symbolizes humanity’s changing relationship with those elements that provide us with the tools for innovation, invention, and advancement. Ogun, the God of iron, shapes not just spears and guns, but railroads, locomotives, cars, and ships. His “children” are not just warriors, but also inventors and drivers. Afrofuturism is also a reclaiming of space previously assumed to be alien to us; it is not so much about being included in someone else’s cultural and technological conversation, as it is a reclaiming of authority to speak as creators and inventors. For Black feminists, such a process surpasses socio-cultural codes demanding containment. “While Afrofuturist women are obviously shaped by modern gender issues, their creations and theories themselves emerge from a space that renders such limitations moot” (Womack, 2012). This process intervenes and interrupts what Alondra Nelson refers to as “the racialized digital divide narrative” in a collection of essays on Afrofuturism called “Future Texts,” a special edition of Social Text (2002): The racialized digital divide narrative that circulates in the public sphere and the bodiless, color-blind mythotopias of cybertheory and commercial advertising have become the unacknowledged frames of reference for understanding race in the digital age. In these frameworks, the technologically enabled future is by its very nature unmoored from the past and from people of color. Neocritical narratives suggest that it is primitiveness or outmodedness, the obsolescence of something or someone else, that confirms the novel status of the virtual self, the cutting-edge product, or the high-tech society Nelson (2002). Racialized tropes that dominate the “public sphere” have been flooded with the notion that a digitalized or highly technological space cannot exist or flourish in a future populated with people of color because they/we are outdated, or of a past existence. Cultural expressions coming from such ideological paradigms assume a future free of those populations that signify a racialized limitation, as well as a past with a very limited or dim view of racial others. Nelson sees writers like Ishmael Reed as an example of a futurist vision that counters the hegemony’s script: “Like [Ishmael Reed’s] critique of the dominant mythos of “Western civ,” his anachronistic use of technology in Mumbo Jumbo begs the question of what tools are valued by whom, and to what ends. With his innovative novel as an exemplar, Ishmael Reed has supplied a paradigm for an African diasporic technoculture (Nelson, 2002).” Reed’s depiction of “technology” serves as a subversion of the dominant tropes by revising and reimagining stories of both our past and our future from a vantage point of one who is able to see our presence as both inventors and users of technology. As Nalo Hopkinson notes with a certain joy, speculation in fiction offers Afrofuturist writers a means towards “shaking up” the hegemony: “Science fiction and fantasy are already about subverting paradigms. It’s something I love about them” Hopkinson (2010). Teresa Goddu asserts that African American writers who have ventured into speculative fiction featuring horror or the fantastic engage in a counter-text or counter-theoretical mode of writing about the past, where the “horror” of the slave institution, Jim Crow, and the aftermath provide rich, fertile ground upon which to imagine supernatural or preternatural figures who exist in a world already rife with evils of racism, subjugation, and dehumanization. She asserts that “[f]rom Morrison’s vampiric Beloved, who sucks the past out of Sethe, to Eddie Murphy’s Vampire in Brooklyn (1995), which replays Dracula’s landing in England as the entrance into New York harbor of a crumbling Caribbean slave ship populated with corpses, the African-American vampire reminds us that the American gothic travels from elsewhere and is burdened by the horror of racial history” Goddu (1999). Kodwo Eshun’s theorization moves in a direction similar to that of Nelson’s trajectory, in that he also sees Afrofuturism as interrupting the old version of the story of the future Eshun (2003). Further, Eshun views Afrofuturism as an emergence of “temporal complications and episodes that disturb the linear time of progress” which “adjust the temporal logics that condemned the black subjects to prehistory” (Eshun, 2003). Put another way, Afrofuturism is a process or performative that disrupts and erupts commonly understood sequential order of things, or what we have understood to be history, or even fact. For novelist Nalo Hopkinson, the speculative possesses a political vehicle that allows writers to explore racial and social class performativity: “So one might say that, at a very deep level, one of the things that fantasy and science fiction do is to use myth-making to examine and explore socioeconomically configured ethnoracial power imbalances” (Hopkinson, 2010). According to Herman Gray, Afrofuturist writers like Octavia Butler, Samuel Delaney, and others inspire this movement in such a way that encourages an imagined existence in the African Diaspora beyond colonized borders and the legacy and terror of slavery and its aftermath. Gray asserts that “Afrofuturists claim that blacks scattered across the Atlantic world are aliens in an alien land, ever on the lookout for clues and resources that point the way out of alien nations and conditions of bondage” (Gray, 2005). Linking Afrofuturist fiction to Afrofuturist music as similar movements away from these limits, Gray contends this movement as a significant step towards liberation, where the liminal could produce innovative modes of fashioning the African diasporic self: “It is possible to rebuild old and make anew different diasporic connections, as well as to imagine possibilities for inhabiting the spaces and identities about which Sun Ra wrote” Gray (2005). Afrofuturism positions the master narrative about the past, present, and future into one of instability and uncertainty, which is, without a doubt, a critical and political strategy that can align and inform with that of a Black feminist process that seeks to develop a discursive strategy that complicates and disrupts those narratives and myths that depend on a singularity of timelines or more importantly, identity politics. Afrofuturism and Black feminism are both vital critical apparatus vehicles for Afro-Diasporic women and men who seek to enter and disrupt an otherwise homogenous ideological framework.

## Solvency/Difference Types of Performance

### Sci-FI

#### Afro-futurism destabilizes the traditional exclusion of people of color from science fiction, like in the case of Sun Ra’s elaborate “MythScience” where he build a version of black history that ran counter to the historical reality of white supremacy.

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As Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson argue, dance music has the potential to challenge or even collapse the post-Renaissance distinction between body and mind, opening up a space in which existing identity formations and power hierarchies can be negotiated and even challenged. Dance music largely rejects the dominant “logocentric” tradition that “privileges modes of thought and experience which occur in the medium of verbal language, which thereby have clearly identifiable and analyzable meanings” (57). The forms of music most strongly associated with Afrofuturism, such as “the intergalactic big-band jazz churned out by Sun Ra’s Omniverse Arkestra, Parliament-Funkadelic’s Dr. Seussian astrofunk, and Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry’s dub reggae” (Dery 182), are good examples of the kind of rhythm-focused dance grooves Gilbert and Pearson describe as bypassing and transforming “the acceptable channels of language, reason and contemplation” (42). Afrofuturist music therefore destabilizes not only sf’s traditional “exclusion of people of color” (Bould 177), but does so in media forms with an innate ability to upset the implicit hierarchies of Western culture and the centripetal world-building practices of genre fiction. For example, Sun Ra’s elaborate “MythScience” offers a version of black history in which ancient Egypt was created by a technologically advanced race of black aliens from the planet Saturn, while claiming an identity for himself as a time-traveling deity who has returned from the past via the present to our future. The mythology constructed by Sun Ra presents itself to us not in terms of secondariness to a single shared Primary World, but as a challenge to “the invisible paradigm of unquestioned reality” of historical white supremacy, allowing the artist’s performative role as a black musician to resonate on multiple registers simultaneously (Van Veen 11). Afrofuturism therefore presented a challenge both to fantastic genres’ normative traditions of white, Eurocentric historiography, and to emerging world-building practices that revolve around “objectively” mappable histories and geographies that reinforce a similarly knowable historical reality.3 By practicing what Kodwo Eshun describes as “chronopolitics,” Afrofuturists employ world-building not as a way to reinforce the coordinates of existing reality, but as “a means through which to reprogram the present” (“Further Considerations” 290). And as Janelle Monáe’s ambitious neo-Afrofuturist work suggests, an essential component in this act of reprogramming involves more than the mere reversal of existing race dichotomies.

#### Sci-Fi is a useful form of integrating imaginations of the future as a form as social activism that can reexamine race and explore self-expression.

Womack 13 (Womack, Ytasha, award-winning filmmaker/author/journalist and choreographer, editor of [www.postblackexperience.com](http://www.postblackexperience.com), guest editor for NV Magazine, social media and pop culture expert, B.A in Mass Media Arts from Clark Atlanta University, studied Arts, Entertainment and Media Management at Columbia College. Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture. Chicago :Chicago Review Press, 2013. Print.)

W.E. B. Du Bois is an American icon. He is known for countless achievements that shifted race dynamics in America: he was one of the quintessential proponents of civil rights in the early twentieth century, he was amongst the founders of the NAACP, he was a proponent of higher education among blacks, he was one of the early black-history documentar- ians and founded a sociology department at Atlanta University, he was a Pan-Africanist. Du Bois’s theories defined turn-of-the- century strategies on race. His dueling views with Tuskegee Uni- versity founder Booker T. Washington are classic. Both men, we’ve discovered, were right. Du Bois’s essays on double consciousness and the Talented Tenth are still hot topics in the new millennium. But few know that Du Bois was also a science fiction writer. “The Comet,” a short story that first appeared in a 1920 col- lection titled Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil, is Du Bois’s primary sci-fi work. The story follows Jim Davis, a black man who quietly resents the nation’s skin games. He’s sent into a dan- gerous underground vault to retrieve records—a task no white man would do, he dutifully notes. During his subterranean quest, a mysterious comet hits, and Davis is the last man standing. But he quickly grows comfortable with his ill-timed fate, dining in a whites-only restaurant and driving his own car. Suddenly the freedom that escaped him in daily life is at his fingertips. Clearly, this disaster has some advantages. He meets a young white woman who was also saved in the peril. Although she initially can’t see Davis past her bias and views his brown skin as alien, she moves past prejudice and falls for him. The responsibility of repopulating Earth consumes her passion. Just as the two are about to consummate their love, they are discovered by a rescue team. To Davis’s dismay, the comet destroyed New York, but the rest of the world is the same. The woman returns to her wealthy husband, and Davis remains at the bottom of the status quo.1 In Du Bois’s analogy, race imbalances were so entrenched that only a catastrophe could bring equity. What is a catastrophe for most of the city—a town ravaged by death and destruction— is a fresh new start with thwarted hopes of self-expression and prosperity for Davis and people of color. I’m not surprised that Du Bois would write a sci-fi story. As a man who devised strategies for eradicating race imbalances for much of his life and who staunchly believed that intellec- tual achievement could bring political parity, sci-fi was both a great release and the ideal tool to ponder the what-ifs in climbing through a rigid race-based social structure. He placed a thought- ful black man at the heart of his story and displayed the frailties and dilemmas of hope in a world resistant to change. As a fervent activist, Du Bois pushed for many social changes, most of which blossomed after his lifetime. With the tug and pull of a transition- ing landscape at the turn of the century—the hope of the end of slavery, the horror at the institution of Jim Crow and mob lynch- ings, the progression of a small upper class, and the undermining of the larger masses—I wonder if Du Bois, too, felt like he was seesawing between progress and devolution. However, Du Bois was one of many activists who, beginning in the nineteenth century, used speculative fiction and sci-fi to hash out ideas about race, re-create futures with black societies, and make poignant commentary about the times. We don’t know how many black speculative writers were published in the late nineteenth century. The dime novels and pulp magazines of the day didn’t reveal the race of their writers, and it was assumed they were white. “I believe I first heard Harlan Ellison make the point that we know of dozens upon dozens of early pulp writers only as names: They conducted their careers entirely by mail—in a field and during an era when pen-names were the rule rather than the exception,” writes Samuel Delany, one of the first major Afri- can American science fiction writers of the twentieth century. “Among the ‘Remmington C. Scotts’ and the ‘Frank P. Joneses’ who litter the contents pages of the early pulps, we simply have no way of knowing if one, three, or seven of them—or even many more—were not blacks, Hispanics, women, native Americans, Asians, or whatever. Writing is like that.”2 However, a number of short stories and articles have surfaced, most written by well-meaning activists who, for fleeting moments, turned to speculative fiction to articulate their frustrations and hopes for the future. Martin Delany, for example, was born in West Virginia to a free mother and slave father in 1812. He became one of the first African Americans to attend Harvard Medical School and was the first African American field officer in the Civil War. It was allegedly his proposition and not that of colleague Frederick Douglass that convinced Lincoln to use black soldiers in the war. Delany helped Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison launch the North Star newspaper, one of the leading abolitionist papers of the era, in the 1840s. An abolitionist himself, Delany worked with escaped slaves and adopted early black nationalistic beliefs, later doing some work to acquire land in Liberia. However, Delany was a writer as well. Shortly after the slave insurrection panics of 1856 and the Dred Scott decision of 1857—which declared that blacks were not citizens of any state— and a year shy of the war that would split the nation in two, Delany released Blake: or, the Huts of America, a speculative fic- tion serial. The story follows Henry Blake, a revolutionary who convinces blacks in the United States to rise up and found a black nation in Cuba. The story was partially published in the Anglo American in 1859 and republished in the Weekly Anglo American from 1861 to 1862.3 Blake was published as a book in 1970. Social activist and Baptist minister Sutton E. Griggs was born in Chatfield, Texas, in 1872. He published more than thirty-three books encouraging African American solidarity and pride. But his best-known work is the controversial Imperium in Imperio. Published in 1899, the book is a response to Edward Bellamy’s utopian Looking Backward and a criticism of its handling of race. Imperium in Imperio follows African American friends Belton Piedmont and Bernard Belgrave, both of whom graduate from college. Bernard is elected congressman, and Belton heads to a black college in Louisiana, only to be lynched. Belton survives the lynching, kills the doctor who tries to vivisect him, and wins in court due to Bernard’s stellar defense. Belton invites Bernard to join the Imperium in Imperio, a secret African American govern- ment in Waco, Texas. Belton wants assimilation; Bernard wants revolution. Bernard’s plan to take over Texas and make it an Afri- can American nation state is approved by the society, and Belton is executed by the Imperium. New York lawyer and educator Edward A. Johnson also was inspired by Looking Backward and wrote the book Light Ahead for the Negro in 1904. A work of utopian speculative fiction, Johnson’s book depicts an African American at the turn of the twentieth century who visits America in 2006. Blacks in the South can read, and the coveted forty acres and a mule have finally been distrib- uted. The book shows how the post-racial world evolved over the century. A decade later, in 1917, Bellamy was elected the first African American to serve in the New York State legislature. Francis E. W. Harper was a social reformer, feminist, and one of the most popular poets of her time. Her book Iola Leroy, pub- lished in 1892, takes place against a feminist backdrop in which the races are unequal. Iola, the main character of the story, is a pro-slavery Southern belle who learns that her mother was a slave of mixed heritage, therefore meaning that Iola, too, is a slave. “The rest of the novel captures her adventures, and con- cludes with the establishment of Harper’s version of the ‘ideal polity’—women active as doctors and activists, large schools taught by married women, and an area in which former slaves can live peacefully and productively. In the context of 1892 and Reconstruction South, this image was indeed a fantastic utopia,” writes author and librarian Jess Nevins.4 In 1902 Pauline Hopkins, one of the most influential black editors of the early twentieth century, wrote Of One Blood, a book that was serialized in the Colored American. Protagonist Reuel Briggs, who has little interest in African American history, travels to Ethiopia on an archaeological expedition and discovers the ancient city of Telessar, inhabited by the descendants of the Ethiopia of 6000 BCE and owners of advanced crystal-based tech- nology and telepathy technology. George S. Schuyler was a Rhode Island–born journalist who both criticized organized religion and was known for more conser- vative views. He was not a fan of most literature from the Harlem Renaissance nor was he an admirer of Du Bois. His book Black No More profiles a scientist who discovers how to turn black people white. The satire includes a horrid description of the lynching of the money-grubbing inventors by a crowd of whites that pains- takingly recreates the gruesome lynchings of black men in the South. In his series “Black Internationale” and “Black Empire,” published in the Pittsburgh Courier between 1936 and 1938, is the story of Carl Slater, a journalist for the fictional Harlem Blade who covers a global battle between white people and people of color. A wealthy intellect leads the battle, gathering top minds in the black diaspora who are frustrated with inequality. The brilliant collective, called Black Internationale, brings the United States to its knees with biological warfare, liberates Africa from its colo- nizers, and launches air raids that crush Europe. A young, white, female stockbroker aids the movement and becomes head of the European espionage unit.5 The idea of using sci-fi and speculative fiction to spur social change, to reexamine race, and to explore self-expression for peo- ple of color, then, is clearly nothing new. The black visionaries of the past who sought to alleviate the debilitating system and end the racial divide used these genres as devices to articulate their issues and visions. This tradition continued with Samuel Delany, Octavia Butler, and Nalo Hopkinson, all of whom merged issues of race, class, sex, sexuality, culture, and identity to make sense of the chang- ing times. Their worlds included people of color, but the issue of otherness was wrapped in a sci-fi space saga that zapped from shape-shifters to gender benders to alien pods, time travel, and killer bodysuits. Nalo Hopkinson was born in 1960 in Kingston, Jamaica, to a Jamaican mother and Guyanese father. She has lived through- out the Caribbean and South America with stints in the United States and Canada. One of the foremost speculative fiction writ- ers of modern times, she’s edited anthologies and published doz- ens of books and short stories. Caribbean dialect and culture are entrenched in many of her stories, and she candidly deals with postmodern issues of culture, race, and sex. Brown Girl in the Ring was her first novel. Published in 1998, the dystopian tale depicts a rebel-led Toronto under siege, and the book was hailed for depicting the Carribean community in Toronto and adeptly writing in dialect. The story combines Carribean mysticism and futuristic medicine and includes a disturbing plot involving organ harvesting. But the terror of the city leads the main character to discover some of the old ways and traditions of her grandmother. The book Sister Mine follows formerly conjoined twins Makeda and Abby, daughters of a demigod and a human mother. One has magi- cal powers and the other does not, but the two must reconcile to help find their father who disappeared mysteriously. Hopkinson’s short story “Ganger (Ball Lightning)” is a sci- fi story that almost reads like a dark comedy. Published in the anthology Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora in 2000, Hopkinson’s story plays off Isaac Asimov’s 1940s robot stories. Cleve and Issy are a married couple who don’t talk anymore. They buy full-bodied sex suits in hopes of saving their marriage only to have the suits turn on them.6 “She’s a powerful writer with an imagination that most of us would kill for,” says Pulitzer Prize–winning author Junot Díaz. “I have read everything she has written and am in awe of her many gifts. And her protagonists are unforgettable—formidable haunted women drawn with an almost unbearable honesty—seri- ously, who writes sisters like Nalo? Takes courage to be that true.” According to sci-fi scholar Gary K. Wolfe, Nalo’s family-centered dramas inspired other writers to go beyond sci-fi norms and build on family relationships, too.7 By age twenty-six Samuel Delany had written more than eight sci-fi books and won three Nebula Awards. Algis Budrys, a critic with Galaxy magazine, declared that Delany, fresh off the release of Nova, was “the best science fiction writer in the world.” He is one of the most decorated and best-known science fiction writers in the world, credited with influencing cyberpunk as well as Afrofuturism. Some of his later books include intense sexuality that Delany himself has called pornography. He is an inductee in the Science Fiction Hall of Fame and has won four Nebula Awards and two Hugo awards. He has more than twenty novels to his credit. However, in his essay “Racism and Science Fiction,” Delany questions the desire of science fiction institutions to group him with former students Butler and Hopkinson, noting that outside of their race, their work, backgrounds, ages, and perspectives are drastically different. However, the Harlem-born legend adds that the best way to end the “pre-judging” in science fiction worlds is to encourage more nonwhite readers and writers to participate and discuss issues at conferences. When some 20 percent of the audience is composed of people of color the landscape for writers and readers will change, he writes. When Delany’s essay was published in 2000, Afrofuturism as a defined genre had taken root and cadres of writers were looking to Delany, Butler, Hopkinson, and others as literary hallmarks in a genre that was all too dismissive of diversity. In 1999, the Carl Brandon Society was created to increase diversity in speculative fiction. One of its tenants is to “fantasize for its own sake and as an agent of social change.” The society offers an Octavia Butler scholarship, honors accomplished writers, and provides supports for new work. More than a decade later, the diversity of sci-fi work and the creators in fiction has given rise to writers like Nnedi Okorafor and N. K. Jemisin, but there are countless others emerging as well. Words inspire visuals. Afrofuturism’s visual aesthetic is a playground for the imagination.

**Yaszek 13** (Lisa Yaszek , Associate Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies, School of Literature, Communication and Culture, Georgia Tech, “Race in Science Fiction: The Case of Afrofuturism”, August 2013, A Virtual Introduction to Science Fiction, [http://virtual-sf.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Yaszek.pdf)](http://virtual-sf.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Yaszek.pdf)/NVG) // KM

One of the most interesting things that scholars are talking about now is the fact that science fiction has actually been a global phenomenon since its inception. We see science fiction coming out of Brazil as early as the 1830s and coming out of China and Japan by the 1860s. So in short, it seems that any time a nation or an ethnic group begins to participate in industrial culture, its authors naturally turn to science fiction as the premiere story form of technoscientific modernity; as an ideal means by which to critically assess new ways of doing economics and politics and science and technology. More specifically, what we find is that authors of all color – and I would certainly include white authors in this – use science fiction to explore the necessary relations of science, society, and race and to stake claim for themselves and for their communities in the global future imaginary. As we're going to see, that is especially important in the case of Afrofuturism. And so that's exactly what we're going to look at today: the 150 years old tradi-tion of speculative fiction written by black people called Afrofuturism. First, let me give you a working definition of the term. Afrofuturism is speculative fiction or science fiction written by both Afrodiasporic and African authors. It's a global aesthetic movement that encompasses art, film, literature, music, and scholarship. Mark Dery talks about it as a process of "signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically-enhanced future" (180) to explore the hopes and fears that people of color face in a high tech world. As I see it, there are three basic goals for Afrofuturism. The main thing that Afrofuturist artists want to do is tell good science fiction stories and I think that if you speak with any black science fiction author from anywhere around the globe, they'll tell you that's first and foremost what they're interested in. But there are two other political goals associated with Afrofuturism as well. Afrofuturist artists are inter-ested in recovering lost black histories and thinking about how those histories inform a whole range of black cultures today. They also want to think about how these histories and cultures might inspire new visions of tomorrow. Let's think a little bit more about these last two goals. A lot of scholars think about Afofuturism as an extension of the historical recovery projects that black Atlantic intellectuals have engaged in for well over two hundred years now. As Tony Morrison has written and spoken about eloquently, these kinds of historic recovery projects show how African slaves and their descendants experienced conditions of homelessness, alienation, and dislocation that very much anticipate what Nietzsche described as the founding conditions of modernity (cf. Gilroy). And so, you can start to see why it is that science fiction appeals to Afrodiasporic artists. If you want think about black people as the primary subjects of modernity, those who have the most intense engagements with it, science fiction has the grammar that allows us to narrate those engagements. Stories about travel through time and space and stories about encounters with the alien other are ideal ways to bring those historical experiences to life for new audiences. Just to jump ahead of myself here for a moment, if you think about Derrick Bell's story "The Space Traders", you can see how the lead character, Professor Golightly, is always engaging African American history in his attempt make sense of an uncertain future, and that's what allows him to realize that the United States’ deal with the aliens may not end all that well. That attempt to connect the past with the present and the future is central to the Afrofuturist project. The next goal for Afofuturists is a more positive one: not just to remember the bad past, but to use stories about the past and the present to reclaim the history of the future. That is what African-British music critic Kodwo Eshun talks about in his really great work on Afofuturism. He talks about how histories of the fu-ture have been hijacked by what he calls "the futures industries" (290). "The fu-tures industries" is his term for the place where technoscience, fictional media, and market prediction meet – especially as the ideas generated by those indus-tries are conveyed across the globe by the mass media. What you tend to see in the mainstream media, again and again and again, is the sense that blackness is a catastrophe. Black spaces are zones of absolute dystopias where either capitalism hasn't had a chance to intervene yet or where capitalism has failed. We see this again and again in the news: black cities are always depicted in dystopic ways. Africa is a gigantic continent, with lots of different ecosystems and cultures and nations and people and events and histories, and yet its always treated somehow as THE place of dystopia, plagued by drought, AIDS, and famine, and we rarely hear positive things about progress in African unless it is in terms of capitalist intervention. For Eshun, Afrofuturism is important because it is a kind of storytelling that gives authors a public means by which to intervene into those bad futures that are written by the futures industry and to challenge them, change them, write al-together new ones. Interestingly, Eshun riffs a bit on W.E.B. Dubois when he talks about this. As some of you might know, Dubois was an African American sociologist who wrote science fiction and who coined the term "double con-sciousness," (Souls 8) which means that black people always live under the con-sciousness of being both African and American. What Eshun sees as valuable about Afrofuturism is that it has the ability to enhance double consciousness and even to triple or quadruple or quintuple consciousness, to give us a sense that there are a lot of different ways to think about being black and to think about the relations of the science, society, and race. This allows authors to create complex futures in full color rather than ones that are either simply white washed utopias or black dystopias.

### Afrofuturism general

#### Afrofuturism is the intersection of technology, Afro-centricity, magical realism, and non-Western beliefs in order to reenvision the past and imagine the future divorced from conventional norms of the Black identity. And Afro-futurism oriented imagining of the future subverts dominant stereotypes of Blackness and imagines a future where those stereotypes do not exist.

Womack 13 (Womack, Ytasha, award-winning filmmaker/author/journalist and choreographer, editor of [www.postblackexperience.com](http://www.postblackexperience.com), guest editor for NV Magazine, social media and pop culture expert, B.A in Mass Media Arts from Clark Atlanta University, studied Arts, Entertainment and Media Management at Columbia College. Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture. Chicago :Chicago Review Press, 2013. Print.)

Afrofuturism is an intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation. “I generally define Afrofuturism as a way of imagining possible futures through a black cultural lens,” says Ingrid LaFleur, an art curator and Afrofuturist. LaFleur presented for the independently organized TEDx Fort Greene Salon in Brooklyn, New York. “I see Afrofuturism as a way to encourage experimentation, reimagine identities, and activate liberation,” she said.1 Whether through literature, visual arts, music, or grassroots organizing, Afrofuturists redefine culture and notions of black- ness for today and the future. Both an artistic aesthetic and a framework for critical theory, Afrofuturism combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs. In some cases, it’s a total reenvisioning of the past and speculation about the future rife with cultural critiques. Take William Hayashi’s self-published novel Discovery: Volume 1 of the Darkside Trilogy. The story follows the discovery of rumored black American separatists whose disgust with racial disparity led them to create a society on the moon long before Neil Armstrong’s arrival. The story is a commentary on separatist theory, race, and politics that inverts the nationalistic themes of the early space race. Or take John Jennings and Stacey Robinson’s Black Kirby exhibit, a touring tribute to legend Jack Kirby of Marvel and DC Comics fame. The show is a “What if Jack Kirby were black?” speculation depicting Kirby’s iconic comic book covers using themes from black culture. The show displays parallels between black culture and Kirby’s Jewish heritage, explores otherness and alienation, and adds new dimensions to the pop culture hero. Afrofuturism can weave mysticism with its social commentary too. Award-winning fiction writer Nnedi Okorafor’s Who Fears Death captures the struggles of Onyesonwu, a woman in post-nuclear, apocalyptic Africa who is under the tutelage of a shaman. She hopes to use her newfound gifts to save her people from genocide. Whether it’s the African futuristic fashion of former Diddy- Dirty Money songstress Dawn Richard—which she unveiled in her music videos for the digital album Goldenheart—or the indie film and video game Project Fly, which was created by DJ James Quake and follows a group of black ninjas on Chicago’s South Side, the creativity born from rooting black culture in sci-fi and fantasy is an exciting evolution. This blossoming culture is unique. Unlike previous eras, today’s artists can wield the power of digital media, social plat- forms, digital video, graphic arts, gaming technology, and more to tell their stories, share their stories, and connect with audiences inexpensively—a gift from the sci- gods, so to speak, that was unthinkable at the turn of the century. The storytelling gatekeepers vanished with the high-speed modem, and for the first time in history, people of color have a greater ability to project their own stories. This tug-and-pull debate over black people controlling their image shifts considerably when a fledgling filmmaker can shoot his sci-fi web series on a $500 DV cam, post it on YouTube, and promote it on Instagram and Twitter. While technology empowers creators, this intrigue with sci-fi and fantasy itself inverts conventional thinking about black identity and holds the imagination supreme. Black identity does not have to be a negotiation with awful stereotypes, a dystopian view of the race (remember those black-man-as-endangered- species stories or the constant “Why are black women single?” reports?), an abysmal sense of powerlessness, or a reckoning of hardened realities. Fatalism is not a synonym for blackness.

**Afrofuturism defies static conceptions of race and history through a reconceptualization of time and space**

**Womack 13** - (Ytasha, Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture, , p.16-18)//KM

What do black geek conferences, geek confessions, space warrior princesses, and excitable black fans dressed like Green Lantern and Blade have to do with progress? Everything. Afrofuturism unchains the mind. This charge to spur critical thinking is why museums including the Tubman AfricanAmerican Museum in Macon, Georgia, the Sargent Johnson Gallery in Oakland, and the Museum of Contemporary Diasporan Arts in Brooklyn championed Afrofuturism exhibits, all hoping to engage children and nontraditional art communities. “It gives our young people another out,” says Melorra Green, visual arts coordinator of the Sargent Johnson Gallery in Oakland. “They need to see people stepping outside of the norm.” I remember a twenty-something African American woman who took my screenwriting class once. She was incredibly frustrated because she wanted to write a historical fiction narrative with black characters but felt thwarted by the realities of racism in the past. There could be no cowboy hero, no Victorian romance, no antebellum South epic, or any other story without the cloud of slavery or colonialism to doom her character’s fate. She couldn’t come up with a single story idea that could have a happy ending, at least not one that took place in the past five hundred years, up to, say, 1960. As for writing sci-fi or creating a world in the future or coming up with a complete fantasy, she didn’t know how she could integrate black culture into the story. The parameters of race had completely chained her imagination. One movement that counteracts historical assumptions is the steampunk movement, which has a large black subculture. In fact, the books and illustrations emerging from the culture are deemed steamfunk. Steampunk is a sci-fi subgenre that uses steam-powered technology from the eras of the old West and Victorian age as the backdrop for alternative-history sagas. The stories are as lively as the real-world steampunk fashionistas, a legion of nineteenth-century-fixated, corset-wearing petticoat lovers who modernize the top hat and pocket watch for the current era. At its heart, Afrofuturism stretches the imagination far beyond the conventions of our time and the horizons of expectation, and kicks the box of normalcy and preconceived ideas of blackness out of the solar system. Whether it’s sci-fi story lines or radical eccentricity, Afrofuturism inverts reality. Afrofuturists write their own stories. “Afrofuturism, like post blackness, destabilizes previous analysis of blackness,” says Reynaldo Anderson, assistant professor of humanities at Harris-Stowe State University and a writer of Afrofuturist critical theory. “What I like about Afrofuturism is it helps create our own space in the future; it allows us to control our imagination,” he says. “An Afrofuturist is not ignorant of history, but they don’t let history restrain their creative impulse s eit her.” the dawn of a new era Afrofuturism as a term was coined by cultural critic Mark Dery, who used it in his 1994 essay “Black to the Future” to describe a flurry of analysis fueled by sci-fi-loving black college students and artists who were passionately reframing discussions about art and social change through the lens of science and technology in the 1980s and ’90s. Dery ushered in the serious study of cyberculture and gave a name to the technoculture trends in black America. Music and culture writers Greg Tate, Mark Sinker, and Kodwo Eshun were among the earliest Afrofuturism theorists, paralleling Dery’s interest. The roots of the aesthetic began decades before, but with the emergence of Afrofuturism as a philosophical study, suddenly artists like avant-garde jazz legend Sun Ra, funk pioneer George Clinton, and sci-fi author Octavia Butler were rediscovered and reframed by Afrofuturists as social change agents. The role of science and technology in the black experience overall was unearthed and viewed from new perspectives. Black musical innovators were being studied for their use and creation of progressive technologies. Inventors like Joseph Hunter Dickinson, who made innovations to the player piano and record player, were viewed as champions in black musical production. Jimi Hendrix’s use of reverb on his guitar was reframed as a part of a black musical and scientific legacy. Others explored the historical social impact of technological advances on people of African descent and how they were wielded to affirm racial divisions or to overcome them. And many found the parallels between sci-fi themes of alien abduction and the transatlantic slave trade to be both haunting and fascinating. Were stories about aliens really just metaphors for the experience of blacks in the Americas? Afrofuturists sought to unearth the missing history of people of African descent and their roles in science, technology, and science fiction. They also aimed to reintegrate people of color into the discussion of cyberculture, modern science, technology, and sci-fi pop culture. With the Internet in its infancy, they hoped to facilitate equal access to progressive technologies, knowing that a widespread embrace would diminish the race-based power imbalance—and hopefully color-based limitations—for good.

#### Afrofuturism seeks to reform internal biases by giving people control over their image of themselves in popular culture.

Womack 13 (Womack, Ytasha, award-winning filmmaker/author/journalist and choreographer, editor of [www.postblackexperience.com](http://www.postblackexperience.com), guest editor for NV Magazine, social media and pop culture expert, B.A in Mass Media Arts from Clark Atlanta University, studied Arts, Entertainment and Media Management at Columbia College. Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture. Chicago :Chicago Review Press, 2013. Print.)

Images are powerful. Although the image-making process isn’t shrouded in smoke and mirrors like in the old days of Holly- wood, and anyone can pull up an editing tutorial on YouTube or watch behind-the-scenes footage on Netflix, the fact remains that most consumers don’t process film, videos, photos, paint- ings, billboards, postcards, and images as a creation by some- one else. Viewing images is a pretty passive affair. For many, an image is a statement of fact, even when the image is fictitious. If I ask you to imagine an alien, chances are that you won’t imagine anything. The first wave of images will be flashbacks from movies, comic books, and video games. Whether it’s the big, hollow-head ghostlike figure from the alien documentaries or the monstrous humanlike giant in the blockbuster Prometheus, it’s highly likely that the first pictures to hit your brainwaves will be plucked from popular images in media. I’m placing special emphasis on the word popular, because it’s the repetition of an image that embeds it in the collective consciousness as a shared emblem. Images aren’t these stand-alone silhouettes. Each comes with a belief system and set of personalized traits. Some of these beliefs are projected by the creator and others are projected by the viewer, but even in this clash, there is a basic consensus, a space where fiction meets some aspect of reality. A drawing of a single smiling fairy can be interpreted as cute, sweet, and sometimes mischievous, in part because the interpretations are based on rehashed stories of the past. But such smiling innocence would never denote the makings of a murderer or the day-to-day work of a stockbroker. There’s simply no reference for that association to take place. Fairies aren’t killers, and fairies aren’t stockbrokers. Fairies also aren’t black. Fairies aren’t Latino. Fairies aren’t Asian. Fairies aren’t men. Fairies aren’t overweight. Fairies aren’t bald. Despite the fact that stories of fairies can be found through- out the world, from Africa to Southeast Asia, of fairies of different sizes, sexes, hair textures, and personalities, fairies in the larger media world have one uniform look and accepted set of quali- ties: She’s a she, she’s petite, she’s white. If she doesn’t look like Thumbelina or Tinker Bell and can’t fit in a size-negative taffeta skirt, she’s not a fairy. Disney wrestled with how to tell a modern story of a black princess, finally putting out The Princess and the Frog in 2009. Although I didn’t see any official statements saying this, I’d guess that one of the greatest problems when trying to develop the project was that the image of the princess with the sashaying Cinderella hoopskirt and Rapunzelesque hair derived from Euro- pean folktales is not associated with the image of black women. Although we’re talking about a cartoon and playing in the world of fiction, the challenge, I’m sure, was to make the image of a black princess connect with audiences. To make the fantasy work, creators had to work with preconceived images and twentieth- century realities. And yet, there have been black princesses (not as many with hoopskirts and Rapunzelesque hair, of course) in real life since the beginning of time. Remote Control Historically, those who fight for equal rights are also fighting for control over their image as well as the development and depic- tion of their culture. Photos, films, drawings, and visual(s) media at large have both intentionally and unintentionally perpetuated class, sex, and ethnic stereotypes. For decades traditional media and the gallery world were visual-media gatekeepers. If your work didn’t filter through their lens of approval, it fought for sur- vival anywhere. Visual media is the medium of choice for widespread pro- paganda. The Birth of a Nation is recognized for being the first large-scale Hollywood picture, but the story—a propagandist tale of the rise of the Ku Klux Klan during Reconstruction—also embedded the stereotypes of blacks in cinema for nearly a cen- tury. The relationship between media, the visual arts, and the dangerous stereotypes so many work to unravel is a serious one. I committed to working in media one day during my junior year in high school when I realized that the books, TV shows, films, and art I soaked in were the only windows to the larger world beyond my day-to-day teen life. Although I was a kid steeped in well-rounded black images, history, and a big heap of positive thinking, not everyone else was. Images are powerful. That is why the NAACP, long a forerunner in advocating for diversity in Hollywood, hosts its annual Image Awards show. It’s the reason that every time a reality show, film, or sitcom with black characters hits the screen, people debate the merit of the image of blacks in media via message boards, Twitter, and in cafes. It’s the reason that, at one point, leaders and fans hoped that hip-hop stars who had the glare of the spotlight upon them might take up the banner for equal rights. It’s the reason that art shows are often heralded for untold views of black life. Unfortu- nately, in the black American experience, images have often been used to frame our lives, how we come to understand ourselves, and how others relate to us. No one’s life should be dictated by a flashing photograph or a cartoon. When DJ Spooky remixed the footage in The Birth of a Nation, the music-backed multimedia presentation traveled to museums throughout the world. While many were horrified by the film’s depictions, DJ Spooky’s exhibit underscored that technology is the ultimate power tool for defining and redefining the image. In the hands of a remixer and with a hint of low-cost editing, the flashing images that had been seared into the nation’s lexicon of black stereotypes could be rewound, inverted, chopped, and screwed—or erased. The power of this looming, larger-than-life screen is in the hands of anyone who wants to change it. Today technology enables a greater ability to create and share images across the world. Social media, websites, music down- loads, digital cameras, low-cost sound engineering, at-home stu- dios, editing equipment, and on and on. Upgrades to animation and illustration software happen so quickly that by the time a stu- dent is trained on one platform, new illustration software debuts. A decade ago, an up-and-coming kid with an over-the-shoulder video camera needed a heavy light kit, tripod, and reflectors to shoot a good scene. Today they can survive with a near- weightless camera or pop an adjustable lens on a camera phone. Two years ago, a still photographer shot my family reunion photo. A few months ago, a cousin shot the whole bunch (more than a hundred) with her iPad. Traditional media isn’t the information gatekeeper it was in the past. A combination of the Internet, inexpensive digital media, and the proliferation of mobile devices and blogs has allowed artists to create art, write about it, and share their work on a world stage. These artists are bound by a conviction to reshape black images past and present. Meshing the limits of time and space, today’s Afrofuturistic artists provide another lens to view the world. While Afrofuturism rippled through a Listserv in the past, today the dialogue has spread through blogs, online news- papers, and Instagram. A Brand-New World “People so did not expect a science fiction film out of Africa,” Pumzi director Wanuri Kahiu told Bitch magazine. “Let alone East Africa. People would ask me things like, ‘With so many other films to make, why would you make a science fiction film? What does that mean?’ Does that mean that because I’m from a certain region, I have a limited capacity of imagination?”1 Born and raised in Kenya, Kahiu came to the United States to study film at UCLA and returned to her hometown, Nairobi, to direct films. Pumzi is the region’s first sci-fi film, and the ground- breaking work picked up awards at festivals across the world. Pumzi means “air” in Kiswahili. Raising questions about sustain- ability and hope, Kahiu provides a never-before-seen image of high-tech Africans in the future. Pumzi may mark the beginning of a new era in African Afrofuturistic cinema. It’s a twenty-one-minute short that follows Asha, an African scientist who lives in the Maitu community, an underground, high-tech futuristic city in East Africa. Some thirty-five years after World War III and the water wars, humans are forced to live underground. Water is rare, and citizens purify their sweat and urine for drinking water. Asha studies soil sam- ples and soon finds one that can bear life. She’s awakened by dreams of a sole tree that stands rooted aboveground, but dream- ing is so discouraged that when she has one, a talking cyborg instructs her to take a dream suppressant. Asha is imprisoned for dreaming, and after a friend escapes, she goes aboveground into toxic environments determined to find the source of the life-supporting soil and plant a seed. She ulti- mately sacrifices herself, using sweat from her body to plant the seed, and in her death, her body provides the nourishment that nurtures the seed into a tree. The images in the film are striking, from the futuristic fashions worn by actress Kudzani Moswela to her bold trek through the sands. Although the story is pretty straightforward, one critic feared that her own Western feminist sentiments prevented her from understanding the story and writing an insightful critique. Very little about this short was rooted in Western culture, other than the film medium itself, a reality that completely disoriented the writer. Even the universalism of the story and the fact that the lead character was a woman still didn’t forge a connection. Was the depiction of tech-savvy futuristic Africans with a desire to connect with nature too different for the writer to analyze? “Maybe I’m Othering Kahiu by equivocating,” she concluded, adding that she’d rather the beauty of the film speak for itself.2 A Star Is a Seed “I want to create images no one has seen,” said Cauleen Smith, experimental filmmaker and multimedia artist. We were swapping tea in Chicago’s Hyde Park, a place now famous for being the home of President Barack Obama, just blocks away from Wash- ington Park and Bronzeville, both of which were Sun Ra’s stomp- ing grounds. “It’s rare that I see an image in a black film that I want to use or that I think is viable in liberating the imagination,” Smith said, noting that the filmmakers from the L.A. Rebellion, a collective of black filmmakers from the UCLA film school, were “masters” of creating the new images that were the antithesis of Hollywood. Smith has worked as an Afrofuturist artist for twenty years. Like many Afrofuturistic artists, she began working in the aes- thetic before Afrofuturism was named. A sci-fi fan, Smith learned how to make experimental films and connected with French structuralist theories, although she didn’t like the structuralist aversion to politics. “I took these structural concepts and merged it with mem- ory and culture. I didn’t realize that’s what Afrofuturism was— speculating about the past and speculating on the future while reconfiguring the present tense.” Smith, at that time a part of a collective called the Carbonist School in Austin, was immediately taken with the idea of blackness as a technology. “We were all into sci-fi,” she said, adding, “We came up with this idea that all these artists were using blackness as a technology. It’s been used as a technology against us—being marked with a certain race determines your race, your movement, access, and privileges.” She read Greg Tate’s work and was intrigued by Samuel Delany, George Clinton, Sun Ra, and other black artists for their use of cognitive estrangement. “Clinton would take all these sci-fi tropes we were familiar with and totally freak it out. But funk was familiar,” she said. “The use of cognitive estrangement, shifting perceptions of the images we’re all familiar with, that defines the Afrofuturistic artist. . . . Put simply, I would describe Afrofutur- ism as the experience of cognitive estrangement as manifested through sound, image, language, and form that so often defines or frames the mundane conditions and movements and genera- tive thought in the African diaspora,” she recorded in the Chicago Arts Archive. She added, “[Afrofuturism] is not a moniker of iden- tity or geography but a musical, literary, and art-historical move- ment—like creative music, postmodernism, or conceptual art.”3

#### Afro-futurists engage in a bending of time – time travel – to reconceptualzie the past in a way that changes the present and the future. This is an empowering practice that gives black bodies the ability to reshape themselves and their reality by controlling the time and positionality they occupy.

Womack 13 (Womack, Ytasha, award-winning filmmaker/author/journalist and choreographer, editor of [www.postblackexperience.com](http://www.postblackexperience.com), guest editor for NV Magazine, social media and pop culture expert, B.A in Mass Media Arts from Clark Atlanta University, studied Arts, Entertainment and Media Management at Columbia College. Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture. Chicago :Chicago Review Press, 2013. Print.)

Time travel, parallel universes, the multiverse, and the Higgs boson are on a fast-track collision with the best in sci-fi. Time travel dominates Afrofuturism as well. Whether it’s a lighthearted comic book about a time-traveling family or Sun Ra using time travel as a musical device as revealed in the film Space Is the Place, time travel is a broadly accepted tool in most Afrofuturistic works. But for Afrofuturists, the notion of bending time erases the prism of race-based limitations that all too often lace the present and define the recent past. “I think we feel held hostage to time,” says D. Denenge Akpem, professor and artist. “There’s this idea that if you can control time and your place in it, you can control the course of history and your own history. Afrofuturists create new visions. If you can create a new vision of the future, you can create a new vision of the past.” Time travel also alleviates regret, she adds: “It’s about empowerment; you’re reshaping yourself, reshaping reality.” Parallel dimensions that can be channeled through music, desire, and thought are common themes among Afrofuturist art- ists. “A lot of people feel trapped in time and look at it as lin- ear,” says Rasheedah Phillips, founder of the AfroFuturist Affair, a nonprofit arts collective in Philadelphia. “They feel like they have no control over the future or the past. The main thing with me doing Afrofuturism is helping to look at time as a cycle and use that and the past for change. How can I use those cycles in a way that is more powerful for me to change my future?” Time-Warped Wonders Jaycen Wise is one of the most popular African American char- acters in independent comics. He defies limitations of time and space with his gift of immortality. Wise, a scholar and warrior, is the “hero’s hero” and the “last son of the African Empire of Kush.” He must battle ignorance while preserving light and knowledge. He can be in a battle in ancient Egypt or rescuing prized diamonds in modern-day Manhattan; Wise has the abil- ity to be anywhere. “I have a passion for developing cutting edge material that pushes the boundaries of the imagination,” says Uraeus, the creator of Jaycen Wise, in the book Black Comix.2 One of the great dilemmas in the development of black char- acters in sci-fi is the question of handling race in the modern context. Time travel, immortality, reincarnation, and parallel universes create wormholes to supersede limitations of history while restoring power to both the narrative and its readers. The gaping hole of history and knowledge that Afrofuturism fills with fantasy and the multiverse embraces the greatest power a story can hold by reinstituting the ultimate hero’s journey. When Dr. Quantum was asked about the lessons of possible time travel and his scientific discoveries, he said, “The past is being created as much as the future. Once you get yourself into the position of creating the past, present, and future, rather than just being a victim of the past you become a magician.”3 Sun Ra would feel vindicated. He’s not alone. “Time is not linear,” says graphic novelist Radi Lewis. “I think it folds in on itself. You can close your eyes and go back to a memory of when you’re a kid; who’s to say you’re not going back in time?” Lewis wrote the graphic novel Children of the Phoenix. “I based it around my family, wife, and dog,” says the New York native, who recently relocated to Arizona. Children of the Phoenix follows the Phoenix family, a reincarnated version of Adam and Eve who are deemed the protectors of their five chil- dren. “It sounds corny, but I kind of feel that way about my wife. I’ve known my wife since I was fourteen years old,” says Lewis. They aren’t immortal, says Lewis of his characters, but much like energy, “you can’t destroy them, and they’ll just reappear in another form. A secret race tracks the family down each incarna- tion and they sacrifice themselves for humanity.” A Time to Heal No one wants to revisit the atrocities of slavery in the antebellum South. Forget the scariness of a dystopian future; the transatlantic slave trade is a reminder of where collective memories don’t want to go, even if the trip is in their imagination. But Octavia Butler defied time-travel norms by sending her heroine into American slavery in her epic work Kindred. “The immediate effect of reading Octa- via Butler’s Kindred is to make every other time travel book in the world look as if it’s wimping out,” writes Jo Walton on Tor.com.4 Butler’s character Dana leaves her comfy life in 1976 Califor- nia and is transported to a slave plantation in 1815. She faces her ancestors, including a young boy with a slave mother and slave- master father. Survival is her greatest triumph. Slavery is neither the utopian future nor an ancient far-removed past. The tragedy that split the nation into warring factions has effects that can be felt in the politics of the present. Slavery is feared. The historic hot potato, there is no romanticized imagery that makes for fictitious time-travel stories in the antebellum South that aren’t emotional firestorms. Slavery is a stone’s throw away from exploring death, and even death writhes with freedom. One of the greatest achievements of Quentin Tarantino’s 2012 film Django Unchained—a slave revenge story told as part spa- ghetti western, part romance, and part action film—was the fact that a Hollywood hero story where the black former slave wins could even be told in the antebellum South and be historically relevant, entertaining, and relatable. The film defied all conven- tions and was a critically acclaimed blockbuster. Butler’s book Kindred was published in 1979—but only after being rejected by many publishers, most of whom didn’t understand how a sci-fi novel could take place in such an uncomfortable time and have a black hero. Butler made her point, a declaration of humanity and social justice, and the result is a classic. The book likely has inspired other slave-based time-travel tales. For example, the independent movie Sankofa, directed by Haile Gerima, follows Mona, a model who has a photo shoot at a Ghanian slave castle that held captured Africans before shipping them to the Americas. Mona is instantly transported through time, survives the Middle Passage, and becomes a slave who eventually aligns with a rebellious West Indian plotting to rebel. Both Dana and Mona, who had been relatively disengaged from social issues and history, return to their modern worlds with a greater understanding of their slave and African lineage. Butler argued that Kindred wasn’t technically sci-fi because Dana didn’t use scientific means to travel. The same can be said of Mona in Sankofa, yet both Butler and Gerima used time travel as a tool to ingrain the realities of slave life and the ensuing sense of responsibility into their protagonists. They used time travel to encourage connections to a painful past. “Reasons” circa Earth, Wind & Fire Time travel is a fun way to free black characters from the restric- tions of the times. But the time-travel element transcends story- telling and is a popular, albeit unidentified, practice taken up by musicians and theorists alike. “As African Americans and blacks in the diaspora, we think cyclically,” says musician Shawn Wallace. “We view time cycli- cally. We usually return to something in the past to interpret it. That’s almost how we create our music; we go back to something and see how we can do it differently. Let’s speed it up, let’s slow it down.” Wallace points to Maurice White of Earth, Wind & Fire and the band’s use of the kalimba, sometimes called the African thumb piano. “He took a very simple instrument that opened him up rhythmically and it changed his music. We’re always going back to go forward.” Almost reminiscent of Torah Midrash methods, a method of analyzing Hebrew text, Afrofuturists are constantly recontextu- alizing the past in a way that changes the present and the future. Sometimes seemingly distant occurrences are linked as an evo- lution of liberation consciousness. President Obama’s election is recast as a manifestation of Dr. Martin Luther King’s legacy. Hope is a deep-rooted catchphrase anchored by President Obama that was echoed with as much fervor by Rev. Jesse Jackson and Dr. King before him. If you read passages by Malcolm X, Marcus Gar- vey, and Frederick Douglass, you’d think you’re reading the same person. How are these voices linked, and how do they inform the future? Is the narrative stronger that the speakers themselves?

#### We advocate the use of afro-futurism to wield the imagination for personal and societal growth, giving rise to innovators of the future. Afro-futurism uses art, music, and discourse to lend a voice to deleted peoples and examine the violence of marginalized peoples.

Womack 13 (Womack, Ytasha, award-winning filmmaker/author/journalist and choreographer, editor of [www.postblackexperience.com](http://www.postblackexperience.com), guest editor for NV Magazine, social media and pop culture expert, B.A in Mass Media Arts from Clark Atlanta University, studied Arts, Entertainment and Media Management at Columbia College. Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture. Chicago :Chicago Review Press, 2013. Print.)

Marshall believes contemplating the future is important. “It comes down to do we really imagine ourselves to be in the future? And if we imagine ourselves into the future, how are we going to be when we get there?” he asks. “Can we be agents of the future or will we be objects of the future, like we were objects of commerce when black folks were brought to the New World?” He’s an advocate of the strategic use of the imagination and urges Afrofuturists to ponder how they can have a collective technological advantage that helps shape the world and alleviate disparity. We must be “in front of the developing of the material realities that shape the future,” he says. The influencers of the future aren’t those who create the next high-profile phone, but rather those who determine whether we’ll be using phones in the first place, he adds. Afrofuturism is a great tool for wielding the imagination for personal change and societal growth. Empowering people to see themselves and their ideas in the future gives rise to innovators and free thinkers, all of whom can pull from the best of the past while navigating the sea of possibilities to create communities, culture, and a new, balanced world. The imagination is the key to progress, and it’s the imagination that is all too often smothered in the name of conformity and community standards. On the one hand, Afrofuturism encourages the beauties of African diasporic cultures and gives people of color a face in the future. But from a global vantage point, the perspective contrib- utes to world knowledge and ideas and includes the perspectives of a group too often deleted from the past and future. Sometimes Afrofuturists address otherness dead-on, while some simply give life to the stories that dance in their mind. But all are aware that the future, technology, and the scope of the imagination have unlimited potential that culture can inform. Yet the inequities that plagued the past and play out in the present cannot be carried into the future. Afrofuturism provides a prism for examining this issue through art and discourse, but it’s a prism that is not exclusive to the diaspora alone. Whether by adopting the aesthetic or the principles, all people can find inspi- ration or practical use for Afrofuturism to both transform their world and break free of their own set of limitations. The myths of the Dogon or the stories of Samuel Delany can and do enrich lives all over the world. The musical approaches of DJ Spooky or the Black Kirby art show provide the cognitive dissonance that many need to rewire their limited view of the world. Good ideas tran- scend time, space, and culture. To quote the film V for Vendetta, ideas are bulletproof.

#### Afrofuturism offers a reconceptuion of the future divorced from the master narrative and disrupts the linearity of time and its accumulation on the black body.

Fisher 13 (Fisher, Mark, author of Capitalist Realism (2009) and Ghosts Of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Future, Programme Leader of the MA in Aural and Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London and a lecturer at the University of East London. "The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology." Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture, n.d. Web. 29 June 2017. <https://dj.dancecult.net/index.php/dancecult/article/viewFile/378/391>.)

Penman’s1995 essays howed that Afrofuturism and hauntology are two sides of the same double-faced phenomenon. The concept of Afrofuturism has always done double work. First, it liberates futurism from the master narratives of white modernity, which positioned Africa as origin, at the furthest remove from the terminus of history projected in Euro-American Science Fictional visions of the future: “ e Shape Of ings To Come—a world without war, hurt or hunger (also, tactless enough, without Fisher | The Metaphysics of Crackle 47 black folks)”, as Mark Sinker sarcastically summarised these supposed utopias in his crucial 1992 essay “Loving e Alien—Black Science Fiction”. Second, Afrofuturism unravels any linear model of the future, disrupting the idea that the future will be a simple supersession of the past. Time in Afrofuturism is plastic, stretchable and prophetic—it is, in other words, a technologised time, in which past and future are subject to ceaseless de- and recompostion. Hip-hop depended on the turntable and the mixer, which converted pre-recorded material from an inert museum into an in nite archive, ripe for recombination; Jungle could only happen when samplers allowed breakbeats to be timestretched, maintaining pitch but increasing tempo and producing the vortical, implosive whorls of sound that prompted Kodwo Eshun to call it “rhythmic psychedelia” (1999: 05[070]). e fact that Penman’s 1995 essay centred on Tricky—the UK artist too “dysfunktional” (Eshun 1998: 03[059]) to be a rapper, too ill to be illbient—was no accident. For Tricky always belonged to a time that was out of joint, a time—to use the neologism Simon Reynolds innovated to deal with sonic hauntology’s temporal displacements—that is dyschronic (Reynolds 2006). Dyschronia is Reynolds’ name for the broken-time proper to hauntology, in which it is no longer possible to securely delimit the present from the past, in which the traces of lost futures unpredictably bubble up to unsettle the pastiche-time of postmodernity. When Tricky began, everything had already ended. “A ermath”, his 1993 rst single, is set in a catatonic, post-apocalyptic psycho-geographic undead zone in which personal disaster is indistinguishable from planetary catastrophe. “My rst lyric ever on a song was ‘your eyes resemble mine, you’ll see as no others can’”, Tricky said when I interviewed him in 2008. “I didn’t have any kids then . . . so what am I talking about? Who am I talking about? My mother. My mother, I found out when I was making a TV documentary, used to write poetry but in her time she couldn’t have done anything with that, there wasn’t any opportunity. It’s almost like she killed herself to give me the opportunity” (Fisher 2008). e spectral voices come like schizo-radio signal down telepathic lines: the cross-dressing Tricky standing in the empty place where the absent father’s law would have been, ventriloquising his dead mother’s voice. So writing songs, Tricky says, is not a question of writing at all. It’s more like allowing himself to be possessed—which is to say, dispossessed of his conscious self:

#### Afrofuturism is a radical imagination of a new world. Rather than letting the past constrain them, Afro-futurists subvert reality and their present conditions.

Womack 13 (Womack, Ytasha, award-winning filmmaker/author/journalist and choreographer, editor of [www.postblackexperience.com](http://www.postblackexperience.com), guest editor for NV Magazine, social media and pop culture expert, B.A in Mass Media Arts from Clark Atlanta University, studied Arts, Entertainment and Media Management at Columbia College. Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture. Chicago :Chicago Review Press, 2013. Print.)

At its heart, Afrofuturism stretches the imagination far beyond the conventions of our time and the horizons of expecta- tion, and kicks the box of normalcy and preconceived ideas of blackness out of the solar system. Whether it’s sci-fi story lines or radical eccentricity, Afrofuturism inverts reality. Afrofuturists write their own stories. “Afrofuturism, like post blackness, destabilizes previous analysis of blackness,” says Reynaldo Anderson, assistant professor of humanities at Harris-Stowe State University and a writer of Afrofuturist critical theory. “What I like about Afrofuturism is it helps create our own space in the future; it allows us to control our imagination,” he says. “An Afrofuturist is not ignorant of his- tory, but they don’t let history restrain their creative impulses either.”

#### Afro-futurism aids in a rejection of negative futures in favor of a radical reimagining of what the future could be.

"Afrofuturism, Science Fiction, and the History of the Future." Socialism and Democracy. Wordpress, 7 Apr. 2011. Web. 30 June 2017. <http://sdonline.org/42/afrofuturism-science-fiction-and-the-history-of-the-future/>.

My second reason for wanting to direct attention to Afrofuturism is political. From the ongoing war on terror to Hurricane Katrina, it seems that we are trapped in an historical moment when we can think about the future only in terms of disaster — and that disaster is almost always associated with the racial other. Of course, there are many artists, scholars, and activists who want to resist these terrifying new representations of the future. As a literary scholar myself, I believe that one important way to do this is to identify the narrative strategies that artists have used in the past to express dissent from those visions of tomorrow that are generated by a ruthless, economically self-interested futures industry. Hence my interest in Afrofuturism, which assures us that we can indeed just say no to those bad futures that justify social, political, and economic discrimination. In doing so this mode of aesthetic expression also enables us to say yes to the possibility of new and better futures and thus to take back the global cultural imaginary today.

### Music

#### Funk = good performance

Womack 13 (Womack, Ytasha, award-winning filmmaker/author/journalist and choreographer, editor of [www.postblackexperience.com](http://www.postblackexperience.com), guest editor for NV Magazine, social media and pop culture expert, B.A in Mass Media Arts from Clark Atlanta University, studied Arts, Entertainment and Media Management at Columbia College. Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture. Chicago :Chicago Review Press, 2013. Print.)

“Funk music is the perfect way to explain Afrofuturism,” says Guillaume Dupit. Dupit, a French-born musician, wrote his doctoral music thesis on funk and Clinton. Immersed in the French jazz scene, he was intrigued by funk’s creation. He com- pares the repetition in funk to the laced sampling in hip-hop as a machine-meets-man duality. “It’s like if you take a sample, the same way you can in hip-hop, you play it and play it, and repeat it,” he says. “In the composition of the funk, you take a sample and you play it thirty minutes or four hours with instruments. A lot of their songs have the same construction. The same drum- beat, just small variations. And yet, the idea of repetition in funk is machine-like.” He continues, “You can’t reproduce the notion of the groove with a machine. If you take the same sample and repeat it, it’s not the same result if you play it with instruments. It’s like science fiction, this balance between the machine and human. I think the point of replaying a sample with an instrument, something that can be relayed by a machine is really specific and hard to replicate. When you see Bootsy Collins playing his bass, it’s not playing soul or jazz or rock. It’s like a machine playing a sample, with micro variations and a totally different feel. “They create something that the machine can’t reproduce. Machines are supposed to do that. Machines are supposed to take a sample and replay it, but the results aren’t the same,” says Dupit.

#### Afrofuturist music seeks to disrupt dominant modes of communication and thought and disrupts the implicit hierarchies of Western culture.

Hassler-Forest 14 (Hassler-Forest, D. (2014), assistant professor of film and literature at the University of Amsterdam, publishes widely on comics, American cinema, popular literature, and critical theory. The Politics of World-Building: Heteroglossia in Janelle Monáe's Afrofuturist WondaLand. Para-doxa, 26, 284-303. <<http://dare.uva.nl/search?identifier=defcf5f6-c6df-4df3-950c-bc51ebd5485c>>.)

As Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson argue, dance music has the potential to challenge or even collapse the post-Renaissance distinction between body and mind, opening up a space in which existing identity formations and power hierarchies can be negotiated and even challenged. Dance music largely rejects the dominant “logocentric” tradition that “privileges modes of thought and experience which occur in the medium of verbal language, which thereby have clearly identifiable and analyzable meanings” (57). The forms of music most strongly associated with Afrofuturism, such as “the intergalactic big-band jazz churned out by Sun Ra’s Omniverse Arkestra, Parliament-Funkadelic’s Dr. Seussian astrofunk, and Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry’s dub reggae” (Dery 182), are good examples of the kind of rhythm-focused dance grooves Gilbert and Pearson describe as bypassing and transforming “the acceptable channels of language, reason and contemplation” (42). Afrofuturist music therefore destabilizes not only sf’s traditional “exclusion of people of color” (Bould 177), but does so in media forms with an innate ability to upset the implicit hierarchies of Western culture and the centripetal world-building practices of genre fiction.

### Cosplay

#### Cosplay is a break from your identity and assigned stereotype and a transgressive imagination of the possibilities for yourself and your future.

Womack 13 (Womack, Ytasha, award-winning filmmaker/author/journalist and choreographer, editor of [www.postblackexperience.com](http://www.postblackexperience.com), guest editor for NV Magazine, social media and pop culture expert, B.A in Mass Media Arts from Clark Atlanta University, studied Arts, Entertainment and Media Management at Columbia College. Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture. Chicago :Chicago Review Press, 2013. Print.)

This open play with the imagination, one that isn’t limited to Halloween or film, is a break from identity, one that mirrors the dress-up antics associated with George Clinton, Grace Jones, and other eccentric luminaries now dubbed Afrofuturists. While it’s all play, there’s a power in breaking past rigid identity parameters and adopting the persona of one’s favorite hero. “Cosplay is a form of empowerment for all children and adults,” says Stanford Carpenter, president and cofounder of the Institute for Comics Studies, who says that he used to be dis- missive of cosplay. But after attending dozens of ComicCons, he witnessed the dress-up affair changing masked heroes inde - nitely. “It’s about empowerment. It’s about the possibility of what you can be or what you can do. And when you see people in underrepresented groups, it takes on the empowerment fantasy of not just, say, being Superman, but also the dimension of stepping on the much more narrow roles that we are assigned. But this idea of this superhero has an added dimension because it inherently pushes against many of the stereotypes that are thrust upon us. It is this opportunity to push the boundaries of what you can be and in so doing, you’re imagining a whole new world and possibilities for yourself that can extend beyond the cosplay experience,” says Carpenter. “It’s like stepping to the top of the mountaintop where everything looks small. It’s not that you stay on the mountain top forever, but when you come down you’re not the same. You have a new perspective. A choice that you don’t know is a choice that you don’t have. The imagination is the greatest resource that humans have. Cosplay builds on that. Cosplay puts imagination and desire into action in a way that allows people to look at things differently.”

### Diasporic Thought

#### Afrofuturism provides subjectivity to the Afrodiasporic identity outside of a humanist future

**van Veen 13** (Tobias C., writer, sound-artist, tech arts curator, turntablist, editor of *Other Planes of There: Afrofuturism Collected*, Postdoctoral Researcher in Communication at the Université de Montréal, *Vessels of Transfer: Allegories of Afrofuturism in Jeff Mills and Janelle Monáe*, Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture 5(2): 7–41, )//KM

[The development and imaginative embrace of alien, machinic, astral, and cyborg subjectivities in Afrofuturism, all of which abandon or modify the archetypal, Enlightenment form of the human—from Janelle Monáe’s ArchAndroid to Jeff Mills’ Messenger—offer an escape hatch from paradigms for Afrodiasporic identity that are all too often restricted to the violence and capitalist bling of ghetto realism, confined to post-slavery resonances of subalternity, or entrapped within the lingering effects of the Civil Rights era, in which African-American subjects had to struggle, over the course of a long century since the Emancipation Proclamation, for the right to be considered Enlightenment subjects. To this end, as Kodwo Eshun argues, “It’s in music that you get the sense that most African- Americans **owe nothing to the status of the human**. African-Americans still had to protest, still had to riot, to be judged Enlightenment humans in the 1960s” (1999: A[193]). Hence the transformative capacity of the alien, and of Afrofuturist science fictional approaches, that explore unEarthly universes, timelines, and identities. When the “human” is nothing but the historical entitlement of white supremacy, signifying an embodied technology of exclusion, there is little reason to invest within the very same paradigm that was once deployed to systemically oppress and enslave one’s ancestors.

#### Afro-futurism counters dominant projections of Africa as a dystopian country.

Eshun 03 (Eshun, Kodwo, author of numerous pieces on music, culture, and the arts, associateeditor of the 21C, author of More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction (Quartet Books, 1998), editor of Afrofuturist Reader from Duke University Press. "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism." The New Centennial Review 3.2 (2003): 287-302. Project Muse. Web. 30 June 2017. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/48294>.)

M ARKET D YSTOPIA If global scenarios are descriptions that are primarily concerned with making futures safe for the market, then Afrofuturism’s first priority is to recognize that Africa increasingly exists as the object of futurist projection. African social reality is overdetermined by intimidating global scenarios, doomsday economic projections, weather predictions, medical reports on AIDS, and life-expectancy forecasts, all of which predict decades of immiserization. These powerful descriptions of the future demoralize us; they command us to bury our heads in our hands, to groan with sadness. Commissioned by multinationals and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), these developmental futurisms function as the other side of the corporate utopias that make the future safe for industry. Here, we are seduced not by smiling faces staring brightly into a screen; rather, we are menaced by predatory futures that insist the next  years will be hostile. Within an economy that runs on SF capital and market futurism, Africa is always the zone of the absolute dystopia. There is always a reliable trade in market projections for Africa’s socioeconomic crises. Market dystopias aim to warn against predatory futures, but always do so in a discourse that aspires to unchallengeable certainty. T H E M USEOLOGICAL T URN For contemporary African artists, understanding and intervening in the production and distribution of this dimension constitutes a chronopolitical act. It is possible to see one form that this chronopolitical intervention might take by looking at the work of contemporary African artists such as Georges Adeagbo and Meshac Gaba. In the tradition of Marcel Broodthaers and Fred Wilson, both artists have turned towards museological emulation, thus laying bare, manipulating, mocking, and critically affirming the contextualizing and historicizing framework of institutional knowledge. Gaba’s “Contemporary Art Museum” is “at once a criticism of the museological institution as conceived in developed countries, as well as the utopian formulation of a possible model for a nonexistent institution. This dual nature, critical and utopian, is related to the artist . . . founding a structure where there isn’t one, without losing sight of the limitations of existing models that belong to a certain social and economic order based in the harsher realities of domination” (Gaba ). 292 ● F u rther Considerations on Afrofuturism P ROLEPTIC I NTERVENTION Taking its cue from this “dual nature” of the “critical and utopian,” an Afrofuturist art project might work on the exposure and reframing of futurisms that act to forecast and fix African dystopia. For the contemporary African artist of , these projections of relentless social disaster contain certain conceptual implications. The African artist that researches this dimension will find a space for distinct kinds of anticipatory designs, projects of emulation, manipulation, parasitism. Interpellation into a bright corporate tomorrow by ads full of faces smiling at screens may become a bitter joke at the expense of multinational delusions. The artist might reassemble the predatory futures that insist the next  years will be ones of unmitigated despair. Afrofuturism, then, is concerned with the possibilities for intervention within the dimension of the predictive, the projected, the proleptic, the envisioned, the virtual, the anticipatory and the future conditional.

#### Afrofuturism disrupts traditional chronologies of history and disrupts the futurisms that condemn black bodies to prehistory. Afrofuturism reconciles diasporic thought through it’s futuristic readings of a grammar of alienation

Eshun 03 (Eshun, Kodwo, author of numerous pieces on music, culture, and the arts, associateeditor of the 21C, author of More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction (Quartet Books, 1998), editor of Afrofuturist Reader from Duke University Press. "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism." The New Centennial Review 3.2 (2003): 287-302. Project Muse. Web. 30 June 2017. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/48294>.)

Afrofuturism is by no means naively celebratory. The reactionary Manichaenism of the Nation of Islam, the regressive compensation mechanisms of Egyptology, Dogonesque cosmology, and the totalising reversals of Stolen Legacy–style Afrocentricity are immediately evident. By excavating the political moments of such vernacular futurologies, a lineage of competing worldviews that seek to reorient history comes into focus. In identifying the emergence and dissemination of belief systems, it becomes critical to analyze how, in Gilroy’s words, “even as the movement that produced them fades, there remains a degree of temporal disturbance.” By creating temporal complications and anachronistic episodes that disturb the linear time of progress, these futurisms adjust the temporal logics that condemned black subjects to prehistory. Chronopolitically speaking, these revisionist historicities may be understood as a series of powerful competing futures that infiltrate the present at different rates. Revisionist logic is shared by autodidact historians like Sun Ra and George G. M. James of Stolen Legacy, and contemporary intellectuals such as Toni Morrison, Greg Tate, and Paul D. Miller. Her argument that the African slaves that experienced capture, theft, abduction, and mutilation were the first moderns is important for positioning slavery at the heart of modernity. The cognitive and attitudinal shift demanded by her statement also yokes philosophy together with brutality, and binds cruelty to temporality. The effect is to force together separated systems of knowledge, so as to disabuse apparatuses of knowledge of their innocence. Afrofuturism can be understood as an elaboration upon the implications of Morrison’s revisionary thesis. In a  interview with the writer Mark Sinker, cultural critic Greg Tate suggested that the bar between the signifier and the signified could be understood as standing for the Middle Passage that separated signification (meaning) from sign (letter). This analogy of racial terror with semiotic process spliced the world of historical trauma with the apparatus of structuralism. The two genealogies crossbred with a disquieting force that contaminated the latter and abstracted the former. Kodwo Eshun ● 297 T H E U SES OF A LIENATION Afrofuturism does not stop at correcting the history of the future. Nor is it a simple matter of inserting more black actors into science-fiction narratives. These methods are only baby steps towards the more totalizing realization that, in Greg Tate’s formulation, Afrodiasporic subjects live the estrangement that science-fiction writers envision. Black existence and science fiction are one and the same. In The Last Angel of History, Tate argued that “The form itself, the conventions of the narrative in terms of the way it deals with subjectivity, focuses on someone who is at odds with the apparatus of power in society and whose profound experience is one of cultural dislocation, alienation and estrangement. Most science fiction tales dramatically deal with how the individual is going to contend with these alienating, dislocating societies and circumstances and that pretty much sums up the mass experiences of black people in the postslavery twentieth century.” At the century’s start, Dubois termed the condition of structural and psychological alienation as double consciousness. The condition of alienation, understood in its most general sense, is a psychosocial inevitability that all Afrodiasporic art uses to its own advantage by creating contexts that encourage a process of disalienation. Afrofuturism’s specificity lies in assembling conceptual approaches and countermemorial mediated practices in order to access triple consciousness, quadruple consciousness, previously inaccessible alienations.

#### Afro-futurism deconstructs static notions of identity and dismantles the idea of “race as technology.”

Esteve 16 (Esteve, Ferran, Journalist, researcher and illustrator, started Proun, a fanzine for research and creation that explores the intersections of art, technology and social change. "Afrofuturism, Science Fiction and African Identity." CCCB LAB. CCCB Lab, 02 Nov. 2016. Web. 01 July 2017. <http://lab.cccb.org/en/afrofuturism-science-fiction-and-african-identity/>.)

From ‘black pride’ to a fluid identity. Afrofuturism is framed within the field of African identity, which was shaped gradually over decades, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. A good example is the changing meaning of the term “black”, which was a derogatory term for any non-white in colonial cities, but began to be used with positive connotations all over the world from the sixties onwards in parallel with the fight for civil rights and decolonisation processes. Being black ceased to be an insult, and became something to be proud of. In the late eighties, however, academics such as Stuart Hall questioned the adjective, because it meant assigning people an essential identity based only on skin colour, which is a characteristic without a biological basis. Afrofuturism clearly reflects this evolving identity, given that in the words of Daylenne English and Alvin Kim it imagines a “less constrained black subjectivity in the future and (…) a profound critique of current social, racial and economic orders.” Their perspective coincides with Marlo David’s idea that in a “post-human universe governed by zeroes and ones, the body ceases to matter, thereby fracturing and finally dissolving ties to a racialized subjectivity”. Adding a different perspective, Ytasha Womack points out that one of the roles of Afrofuturism is to dismantle the idea of “race as technology”, which is to say the construction of the myth of biological differences among humans as a tool at the service of European colonialism and American slavery.

Rutledge, Gregory E., studies African-American literature and culture, including speculative fiction, literary history, the African-American epic aesthetic, folklore. "FUTURIST FICTION & FANTASY: The Racial Establishment" (2006). Faculty Publications -- Department of English. 27.

Before the emergence of the Black FFF tradition in the 1960s, the racial politics of the society at large exerted a strong influence on the publication policies of the industry. Not only were there no Black authors, but Black characters were a rarity. Black characters appeared in the fiction of White authors such as C. S. Lewis’ Out of A Silent Planet (1938), which features a Black protagonist, Theodore Sturgeon’s More than Human (1953), Robert Heinlein’s Farnham’s Freehold (1964), which is a novel in which Blacks in a future era are “the Chosen,” and Ursula K Le Guin’s The Left Hand of Darkness (1969) (Govan 44). Although they are not malefactors, seldom did these characters enjoy more than secondary status. The reason for the dearth of Black characters is probably manifold. Sandra Govan, a literary scholar who has written on futurist fiction, suggests that to the extent racism was considered not to be a problem of the future, White authors merely ignored the implications of the non-articulation of Black being: [S]cience fiction implies that the knots of terrestrial racism will eventually loosen because Terrans will have to unite against the aliens, androids, or BEMs [Bug-Eyed Monsters] of the galaxy. Under these circumstances, humans become remarkable for their humanity, not their ethnicity. Robert Scholes seems to have this concept in mind when he remarks that science fiction as a form “has been a bit advanced in its treatment of race and race relations. Because of their orientation toward the future, science fiction writers frequently assumed that America’s major problem in this area—black/white relations—would improve or even wither away.“7 . . . While Scholes and others conveniently assume that distinctions based on race will become invalid in possible future worlds and that it is therefore unnecessary for a character to have a distinct racial background, their presumed total eradication of distinctions based on color or ethnicity seems doubtful short of the Millennium. (44) (parenthetical added) Hence, although the imaginative intent behind the raceless future is benign, it could well give rise to a White future that reinscribes existing racial divisions. Another possible reason for the absence of Black authors lies in the publishing industry’s market-driven policy. In the United States, for example, with the exception of the performative aspects of the entertainment industry and arts (e.g., singing, dancing, and acting), the AfricanAmerican presence has been strongly circumscribed by European-American culture. It was commonly believed that European-American FFF readers would not pay to read about the doings of Black characters. Sandra Govan reports that Richard Lupoffs One Million Centuries (1967) and Samuel R. Delany’s Nova (1968) were initially rejected because they contained Black protagonists (44). In a market where the readership was heavily male and European American, this reasoning seems valid. Implicit in Govan’s critique is that this position overlooks the relationship between media image and viewer interest, for if African Americans were proportionally represented, they probably would have been and would now be a larger part of the market. One need look no further than standard televised and cinematic representations of futurist-fiction futures—Lost in Space (1965-68), Star Trek (1966-69), Battlestar Galatica (1978), Space: 1999 (UK, 1975-77), Buck Rogers (1939 film; 1979-81 serial), the Star Wars trilogy (1977, 1980, 1983), Star Trek: The Next Generation (1987-94), Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (1993-1999), Star Trek: Voyager (1995-), Space: Above and Beyond (1997), Babylon 5 (1993-98), and Lost in Space the movie (1998)—to find evidence of the blanching of the future.8 The tacit rationale for deemphasizing race because it would be irrelevant in a more advanced society, as has been argued, is specious at best. As Govan notes, since futurist fiction writers reinscribe into their futures quotidian vices such as greed, classism, and theft, then surely racism would be present, too (44). An alternative reason why Blacks are not substantively part of the FFF genre is the history of fiction masquerading in the guise of science (e.g., Dr. Samuel George Morton’s 19th-century cranium-size studies). This science has been anathema to diasporic Africans’ attempts to abrogate their dehumanization by society. The strong connection between science and its printmedia disseminators—i.e., (text)book, magazine, and newspaper publishers—underlies the currents of antagonism existing within the Black community. A counter-prejudice to these media and to science should be expected when the apex of thought, science, and the best purveyor of its advances, the print media, have frequently been hostile to diasporic Africans since the 18th century.9 Many studies have documented the distrust African Americans bear toward science and medicine and the mass media for their negative portrayals of Blacks.10 Still the phenomenon of re-entrenching the prejudice continues, as ostensibly scientific works like The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (1994) continue to find dissemination within the publishing industry. Diasporic Africans may also be under-represented as FFF authors for reasons correlated with socioeconomics, time, and freedom of thought. Wealth and security generate zones of freedom to indulge in speculative thought, reading, and writing. Futurist fiction is certainly a speculative enterprise most often well-developed in wealthy, technology-based societies possessed of substantial reflective time. Neither Black communities in Africa nor in the African diaspora, long encumbered with sociopolitical and socioeconomic travails, has had the opportunity to acquire the critical momentum to make speculative fiction a broad phenomenon. Indeed, James Weldon Johnson himself thought the same of the African-American literary canon in the 1920s. Speculating on the relative dearth of Black (literary) creativity in the United States vis-à-vis the belletristic output from other countries, Weldon posited the enervating effect of racism as the causal factor: I know the question naturally arises: If out of the few Negroes who have lived in France there came a Dumas; and out of the few Negroes who have lived in England there came a Coleridge-Taylor; and if from the man who was at the time, probably, the only Negro in Russia [Alexander Pushkin] there sprang that country’s national poet, why have not the millions of Negroes in the United States with all the emotional and artistic endowment claimed for them produced a Dumas, or a Coleridge-Taylor, or a Pushkin? The question seems difficult, but there is an answer. The Negro in the United States is consuming all of his intellectual energy in this grueling race-struggle.... In considering the Aframerican poets of the Latin languages I am impelled to think that, as up to this time the colored poets of greater universality have come out of the Latin-American countries rather than out of the United States, they will continue to do so for a good many years. The reason for this I hinted at in the first part of this preface. The colored poet in the United States labors with limitations which he cannot easily pass over. He is always on the defensive or the offensive. The pressure upon him to be propagandistic is well nigh irresistible. These conditions are suffocating to breadth and to real art in poetry. (869, 879-80) The rarity of the FFF genre in various developing countries throughout the world supports this conclusion.11 A final possible explanation for the nonBlack nature of FFF stems from the problem of objectivity, or the lack thereof; in Western science, especially the social sciences.12 Pierre Bourdieu, finding scientific methodology wanting, has advanced the notion of the theorization effect in The Logic of Practice (1980) to characterize the fallacious reasoning of various scientific disciplines. Bourdieu criticizes the tendency of the putatively objective scientific method to reduce the complexity of the habitus, or our perceptual world, to graphs and synoptic statements, a phenomenon that always benefits the observer (86). Western anthropologists have especially earned Bourdieu’s ire (33, 68, 79). On a less broad scale, Marianna Torgovnick has presented a similar polemic with respect to the primitivization of nonWhite cultures by Western scientists, particularly anthropologists (7-8). Furthermore, in S. P. Mohanty’s classic essay on the problems underlying relativism as an answer to past discrimination, she notes how the rationality underlying Western anthropology may fail to account for different modes of C A L L A L O O 241 cultural practice and belief not amenable to a logical hermeneutic (15-18). Indeed, the South African griot, Djeliba Mamoudou Kouyaté, 13 expresses what he considers to be the limitations of the foundation of Western science—writing—even more poignantly: Other peoples use writing to record the past, but this invention has killed the faculty of memory among them. They do not feel the past anymore, for writing lacks the warmth of the human voice. With them everybody thinks he knows, whereas learning should be a secret. The prophets did not write and their words have been all the more vivid as a result. What paltry learning is that which is congealed in dumb books! (Niane 41) Whether or not one subscribes to Griot Kouyaté’s belief in the fundamentally undermining nature of writing, he joins Torgovnick and Bourdieu in providing theoretical support for the proposition that Blacks and Western science have been at odds often. The philosophy of the hard SF writers, who represent more traditional perspectives on the sciences and independent thought, would arguably conflict with the spiritual, interdependence-based science of the Black community. The devotion the hard sciences and hard SF entail might be especially inconsistent with Black theology. Kathryn Cramer notes the paradox hard SF presents for Black religion. Positing developments in physics as the source sustaining the viability of the human fascination with technology and its innovations, Cramer holds that [t]his notion leads to one of hard sf’s paradoxes: If our faith in science replaces religious faith, science is co-opted into becoming a religion, which, of course, would be unscientific. . . . The primacy of the sense of wonder in science fiction poses a direct challenge to religion: Does the wonder of science and the natural world as experienced through science fiction replace religious awe? . . . The idea that in the future better and more scientific things will replace all the things we currently need and use—a cosmic belief in an ever-improving standard of living—constitutes what I call the replacement principle of sf. (28) The question of more pointed significance to the Black community is whether the advent of and devotion to science—which has been used, as a science fiction, throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries to justify slavery and the inferiority of Blacks14—will undercut religion in the African diaspora. Religion has long occupied the central role in the freedom struggle of the Black community (Du Bois, Souls 211-20; Franklin 92-95, 146-47; Woodson 52-53). According to Hartwell, much of futurist fiction in the 1940s and 1950s elevated scientific knowledge above other systems of thought, and thus “a lot of it was xenophobic, elitist, racist, and psychologically naive” (38). Apparently, not even the recent unmasking of the widespread eradication or co-opting of diasporic scientific accomplishments engendered by the wave of Black studies programs initiated in the early 1970s has undone the Black community’s suspicion toward science.15

## Afrofuturist Black Feminism/AT: Black Feminism

#### The paradox of the present is a black hole- it presents the black female body for continual nonblack consumption while simultaneously consuming her. The aff's creation of alternative realities is a fissure that breaks from the present and exists in a black future where our survival is possible.

**Turpin 2014** (Cherie Ann, Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of the District of Columbia) August “Strategic Disruptions: Black Feminism and Afrofuturism” <http://afrofuturismscholar.com/2014/08/24/work-in-progress-strategic-disruptions-black-feminism-and-afrofuturism-by-cherie-ann-turpin/> )//KM

The beginning of the 21st century marked a shift towards a shaping and attempts at cultivating an aesthetic and critical apparatus to respond to an emerging artistic movement within literature, music, and visual art called Afrofuturism. Afrofuturism opens possibilities of developing responses to ideas about where and how people of African descent could position themselves as intricate parts of human collectives and unknown futures, especially as we move towards realizing virtual and digitalized forms of cultural expression. Further, subjectivity and taking personal agency to create imagined worlds where Black people are leaders is a strong challenge to the weakened but still existing stereotypes of Black women and men as non-intellectual or limited in technological knowledge. Development of Afrofuturism as an aesthetic, theory, or as a process is fraught with the many of same critical debates and discursive tensions that continue to permeate through Black Feminism with regard to essentialism, identity politics, performativity, and aesthetic concerns. Parallel commentary regarding bodies, gender, and race have continued to impact critical responses to speculative and science fiction coming from Afro-Diasporic writers in the 20th and 21st century. “Ironically, African-American critical theory provides very sophisticated tools for the analysis of cyberculture, since African-American critics have been discussing the problem of multiple identities, fragmented personae, and liminality for more than 100 years” Tal (1996). Making connections between two flourishing movements is not so much the issue as it is negotiating the discursive tensions with regard to political and aesthetic concerns. In order to understand these discursive tensions permeating critical reception of gender and race in Afrofuturist culture, this essay will discuss the role of critical debates and critical tensions in Black Feminist theory, as well as its role in the development of Afrofuturism as critical theory. Stereotypes regarding Black women and intellectual abilities continue to be extremely difficult to unravel in the 21st century by Black feminists who seek to build a counter-text to them. However, as noted earlier, some Black feminist theorists have attempted to take on this difficult task in order to recover Black womanhood from degradation. “Women develop theories, characters, art, and beauty free of the pressures of meeting male approval, societal standards, color-based taxonomies, or run-of-the-mill female expectations. The results are works that some critics call uncategorizable” Womack (2013). Black feminists have persisted in creating fissures in these “bodies” of “knowledge” in order to question and unravel these stereotypes, while opening possibilities for critical inquiry that would traverse new terrain in Africana women’s speculative/science fiction. Black Feminist Theory Early Approaches Over the course of well over forty years, Black women intellectuals have engaged in theoretical debate and discussion as a means towards building a critical apparatus that would address both aesthetic and political concerns regarding the “place” and “position” of Black women writers, artists, in addition to our presence as academics in higher education. Barbara Smith’s “call to action” for a Black feminist theory during the 1970s, argued for a breaking of racial and gendered silence in understanding Black women writers’ work: “Black women’s existence, experience, and culture and the brutally complex systems of oppression which shape these in the in `real world’ of white and/or male consciousness beneath consideration, invisible, unknown” Smith (1978). For Smith, Black women struggled to be heard and acknowledged as contributors to literary traditions, and as “outsiders,” were subject to marginalization in academic discourse. During the 70s, 80s and 90s, Black Feminism as a form of literary inquiry, or what became known as “Black Feminist Theory,” came into the academic community through the work of Barbara Smith, the Combahee River Collective, Mary Helen Washington, Toni Cade Bambara, Audre Lorde, Michelle Wallace, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Angela Davis, bell hooks, Alice Walker, Evelynn Hammond, Barbara Christian, Deborah McDowell, Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, Valerie Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, June Jordan, and Hortense Spillers. Approaches to Black feminist theory during the 1980s were fraught with debates regarding politics of language, which in turn unfolded tensions between what some Black feminists saw as essentialism and what other Black feminists saw as articulation of what had been deemed by the hegemony as unspeakable and unacceptable in an overwhelming White, male, heteronormative academy: the Black female body. Barbara Christian warned of the dangers of becoming entangled in “academic language” that that could not only alienate and exclude, but miss engaging in crucial inquiries: “Academic language has become the new metaphysic through which we turn leaden idiom into golden discourse. But by writing more important thinking exclusively in this language, we not only speak but to ourselves, we also are in danger of not asking those critical questions which our native tongues insist we ask” Christian (1989). Christian’s concerns were in part a response to Hazel Carby, who debated and disagreed with Christian and McDowell’s critique regarding the direction of Black feminism towards a discursive body infused with dense, Eurocentric language designed to exclude: “For I feel that the new emphasis on literary critical theory is as hegemonic as the world which it attacks” (Christian, 1987). Hazel Carby, paraphrasing Elaine Showalter in her introduction to Reconstructing Womanhood, suggested a model of black feminist theory, which would occur in three phases: “(1) the concentration on the misogyny (and racism) of literary practice; (2) the discovery that (black) women writers had a literature of their own (previously hidden by patriarchal [and racist] values) and the development of a (black) female aesthetic; and (3) a challenge to and rethinking of the conceptual grounds of literary study and an increased concern with theory” Carby (1987). Carby rejected the notion of shared experience between black women critics and black women writers as ahistorical and essentialist. She did “not assume the existence of a tradition or traditions of black women writings and, indeed, is critical of traditions of Afro-American intellectual thought that have been constructed as paradigmatic of Afro-American history” (Carby, 1987). Carby saw “black feminist” and ‘black woman” as being signs; black feminist theory, in her view, must interrogate the sign as “an arena of struggle and a construct between socially organized persons in the process of their interaction [and] as conditioned by the social organization of the participants involved and also by the immediate conditions of their interactions” (Carby, 1987). Language in black women’s literature, in Carby’s view, was not some universal code of communication or an essentialist vision of communion between black women (Carby, 1987). Carby intersected critical and political aspects of reading which serve to modify poststructuralist models of criticism with the intention of moving black feminist criticism directly in the midst of “the race for theory.” Deborah McDowell noted the importance of the work completed and progress made by critics coming out of Black Arts Movement and the Black Feminist Movement to bring Black female writers into the larger academic discourse McDowell (1990). “ In isolating and affirming the particulars of black female experience they inspired and authorized writers from those cultures to sing in their different voices and to imagine an audience that could hear the song” (McDowell, 1990). Elizabeth Alexander views the 80-90s struggle for theoretical ground as counterproductive to transformation of academic inquiry and academic space: “As “race” became a “category,” and much intellectual energy was put into critiquing “essentialism,” the focus was lost on actual people of color, their voices and contributions, as well as, more practically, the importance of increasing their—out—empowered presence on campuses and in other workplaces. The extreme reaches are not unimaginable: a gender studies without women, “race” studies without black people and other people of color” (McDowell, 1990). Black Feminism and Marginality Politics Other Black feminists furthered the call for theory through series of reshaping and reimagining European theoretical apparatuses, borrowing discursive strategies introduced by Bahktin, Derrida, Freud/Lacan in order to do what Audre Lorde warned could not be done: use the Master’s Tools to dismantle the Master’s “House,” which could be considered as signified through imposition of “theoretical discourse.” For example, Wallace borrowed Houston Baker’s trope of the black hole, in which “black holes may give access to other dimensions…and object …enters the black hole and is infinitely compressed to zero volume…it passes through to another dimension, whereupon the object…reassumes…all of the properties of visibility and concreteness, but in another dimension” Wallace (1990). The dialectic of black women’s art is forced into the position of “other” by white women and black men, who are themselves other to white men (Wallace, 1990). The trope of the black hole described the dimensions of negation, and described the repressed accumulation of black feminist creativity as compressed mass, negated from existence in the race and production of theory (Wallace, 1990). “The outsider sees black feminist creativity as a hole from which nothing worthwhile can emerge and in which everything is forced to assume the zero volume of nothingness, the invisibility, that results from the intense pressure of race, class and sex” (Wallace, 1990). Here, Wallace attempted to address what Mary O’Connor considered to be “nothingness….as a place of origin for …much of black feminist writing…imposed from without, entity defined by the patriarchal and white world of power and wealth.” Mary Helen Washington declared that black women “have been hidden artists–creative geniuses…whose creative impulses have been denied and thwarted in a society in which they have been valued only as a source of cheap labor” Washington (1974). Through the margin of resistance black women writers encourage others to write, to create works of art, and to break through the “black hole”. During the early 1990s bell hooks theorized that art created in the margin as radical, saying that “[i]n this space of collective despair resistance to colonization becomes a vital component to the creativity at risk. Space is interrupted, appropriated and transformed through artistic and literary intervention” hooks (1990). Black women’s creative works reached back into the broken and silenced past and re-cover and re-claim the repressed words of their ancestors, while speaking of their experiences and beauty. bell hooks saw aesthetics as a means of inhabiting space or location, a way of looking and becoming (hooks, 1990). “African American discourse on aesthetics is not prescriptive…the location of white western culture is only one location of discourse on aesthetics.” (hooks, 1990). Aesthetics were also formed through encouragement of other black women to write and to express themselves artistically. “The realities of choice and location are confronted in the gesture of “re-vision,” shaping and determining the response to existing cultural practices and in the capacity to envision new alternative, oppositional aesthetic acts” (hooks, 1990). hooks also saw subjectivity in black women as a process towards political radicalness, and that black women writers should resist Western notions of subjectivity, which limit the ability to commit to political upheaval the structures which oppress black women (hooks, 1990). For hooks, although black women’s writing contained radical resistance to racist oppression, many black female writers limited black women characters’ progress after breaking away from oppression instead of becoming radical subjects of resistance (hooks, 1990). Contemporary black women writers linked subjectivity with emotional and spiritual health, ignoring the possibility of commitment to radical politics and the possibility of resisting unity concepts and accepting difference in female experience and in subjectivity itself, reinforcing dominant feminist thought and essentialist notions of black identity (hooks, 1990). Further, hooks viewed marginality as being more than a site of deprivation; for her the margin was a position of political possibility and a space of resistance, and a location of counter-hegemonic discourse which also came from lived experience (hooks, 1990). Black women writers have possibilities of multiple locations of expression. When black women as “other” speaks and writes in resistance, she is no longer a silent object of derision or object of degradation; she is a radical subject of resistance. As a speaking “other” she is not the muted other, but a subject of power, power which is used to deconstruct the structures of oppression. However, like Barbara Christian, hooks warned black feminists regarding slippage between the voice of the oppressed and the voice of oppressor, especially with regard to power relations and domination of the oppressed. (hooks, 1990). Language was “a politicization of memory” which explained the present while articulating the past (hooks, 1990). Mae Gwendolyn Henderson referred to this articulation as a sort of “speaking in tongues, ” an ability of black women through their location as marginalized to see and speak more than one language as reader Henderson (1989). Henderson proposed a discursive strategy that “seeks to account for racial difference within gender identity and gender difference within racial identity. This approach represents [her] effort to avoid ….the presumed `absolute and self-sufficient’ otherness of the critical stance in order to allow the complex representations of black women writers to steer use away from `a simple and reductive paradigm of otherness.’” (Henderson, 1989). To Henderson, critical theory in the dominant hegemony negated the multiplicity of voices of subjectivity within black women’s writing, which was in “dialogue with the plural aspects of self that constitute the matrix of black female subjectivity”, and was in “dialogue with the aspects of “otherness” within the self” (Henderson, 1989). Henderson’s critical model proposed the existence of heteroglossia in black women’s writing, borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin’s “notion of dialogism”, in which “voices of the other(s) `encounter one another and coexist in the consciousness of real people”…that speaks to the situation of black women writers in particular, `privileged’ by a social positionality that enables them to speak in dialogically racial and gendered voices to the other(s) both within and without” (Henderson, 1989). Henderson saw black female creative writers as “enter[ing] simultaneously into familial, or testimonial and public or competitive discourses….that….enter into testimonial discourse with black men as blacks, with white women as women and with black women as black women…..[and]…enter into a competitive discourse with black men as women, with white women as blacks, and with white men as black women” (Henderson, 1989). Henderson suggested the development of “an enabling critical fiction–that it is black women writers who are the modern-day apostles, empowered by experience to speak as poets and prophets in many tongues….signify[ing] a deliberate intervention by black women writers into the canonic tradition of sacred/literary texts” (Henderson, 1989). She argued that Black women were in a unique position of possibilities as prophets, as with the Hebrew prophets of old, who were in a unique position of being the mouthpiece of God. Conversely, Michelle Wallace offered the caveat that romanticizing or privileging marginality as a primary theoretical/political strategy would lead to a reaffirmation of the white hegemony through reinforcement of the image of the silent “strong matriarch” who is “already liberated” from her oppression (Wallace, 1990). These and other images could be used by the hegemony to silence the process of resistance (Wallace, 1990). “It seemed to me the evidence was everywhere in American culture that precisely because of their political and economic disadvantages, black women were considered to have a peculiar advantage” (Wallace, 1990). For hooks, a strategy of building a critical apparatus that would resist a fixed position or singularity of identity that could be co-opted; rather, it would open possibilities of opening inquiry on multiple experiences and voices. “A radical aesthetic acknowledges that because of changing positions and locations, there can never be one critical paradigm for evaluating African American art” (hooks, 1990). Still, other critics like Deborah Chay, whose essay “Rereading Barbara Christian: Black Feminist Criticism and the Category of Experience” constructed a strong theoretical rebuttal of the notion of “experience” or “representation” as theorized by Barbara Smith, Barbara Christian, and other early Black feminists, offered a blunt observation that the dilemma faced by Black feminist critics was one that was brought on their dependency on a paradigm that was itself self-evident of a need for them to transcend its limits and traps: “I would like to suggest that it is precisely to the extent that the grounds for their differentiation cannot be maintained that black feminists may make their strongest case for both the continuity and the importance of their critical project. That is, the conditions which continue to make an appeal to experience as a logical, appealing, and invisible foundation themselves constitute the most powerful argument for the continued need for “black feminist critics” to organize and inventively challenge the apparatus and terms of their representation Chay (1993).” In other words, the strategy of relying on “experience” or “representation” as a theoretical foundation exposed a theoretical flaw that would and did, in time, prove to become intellectual traps for Black feminists. In addition to critiques on the limits of identity-based theory that focused on race and gender, significant contributions were published by Black feminists who felt the need to address what Hortense J. Spillers and Evelynn Hammonds referred to as “silences” in mainstream feminism with regard to Black female bodies and sexualities. For instance, Spillers argued that mainstream feminism’s silence towards Black female tended to perpetuate dominant ideological paradigms that continued to perpetuate oppressive impressions of Black female sexuality. “I wish to suggest that the lexical gaps I am describing here are manifest along a range of symbolic behavior in reference to black women and that the absence of sexuality as a structure of distinguishing terms is solidly grounded in the negative aspects of symbol-making. The latter, in turn are wed to the abuses and uses of history, and how it is perceived.” Spillers (2003). Spillers asserted a need for Black feminists to pursue a discursive strategy to correct “official” histories of Black female sexuality that would reposition us as a disruptive force to counter hegemonic influence: The aim, though obvious, might be restated: to restore to women’s historical movement its complexity of issues and supply the right verb to the subject searching for it, feminists are called upon to initiate a corrected and revised view of women of color on the frontiers of symbolic action” (Spillers, 2003). In addition to Spillers’ call to Black feminists, Hammonds also proposed a much more decisive and unequivocal discursive strategy for Black feminists. She saw Black feminists’ reluctance to pursue a theoretical direction that included discussions on lesbian eros as an exclusionary tactic that exposed a privileging of heterosexual desire, as well as the presence of the excluded lesbian text: “Since silence about sexuality is being produced by black women and black feminist theorists, that silence itself suggests that black women do have some degree of agency. A focus on black lesbian sexualities, I suggest, implies that another discourse—other than silence—can be produced Hammonds (1994).” Hammonds believed such discourse to be crucial to the development of Black feminist criticism that would contend with Black women artists and writers articulating from a previously missed context that needed to be explored in order to address sexual difference and multiplicity. For Hammonds, breaking this silence was a decisive move that could not be ignored by Black feminists. “Disavowing the designation of black female sexualities as inherently abnormal, while acknowledging the material and symbolic effects of the appellation, we could begin the project of understanding how differently located black women engage in reclaiming the body and expressing desire (Hammonds, 1994). Black Feminism and Intersectionality In the 21st century Black feminism has continued to engage in a series of complex struggles to engage a rapidly changing academic and theoretical landscape challenged by instabilities and uncertainties with regard to political and cultural alliances. For some Black women, disengaging themselves from the limits of a feminism aligned with a singularity of racial identity while remaining committed to dismantling oppressive ideological frameworks entailed developing and encouraging a critical strategy that promised a much more complex engagement: intersectionality. Jennifer C. Nash defined intersectionality as “the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality, has emerged as the primary theoretical tool designed to combat feminist hierarchy, hegemony, and exclusivity” Nash (2011). Nash’s essay “rethinking intersectionality” criticized intersectionality’s tendency to persist in Black feminism’s theoretical problem of “continuously and strategically jamming the workings of binary thinking” by “continu[ing] in the tradition of black feminism with the addition of a new name for conceptualizing the workings of identity” (Nash, 2011). For Nash, intersectionality as a truly useful and progressive theoretical apparatus needed to undergo a critical overhaul that would correct its ambiguity as to how it distinguishes itself from previous versions of Black feminism, whether it remained a part of Black feminist theory as a revised or emergent version, or whether it served as a critical strategy that completely “departs” from it (Nash, 2011). Nash asserted that “[i]n conceiving of privilege and oppression as complex, multi-valent, and simultaneous, intersectionality could offer a more robust conception of both identity and oppression” (Nash, 2011). She suggested an intersectionality strategy that would study “race and gender as co-constitutive processes and as distinctive and historically specific technologies of categorization,” which would in turn allow a much more robust intellectual engagement that would result in “insights that far exceed imagining race and gender as inextricably bound up” (Nash, 2011). By 2011, Nash takes her call to reconsider intersectional analysis in a critical and political direction that seems to anticipate and invite what I would refer to as a theoretical “bridge” for those who would seek to engage in Black feminism beyond identity traps, especially for those who seek to connect Black feminism with Afrofuturism. Her essay “Practicing Love: ‘Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post-Intersectionality’” takes on Audre Lorde’s theory of the erotic in her (1983) essay “Uses of the Erotic” and remixes it with affective theory, proposing a Black feminist love politics that would expose “the existence—indeed, vibrancy—of multiple black feminist political traditions” through “a radical conception of the public sphere” and through “a new relationship to temporality generally, and to futurity” (Nash, 2011). Nash asserts what I would consider a theoretical bridge that invites an Afrofuturist vision of Black feminism when she theorizes that “love-politics practitioners dream of a yet unwritten future; they imagine a world ordered by love, by a radical embrace of difference, by a set of subjects who work on/against themselves to work for each other” (Nash, 2011). Bridge Towards Afrofuturism The rise of Afrofuturism in the 21st century, a name first articulated by Greg Tate in the mid 1990s, can be considered as an aesthetic and critical process existing at the side of and through the development of Black feminism and its critical companion intersectionality. It is inclusive of science fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction, as well as visual art, music, and technological infusion into Afro-Diasporic cultures. Jewelle Gomez refers to “speculative fiction,” as new landscapes and life experience are imagined beyond the limits of the so-called real: “[s]peculative fiction is a way of expanding our ideas of what human nature really is, allowing us to consider all aspects of ourselves; it is important that a diverse range of writers, Black lesbian writers included, participate in this expansion” Gomez (1991). D. Denenge Akpem, discussing the 2011 Afrofuturism Conference in Chicago Art Magazine, describes Afrofuturism as “an exploration and methodology of liberation, simultaneously both a location and a journey…[w]e are alchemists in this city of steel, akin to the Yoruba god Ogun, fusing metal to metal.” As “alchemists,” Afrofuturists invoke the past as a means towards imagining a future that is not only inclusive of us as participants but as shapers of worlds that embrace new permutations of existence, as well as new permutations of expression, artistically. “Afrofuturism as a movement itself may be the first in which black women creators are credited for the power of their imaginations and are equally represented as the face of the future and the shapers of the future” (Womack, 2012). Like Black Feminists, Afrofuturists engage in a recovery and retelling of the presence of people of African descent as contributors to cultural production and articulation. “Afrofuturism has evolved into a coherent mode not only aesthetically but also in terms of its political mission. In its broadest dimensions Afrofuturism is an extension of the historical recovery projects that black Atlantic intellectuals have engaged in for well over two hundred years” (Sdonline). Rather than following dominant cultural assumptions of Africana culture as being in opposition to a digitalized future or present, Akpem invokes an Orisha who symbolizes humanity’s changing relationship with those elements that provide us with the tools for innovation, invention, and advancement. Ogun, the God of iron, shapes not just spears and guns, but railroads, locomotives, cars, and ships. His “children” are not just warriors, but also inventors and drivers. Afrofuturism is also a reclaiming of space previously assumed to be alien to us; it is not so much about being included in someone else’s cultural and technological conversation, as it is a reclaiming of authority to speak as creators and inventors. For Black feminists, such a process surpasses socio-cultural codes demanding containment. “While Afrofuturist women are obviously shaped by modern gender issues, their creations and theories themselves emerge from a space that renders such limitations moot” (Womack, 2012). This process intervenes and interrupts what Alondra Nelson refers to as “the racialized digital divide narrative” in a collection of essays on Afrofuturism called “Future Texts,” a special edition of Social Text (2002): The racialized digital divide narrative that circulates in the public sphere and the bodiless, color-blind mythotopias of cybertheory and commercial advertising have become the unacknowledged frames of reference for understanding race in the digital age. In these frameworks, the technologically enabled future is by its very nature unmoored from the past and from people of color. Neocritical narratives suggest that it is primitiveness or outmodedness, the obsolescence of something or someone else, that confirms the novel status of the virtual self, the cutting-edge product, or the high-tech society Nelson (2002). Racialized tropes that dominate the “public sphere” have been flooded with the notion that a digitalized or highly technological space cannot exist or flourish in a future populated with people of color because they/we are outdated, or of a past existence. Cultural expressions coming from such ideological paradigms assume a future free of those populations that signify a racialized limitation, as well as a past with a very limited or dim view of racial others. Nelson sees writers like Ishmael Reed as an example of a futurist vision that counters the hegemony’s script: “Like [Ishmael Reed’s] critique of the dominant mythos of “Western civ,” his anachronistic use of technology in Mumbo Jumbo begs the question of what tools are valued by whom, and to what ends. With his innovative novel as an exemplar, Ishmael Reed has supplied a paradigm for an African diasporic technoculture (Nelson, 2002).” Reed’s depiction of “technology” serves as a subversion of the dominant tropes by revising and reimagining stories of both our past and our future from a vantage point of one who is able to see our presence as both inventors and users of technology. As Nalo Hopkinson notes with a certain joy, speculation in fiction offers Afrofuturist writers a means towards “shaking up” the hegemony: “Science fiction and fantasy are already about subverting paradigms. It’s something I love about them” Hopkinson (2010). Teresa Goddu asserts that African American writers who have ventured into speculative fiction featuring horror or the fantastic engage in a counter-text or counter-theoretical mode of writing about the past, where the “horror” of the slave institution, Jim Crow, and the aftermath provide rich, fertile ground upon which to imagine supernatural or preternatural figures who exist in a world already rife with evils of racism, subjugation, and dehumanization. She asserts that “[f]rom Morrison’s vampiric Beloved, who sucks the past out of Sethe, to Eddie Murphy’s Vampire in Brooklyn (1995), which replays Dracula’s landing in England as the entrance into New York harbor of a crumbling Caribbean slave ship populated with corpses, the African-American vampire reminds us that the American gothic travels from elsewhere and is burdened by the horror of racial history” Goddu (1999). Kodwo Eshun’s theorization moves in a direction similar to that of Nelson’s trajectory, in that he also sees Afrofuturism as interrupting the old version of the story of the future Eshun (2003). Further, Eshun views Afrofuturism as an emergence of “temporal complications and episodes that disturb the linear time of progress” which “adjust the temporal logics that condemned the black subjects to prehistory” (Eshun, 2003). Put another way, Afrofuturism is a process or performative that disrupts and erupts commonly understood sequential order of things, or what we have understood to be history, or even fact. For novelist Nalo Hopkinson, the speculative possesses a political vehicle that allows writers to explore racial and social class performativity: “So one might say that, at a very deep level, one of the things that fantasy and science fiction do is to use myth-making to examine and explore socioeconomically configured ethnoracial power imbalances” (Hopkinson, 2010). According to Herman Gray, Afrofuturist writers like Octavia Butler, Samuel Delaney, and others inspire this movement in such a way that encourages an imagined existence in the African Diaspora beyond colonized borders and the legacy and terror of slavery and its aftermath. Gray asserts that “Afrofuturists claim that blacks scattered across the Atlantic world are aliens in an alien land, ever on the lookout for clues and resources that point the way out of alien nations and conditions of bondage” (Gray, 2005). Linking Afrofuturist fiction to Afrofuturist music as similar movements away from these limits, Gray contends this movement as a significant step towards liberation, where the liminal could produce innovative modes of fashioning the African diasporic self: “It is possible to rebuild old and make anew different diasporic connections, as well as to imagine possibilities for inhabiting the spaces and identities about which Sun Ra wrote” Gray (2005). Afrofuturism positions the master narrative about the past, present, and future into one of instability and uncertainty, which is, without a doubt, a critical and political strategy that can align and inform with that of a Black feminist process that seeks to develop a discursive strategy that complicates and disrupts those narratives and myths that depend on a singularity of timelines or more importantly, identity politics. Afrofuturism and Black feminism are both vital critical apparatus vehicles for Afro-Diasporic women and men who seek to enter and disrupt an otherwise homogenous ideological framework.

**Affirmation of our historical counter-future is a gesture of defiance that heals and creates new growth and new life via transgressive black feminist epistemologies**

**Morris 2012**(Susana, Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Auburn University) Fall/Winter “Black Girls Are from the Future: Afrofuturist Feminism in Octavia E. Butler's "Fledgling"” Women's Studies Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 3/4, ENCHANTMENT (FALL/WINTER 2012), pp. 146-166)//KM

Speculative fiction, that is, science fiction, fantasy, horror, and futurist fiction, has largely been (mis)understood as a genre written only by whites (mostly men) about whites (again, mostly men). However, by the end of the twentieth century black writers such as Samuel Delaney, Octavia E. Butler, Steven Barnes, Tananarive Due, and Nalo Hopkinson, among others, reflected a tradition of black speculative fiction known as Afrofu turism.6 My use of the term "Afrofuturism" is particularly informed by Afrofuturist scholars Mark Dery, Alondra Nelson, Lisa Yaszek, and Kodwo Eshun. Dery coined the term "Afrofuturism" in 1994 to "describe African American cultures appropriation of technology and SF imagery" (2008, 6). He further notes that "speculative fiction that treats African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of tech nology and a prosthetically enhanced future ... might, for want of a bet ter term, be called Afro-Futurism" (8). Dery s portmanteau of "afro" and "futurism" denotes the important connection between race and futurist fiction, a circumstance that tends to go unacknowledged in mainstream speculative fiction.7 In addition to Dery's definition, Alondra Nelson's groundbreaking work—including editing the special issue of Social Text devoted to Afrofuturism and founding the Afrofuturism Listserv and website—has been vital to the development of Afrofuturism criticism and scholarship. Nelson contends that Afrofuturism forwards "takes on digital culture that do not fall into the trap of the neocritics or the futurists of one hundred years past. These works represent new directions in the study of African diaspora culture that are grounded in the histories of black com munities, rather than seeking to sever all connections to them" (2002, 9). Likewise, Afrofuturist scholar Lisa Yaszek suggests, "While early Afrofuturists are concerned primarily with the question of whether or not there will be any future whatsoever for people of color, contemporary Afrofuturists assume that in the future race will continue to matter to individuals and entire civilizations alike. In doing so, they expand our sense of the possible and contribute to the ongoing development of science fiction itself" (2006). My use of Afrofuturism is also informed by Kodwo Eshun's asser tion that Afrofuturism is "concerned with the possibilities for interven tion within the dimension of the predictive, the projected, the proleptic, the envisioned, the virtual, the anticipatory and the future conditional" (2003, 293). Furthermore, it is important to note, as Eshun contends, that "Afrofuturism may be characterized as a program for recovering the histories of counter-futures created in a century hostile to Afrodiasporic projection and as a space within which the critical work of manufacturing tools capable of intervention within the current political dispensation may be undertaken" (301). Thus, Afrofuturism is an epistemology that both examines the current problems faced by blacks and people of color more generally and critiques interpretations of the past and the future. Ulti mately, Dery, Nelson, Yaszek, and Eshun illuminate that one of Afrofuturism's foremost guiding tenets is the centrality of African diasporic histories and practices in sustaining progressive visions of the future. Put another way, not only does Afrofuturism posit that blacks will exist in the future, as opposed to being harbingers of social chaos and collapse, but in "recovering the histories of counter-futures" Afrofuturism insists that blacks fundamentally are the future and that Afrodiasporic cultural practices are vital to imagining the continuance of human society. Because much of Afrofuturism's transgressive politics align with the fundamental tenets of black feminist thought, I argue that it is critical to understand these epistemologies not only as related but as, in fact, in conversation with one another and potentially even symbiotic. Just as Afrofuturism underscores the centrality of blacks to futurist knowledge and cultural production and resistance to tyranny, so does black feminist thought contend that black peoples experience, knowledge, and culture are vitally important. Black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins claims, "Black feminist thought affirms, rearticulates, and provides a vehicle for expressing in public a consciousness that quite often already exists" (2000, 32). Moreover, just as Afrofuturism seeks to liberate the possibilities that open up when blackness is linked to futurity, so does black feminist thought seek to uncouple dominance from power as blacks assert their agency, for as bell hooks declares, "Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back,' that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice" (1989, 9). This movement toward a liberated voice, as hooks suggests, is not about simply replacing the dom inant voice with the voice of the marginalized; rather, liberation is cast in terms of coalition and power sharing, methodologies that would incite a future quite different from the hegemony of present structures. I want to consider the synthesis of Afrofuturism and black feminist thought as Afrofuturist feminism. Afrofuturist feminism is a reflection of the shared central tenets of Afrofuturism and black feminist thought and reflects a literary tradition in which people of African descent and transgressive, feminist practices born of or from across the Afrodiaspora are key to a pro gressive future. Ultimately, I argue that recognizing Afrofuturist feminism offers a critical epistemology that illuminates the working of black speculative fiction in vital ways. Octavia Butler is certainly among the authors whose works exemplify Afrofuturist feminism. In her essay "Positive Obsession," Butler asserts that speculative fiction has the potential to catalyze progressive political change and that, for black people, this is a particularly significant project. She writes: What good is any form of literature to Black people? What good is sci ence fictions thinking about the present, the future, and the past? What good is its tendency to warn or to consider alternative ways of think ing and doing? What good is its examination of the possible effects of science and technology, or social organization and political direction? At its best, science fiction stimulates imagination and creativity. It gets reader and writer off the beaten track, off the narrow, narrow footpath of what "everyone" is saying, doing, thinking—whoever "everyone" happens to be this year. And what good is all this to Black people? (2005b, 135). Butlers rhetorical questions and subsequent answers reject the notion that speculative fiction is a "whites only" enterprise, arguing instead that the genre can incite d for a variety of people. Also, Butlers emphasis on the transformative potential of speculative fiction underscores her Afrofuturist work as being defined by a feminist sensibility. That is, her works of speculative fiction not only adhere to the tenets of Afrofuturism but also are self-consciously interested in the con nections between race, gender, sexuality, and ability that are at the core of black feminist thought. Indeed, as Marilyn Mehaffy and AnaLouise Keating note, "Octavia Butler s work is thematically preoccupied with the potentiality of genetically altered bodies—hybrid multispecies and multi ethnic subjectivities—for revising contemporary nationalist, racist, sexist, and homophobic attitudes" (2001,45). Thus, Butler s work is Afrofuturist feminism in several ways. Her texts are committed to portraying compli cated (and sometimes vexed) histories of people of color and visions of the future with people of color at the center, with a particular emphasis on women of color. Butlers fiction is also fundamentally interested in critiquing conventional systems of power and dominance and offering futurist solutions based on cooperation and egalitarian ethics. Thus, Butlers writing consistently advocates transgressing repressive social norms and rejecting heteropatriarchy, while centering (or creating) a variety of experiences from across the Afrodiaspora. Nonetheless, while Butler's Afrofuturist work underscores a commitment to an equitable vision of society, it does not resort to simply offering up Utopias. Butler s visions of the future are often ambivalent ones that reveal an ongoing struggle for peace and justice. To that end, while contemporary vampires (and other principle figures and tropes of speculative fiction) are often illustrated as a way to crystallize and affirm whiteness and Western values, Butlers Afrofuturist feminism radically challenges these tenets. She (re)configures vampires as power ful beings not outside of the history of racism, but as powerful, enchant ing beings that are both vulnerable to the constraints of racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism (and their attendant violence) and committed to creating futures for them and those they love that reject these ways of knowing. Nevertheless, I am not arguing that Fledgling is (simply) a reac tionary text. As Kimberly Nichelle Brown argues, "Contemporary African American female writing is a product of choice, of agency, rather than solely a reaction to victimization" (2010, 64). In other words, I see the novel participating in a tradition of feminist resistance in literature that also taps into the potential (albeit sometimes unrealized) that speculative fiction has to interrogate and challenge normative ideologies and practice. That is not to say that Butler s Afrofuturistic vampires are not enchanted or enchanting; however, they break from many of the traditional or con ventionally popular tropes. These vampires are a biological species, not a supernatural force. Some of them are "daywalkers " or, in other words, can move about in the sun. They have preternatural strength but they are not invincible. They have seductive powers of persuasion that they largely use for good, not evil. They live in nonnormative groups with or among human beings and are (generally) not antagonistic to humans. Although not magical creatures, Butlers vampires are, nevertheless, enchanted because of the power that they wield, despite their various flaws and vul nerabilities and their ability to radically alter their surroundings and chal lenge normative notions of how to be..

**The affirmative’s criticism, and re-articulation of education practices functions as an Afrofuturist, feminist epistemology – voting aff is the basis for a pragmatic model for cooperation and change**

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Black Girls Are from the Future In an early study of Butler s works, Ruth Salvaggio contends, "Though Butler s heroines are dangerous and powerful women, their goal is not power. They are heroines not because they conquer the world, but because they conquer the very notion of tyranny" (1984, 8l).10 This sentiment also describes the dynamics at the heart of Fledgling, Butler s final novel. Fledgling strips vampires of both their omnipotence and their universal izing whiteness. Instead, Butler insists that vampires' potential strength is not in their brawn, or speed, or seductiveness; rather, their strength can be found in symbiosis and hybridity, a transgressive Afrofuturist feminist stance dangerous to conservative notions of identity and community often found in vampire lore. De Witt Douglas Kilgore has suggested, "Black women who contribute to [science fiction/fantasy/horror] have reached the point where the history they recover can potentially become future history. It is now possible to identify a new pattern of expectation, one that emerges from long-suppressed voices" (2008, 127). Thus, the organizing principles of Ina life have the potential to stand as a sort of Afrofuturist feminist epistemology and become a pragmatic model of cooperation that, while a work in progress, does not simply reinforce racism, sexism, and compulsory heterosexuality and other hegemonic social ideals. Fur thermore, Butler s emphasis on symbiosis, enchantment, and the ways in which the novel's humans and Ina struggle to make sense of the evolu tion of their cultures and species reflects the challenges found in our own diverse, unenchanted world as we try to make feminist futures out of tren chant patriarchal realities. Octavia Butler is one member of a thriving cohort of Afrofuturist femi nist writers whose work is actively reconfiguring the contours of specula tive fiction. Her work stands alongside of and is in conversation with the work of writers such as Jewelle Gomez, whose pioneering work in queer speculative fiction has inspired more nuanced renderings of black sexuali ties; Tananarive Due, whose recent work in horror has revolutionized the genre by focusing on complex black heroines; L. A. Banks, whose dark fan tasy/horror novels rival Buffy s girl power but without the racist dynamics; Nalo Hopkinson, whose Afrodiasporic tales of fantasy and folklore skill fully blend tradition with a futurist vision; and Nnendi Okorafo-Mbachu, whose stories of precolonial Africa incite us to reenvision the continent s past and future. Their works stand as, in the words of Kimberly Nichelle Brown (2010), decolonizing texts that destabilize normative notions of what is possible by creating worlds in which black women not only have the power to transform their lives, communities, and even species but do so routinely and, often, unapologetically. Ultimately, while mainstream speculative fiction might depict women, and women of color, especially, as accessories or minor characters, these authors insist that black women and girls are in the present and can and do signify (on) the future.

#### Afrofuturism is a feminist space that allows women to engage in an imagining of their futures that renders moot the gender issues that affect them.

Womack 13 (Womack, Ytasha, award-winning filmmaker/author/journalist and choreographer, editor of [www.postblackexperience.com](http://www.postblackexperience.com), guest editor for NV Magazine, social media and pop culture expert, B.A in Mass Media Arts from Clark Atlanta University, studied Arts, Entertainment and Media Management at Columbia College. Afrofuturism : The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture. Chicago :Chicago Review Press, 2013. Print.)

Valuing the divine feminine is one way that Afrofuturism dif- fers from sci-fi and the futurist movements in the past. In Afrofu- turism, technological achievement alone is not enough to create a free-thinking future. A well-crafted relationship with nature is intrinsic to a balanced future too. The feminine aspect of humanity reigns freely in Afrofutur- ism. The subconscious and intuition, which metaphysical studies dub as the feminine side of us all, are prioritized in the genre. This feminine side is neither guided by Western mythology nor limited by popular takes on history. Women Afrofuturists have decision- making power over their creative voice. They make their own standards and sculpt their own lens through which to view the world and for the world to view them. Most important, their voice is not specifically shaped in opposition to a male or racist perspec- tive. While Afrofuturist women are obviously shaped by modern gender issues, their creations and theories themselves emerge from a space that renders such limitations moot. The main commonality is their individuality and a desire to encourage free thinking and end the -isms that have plagued the present and the recent past. Afrofuturist women get a kick out of rewiring their audi- ences. The muses and icons that’ve inspired the genre always appear to have sprung up from nowhere. Grace Jones, Octavia Butler, Erykah Badu, Janelle Monáe, for example, are just hard to place. Even their personal histories and private lives are shrouded in mystery. On the surface, these women don’t fit neatly into any artistic movement or the history of the times without a healthy dose of explanation. “Am I a freak? Or just another little weirdo? Call me weak, or better yet—you can call me your hero, baby,” Janelle Monáe sings in the song “Faster.” “That’s what I’ve always been fighting for,” Monáe says, “making sure that people love themselves for who they are, and we don’t pick on people because we’re uncomfortable with our- selves, or who they are. That’s been my message, from when I was young to now. There are lots of young girls out there who are struggling with their identities, afraid of being discriminated against or teased. I take risks and use my imagination so that other people will feel free and take risks. That’s my hope.”3 Read Nnedi Okorafor’s book Who Fears Death, visit D. Denenge Akpem’s performance installation Alter-Destiny 888 or a dance performance by A’Keitha Carey, and flip through Afua Richardson’s comic illustrations, and there’s a conscious reori- entation process that takes place, almost as if you were dropped into a far-off land. But the land feels familiar, a reality that is soothing for some and unsettling for others. It’s as if the artists want you to remember something, and they discuss it in such a matter-of-fact way that you figure you must know. But do you? There’s an unconscious game of trying to remember a memory, a time or space when and where these familiar oddities weren’t so bizarre. It’s the familiarity with the seemingly bizarre that leads to the aha moment. Female Afrofuturists create their own norm, and the rest of the world just tries to catch up. A Star Is Born Afrofuturism has a star-is-born quality to it. Either morphing from the head of Zeus or crafted from clay like Wonder Woman or her black sister Nubia, there’s just a supernatural quality to engaging in the work. Grace Jones is no exception. Jones is a pop-culture phenom whose bold antics, outlandish personality, and dazzling looks defied all norms. There was absolutely nothing about her that was conventional when she hit the world stage in the late 1970s. She is Josephine Baker post women’s lib and the black lib- eration movement, with a steely, feminine-yet-androgynous look that came to define early ’80s style and has resurged in the twenty- first century. A preacher’s daughter born in Jamaica, Jones moved to New York as a child and built on her theater training to make the world her stage. Her rocket was launched in the club scene and fashion houses of New York and Paris, where she bridged the exotic and the futuristic in a shock-and-awe manner that screamed power. She was a muse to Andy Warhol, and while she was popular in the 1970s and ’80s, by the twenty-first century—when nouveau pop stars recreated her style—she had juggernauted into legend status. Jones recorded a couple of disco singles in the mid-1970s and eventually landed a record deal with Island Records in 1977. She went on to record a string of underground dance hits in the late ’70s and ’80s and continued to make music into the 2000s, most recently in 2008. Although her electronic new-wave sound captured the radical shift in music in the 1970s, she is most popular for her radical fashion and style. “I’ve always been a rebel,” says Jones. “I never do things the way they’re supposed to be done. Either I go in the opposite direction or I create a new direction for myself, regardless of what the rules are or what society says.”4 In a 1985 performance at Paradise Garage, an underground dance club, Jones’s body-paint adornments and colorful metal- and-wire costume (both designed and executed by artist Keith Haring) morphed native art ideas into futuristic fashion. A tall, lithe, brown-skinned woman whose angular features were accented by her square-shaped hairdo, everything Jones did in fashion became iconic decades later. “Models are there to look like mannequins, not like real people. Art and illusion are supposed to be fantasy,” she says. Her red-carpet looks were jaw-dropping. Her concerts were scary gender-bending carnivals of role reversals. She sported a flattop and fade, a style many black men would adopt nearly a decade later, when most women were going for big-hair glam looks. She established the shoulder- padded look of the ’80s that made a high-fashion comeback in 2010. She sported severely tailored pantsuits just as more women entered the workforce. Styled almost exclusively by Jean-Paul Goude from the late 1970s until the mid-1980s, everything about Jones’s outfits, from nude appearances in body paint to floor-length hooded gowns, has been mimicked by Madonna, Lady Gaga, Rihanna, and oth- ers. Her style and aggression, boldness and otherworldly reach, embodied Goude’s look of the future. Jones’s appearances were— and still are—spectacles. In 2012, at age sixty-four, she performed at Queen Elizabeth’s Diamond Jubilee celebration. She twirled a hula hoop around her svelte physique while singing “Slave to the Rhythm” and wearing a black-and-red bodysuit and a giant red headdress. Jones redefined the ideas of beauty, sexuality, and feminin- ity. She wielded fashion as her weapon of choice and inverted beauty standards and women’s roles, mesmerizing people in their discomfort. Although she had the help of stylists and producers, Jones has always been Jones. “But I’m a free spirit,” she says. “Where is the wrong? How do I put a limit to freedom?”5 Feminist Space “Afrofuturism is a feminist movement,” says Alondra Nelson, Columbia University professor and Afrofuturism theorist who launched the now-legendary Internet Listserv for Afrofuturists. The complex black women characters in black sci-fi stories and the plethora of Afrofuturist women in the arts and beyond are no accident, she says. “There have always been black feminists at the center of the project,” she adds. Many women theorists expanded Afrofuturism’s early infatu- ation with music titans and film to include other arts and social transformation. Sheree R. Thomas, editor of Dark Matter: A Cen- tury of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora, assembled the first major collection of African American science fiction, even including a short story by W. E. B Du Bois. University of Southern California professor Anna Everett organized the early AfroGEEKS conferences that tackled the potential use of the Internet for social change and transformation. And Professor Kara Keeling forged groundbreaking queer-studies research through Afrofuturism. But claiming a space as feminist doesn’t mean it’s for women only. What makes a feminist space? “One characteristic is the empowerment of women to work and make decisions in an egali- tarian environment,” says feminist Jennie Ruby. “Another is the acceptance of women’s bodies in all shapes, ages, sizes, and abili- ties.” She continues that, in a feminist space, there’s a democracy, a sharing of the workload, and a goal of “valuing nurturance and cooperation over aggression and competition, and working against sexism, racism, heterosexism, ageism, and classism.”6 “[Afrofuturism] is not a space that women are finding iden- tity; it is a feminist space,” Nelson affirms. “Of course it’s a space for women to feel empowered, because it’s a way to critique the ways people associate with science and technology. I think tech- nology inherently opens the space for women to be central fig- ures in that.” Just as contributions from African descendants to the world’s knowledge are frequently viewed as cultural, rather than scien- tific, the same can be said when looking at the contributions of black women, says Nelson. She points to Madam C. J. Walker, who is widely known as being the first self-made woman mil- lionaire in the US, though she was never hailed as an inventor for creating the products that launched her hair-care empire.

#### Black women are able to counter dominant feminist thought because of the specific intersectionality of their social position. By speaking through their writing, their words, or their art, they can create a tension between the words of other marginalized groups and their own words.

Turpin (Turpin, Cherie Ann, University of the District of Columbia, Feminist Theory, Women's Studies, African American Literature, Popular Culture. "Strategic Disruptions: Black Feminism, Intersectionality, and Afrofuturism.")

Contemporary black women writers linked subjectivity with emotional and spiritual health, ignoring the possibility of commitment to radical politics and the possibility of resisting unity concepts and accepting difference in female experience and in subjectivity itself, reinforcing dominant feminist thought and essentialist notions of black identity. Further, hooks viewed marginality as being more than a site of deprivation; for her the margin was a position of political possibility and a space of resistance, and a location of counter-hegemonic discourse which also came from lived experience. Black women writers have possibilities of multiple locations of expression. When black women as "other" speaks and writes in resistance, she is no longer a silent object of derision or object of degradation; she is a radical subject of resistance. As a speaking "other" she is not the muted other, but a subject of power, power which is used to deconstruct the structures of oppression. However, like Barbara Christian, hooks warned black feminists regarding slippage between the voice of the oppressed and the voice of oppressor, especially with regard to power relations and domination of the oppressed. Language was "a politicization of memory" (hooks, 1990, p.147) which explained the present while articulating the past. Mae Gwendolyn Henderson (1989) referred to this articulation as a sort of "speaking in tongues," an ability of black women through their location as marginalized to see and speak more than one language as reader by proposing a discursive strategy that "seeks to account for racial difference within gender identity and gender difference within racial identity” (p.117). To Henderson, critical theory in the dominant hegemony negated the multiplicity of voices of subjectivity within black women's writing, which was in "dialogue with the plural aspects of self that constitute the matrix of black female subjectivity", and was in "dialogue with the aspects of "otherness" within the self." Henderson's (p.117) critical model proposed the existence of heteroglossia in black women's writing, borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia and dialogism, where he dispels notions of language as ideologically neutral, but instead a seemingly endless discursive process of layering histories and ideological intentions. Bakhtin’s notion of the heteroglot served as a promising theoretical path towards articulating Black women’s strategies to disrupt dominant ideals of language and meaning because of Bakhtin’s recognition of utterance or as he said, the “word,” as infused with socio-political histories and paths: “[language] represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between different epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles, and so forth, all given a bodily form” (Bakhtin 1981, p. 291). Henderson saw black female creative writers as "enter[ing] simultaneously into familial, or testimonial and public or competitive discourses....that....enter into testimonial discourse with black men as blacks, with white women as women and with black women as black women . . . [and] . . . enter into a competitive discourse with black men as women, with white women as blacks, and with white men as black women" (Henderson 1989, p. 120-121). She argued that Black women were in a unique position of possibilities as prophets, as with the Hebrew prophets of old, who were in a unique position of being the mouthpiece of God.

#### Afrofuturism aligns with black feminism as a political strategy to disrupt the dominant sense of linearity and the hegemonic narratives of the past, present, and future.

Turpin (Turpin, Cherie Ann, University of the District of Columbia, Feminist Theory, Women's Studies, African American Literature, Popular Culture. "Strategic Disruptions: Black Feminism, Intersectionality, and Afrofuturism.")

The rise of Afrofuturism in the 21st century actually began its climb in intellectual circles as a continuation of a discussion regarding Black science fiction writers. The term “Afrofuturism” was first articulated and defined by Mark Dery in his 1993 essay “Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose,” where he defined it as “[s]peculative fiction that treats African American themes and addresses African American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture—and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future” (Dery 1993, p.180). It is inclusive of science fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction, as well as visual art, music, and technological infusion into Afro-Diasporic cultures. Jewelle Gomez refers to “speculative fiction,” as new landscapes and life experience are imagined beyond the limits of the so-called real: “[s]peculative fiction is a way of expanding our ideas of what human nature really is, allowing us to consider all aspects of ourselves; it is important that a diverse range of writers, Black lesbian writers included, participate in this expansion” Gomez (1991). D. Denenge Akpem, discussing the 2011 Afrofuturism Conference in Chicago Art Magazine, describes Afrofuturism as “an exploration and methodology of liberation, simultaneously both a location and a journey...[w]e are alchemists in this city of steel, akin to the Yoruba god Ogun, fusing metal to metal.” As “alchemists,” Afrofuturists invoke the past as a means towards imagining a future that is not only inclusive of us as participants but [and] as shapers of worlds that embrace new permutations of existence, as well as new permutations of expression, artistically. “Afrofuturism as a movement itself may be the first in which black women creators are credited for the power of their imaginations and are equally represented as the face of the future and the shapers of the future.” (Womack 2012, para 16) Like Black Feminists, Afrofuturists engage in a recovery and retelling of the presence of people of African descent as contributors to cultural production and articulation. “Afrofuturism has evolved into a coherent mode not only aesthetically but also in terms of its political mission. In its broadest dimensions Afrofuturism is an extension of the historical recovery projects that black Atlantic intellectuals have engaged in for well over two hundred years” (sdonline, para 14). Rather than following dominant cultural assumptions of Africana culture as being in opposition to a digitalized future or present, Akpem invokes an Orisha who symbolizes humanity’s changing relationship with those elements that provide us with the tools for innovation, invention, and advancement. Ogun, the God of iron, shapes not just spears and guns, but railroads, locomotives, cars, and ships. His “children” are not just warriors, but also inventors and drivers. Given its persistence as both an artistic and as an aesthetic and critical process that articulates gender, racial, and sexual pluralities in the African Diaspora, Afrofuturism can be considered as existing at the side of and through the development of Black feminist theory and its emergent critical companion “intersectionality.” Afrofuturism is also a reclaiming of space previously assumed to be alien to us; it is not so much about being included in someone else’s cultural and technological conversation, as it is a reclaiming of authority to speak as creators and inventors. For Black feminists, such a process surpasses socio-cultural codes demanding containment. “While Afrofuturist women are obviously shaped by modern gender issues, their creations and theories themselves emerge from a space that renders such limitations moot.” (Womack 2013, p.104 ) This process intervenes and interrupts what Alondra Nelson (2002) refers to as “the racialized digital divide narrative” in a collection of essays on Afrofuturism called “Future Texts,” a special edition of Social Text. The racialized digital divide narrative that circulates in the public sphere and the bodiless, color-blind mythotopias of cybertheory and commercial advertising have become the unacknowledged frames of reference for understanding race in the digital age. In these frameworks, the technologically enabled future is by its very nature unmoored from the past and from people of color. Neocritical narratives suggest that it is primitiveness or outmodedness, the obsolescence of something or someone else, that confirms the novel status of the virtual self, the cutting-edge product, or the high-tech society Nelson (2002). Racialized tropes that dominate the “public sphere” have been flooded with the notion that a digitalized or highly technological space cannot exist or flourish in a future populated with people of color because they/we are outdated, or of a past existence. Cultural expressions coming from such ideological paradigms assume a future free of those populations that signify a racialized limitation, as well as a past with a very limited or dim view of racial others. Nelson sees writers like Ishmael Reed as an example of a futurist vision that counters the hegemony’s script: “Like [Ishmael Reed’s] critique of the dominant mythos of “Western civ,” his anachronistic use of technology in Mumbo Jumbo begs the question of what tools are valued by whom, and to what ends. With his innovative novel as an exemplar, Ishmael Reed has supplied a paradigm for an African diasporic technoculture (Nelson, 2002).” Reed’s depiction of “technology” serves as a subversion of the dominant tropes by revising and reimagining stories of both our past and our future from a vantage point of one who is able to see our presence as both inventors and users of technology. As Nalo Hopkinson notes with a certain joy, speculation in fiction offers Afrofuturist writers a means towards “shaking up” the hegemony such that science fiction and fantasy are already about subverting paradigms. Further, Teresa Goddu (1999) asserts that African American writers who have ventured into speculative fiction featuring horror or the fantastic engage in a counter-text or counter-theoretical mode of writing about the past, where the “horror” of the slave institution, Jim Crow, and the aftermath provide rich, fertile ground upon which to imagine supernatural or preternatural figures who exist in a world already rife with evils of racism, subjugation, and dehumanization. Goddu asserts that “[f]rom Morrison's vampiric Beloved, who sucks the past out of Sethe, to Eddie Murphy's Vampire in Brooklyn (1995), which replays Dracula's landing in England as the entrance into New York harbor of a crumbling Caribbean slave ship populated with corpses, the African-American vampire reminds us that the American gothic travels from elsewhere and is burdened by the horror of racial history” (Goddu 1999, p.139). Kodwo Eshun’s theorization moves in a direction similar to that of Nelson’s trajectory, in that he also sees Afrofuturism as interrupting the old version of the story of the future (Eshun, 2003). Further, Eshun views Afrofuturism as an emergence of “temporal complications and episodes that disturb the linear time of progress” which “adjust the temporal logics that condemned the black subjects to prehistory.” (1990, p.297) Put another way, Afrofuturism is a process or performative that disrupts and erupts commonly understood sequential order of things, or what we have understood to be history, or even fact. For novelist Nalo Hopkinson, the speculative possesses a political vehicle that allows writers to explore racial and social class performativity, “so one might say that, at a very deep level, one of the things that fantasy and science fiction do is to use myth-making to examine and explore socioeconomically configured ethnoracial power imbalances” (Hopkinson 2010, p.46). According to Herman Gray, Afrofuturist writers like Octavia Butler, Samuel Delaney, and others inspire this movement in such a way that encourages an imagined existence in the African Diaspora beyond colonized borders and the legacy and terror of slavery and its aftermath. Gray (2005) notes how “Afrofuturists claim that blacks scattered across the Atlantic world are aliens in an alien land, ever on the lookout for clues and resources that point the way out of alien nations and conditions of bondage.” (p.166). Connecting Afrofuturist fiction to Afrofuturist music as similar movements away from these limits, Gray contends this movement as a significant step towards liberation, where the liminal could produce innovative modes of fashioning the African diasporic self, “it is possible to rebuild old and make anew different diasporic connections, as well as to imagine possibilities for inhabiting the spaces and identities about which Sun Ra wrote.” (Gray 2005, p.166) Afrofuturism positions the master narrative about the past, present, and future into one of instability and uncertainty, which is, without a doubt, a critical and political strategy that can align and inform with that of a Black feminist process that seeks to develop a discursive strategy that complicates and disrupts those narratives and myths that depend on a singularity of timelines or more importantly, identity politics. Afrofuturism and Black feminism are both vital critical apparatus vehicles for Afro-Diasporic women and men who seek to enter and disrupt an otherwise homogenous ideological framework.

#### Black women can use their creativity and imagination to produce radical aesthetics of resistance that challenge traditional tropes of the “black hole” and challenge dominant aesthetics.

Turpin (Turpin, Cherie Ann, University of the District of Columbia, Feminist Theory, Women's Studies, African American Literature, Popular Culture. "Strategic Disruptions: Black Feminism, Intersectionality, and Afrofuturism.")

Other Black feminists furthered the call for theory through series of reshaping and reimagining European theoretical apparatuses, borrowing discursive strategies introduced by Bahktin, Derrida, Freud/Lacan in order to do what Audre Lorde warned could not be done: use the Master’s Tools to dismantle the Master’s “House,” which could be considered as signified through imposition of “theoretical discourse.” For example, Wallace borrowed Houston Baker's trope of the black hole, in which "black holes may give access to other dimensions...and object ...enters the black hole and is infinitely compressed to zero volume...it passes through to another dimension, whereupon the object...reassumes...all of the properties of visibility and concreteness, but in another dimension." (Wallace 1990, p.55 ). The dialectic of black women's art is forced into the position of "other" by white women and black men, who are themselves other to white men. The trope of the black hole described the dimensions of negation, and described the repressed accumulation of black feminist creativity as compressed mass, negated from existence in the race and production of theory. "The outsider sees black feminist creativity as a hole from which nothing worthwhile can emerge and in which everything is forced to assume the zero volume of nothingness, the invisibility, that results from the intense pressure of race, class and sex" (Wallace 1990, p.55). Wallace attempted to address what Mary O'Connor considered to be "nothingness....as a place of origin for ...much of black feminist writing...imposed from without, entity defined by the patriarchal and white world of power and wealth" (Wallace 1990, p.55). Further, Wallace illustrated a methodical, constant process of erasure rendering Black female voices silent. Her assertion here joined other Black feminists engaged in the process of understanding the negative historical impact of racism, sexism and classism on Black women’s access to artistic and intellectual opportunities. Significantly, Mary Helen Washington declared that black women "have been hidden artists--creative geniuses...whose creative impulses have been denied and thwarted in a society in which they have been valued only as a source of cheap labor." (Washington 1974, p.209) Through the margin of resistance black feminists like Wallace and Washington encouraged Black women to write, to create works of art, and to break through the "black hole." Furthering this trajectory, bell hooks (1990) theorized that art created in the margin as radical works, saying that "[i]n this space of collective despair resistance to colonization becomes a vital component to the creativity at risk. Space is interrupted, appropriated and transformed through artistic and literary intervention.” (p.152) Black women's creative works reached back into the broken and silenced past and re-cover and re-claim the repressed words of their ancestors, while speaking of their experiences and beauty. hooks argued for consideration of aesthetics as plural instead of singular, as well as a plurality of Black discursive locations. Her reasoning came in part from the recognition that Eurocentric discourse was not only not singular, but also not necessarily located at the center. Plurality disrupted binary reasoning in the assessment and articulation of “cultural practices”: African American discourse on aesthetics is not prescriptive...the location of white western culture is only one location of discourse on aesthetics . . . . The realities of choice and location are confronted in the gesture of "re-vision, shaping and determining the response to existing cultural practices and in the capacity to envision new alternative, oppositional aesthetic acts" (hooks, 1990 p.145). hooks also saw subjectivity in black women as a process towards political radicalness, and that black women writers should resist Western notions of subjectivity, which limit the ability to commit to political upheaval the structures which oppress black women. For hooks, although black women's writing contained radical resistance to racist oppression, many black female writers limited black women characters' progress after breaking away from oppression instead of becoming radical subjects of resistance.

## Afropessimism Answers

### Impact – Agency

#### Subjectivity for black queer people is self-constructed and expressed through language and action – their single-issue, totalizing theory fails to listen and precludes methods of liberation

Gill 12  
(Lyndon K. Gill is an assistant professor of African and African Diaspora Studies at UT Austin with interests in queer aesthetics in the African Diaspora, the erotic, LGBT art and activism in Caribbean cultures, African-based spiritual traditions in the Americas, subjectivity and community building. "Situating Black, Situating Queer: Black Queer Diaspora Studies and the Art of Embodied Listening." *Transforming Anthropology* 20.1 (2012) cVs)

If a Black queer diasporic consciousness encourages the kinds of perspectival shifts that permit different visions of queer possibility to emerge from the impermanent places Black queer people inhabit and the fertile impermanence that inhabits Black queerness, then it must not be satisfied with discursive treatments of Black queer subjects, Black queer subjectivity or even the juridical, moral and theoretical contexts in which Black queers find themselves. Black queer diaspora studies remains incomplete without the appearance of Black queers not simply as representational abstractions, but as situated, speaking subjects.4 This praxis of Black queer presence is intended to insistently foreground the material reality, quotidian experiences and cultural products of Black queer peoples. Anthropologist Gloria Wekker has offered her work as a call for rooted, context-conscious analyses of Black diasporic same-sex community (as well as sexual practices) that do not trample blossoming specificities in the haste to cultivate a haphazard global same-sex sexuality. And this call is at once part of a delicate symbiosis between a critique of transnational sexuality studies and a desire to elaborate a very specifically situated sexual subjectivity. As Wekker explains, attending to this subjecthood demands that one listen closely: One possible fruitful way to open windows to local conceptions of personhood is to listen carefully to what people have to say about themselves and what terms they use to make these statements. Collecting and studying a contextualized lexicon of the self can provide an understanding of the ways subjectivity is locally conceptualized. [Wekker 1997:333] Wekker describes what might seem like quite an intuitive way to assess contextualized subjectivity; yet this methodology has proven still rare and exotic in assessments of Black queer lifeways in general and the Black queer Caribbean in particular. Pushing Wekker's proposition even further, I contend that her “contextualized lexicon of self” extends even beyond that which is spoken in language to include that which is spoken in excess of language. Learning the vocabulary of actions—a kinesthetic literacy—is a form of interpretive artistry cultivated within the discipline of anthropology.5 This artful listening practice as ethnographic method and as theoretical starting point is the principal contribution of an anthropology transformed by the interventions of Black feminist studies and queer studies. Black feminist anthropology promotes this listening practice as part of an elaborate strategy for interrupting certain forms of biased knowledge (re)production in the service of a holistic praxis of social transformation (McClaurin 2001:2,16).6 Embracing an interdisciplinary richness at the same time that it foregrounds particularly situated lived experience, Black feminist anthropology has pushed the discipline to listen beyond its disciplinary borders while hearing the cross-influences of race, gender and place on the lives of various subjects (McClaurin 2001:9,14–15,57). On the other hand, queer anthropology—the conditions of its possibility having been laid by the anthropology of gender and by the institutional space cleared by pioneering lesbian anthropologists of gender—has insisted upon the inclusion of sexuality as a category of analysis in any fully embodied listening praxis (Weston 1998:149–150; Boellstorff 2007:19, 26–27). Setting the discipline against hegemonic ideologies in an effort to denaturalize taken for granted conceptions of sex, gender and sexuality (among other categories) primarily through reworking conventional approaches to bodies, desire, performance and power, queer anthropology has seduced the discipline into listening beyond (sex-gender-sexuality) norms (Weston 1998:159,175). Taken together then, Black feminist and queer anthropology have made of the house of anthropology a kind of home in which embodied listening as method and as theoretical foundation hears the reverberations of race, gender, sexuality and place (at the very least) in the song of subjecthood. Thus, Black feminist and queer anthropology must inform the anthropologically informed listening practice I propose for Black queer studies.7 It is important to emphasize, however, that this call for an anthropologically informed Black queer studies is absolutely not a mandate to turn away from queerness in African American communities. Rather, I offer here an invitation to apply certain of anthropology's principles in those communities—as part of the African Diaspora—while simultaneously conscious of other cultural sites of Black queerness within the United States and beyond it that are distinct though not altogether unrelated to US-American Black queer worlds. A “not-here”—if you will—a space beyond here that is no less present. Principal among these anthropological methods is an attentiveness to socio-cultural particularities achieved primarily through participant observation. This discipline defining method is largely a means by which to cultivate a fully embodied listening technique. An immersion-based praxis, participant observation is a disciplining technique intended to sharpen one's ability to hear what people say about themselves, their communities, and their world by listening to their words and beyond them. And although (post)modern anthropology no longer requires a transnational or even transcultural journey, it still requires us to listen—closely, fully—to people, to space, and to context in much the same imperfect way that it always has. This methodological seed is planted in the rich soil of specificity, so it is to particularities I now turn to ground much of the previous discussion.

### Impact – Anti-Black Gendered Violence

#### Ignorance of the black/queer subject sanctions violence against them – anti-blackness is not a sufficient starting point to understand racialized sexuality

Ellison 16  
(Treva Ellison, Assistant Professor of Geography and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Dartmouth. Treva earned their doctorate in American Studies and Ethnicity from the University of Southern California in 2015. “The Strangeness of Progress and the Uncertainty of Blackness” in No Tea, No Shade. cVs)

Notably missing from the conversation about extrajudicial and statesanctioned violence is a discussion of how harm and violence impacts various embodiments of blackness, particularly black women and black lgbt people who were also murdered through legal and extralegal violence. This is not because people have not organized around or claimed these people. Family members, journalists, activists, intellectuals, and everyday people have worked tirelessly to call attention to and demand accountability for the murders of Aiyana Stanley-Jones by Detroit police officers, Rekia Boyd by Chicago police, the assault of 13 black women by an Oklahoma City police officer, the prosecution of Marissa Alexander in Florida for surviving a domestic assault, the murders of Islan Nettles in New York and Deshawnda Bradley in Los Angeles, and so many more. However, these names and the lives they represent are devalued in a social order that devalues the everyday existence of black women and black lgbt people, particularly black transwomen. For example, the 2012 National Transgender Discrimination Survey notes that 34 percent of black transgender respondents reported living on less than $10,000 a year.3 A research project being funded by the MacArthur Foundation based on housing research in Milwaukee likens evictions to an extracorrectional punishment for black women, noting that black women in Milwaukee make up 9.6 percent of the population but 30 percent of evictions.4 These statistics cannot account for the interpersonal and communal violence that circumscribe the experiences of black women and black lgbt people.5 The same networks of power, resources, and belonging that attempt to make our lives unlivable shape the difficulty of translating violence against black women and black lgbt people into intelligible national outrage. The routines and networks of antiblack violence that characterize American life are upheld by a precarious relationship between blackness and representation in the post–civil rights era in which the quantity of black representation (political, legal, and social visibility rights and privileges) is diffused from the quality of black representation or the character of prevailing socially and institutionally sedimented value system.6 It is this contradiction that confounds normative models of democratic redress, such as the legal system, when they are used to affirm an existence that is already socially, economically, and politically devalued. The limit of official modes of juridical representation to register black injury has re-ignited a long-standing social and political critique of law and order, currently organized under the banner of #blacklivesmatter. “Operation Ghetto Storm,” a report released by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, has received considerable attention by activists and advocacy groups organized around the murders of young black men.7 The report details the murders of black people by law enforcement, security guards, and vigilantes, noting a black person is murdered every 28 hours by one of these groups of people. I am concerned about how the definition of “extrajudicial” in this report obscures the circulation of harm through violence and vulnerability that enables the murders of black women and black queer and lgbt people, particularly black transwomen. These murders are rendered as not only outside the realm of legal and ethical concern but also outside the purview of antiblack racism. This positioning misses the ways that the multiple and sometimes conflicting experiences of black cisgendered men, black women, and black transwomen are conditioned by similar contexts of discursive power and modes of spatial differentiation (namely, neoliberal multiculturalism and racial capitalism). Racial capitalism is an economic system through which the built environment, ideas, and knowledge, as well as sign systems and feelings, are organized into diferent kinds of places to facilitate the extraction of surplus value, which, transformed into capital, has concentrated in the hands of white people, men, and property owners operating under the auspices of multinational corporations, national and international governance, and banking entities (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank). The “racial” in racial capitalism underscores the historically accrued symbiosis between racial difference and capitalism, as racial difference has been the logic that upholds the regimes of human and spatial differentiation that created flexible pathways for the private and public accumulation of surplus value.

### Kinship

#### Black/queer subjects form and recover their own kinship through their crystallization of identity within communities and throughout legacies – their anti-futurism renders queer of color critique banal at best and oppressive at worst

Gumbs and Wallace 16  
(Alexis Gumbs is a poet, independent scholar, and activist. She is coeditor of Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines and the Founder and Director of Eternal Summer of the Black Feminist Mind, an educational program based in Durham, North Carolina. Julia Wallace is a filmmaker, theology scholar and the founder of Queer Renaissance a multimedia movement building company based on the premise that we can create the world anew. “Something Else to Be: Generations of Black Queer Brilliance and the Mobile Homecoming Experimental Archive” in No Tea, No Shade. cVs)

The inspiration and resources for the Mobile Homecoming, an experiential archive project amplifying generations of black lgbtq brilliance, spring from a collective desire to witness the lives and loves that are foundational for the survival of participants in a black, lgb, trans, queer, or genderqueer legacy. The form of our journey is poetic and ex- perimental, and it transforms to open itself up to the resources of those innovative geniuses who have come before us and to collectivize those resources with our contemporary and younger community members, all of whom hold us accountable to this labor of love. We are not the first to challenge form (the form of the archive, the form of the movement, the form of the question) in ways that resonate in black queer communities, and we will not be the last. In each community, context, and time the ceremony must be found to activate the medicine necessary for us each to achieve our destinies.1 Elsewhere we write about the details of how the Mobile Homecoming ceremony functions on critical ethnographic and social movement terms. This essay looks at founding black feminist moments in queer of color critique to present the Mobile Homecoming experiential archive project as a form of reading and writing community, a literary praxis informed by Toni Morrison’s Sula and Audre Lorde’s “A Litany for Survival,” key literary moments relevant to an insurgent history of queer black life written across generations. In 1973, when Toni Morrison published her second novel, Sula, she changed black feminist literary criticism forever. Some say that black feminists created black feminist literary criticism to deal with Sula, the character and the text. In partnership with her first novel, The Bluest Eye, Morrison’s Sula does more than insert nuanced black female characters into an existing literary scene. With these two novels Morrison insists that the very form of the novel must bend and bow and breathe and move to witness the experiences of black women and girls. Sula arrived well placed in time to become the catalyst that it was and is for black feminist literary criticism. The book was published right when the first black women’s lit courses were being taught in newly formed black studies and women’s studies programs in colleges in the Northeast. The two foundational works of black feminist literary studies, Mae Gwendolyn Henderson’s “Speaking in Tongues: Dialectics, Dialogics, and the Black Woman Writer’s Literary Tradition” and Barbara Smith’s “Toward a Black Feminist Criticism” both read Sula as their primary text and as an instance through which to imagine what black feminist literary criticism could be. Audre Lorde mentions in a 1982 interview with Claudia Tate that she doesn’t care that it was Song of Solomon that Morrison won the National Book of the Month Club selection for, it is Sula that “made me light up inside like a Christmas tree”; she adds, “That book is like one long poem.”2 The passages that cause black feminists to canonize Sula are the passages about mutual self-invention that occur between Sula and Nel. The most cited passage is the one where the narrator explains the destined friendship of the two girls, noting that “having long ago realized they were neither white nor male . . . they went about creating something else to be.”3 This is a proposition as far reaching as to appear in Afro-Scottish Maud Sulter’s description of an art exhibit she curated in England; as long lasting as to reappear as the “different sort of subject” that Hortense Spillers asks for in her 1987 essay “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe”; and as genesis moment for queer of color critique in Roderick Ferguson’s Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique in 2003. The two other moments of the text that black feminist theorists drew in the sky are Sula’s insistence, when her grandmother, Eva, suggests she should settle down and have some babies, that “I don’t want to make someone else. I want to make myself.”4 This challenge to motherhood partially constitutes the critique of heteropatriarchy that allows Barbara Smith to claim Sula as a “lesbian” text alongside the book’s final revelation that the loss of a husband is nothing compared with the loss of a girlfriend. As queer black feminist researchers and artists seeking a way to amplify black feminist practices in the black lgbtq community across generations, with a specific focus on those visionaries who, like Nel and Sula, have faced the dilemma of being seen as nonwhite and nonmale (even if they, in fact, are trans men), we decided to look closely at how people in different communities across decades had sustained the practice of being something else both literally and in the vernacular sense that is used in the black community to mark nonconformist behavior and performance (that is, “Now Alexis and Julia are driving around in that Winnebago looking for black queer rituals? They are truly something else.”). We have found that even engaging this inquiry requires a queerness in our approach to research, something else to do and something else to be while doing it. Our specific other ways of being are implicated in a theory of survival, what it means for us to survive while doing experiential archive work grounded in the U.S. Southeast, what it means to do this work sustainably and centrally and not as a side project, what it means for the legacy of our elders and ancestors to move through us, and what it means to “[seek] a now that can breed [queer] futures.”5

### Social Death Wrong – Gender

#### Black social death assumes a fragility of black gender – the interrelatedness of antiblackness with transphobia and antiqueerness needs to be examined for a revival

Richardson 12   
(Matt, “My Father Didn’t Have a Dick” Social Death and Jackie Kay’s Trumpet, GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies, Vol. 18 No. 2)

Perhaps the best way to unpack the implications of Colman’s crisis of manhood is to begin with an earlier instantiation of gender crisis that took place from the moment that black bodies were ripped away from the African continent. In the now foundational essay “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” Hortense Spillers asserts that black captives were stripped of the genders that they were used to, then regendered at the other end of the Middle Passage — disallowed from continuing with the gender systems from the places they were from and prohibited from participating in the gender systems simultaneously demanded from them.2 I contend that the undoing and reworking of black gender categories is a key facet of social death.3 Orlando Patterson defines social death as the condition in which slaves are forced into the position of natal alienation, dishonor, and disrespect from which they cannot recover. Extending from Patterson’s definition, I consider how social death reaches beyond the formal end of slavery and colonialism. As Sharon Holland contends, “Some subjects never achieve, in the eyes of others, the status of the ‘living.’ ”4 For these purposes, “living” is having available to oneself a full range of subjectivity and citizenship. The gendered aspect of social death gives us a perspective from which to explore its queer implications. Recognizing the continued impact of slavery, Spillers challenges us to make a decision not to futilely follow “the master’s” definitions of gender down the (hetero)patriarchal rabbit hole of normativity but to gain “insurgent ground” by taking a stand outside the “traditional symbolics” of gender.5 Of specific interest here is what it would mean for black men to embrace the feminine within themselves.6 In this essay, I follow Colman’s burgeoning awareness of his own queerness: the fact that gender fragility and uncertainty are a part of what makes black bodies already dead to the Scottish nation. It is this truth that Colman finds unbearable and the condition with which he ultimately has to come to terms. As a queer, Joss is the one to make this aspect of social death salient. His literal death and the subsequent revelation of his queer gender identity bring everyone’s gender anxieties into relief alongside their longing for normative gender categories. Colman is unaware of his figurative death until his father physically dies. I am especially interested in how Colman comes to see himself as socially dead as well — a black man who is ultimately in a feminized position in relationship to legitimate patriarchal white masculinity. Here I agree with Darieck Scott’s argument in Extravagant Abjection that blackness is a hybrid position, at once “hypermasculine and feminine.”7 I would like to depart from his assertions that black male abjection does not have to belong solely to the feminine register in order to examine where male abjection and femininity meet. What if we imagined that the sociologist Robert Park was at least partly right, in that in some fundamental ways the black is structurally the “lady of the races”?8 The structural meeting of black manhood and femininity does not have to be an occasion for distress. It could be an opportunity to reimagine and improvise other registers for black manhood — perhaps even through the maternal. Misogyny assumes that the feminine is the end of possibility. How can we transform positionality into potential? Perhaps black queerness provides the site from which this burden of decision can be most clearly rendered, given its positionality outside the nation and even outside blackness.

#### The alternative assumes a non-gendered Black body that totalizes violence targeted specifically at black women – this relies on false readings of the history of slavery and pathologies Black femininity.

Hodges 12  
(Asia Nichole Hodges - University of California, Irvine, African American Studies, Undergraduate. “Mama’s Baby & the Black Gender Problematic” written for the Undergraduate Critical Theory Conference 2012. Mentored by Tamara Beauchamp. <https://www.academia.edu/2027925/Mama_s_Baby_and_the_Black_Gender_Problematic> cVs)

For me, this paper represents an opportunity to bring focus to the ungendered black subject of afropessimist thought, a concept I was first introduced to in winter quarter of 2011, which was the most theoretically rich coursework I have ever undertaken. In retrospect, the work of Frank Wilderson, III also appeared at a very critical moment in my development, both as a thinker and as a black woman engaged in organizing around issues affecting the black community on campus as well as back home. Afropessimist thought resonated deeply because it spoke to the terrifying truths of antiblack racism, black structural positionality and black life, corroborating my own experience but more importantly providing the language and a framework through which to approach a more thorough explanation of this experience theoretically. Further, when I use the term ‘’black” I mean it in the sense closest to the truth of the paradigm of afropessimist thought as described by Wilderson in Red, White & Black: Cinema & the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms. It is my intent to critique Wilderson’s argument for an ungendered black subject using the work of black feminist scholar, Hortense Spillers, and explore the categories she protects in her work. She is indispensible here not only because she was an impetus for Wilderson’s project, but also because it was her thought that mothered my own. In conversation with the seminal article of Hortense Spillers, Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book, Wilderson explains that, for him, antiblackness functions as a prohibition on gender, thus the black subject is inherently genderless. He writes, “Gratuitous violence relegates the Slave to the taxonomy, the list of things. That is, it reduces the Slave to an object. Motherhood, fatherhood, and gender differentiations can only be sustained in the taxonomy of subjects.”[[1]](#footnote-1) While this framework has helped me to understand of the structuring properties of violence, and grasp its role in subject formation more generally, this explanation features an ungendered black subject and cannot be extended to the truth of my life as a black and as a female. This is not to say that afropessimism does not hold the potential to speak to the effect of antiblackness on gender. To the contrary, it was Spillers who first argued that such work was fruitful, writing that in “undressing these conflations of meaning, as they appear under the rule of dominance… we would gain… the potential for gender differentiation as it might express itself along a range of stress points, including human biology in its intersection with the project of culture.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Both Wilderson and Spillers take the dereliction of the black from civil society as their point of departure, but in many ways, Spillers has offered us a great deal more than we know what to do with on matters of gender and antiblackness. In Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe she theorizes that there is a profundity to the particularities of the position of the female black that is exemplified through regimes of naming. In the spirit of black feminism, though its ensemble of questions cannot help me here, I must occasion an explanation of black positionality that accounts for the manner of existential negation and the modes of violence which position me, moving beyond the concerns with black patriarchy. Theoretically, antiblackness does not only lend itself to an argument against a gendered understanding of my condition, it also offers an opportunity for a more nuanced understanding of gender itself. This begs the question, what does a genderless black subject help us to understand that a more complicated rendering [or gendering] of the black subject would obscure? In my view, black political thought lags here, unable to describe its condition without relegating the particularities of the female black to the abyss. Moreover, it seems the black female labors in service of civil society in ways we have yet to fully understand. Spillers supports an argument for the necessity of this work in building a more robust theoretical foundation for black political thought, and afropessimism could be our point of departure. For Wilderson, there is a line of recognition and incorporation. Above it are human beings, civil society made up of white men and women, and below it is the black in absolute dereliction, a concept he draws from Frantz Fanon writings on the black condition. I mean to suggest that the distinction we’re looking for under the line of recognition and incorporation is not “man” and “woman”, which Wilderson would reject, but that is not to say there is no distinction to be made whatsoever. It seems we may too hastily disregard the possibility for distinction for three reasons, described loosely as outlined by Spillers: 1) there was no distinction made between male and female slaves on the ships, 2) men and women performed the same hard, physical labor and lastly, 3) gender is a category requiring the symbolic integrity from which the black is barred. I am unable to go into each in detail here, but the validity of these points of contention is not what is in question for Spillers. The distinctions made on ships or on fields are not the only sites we should scourer for insight into the black gender problematic, and evidence that captives are not regarded as “men” and “women,” like their captors, is elucidating but not explanatory. In Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe, Spillers uses naming as a point of entry into black gender problematic. She revisits Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s report on the state of the black community in America during the late 1960s, and meditates on the significance of black women emerging as the locus of black pathology. She writes that for Moynihan, “the ‘Negro Family’ has no Father to speak of—his Name, his Symbolic function mark the impressive missing agencies in the essential life of the black community… and it is, surprisingly, the fault of the Daughter, or the female line”. Thus, it is the “displacing [of] the Name and the Law of the father to the territory of the Mother and Daughter [that] becomes an aspect of the African-American female’s misnaming.”[[3]](#footnote-3) The black is without the gendered symbolic integrity that the subjects of civil society enjoy; the black performs to both genders, as well as anything in between and beyond, and is not granted the protections of motherhood or the entitlements of fatherhood for example. Moynihan observes the behavior of the black family and concludes that it is a manifestation of the backwardness of blackness generally, and the pathology of black women in particular. But a structural analysis would include a discussion of historical context, relations to power and positionality, with an understanding of the black as positioned through the violence of captivity. Moreover, the emergence of the female black marks the divergence between chattel slavery and racial slavery. Peter Wood, professor of history at Duke University, explains that partus sequitir ventrem, “that which is brought forth follows the womb”, is a legal doctrine which mandates that the child follows the status of the mother, or rather in the case of the female black, her child is doomed to captivity. Woods notes that there was a “shift from indentured servitude to lifelong slavery to heredity slavery, where not only am I enslaved but my children as well” and emphasizes that it was indeed “a remarkable shift”[[4]](#footnote-4). However, the problem is not that we do not know this history, but rather we have not dealt with it theoretically, and even in the most likely of discourses, particularity on the basis of sex is not explored. In chapter 11 of Red, White and Black, Wilderson takes up the issue of gender and sex under captivity, but largely leaves the work Spillers does in Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe untouched. Earlier in the chapter, she is employed as support for Wilderson’s claim that the position of white women and black females are made distinct as a direct consequence of captivity. However, when Wilderson addresses blackness and gender, specifically gender ontology and the reification of gender, Spillers absence is haunting. Moreover, the effect of captivity on gender is not simply a reversal of power between the categories of “man” and “woman” as suggested by Moynihan, but rather that these categories are in fact eviscerated entirely where the black is concerned. Though the black does not hold the symbolic integrity for gender normativity, as argued by both Wilderson and Spillers, the categories of male and female are still apt here; “man” and “woman” representing the body and the latter, eviscerated categories, representing Spillers’ notion of the flesh.  She writes: Before there is the ‘body’ there is the ‘flesh,’ that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography. Even though the European hegemonies stole bodies—some of them female… we regard this human and social irreparability as high crimes against the flesh, as a person of African females and African males registered the wounding. [[5]](#footnote-5)Here, Spillers shows that the violence of captivity registers on multiple levels, and of course that the violence can be understood from multiple registers

#### Afrofuturism affords new modes of critical analysis that rethink black identity

**Womack 2012** (L. Ytasha, Afrofuturism: An Aesthetic and Exploration of Identity)//KM

The world of science fiction is known for its absence of cultural diversity. While history texts are still recovering from the conspicuous absence of the contributions of non-European cultures across the world and in America, there’s an equal need to claim the future as well. Hijacking the imagination and perpetuating limiting views on culture and humanity in the imaginative future just won’t do. Enter Afrofuturism. Afrofuturism is a term that emerged in the mid 90s, coined by cultural critic Mark Dery who affixed the term to the growing artistic movement and critiques that followed narratives of people of African descent in a sci-fi, futuristic treaties. Afrofuturists seek to inspire and forge a stronger self-identity and respect for humanity by encouraging enthusiasts to reexamine their environments and reimagine the future in a cross cultural context. For example, one digital Afrofuturist painting of a young African American girl in the future depicted her in metallic space boots and pants; her hair was styled in an Afro and she wore an ankh, an ancient Kemetic symbol on her green-friendly T-shirt. The image bound the future with the past, celebrated culture and universality, and positioned the teen smack dab in the latter part of the 21st century. For many, simply placing a young African American girl in a futuristic context challenges the absence of such images and rearticulates the relevance of such cultures and world views in art depicting the future. The aesthetic includes the music, visual art, literature, film, critical essays and other mediums dedicated to futuristic explorations primarily through the arts. Works range in theme and story lines but they are typically characterized by compelling insights, both cosmetic and analytical into black identity in the Americas, Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa and beyond. From soul singer Erykah Badu’s “Next Lifetime” video which highlights West African traditions in a futuristic society to Nnedi Okorofor’s book “Who Fears Death” chronicling a mystical young girl in post-apocalyptic Africa, the depictions are culturally rich takes on the future through fiction that explore identity, too. Artists like jazz composer Sun Ra, 70s funk pioneer George Clinton, science fiction writer Octavia Butler, or DJ/multimedia artist DJ Spooky are among the more popular purveyors of the genre (although Sun Ra, Clinton and Butler did work long before the term came into vogue). There are a bevy of new wave artists, musicians and filmmakers creating new works as well as a cadre of established professors now chronicling and teaching it. In fact, Afrofuturism is now taught in several universities as an artistic aesthetic, a tool for critical cultural analysis, a platform for rethinking the impact of modernization on cultural creations as well as an exploration of identity. Pioneers created works largely to challenge color-based social structures, caste systems and the realities of second-class citizenship, which plagued the experience of black people, particularly in America and across the world for much of the modern era. In many cases, particularly in music, they re-imagined technologies to create new artistic works or reinvented processes that created new sounds. The creations of avant-garde jazz, funk, dub, house, hip-hop and other genres are as innovative for their musicality as for their experimentations with electronic sounds and machinery. The use of a turntable needle in hip-hop to create music or the multi-layering of prerecorded noises in dub are as Afrofuturist as Motown Record’s Berry Gordy looking to Detroit’s car assembly lines as a basis for creating a new system in artist development. Each explores the impact of modernization and environment on the creation of artistic movements, identity and perspectives by people of color.An extensive body of critical analysis using Afrofuturism as the prism currently exists. DJ Spooky, for one, is most known for reediting the film Birth of a Nation, a film which was technically advanced at the time but also reinforced horrific stereotypes of blacks during the Reconstruction period in the US and established ethnic stereotypes in films for years to come. DJ Spooky linked the images on the screen to his turntable and mixed and scratched along with the revisioning of the film. Many Afrofuturist works are characterized by a synchronicity between the past and the future. While many science fiction works heavily disavow the past, Afrofuturism has a great deal of reverence for ancestors and ancient societies as well as an active celebration of movements in history that countered the active dehumanization of people of color through power systems. This reverence is rearticulated in a futuristic context. References to Egyptian deities and other African Traditional Religions (Yoruba, etc), African Derived Religions (Santeria, Candomble, Hoodoo) and Native American folklore and spirituality are common as are references to Asian fighting arts and the civil rights movement in the US. Spirituality and mysticism are frequent threads. Humanity, freedom and self-determination are common themes.While all works dubbed Afrofuturist aren’t created by people of African descent or don’t deal with black identity on the surface (the pop culture favorite “The Matrix” or the original “Night of the Living Dead” film for example) they share themes, symbolism or imagery that evokes cultural markers.In essence, many Afrofuturists aim to challenge society’s limits to the imagination and this limitation includes a very narrow reflection on race, culture and ethnicity in fictional and artistic works on the future. Afrofuturism celebrates new takes on modernization and the histories that have facilitated social change. Although some might argue that the term itself is as freeing as it is constricting, the growing body of work categorized in this genre is fascinating and enriching.

#### Starting from the point of the alien abductee provides a lens through which best to understand the peculiarities of antiblack violence

**Womack 13** - (Ytasha, Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture, , p.32-33)

British writer Mark Sinker was arguably the first to ask, “What does it mean to be human?” in what would later be called the Afrofuturistic context. Sinker, then a writer for Wired, posed the question and explored the aspirations, sci-fi themes, and technology in jazz, funk, and hip-hop music. “In other words, Mark made the correlation between Blade Runner and slavery, between the idea of alien abduction and the real events of slavery,” writes Kodwo Eshun. “It was an amazing thing, because as soon as I read this, I thought, my God, it just allows so many things.” 2 Dery identified the parallels in “Black to the Future” as well. “African Americans are, in a very real sense, the descendants of alien abductees,” Dery writes. He compares the atrocities of racism experienced by blacks in the United States to “a sci-fi nightmare in which unseen but no less impassable force fields of intolerance frustrate their movement; official histories undo what has been done; and technology is too often brought to bear on black bodies (branding, forced sterilization, the Tuskegee experiment, and tasers come readily to mind).” 3 Dery and Sinker were not the first to explore the deplorable need of some to dehumanize others in the quest for power. Yet their frameworks led to Afrofuturistic writings that for the first time linked the transatlantic slave trade to a metaphor of alien abduction. What does it mean to be nonhuman? As a nonhuman, your life is not valued. You are an “alien,” “foreign,” “exotic,” “savage”— a wild one to be conquered or a nuisance to be destroyed. Your bodies are not your own, fit for probing and research. You have no history of value. You are incapable of creating culture in general, but when you do, it is from an impulse or emotion, never intellect. Humans, well meaning or otherwise, can’t relate to a nonhuman. Even the term “illegal alien,” often used for undocumented workers moving to nations across the world, plays off fears of otherness, invasion, and takeover. The fear fanned by the fastapproaching minority-majority nation shift in the United States has led to hotly debated laws and policies that mostly target Latino immigrants. Advocates charge that racial profiling and other human-rights violations are on the upswing as undocumented workers and those who fit the ethnic description of the stereotyped “illegal alien” fall prey to unjust attacks, violence, or surveillance. The greater part of the civil rights movement in the United States, as well as self-rule movements in precolonial India, the Caribbean, and on the African continent, were efforts to ensure equal rights for all. And this struggle paralleled equal efforts to prove that people of color, women, LGBTQ people, the working class, and others were in fact human. The burden of having to prove one’s humanity has defined the attainment of some of the greatest human rights achievements of our times as well as some of the greatest artistic works. However, this notion of otherness prevails. the other side of the rainbow The alien metaphor is one of the most common tropes in science fiction. Whether they are invading, as in Independence Day; the ultimate enemy, as portrayed in Alien; or misunderstood, like in E .T., there is a societal lesson of conquering or tolerance that reminds viewers of real-life human divisions. Other films are more explicit in the racial metaphor. District 9, a film set in South Africa about segregated alien settlements, was inspired by the horrors of Cape Town’s District Six during the apartheid era. Avatar is a thinly veiled commentary on imperialism and indigenous cultures. And The Brother from Another Planet depicts an extraterrestrial in the form of a black man confused by the racial norms of the day. Much of the science fiction fascination with earthbound alien encounters is preoccupied with how both cultures could merge and the turmoil that would ensue from overcoming perceptions of difference. But other artists have compared their wrestling with W. E. B. Du Bois’s double consciousness or the struggle of being both American and black with alien motifs. Artists from Sun Ra to Lil Wayne have referenced being alien to explain isolation. Author Saidiya Hartman wrote in her book Lose Your Mother about feeling trapped in a racial paradox: “Was it why I sometimes felt as weary of America as if I too had landed in what was now South Carolina in 1526 or in Jamestown in 1619? Was it the tug of all the lost mothers and orphaned children? Or was it that each generation felt anew the yoke of a damaged life and the distress of being a native stranger, an eternal alien?” 4

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#### By analogizing the middle passage to an alien abduction, the implications of slavery are rerouted through fiction.

Eshun 03 (Eshun, Kodwo, author of numerous pieces on music, culture, and the arts, associateeditor of the 21C, author of More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction (Quartet Books, 1998), editor of Afrofuturist Reader from Duke University Press. "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism." The New Centennial Review 3.2 (2003): 287-302. Project Muse. Web. 30 June 2017. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/48294>.)

Afrofuturism uses extraterrestriality as a hyperbolic trope to explore the historical terms, the everyday implications of forcibly imposed dislocation, and the constitution of Black Atlantic subjectivities: from slave to negro to coloured to evolué to black to African to African American. Extraterrestriality thereby becomes a point of transvaluation through which this variation over time, understood as forcible mutation, can become a resource for speculation. It should be understood not so much as escapism, but rather as an identification with the potentiality of space and distance within the high-pressure zone of perpetual racial hostility. It is not that black subjectivities are waiting for science-fiction authors to articulate their lifeworlds. Rather, it is the reverse. The conventions of science fiction, marginalized within literature yet central to modern thought, can function as allegories for the systemic experience of post-slavery black subjects in the twentieth century. Science fiction, as such, is recast in the light of Afrodiasporic history. Afrofuturism therefore stages a series of enigmatic returns to the constitutive trauma of slavery in the light of science fiction. Isolating the enigmatic phrase “Apocalypse bin in effect” from the  Public Enemy track “Welcome to the Terradome,” Mark Sinker’s  essay “Loving the Alien” argued that this lyric could be interpreted to read that slavery functioned as an apocalypse experienced as equivalent to alien abduction: “The ships landed long ago: they already laid waste whole societies, abducted and genetically altered swathes of citizenry. . . . Africa and America—and so by extension Europe and Asia—are already in their various ways Alien Nation.” T EMPORAL S WITCHBACK Afrofuturism approaches contemporary digital music as an intertext of recurring literary quotations that may be cited and used as statements capable of imaginatively reordering chronology and fantasizing history. The lyrical statement is treated as a platform for historical speculation. Social reality and science fiction create feedback between each other within the same phrase. The alien encounters and interplanetary abductions people experienced as delusions in the Cold War present had already occurred in the past, for real. All the symptoms specific to a close encounter had already occurred on a giant scale. The collective delusion of the close encounter is transplanted. The effect is not to question the reality of slavery, but to defamiliarize it through a temporal switchback that reroutes its implications through postwar social fiction, cultural fantasy, and modern science fiction, all of which begin to seem like elaborate ways of concealing and admitting trauma

**Rollefson 2008**( J Griffith, THE "ROBOT VOODOO POWER" THESIS: AFROFUTURISM AND ANTI-ANTI-ESSENTIALISM FROM SUN RA, Rollefson, J Griffith, Black Music Research Journal; Spring 2008; 28, 1; ProQuest pg. 83 )//KM

What I have argued up until now is largely in line with what scholars of Afrofuturism—particularly those involved with the AfroFuturism listserv—have recognized in this technophilic project of alternative subject/identity. Yet, in representing Afrofuturism in the preceding pages I have made a con-certed effort to balance the tension between fantasies of both "the past" and "the future." As the moniker "Afrofuturism" implies, **the scholarly focus on this phenomenon has tended towards the future, the technological**. Indeed, much of Afrofuturism's humor and playfulness derives its power from the irony of the visual image of African Americans engaging in futuristic activi-ties that have too often been coded as white in American media culture. This is where the subject of Afrofuturism gets a bit tricky. The ironic power of Afrofuturism is nowhere more evident than in the Saturday Night Live character of "Astronaut Jones" played by Tracy Morgan. The comic premise of these sketches—that show the black astronaut bum-bling about until his attention is focused by a sexualized space alien—is that blacks do not belong in space, if for no other reason than they are not yet fully civilized. Indeed, the premise of Afrofuturism relies on the nor-malized disparity between the black body and the cybernetic technological future. The project gets its power by transgressing the boundaries of this mediatized binary. Yet, the danger with this strategy is that it can quickly turn from a critical commentary into a re-stabilization of black inferiority through simple contrast rather than continually highlighting the historical constructedness of both the myths about blackness and the myths about whiteness. As a partial corrective for this potential pitfall of the Afrofutur-ist project, I would like to propose a theoretical framework that keeps a critical eye on the ideological underpinnings of the rational, empirical, and scientific as well as the irrational, unexplainable, and magical. Following from Paul Gilroy's discussion of the unsatisfactory nature of the two critical positions most commonly taken with regard to black identity—the essentialist and anti-essentialist arguments—I would like to propose that Afrofuturism reflects a strategic version of what Gilroy first refers to as "anti-antiessentialism" in his article "Sounds Authentic: Black Music, Ethnicity, and the Challenge of a 'Changing' Same" (1991, 123-128) and later as "anti-anti-essentialism" in his The Black Atlantic: Modernity and ouble Consciousness (1993, 96-110). Through playful engagement with the primitivist tropes of voodoo or black magic and their ironic juxtaposition to science fiction as a sort of white magic, **Afrofuturism strikes blows to both the black nativist stance (read: essentialist) and the white poststructuralist argument (read: anti-essentialist)**. As Gilroy sees it, essentialist arguments are of questionable political ef-ficacy, but because of continued inequality **it is not yet time for the free-float-ing identities of postmodernists.** He writes: "the unashamedly hybrid char-acter of these black Atlantic cultures continually confounds any simplistic (essentialist or anti-essentialist) understanding of the relationship between racial identity and racial non-identity, between folk cultural authenticity and pop cultural betrayal" (1993, 99). Gilroy's anti-anti-essentialism thus critiques black nationalism as an outmoded ideology and denounces post-structuralism as a white idealist project while recovering the idea that black-ness has real material meaning as a cultural category. As W. E. B. Du Bois argued in his 1897 "The Conservation of Races": "We believe it the duty of the Americans of Negro descent, as a body, to maintain their race identity until this mission of the Negro people is accomplished, and the ideal of human brotherhood has become a practical possibility" ([1897] 1997, 237). I suggest that the strategic anti-anti-essentialism of Afrofuturism is a critical project with the mission of laying the groundwork for a humanity that is not bound up with the ideals of white Enlightenment universalism. This, in brief, is the "Robot Voodoo Power" thesis—and this is where Afrofuturism's third way becomes apparent. Although Gilroy does not comment directly on "Afrofuturism," his work anticipated the field of inquiry through its deep engagement with the manner in which technologies confound discourses of black authenticity—especially in music. In his 1991 article "Sounds Authentic" Gilroy writes specifically of "the opportunity to use music as a model that can break the deadlock between the two unsatisfactory positions that have dominated recent discussion of black cultural politics" (124). Updating Amiri Baraka's idea of the "changing same," he employs the historical fact of technological innovation in black music—from country to urban blues, from jazz to fusion, and from turntable-based to digitally-produced hip hop—to argue against binary formulations (123-133).3 **His choice of the double negative term "anti-anti-essentialism" to describe this position also reflects the playfulness of the Afrofuturists in its recognition that it is in fact the rigid binary between the essentialist and anti-essentialist positions that is the real joke**. Indeed, it is this double rhetorical move and its side-stepping of double consciousness in favor of a third way that makes Afrofuturism's anti-anti-essentialism so ingenious and potent. And, like Weheliye's dynamic reading of Afrofuturism, Gilroy's anti-anti-essentialism stresses the hybridities and synchronisms of "I Am I Be." Indeed, Gilroy's sentiments about "folk cultural authenticity and pop cultural betrayal" echo those of De La Soul's Buhloon Mind State—an album that begins with the repeated mantra of "it might blow up [i.e. become wildly popular] but it won't go pop [i.e. betray itself]" (1993). Perhaps the most explicit of Gilroy's linkages with the Afrofuturist project come in his discussion of Parliament-Funkadelic's utopian potentialities from his first book: 'There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack' (1987). Closely echoing Ra's concept of Myth-Science, he describes how P-Funk's futuristic visions held a potential through which "The destructive capacity of America's techno-logical rationality would be held in check by mystic, natural forces contained within the pyramids of ancient Egypt, a durable symbol of black pride and creativity" (1987,18o). In the following section, I support this continuity be-tween Afrofuturism and anti-antiessentialism—this "Robot Voodoo Power" thesis—through a discussion of the music and philosophies of three musicians that represent the best of the Afrofuturist tradition. Furthermore, I argue that it is the seamless embodiment of Afrofuturist hybridity /simultaneity in the performative musicality of these three artists that render their philosophical statements so powerful.

**Rollefson 2008**( J Griffith, THE "ROBOT VOODOO POWER" THESIS: AFROFUTURISM AND ANTI-ANTI-ESSENTIALISM FROM SUN RA, Rollefson, J Griffith, Black Music Research Journal; Spring 2008; 28, 1; ProQuest pg. 83 )//KM

**The collapse of mythic past and future is self-evident here,** with the update of the classic fairy tale anacrusis preparing the listener for a story of "sleeping beauties" and "secrets of the pyramids" side by side with "afronauts" and cloning. Indeed, the album's narrative draws heavily on the Frankenstein story and the trope of the mad scientist—who is also somehow magical—to locate a past truth in ancient Pharaonic Egypt that was "repossessed" for protection from the negativity of encroaching white civilization. In drawing on the mad scientist archetype, the album also echoes Amiri Baraka's play A Black Mass (1969), a work based on Nation of Islam creation stories in which the black mad scientist Yacub breathes life into an evil white race. The basic story as first told by NOI founder Wallace Fard Muhammad or as reinterpreted by Jones was almost certainly known to George Clinton as it indeed was to the Chicago-based Ra (Szwed 1997, 132; Baraka 1999).8 Notably, however, in their takes on this black myth-science both Ra and Parliament purge the story of its wholesale demonization of the white race. As Zuberi writes of Ra's use of this NOI creation myth: "Though he didn't subscribe to its cosmology . . . these [and other] texts made their way into Ra's mythical lexicography" (2004, 8o). Similarly, rather than emphasizing a Manichean battle between good blacks and evil whites as in the original myth or in Jones's controversial Black Arts Movement work, Parliament's version of the black mad scientist is a more conciliatory figure—and perhaps most important, a more playful one. On the title track of the 1975 album Chocolate City, Clinton slyly expresses his dissent from the unfulfilled promises and structural racism of our liberal democracy. The track begins hopefully, echoing Ra's thoughts from A Joyful Noise: "What's happening CC [Chocolate City]? / They still call it the White House but that's a temporary condition, too. / Can you dig it, CC?" Later on the track Clinton continues: "We didn't get our forty acres and a mule but we did get you, CC. / Gainin' on ya. / Movin' in and around ya. / God bless CC and its vanilla suburbs." And on the 1976 album Mothership Connection Clinton begrudgingly but jokingly gives a degree of credit to other funk musicians, both black and white, musing on the tune "P. Funk (Wants to Get Funked Up)": "Hey I was diggin' on y'alls funk for a while. / Sounds like it got a three on it though, to me. / Then I was down south and I heard some funk with some main ingredients like Doobie Brothers, Blue Magic, David Bowie. / It was cool, but can you imagine Doobie in your funk? Ho!" As with Ra, **the articulation of past and future myths as well as the inherent critique of the liberal rationality of the present are essential to Parliament's episteme**. Indeed, Clinton uses Ra's language of "citizens of the universe" on Mothership Connection (1976), bypassing the historically restricted citizenship of planet Earth. In addition, **the narratives of abduction and exodus inform Clinton's Afrofuturism as body snatchers appear and we hear choruses of "swing down sweet chariot, stop and let me ride."** The inspiration for the concept of "mothership" on the album was likely also inspired by black Islamic teachings that held that a select group of black people are in fact superhuman and will be saved from Earth by a "mothership" as the white race perishes in flames. Opting out of this divisive ideology, however, Clinton's Parliament again adopts a symbol of black separatism while undermining its most divisive aspects through playful articulation to the decidedly anti-civilized imagery of the character "Sir Lollipop Man," the outrageous stage shows featuring space costumes, and a giant UFO mothership (behind Clinton in Fig. 1), as well as the commonly diapered vocalist/guitarist Garry Shider. Through their staging, costumes, narratives of "extraterrestrial brothers, dealers of funky music," and "terrestrial projects," Parliament develops characters that Kodwo Eshun fittingly describes as "Spacepimps" (1998, 139). By reconfigur-ing and redeploying ethnocentric markers in ironic ways, Clinton balanced his critique of white supremacy with a healthy suspicion of black nationalism. As Ra's formulation of the word "Arkestra" combines the primordial mythic vessel with the iconicity of European high art music, Clinton's "Parliament-Funkadelic" collapses the central symbol of Western democracy onto a signi-fier of drug-laced black soul. Clinton, like Ra before him, seeks a symbolic escape from the politics of the ossified dualities embodied in these terms. It is on Mothership Connection that Parliament first introduces their Af-rofuturistic concept of P-Funk--a concept that resonates with Weheliye's "hypersoul." While the funk idea captures the musical idea of black soul, P-Funk—derived from the Parliament-Funkadelic moniker—amplifies, elec-tronifies, and futurizes that soul. As Eshun describes from the opposite/par-allel (as Ra would have it) perspective: "P-Funk personifies the nonhuman force of media" (1998, 138). P-Funk is therefore an update of Ra's Myth-Science—a sort of hyper-mediatized techno-soul. In a calm, reassuring, and measured voice, Clinton introduces the listener to P-Funk on the tune "P. Funk (Wants to Get Funked Up)":

#### Afrofuturism’s transcendant cabailities enable us to transcend the alt’s correction of the FUTURE and also correct the past- our use of a countermemorial reading of history is able to access the sorts of congnitive shifts that are a pre-requisite to the alternative and allow us to access triple and quadruple consciousness

**Eshun 2003**

(Kodwo; University of London; “Further Considerations on Afrofuturism,” CR: The New Centennial Review 3:2; Summer 2003, pp.287-302)//KM

Afrofuturism is by no means naively celebratory. The reactionary Mani- chaenism of the Nation of Islam, the regressive compensation mechanisms of Egyptology, Dogonesque cosmology, and the totalising reversals of Stolen Legacy-style Afrocentricity are immediately evident. By excavating the polit- ical moments of such vernacular futurologies, a lineage of competing world- views that seek to reorient history comes into focus. In identifying the emergence and dissemination of belief systems, it becomes critical to ana- lyze how, in Gilroy's words, "even as the movement that produced them fades, there remains a degree of temporal disturbance." By creating temporal complications and anachronistic episodes that dis- turb the linear time of progress, these futurisms adjust the temporal logics that condemned black subjects to prehistory. **Chronopolitically speaking, these revisionist historicities may be understood as a series of powerful competing futures that infiltrate the present at different rates.** Revisionist logic is shared by autodidact historians like Sun Ra and George G. M. James of Stolen Legacy ; and contemporary intellectuals such as Toni Morrison, Greg Tate, and Paul D. Miller. Her argument that the African slaves that experienced capture, theft, abduction, and mutilation were the first moderns is important for positioning slavery at the heart of modernity. **The cognitive and attitudinal shift demanded by her statement also yokes philosophy together with brutality, and binds cruelty to temporality**. The effect is to force together separated systems of knowledge, so as to disabuse apparatuses of knowledge of their innocence. Afrofuturism can be understood as an elaboration upon the implications of Morrisons revisionary thesis. In a 1991 interview with the writer Mark Sinker, cultural critic Greg Tate suggested that the bar between the signifier and the signified could be understood as standing for the Middle Passage that separated signification (meaning) from sign (letter). This analogy of racial terror with semiotic process spliced the world of historical trauma with the apparatus of structuralism. The two genealogies crossbred with a disquieting force that contaminated the latter and abstracted the for Afrofuturism does not stop at correcting the history of the future. Nor is it a simple matter of inserting more black actors into science-fiction narra- tives. These methods are only baby steps towards the more totalizing real- ization that, in Greg Tate's formulation, **Afrodiasporic subjects live the estrangement that science-fiction writers envision**. Black existence and sci- ence fiction are one and the same. In The Last Angel of History, Tate argued that "The form itself, the con- ventions of the narrative in terms of the way it deals with subjectivity, focuses on someone who is at odds with the apparatus of power in society and whose profound experience is one of cultural dislocation, alienation and estrangement. Most science fiction tales dramatically deal with how the individual is going to contend with these alienating, dislocating societies and circumstances and that pretty much sums up the mass experiences of black people in the postslavery twentieth century." At the century's start, Dubois termed the condition of structural and psychological alienation as double consciousness. The condition of alien- ation, understood in its most general sense, is a psychosocial inevitability that all Afrodiasporic art uses to its own advantage by creating contexts that encourage a process of disalienation. **Afrofuturism's specificity lies in assem- bling conceptual approaches and countermemorial mediated practices in order to access triple consciousness, quadruple consciousness, previously inaccessible alienations.**

#### Our use fo Extraterrestriality is the BEST METHOD for understanding anti-black violence- the use of science fiction is able to theorize slavery ass maximum captivity through NEW LENS

**Eshun 2003**

(Kodwo; University of London; “Further Considerations on Afrofuturism,” CR: The New Centennial Review 3:2; Summer 2003, pp.287-302)//KM

Afrofuturism uses extraterrestriality as a hyperbolic trope to explore the his- torical terms, the everyday implications of forcibly imposed dislocation, and the constitution of Black Atlantic subjectivities: from slave to negro to coloured to évolué to black to African to African American. **Extraterrestriality thereby becomes a point of transvaluation through which this variation over time, understood as forcible mutation, can become a resource for speculation.** It should be understood not so much as escapism, but rather as an identification with the potentiality of space and distance within the high-pressure zone of perpetual racial hostility. It is not that black subjectivities are waiting for science-fiction authors to articulate their lifeworlds. Rather, it is the reverse. T**he conventions of sci- ence fiction, marginalized within literature yet central to modern thought, can function as allegories for the systemic experience of post-slavery black subjects in the twentieth century.** Science fiction, as such, is recast in the light of Afrodiasporic history**. Afrofuturism therefore stages a series of enigmatic returns to the con- stitutive trauma of slavery in the light of science fiction**. Isolating the enig- matic phrase "Apocalypse bin in effect" from the 1992 Public Enemy track "Welcome to the Terradome," Mark Sinkers 1992 essay "Loving the Alien" argued that this lyric could be interpreted to read that slavery functioned as an apocalypse experienced as equivalent to alien abduction: "The ships landed long ago: they already laid waste whole societies, abducted and genet- ically altered swathes of citizenry. . . . Africa and America - and so by exten- sion Europe and Asia - are already in their various ways Alien Nation."

## Not sure what we would use this for but probably about the value of performance v pessimism

**Moten 08** (“In the Break: The Aesthetics of Black Radical Tradition”; Fred Moten; University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis )//km

In his critical deployment of such music and speech, Douglass discovers a hermeneutic that is simultaneously broken and expanded by an operation akin to what Jacques Derrida refers to as “invagination.”5 This cut and augmented hermeneutic circle is structured by a double movement. The Wrst element is the transference of a radically exterior **aurality** that **disrupts and resists certain formations of identity and interpretation by challenging the reducibility of phonic matter to** verbal **meaning** or conventional musical form. The second is the assertion of what Nathaniel Mackey calls “‘broken’ claim(s) to connection”6 between Africa and African America that seek to suture corollary, asymptotically divergent ruptures—maternal estrangement and the thwarted romance of the sexes—that he refers to as “wounded kinship” and the “the sexual ‘cut.’”7 This assertion marks an engagement with a more attenuated, more internally determined, exteriority and a courtship with an always already unavailable and substitutive origin. It would work **by way of an imaginative restoration** of the Wgure of the mother to a realm determined not only by verbal meaning and conventional musical form but by a nostalgic specularity and a necessarily endogamous, simultaneously 6 – RESISTANCE OF THE OBJECT virginal and reproductive sexuality. These twin impulses animate a forceful operation in Douglass’s work, something like a revaluation of that revaluation of value that was set in motion by four of Douglass’s “contemporaries”—Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Saussure. Above all, **they open the possibility of a critique of the valuation of meaning** over content and the reduction of phonic matter and syntactic “degeneracy” in the early modern search for a universal language and the late modern search for a universal science of language. This disruption of the Enlightenment linguistic project is of fundamental importance since it allows a rearrangement of the relationship between notions of human freedom and notions of human essence. More speciWcally, the emergence from political, economic, and sexual objection of the radical materiality and syntax that animates black performances indicates a freedom drive that is expressed always and everywhere throughout their graphic (re)production. In Caribbean Discourse Edouard Glissant writes: From the outset (that is from the moment Creole is forged as a medium of communication between slave and master), **the spoken imposes on the slave its particular syntax.** For Caribbean man, the word is Wrst and foremost sound. Noise is essential to speech. Din is discourse. . . . Since speech was forbidden, slaves camouflaged the word under the provocative intensity of the scream. It was taken to be nothing but **the call of a wild animal.** This is how the dispossessed man organized his speech by weaving it into the apparently meaningless texture of extreme noise.8 Lingering with Glissant’s formulations produces certain insights. The Wrst is that the temporal condensation and acceleration of the trajectory of black performances, which is to say black history, is a real problem and a real chance for the philosophy of history. The second is that the animative materiality—the aesthetic, political, sexual, and racial force— of the ensemble of objects that we might call black performances, black history, blackness, is a real problem and a real chance for the philosophy RESISTANCE OF THE OBJECT – 7 of human being (which would necessarily bear and be irreducible to what is called, or what somebody might hope someday to call, subjectivity). One of the implications of blackness, if it is set to work in and on such philosophy, is that those manifestations of the future in the degraded present that C. L. R. James described can never be understood simply as illusory. The knowledge of the future in the present is bound up with what is given in something Marx could only subjunctively imagine: **the commodity who speaks**. Here is the relevant passage from volume 1 of Capital, at the end of the chapter on “The Commodity,” at the end of the section called “The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret.” But, to avoid anticipating, we will content ourselves here with one more example relating to the commodity-form itself. If commodities could speak they would say this**: our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us as objects.** What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value. Our own intercourse as commodities proves it. We relate to each other merely as exchange-values. Now listen how those commodities speak through the mouth of the economist: “Value (i.e., exchange-value) is a property of things, riches (i.e., usevalue) of man. Value in this sense necessarily implies exchanges, riches do not.” “Riches (use-value) are the attribute of man, value is the attribute of commodities. A man or a community is rich, a pearl or a diamond is valuable. . . . A pearl or a diamond is valuable as a pearl or diamond.” So far no chemist has ever discovered exchange-value either in a pearl or a diamond. The economists who have discovered this chemical substance, and who lay special claim to critical acumen, nevertheless Wnd that the use-value of material objects belongs to them independently of their material properties, while their value, on the other hand, forms a part of them as objects. What conWrms them in this view is the peculiar circumstance that the use-value of a thing is realized without exchange, i.e. in a social process. Who would not call to mind at this point the advice given by the good Dogberry to the night-watchman Seacoal? 8 – RESISTANCE OF THE OBJECT “To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but reading and writing comes by nature.”9 The difWculty of this passage is partly due to its dual ventriloquizations. Marx produces a discourse of his own to put into the mouth of dumb commodities before he reproduces what he Wgures as the impossible speech of commodities magically given through the mouths of classical economists. The difWculty of the passage is intensiWed when Marx goes on to critique both instances of imagined speech. These instances contradict one another but Marx comes down neither on the side of speech he produces nor on that of the speech of classical economists that he reproduces. Instead he traverses what he conceives of as the empty space between these formulations, that space being the impossible material substance of the commodity’s impossible speech. In this regard, what is at stake is not what the commodity says but that the commodity says or, more properly, that the commodity, in its inability to say, must be made to say. It is, more precisely, the idea of the commodity’s speech that **Marx** critiques, and this is because he **believes neither in the fact nor in the possibility of such speech.** Nevertheless, **this critique of the idea of the commodity’s speech only becomes operative by way of a deconstruction of the specific meaning of those impossible or unreal propositions imposed upon the commodity from outside.** The words Marx puts into the commodity’s mouth are these: “our use value . . . does not belong to us as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value,” where value equals exchange value. Marx has the commodity go on to assert that commodities only relate to one another as exchange-values, that this is proven by the necessarily social intercourse in which commodities might be said to discover themselves. Therefore, the commodity discovers herself, comes to know herself, only as a function of having been exchanged, having been embedded in a mode of sociality that is shaped by exchange. The words of the commodity that are spoken through the mouths of the classical economists are roughly these: riches (i.e., use-value) are independent of the materiality of objects, but value, which is to say RESISTANCE OF THE OBJECT – 9 exchange-value, is a material part of the object. “A man or a commodity is rich, a pearl or a diamond is valuable.” This is because a pearl or a diamond is exchangeable. Though he agrees with the classical economists when they assert that value necessarily implies exchange, Marx chafes at the notion that value is an inherent part of the object. “No chemist,” he argues, “has discovered exchange-value either in a pearl or a diamond.” For Marx, this chemical substance called exchange-value has not been found because it does not exist. More precisely, Marx facetiously places this discovery in an unachievable future without having considered the conditions under which such a discovery might be made. Those conditions are precisely the fact of the commodity’s speech, which Marx dismisses in his critique of the very idea. “So far no chemist has ever discovered exchange-value either in a pearl or a diamond” because pearls or diamonds have not been heard to speak. The impossible chemical substance of the object’s (exchange-)value is the fact—the material, graphic, phonic substance—of the object’s speech. Speech will have been the cutting augmentation of the already existing chemistry of objects, but **the object’s speech, the commodity’s speech, is impossible**, that impossibility being the Wnal refutation of whatever the commodity will have said. Marx argues that the classical economists believe “that the usevalue of material objects belongs to them independently of their material properties.” He further asserts that they are conWned in this view by the nonsocial realization of use-value—the fact that its realization does not come by way of exchange. When he makes these assertions, Marx moves in an already well-established choreography of approach and withdrawal from a possibility of discovery that Douglass already recited: the (exchange-)value of the speaking commodity exists also, as it were, before exchange. Moreover, it exists precisely as the capacity for exchange and the capacity for a **literary, performative, phonographic disruption of the protocols of exchange**. This dual possibility comes by a nature that is and at the same time is social and historical, a nature that is given as a kind of anticipatory sociality and historicity. To think the possibility of an (exchange-)value that is prior to exchange, and to think the reproductive and incantatory assertion of 10 – RESISTANCE OF THE OBJECT that possibility as the objection to exchange that is exchange’s condition of possibility, is to put oneself in the way of an ongoing line of discovery, of coming upon, of invention. The discovery of the chemical substance that is produced in and by Marx’s counterfactual is the achievement of Douglass’s line given in and as the theory and practice of everyday life where the spectacular and the mundane encounter one another all the time. It is an achievement we’ll see given in the primal scene of Aunt Hester’s objection to exchange, an achievement given in speech, literary phonography, and their disruption. What is sounded through Douglass is a theory of value—an objective and **objectional,** productive and reproductive **ontology**—whose primitive axiom is that commodities speak. The impossible example is given in order to avoid anticipation, but it works to establish the impossibility of such avoidance. Indeed, the example, in her reality, in the materiality of her speech as breath and sound, anticipates Marx. This sound was already a recording, just as our access to it is made possible only by way of recordings. We move within a series of phonographic anticipations, encrypted messages, sent and sending on frequencies Marx tunes to accidentally, for effect, without the necessary preparation. However, this absence of preparation or foresight in Marx—an anticipatory refusal to anticipate, an obversive or anti- and anteimprovisation—is condition of possibility of a richly augmented encounter with the chain of messages the (re)sounding speech of the commodity cuts and carries. The intensity and density of what could be thought here as his alternative modes of preparation make possible a whole other experience of the music of the event of the object’s speech. Moving, then, in the critical remixing of nonconvergent tracks, modes of preparation, traditions, we can think how the commodity who speaks, in speaking, in the sound—**the inspirited materiality**—of that speech, **constitutes a kind of temporal warp that disrupts and augments not only Marx but the mode of subjectivity that the ultimate object of** his critique, **capital,** both allows and disallows. All of this moves toward the secret Marx revealed by way of the music he subjunctively mutes. Such aurality is, in fact, what Marx called the “sensuous outburst of [our] essential activity.”10 It is a passion wherein “the senses have . . . RESISTANCE OF THE OBJECT – 11 become theoreticians in their immediate practice.”11 The commodity whose speech sounds **embodies the critique of value, of private property, of the sign.** Such embodiment is also bound to the (critique of ) reading and writing, oft conceived by clowns and intellectuals as the natural attributes of whoever would hope to be known as human.Part of the project this drive animates is the improvisation through the opposition of spirit and matter that is instantiated when the object, the commodity, sounds. Marx’s counterfactual (“If the commodity could speak, it would say . . .”) is broken by a commodity and by the trace of a subjectivity structure born in objection that he neither realizes nor anticipates. There is something more here than alienation and fetishization that works, with regard to Marx, as a preWgurative critique. However, according to Ferdinand de Saussure, and in extension of Marx’s analytic, the value of the sign is arbitrary, conventional, differential, neither intrinsic nor iconic, not reducible to but rather only discernible in the reduction of phonic substance. In any case, it is impossible that sound, as a material element, should in itself be part of the language. Sound is merely something ancillary, a material the language uses. All conventional values have the characteristic of being distinct from the tangible element which serves as their vehicle. **It is not the metal in a coin which determines its value**. A crown piece nominally worth Wve francs contains only half that sum in silver. Its value varies somewhat according to the efWgy it bears. It is worth rather more or rather less on different sides of a political frontier. Considerations of the same order are even more pertinent to linguistic signals. Linguistic signals are not in essence phonetic. **They are not physical in any way.** They are constituted solely by differences which distinguish one such sound pattern from another.12 The value of the sign, its necessary relation to the possibility of (a universal science of and a universal) language, is only given in the absence or supercession of, or the abstraction from, sounded speech— its essential materiality is rendered ancillary by the crossing of an immaterial border or by a differentializing inscription. Similarly, **the truth about the value of the commodity is tied precisely to the impossibility of its speaking, for if the commodity could speak it would have intrinsic value, it would be infused with a certain spirit, a certain value given not from the outside, and would, therefore, contradict the thesis on value**—that it is not intrinsic—that Marx assigns it. The speaking RESISTANCE OF THE OBJECT – 13 commodity thus cuts Marx; but the shrieking commodity cuts Saussure, thereby cutting Marx doubly: this by way of an irruption of phonic substance that cuts and augments meaning with a phonographic, rematerializing inscription. That irruption breaks down the distinction between what is intrinsic and what is given by or of the outside; here what is given inside is that which is out-from-the-outside, a spirit manifest in its material expense or aspiration. For Saussure such speech is degraded, say, by accent, a deuniversalizing, material difference; for Chomsky it is degraded by a deuniversalizing agrammaticality, but Glissant knows that “the [scarred] spoken imposes on the slave its particular syntax.” These material degradations—Wssures or invaginations of a foreclosed universality, a heroic but bounded eroticism—are black performances. There occurs in such performances a revaluation or reconstruction of value, one disruptive of the oppositions of speech and writing, and spirit and matter.

**Moten 2008** (Fred, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition,* Helen L. Bevington Prof. of Modern Poetry @ Duke U.,, pp. 13-18)

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All conventional values have the characteristic of being distinct from the tangible element which serves as their vehicle. It is not the metal in a coin which determines its value. A crown piece nominally worth five francs contains only half that sum in silver. Its value varies somewhat according to the effigy it bears. It is worth rather more or rather less on different sides of a political frontier. Considerations of the same order are even more pertinent to linguistic signals. Linguistic signals are not in essence phonetic. They are not physical in any way. They are constituted solely by differences which distinguish one such sound pattern from another.12 The value of the sign, its necessary relation to the possibility of (a universal science of and a universal) language, is only given in the absence or supercession of, or the abstraction from, sounded speech— its essential materiality is rendered ancillary by the crossing of an immaterial border or by a differentializing inscription. Similarly, the truth about the value of the commodity is tied precisely to the impossibility of its speaking, for if the commodity could speak it would have intrinsic value, it would be infused with a certain spirit, a certain value given not from the outside, and would, therefore, contradict the thesis on value—that it is not intrinsic—that Marx assigns it. The speaking commodity thus cuts Marx; but the shrieking commodity cuts Saussure, thereby cutting Marx doubly: this by way of an irruption of phonic substance that cuts and augments meaning with a phonographic, rematerializing inscription. That irruption breaks down the distinction between what is intrinsic and what is given by or of the outside; here what is given inside is that which is out-from-the-outside, a spirit manifest in its material expense or aspiration. For Saussure such speech is degraded, say, by accent, a deuniversalizing, material difference; for Chomsky it is degraded by a deuniversalizing agrammaticality, but Glissant knows that “the [scarred] spoken imposes on the slave its particular syntax.” These material degradations—fissures or invaginations of a foreclosed universality, a heroic but bounded eroticism—are black performances. There occurs in such performances a revaluation or reconstruction of value, one disruptive of the oppositions of speech and writing, and spirit and matter. It moves by way of the (phono-photo-porno-)graphic disruption the shriek carries out. This movement cuts and augments the primal. If we return again and again to a certain passion, a passionate response to passionate utterance, horn-voice-horn over percussion, a protest, an objection, it is because it is more than another violent scene of subjection too terrible to pass on; it is the ongoing performance, the prefigurative scene of a (re)appropriation—the deconstruction and reconstruction, the improvisational recording and revaluation—of value, of the theory of value, of the theories of value.13 It’s the ongoing event of an antiorigin and an anteorigin, replay and reverb of an impossible natal occasion, the performance of the birth and rebirth of a new science, a phylogenetic fantasy that (dis)establishes genesis, the reproduction of blackness in and as (the) reproduction of black performance(s). It’s the offset and re- write, the phonic irruption and rewind, of my last letter, my last record date, my first winter, casting of effect and affect in the widest possible angle of dispersion. It is important to emphasize that the object’s resistance is, among other things, a rupture of two circles, the familial and the hermeneutic. The protocols of this investigation demand the consideration of that resistance as we’ll see Douglass both describe and transmit it. More precisely, we must be attuned to the transmission of the very materiality that is being described while noting the relay between material phonography and material substitution. Impossible, substitutive motherhood is the location of Aunt Hester, a location discovered, if not produced, in Hortense Spillers’s improvisational audition of sighting, non-sight, seen; of the heretofore unheard and overlooked (overseen) at the heart of the spectacle. Spillers explains what Douglass brings in his prefigurative disruption of and irruption into a fraternal science of value that emerges in a “social cli- mate” in which motherhood is not perceived “as a legitimate procedure of cultural inheritance”: The African-American male has been touched, therefore, by the *mother,* handled by her in ways that he cannot escape, and in ways that the white American male is allowed to temporize by a fatherly reprieve. This human and historical development—the text that has been inscribed on the benighted heart of the continent—takes us to the center of an inexorable difference in the depths of American women’s community: the African-American woman, the *mother,* the daughter, becomes historically the powerful and shadowy evocation of a cultural synthesis long evapo- rated—the law of the Mother—only and precisely because legal enslave- ment removed the African-American male not so much from sight as from *mimetic* view as a partner in the prevailing social Wction of the Father’s name, the Father’s law. Therefore, the female, in this order of things, breaks in upon the imagination with a forcefulness that marks both a denial and an “illegitimacy.” Because of this peculiar American denial, the black American male embodies the *only* American community of males which has had the specific occasion to learn *who* the female is within itself, the infant child who bears the life against the could-be fateful gamble, against the odds of pulverization and murder, including her own. It is the heritage of the *mother* that the African-American male must regain as an aspect of his own personhood—the “power” of “yes” to the “female” within.14 Listen to the echo of Douglass’s performative reproduction of a performance inextricably bound to his attempts to repress the learning that Spillers describes. But note that this attenuated covering of the maternal mark in Douglass is itself part and parcel of a kind of counterinscription before the fact, a prefigurative rematerialization constitutive of his recitation that returns as an expansive, audiovisual discourse on music. Meanwhile, note the indistinctness of the conditions of “mother” and “enslavement” in the milieu from which Douglass emerges and which he describes and narrates. This is to say that enslavement—and the resistance to enslavement that is the performative essence of blackness (or, perhaps less controversially, the essence of black performance) is a being maternal that is indistinguishable from a being material. But it is also to say something more. And here, the issue of reproduction (the “natural” production of natural children) emerges right on time as it has to do not only with the question concerning slavery, blackness, performance, and the ensemble of their ontologies but also with a contradiction at the heart of the question of value in its relation to personhood that could be said to come into clearer focus against the backdrop of the ensemble of motherhood, blackness, and the bridge between slavery and freedom. Leopoldina Fortunati puts it this way: “The conflicting presence of value and nonvalue contained within individuals themselves obviously creates a specific and unresolvable contradiction.”15 She is speaking of a certain dematerialization that marks the transition from precapitalist to capitalist production and that works analogously to a dematerializing operation animating the movement from slave labor to “free” labor. These transitions are both characterized by the *commodity,* [as] *exchange value,* taking precedence over *the-individual- as-use-value,* despite the fact that the individual is still the only source of the creation of value. For it is only by re-defining the individual as non-value, or rather as pure use-value, that capital can succeed in creating labor power as “a commodity,” i.e. an exchange value. But the “value- lessness” of free workers is not only a consequence of the new mode of production, it is also one of the preconditions, since capital cannot become a social relation other than in relation to the individuals who, divested of all value, are thus forced to sell the only commodity they have, their labor power. Secondly, under capitalism, *reproduction* is *separated off* from *produc- tion;* the former unity that existed between the production of use-values and the reproduction of individuals within precapitalist modes of pro- duction has disappeared, and now the general process of commodity production appears as being separated from, and even in direct opposi- tion to, the process of reproduction. While the Wrst appears as the *creation* of value, the second, reproduction, appears as the creation of non-value. Commodity production is thus posited as *the* fundamental point of capitalist production, and the laws that govern it as *the* laws that charac- terize capitalism itself. Reproduction now becomes posited as “natural” product ion.16 Fortunati joins Marx in a minute but crucial declension from use-value to nonvalue. The individual, enslaved laborer is characterized as use-value that, in the field of capitalist production, is equivalent to no-value, which is to say operative outside of exchange. But if this theoretical placement of the enslaved laborer outside of the field of exchange positions her as noncommodity, it does so not by way of some rigorous accounting but rather as a function of not hearing, of overlooking. This is despite the inescapable fact of the traffic in slaves. And because neither Marx nor Fortunati is able fully to think the articulation of slave and commodity, they both underestimate the commodity’s powers, for instance, the power to speak and to break speech. And yet, Fortunati, in her analysis of reproduction and in her submission of Marxian categories to the corrective of feminist theory, sees, along with and ahead of Marx, that the individual contains value and nonvalue, that the commodity is contained within the individual. This presence of the commodity within the individual is an effect of reproduction, a trace of maternity. Of equal importance is the containment of a certain personhood within the commodity that can be seen as the commodity’s animation by the material trace of the maternal—a palpable hit or touch, a bodily and visible phonographic inscription. In the end, what I’m interested in is precisely that transference, a carrying or crossing over, that takes place on the bridge of lost matter, lost maternity, lost mechanics that joins bondage and freedom, that interinanimates the body and its ephemeral if productive force, that interarticulates the performance and the reproductive reproduction it always already contains and which contains it. This interest is, in turn, not in the interest of a nostalgic and impossible suturing of wounded kinship but is rather directed toward what this irrepressibly inscriptive, reproductive, and resistant material objecthood does for and might still do to the exclusionary brotherhoods of criticism and black radicalism as experimental black performance. This is to say that this book is an attempt to describe the material reproductivity of black performance and to claim for this reproductivity the status of an ontological condition. This is the story of how apparent nonvalue functions as a creator of value; it is also the story of how value animates what appears as nonvalue. This functioning and this animation are material. This animateriality—impassioned response to passionate utterance—is painfully and hiddenly disclosed always and everywhere in the tracks of black performance and black discourse on black performance. It is both for and before Marx in ways delineated by Cedric Robinson’s historical analysis of “the making of the black radical tradition.” This book is meant to contribute both to the aesthetic genealogy of that line and to the invagination of the onto- logical totality whose preservation, according to Robinson, inspires a tradition whose birth is characterized by an ancient pre-maturity.17

**Moten 2008** (Fred, Helen L. Bevington Prof. of Modern Poetry @ Duke U., “Black Op,” Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America, pp. 1745)

\*Paleonymic is the deconstruction term for creating new words for old terms

All this—which was always so essentially and authentically clear in its wrought, inventive, righteous obscurity—now often suffers being revealed and reviled in critique that advances by way of what is supposed to be the closure of authenticity, essence, and experience, all of which continue to be made to share the most precise and predictably easy-to-dismiss name, local habitation, and communal form of life. That blackness is often profiled and found wanting what it is and has, in work that involuntarily falls under the admittedly imprecise rubric of African American studies, is also unsurprising and is due not so much to chauvinistic reactions to real or perceived chauvinism but to the fact that blackness’s distinction from a specific set of things that are called black remains largely unthought. Paraontological resistance to this particular brand of orthodoxy requires a paleonymic relation to blackness, which is not in need of a highlight it already has or an extrachromatic saturation it already is or a rampant internal differentiation it already bears. As such, it need not be uncoupled from the forms that came to stand (in) for blackness, to which they could not be reduced and which could not be reduced to them. What is often overlooked in blackness is bound up with what has often been overseen. Certain experiences of being tracked, managed, cornered in seemingly open space are inextricably bound to an aesthetically and politically dangerous supplementarity, an internal exteriority waiting to get out, as if the prodigal’s return were to leaving itself. Black studies’ concern with what it is to own one’s dispossession, to mine what is held in having been possessed, makes it more possible to embrace the underprivilege of being sentenced to the gift of constant escape. The strain of black studies that strains against this interplay of itinerancy and identity—whether in the interest of putting down roots or disclaiming them—could be said, also, to constitute a departure, though it may well be into a stasis more severe than the one such work imagines (itself to be leaving). In contradistinction to such skepticism, one might plan, like Curtis Mayfield, to stay a believer and therefore to avow what might be called a kind of metacritical optimism. Such optimism, black optimism, is bound up with what it is to claim blackness and the appositional, runaway, phonoptic black operations—expressive of an autopoetic organization in which flight and inhabitation modify each other—that have been thrust upon it. The burden of this paradoxically aleatory goal is our historicity, animating the reality of escape in and the possibility of escape from.

## Cap Answers

#### The alt fails – too totalizing and can’t articulate the intricacies of class relations for black women historically or currently – your starting point means your ending point is always predicated on exclusion of the black feminized body. The perm dissolves the links and proves that the methods are not only compatible but always already interrelated

McDonald 97 [Katrina Bell, Associate Professor of Sociology and Faculty Board Member for the Center for Africana Studies at John Hopkins] Black Activist Mothering: A Historical Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class, Gender and Society, Vol. 11, No. 6 (Dec., 1997), pp. 773-795, Sage Publications, Inc.

BLACK ACTIVIST MOTHERING A Historical Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class KATRINA BELL McDONALD Johns Hopkins University The prevalence of poor health among young disadvantaged Black mothers and their children has prompted a revival of maternal activism among Black middle-class urban women. A study of the California-based "Birthing Project, "founded in 1988, reveals that such activism is best understood as a modern-day version of Black activist mothering practiced by African American clubwomen from the time of slavery to the early 1940s. This article demonstrates the legacy of "normative empathy" as a significant motivator for middle-class maternal activism and as a basis for a middle-class critique of Black mothering among the disadvantaged. For more than 20 years, reformative social policy and technological advances have done little to curb the unyielding threat of Black infant mortality. Although the overall infant mortality rate in the United States has been on the decline for many years, recent figures show that Black babies continue to die at more than twice the rate of those of Whites (Fullilove 1993; Rowley et al. 1993; Singh and Yu 1995). This crisis, one of the most vexing problems for African America, was precipitated by a host of interrelated medical, sociodemographic, and psychosocial problems suffered primarily among the most vulnerable population: young African American mothers of the "underclass" (Boone 1989; Fullilove 1993; Rowley et al. 1993). Whereas the root cause of elevated poor pregnancy outcomes among African Americans lies in the historically oppressive conditions of Black women's lives, a popular argument is that this crisis, like many others, has been exacerbated by the restructuring of Black social capital. The persistence of poor birth outcomes for Blacks is often linked to the recent "Black flight" of the middle class from urban areas (Anderson 1990; Baca Zinn 1990; Wilson 1987, 1989). The resultant spatial concentration of disorganized, unskilled, and alienated "underclass" populations in urban neighborhoods is said to worsen the most negative features of Black mothers' lives by effectively severing the long-standing link between Black middle-class maternal support and disadvantaged women. Claims about the significance of the social class schism in the Black community are not easily dismissed. For example, Black feminist theory has addressed, although scantily, the class polarization of the Black community and its potential to dismantle gender/ethnic solidarity. Some authors openly admit that the strong Black maternal activist tradition is not immune to the problems of urbanization and the dislocation of women from the "once familial" character of social relationships within the community (Ladner 1986, 17). As Collins explains, "The entire commu- nity structure of bloodmothers and othermothers is under assault in many inner-city neighborhoods, where the very fabric of African-American community life is being eroded" (1991, 122). Nonetheless, while there has been a reorganization of social relations among African American urban women, the exodus of middle-class women from urban areas has not necessarily resulted in an exodus of care, in the total removal of "an important 'social buffer' that could deflect the full impact of the kind of prolonged and increasing poverty that plagues [the inner city]" (Wilson 1987, 56). Modern Black activist women are concerned that the social degradation and isolation of young Black mothers has led to the perception that Black pregnancy and mother- hood is not celebrated among the disadvantaged and that the Black community has failed to attend to the contemporary needs of African American childbearing. They understand that social support that was common to Black pregnancy and childbear- ing among the poor and working classes from which they came is uncommon for many mothers today; strong, cross-class maternal support-at least in the form they call to memory-is not characteristic of modern Black urban life. In assessing the damage, Black middle-class maternal activists have sought to rescue disadvantaged mothers from their increasing social isolation. They have found it necessary to evoke a sense of gender/ethnic solidarity in creatively crossing class lines to positively affect Black pregnancy outcomes. Their main objective is to exploit the empathy of upwardly mobile community women to re-create maternal support for the disadvantaged of the urban community and help thwart the escala- tion of poor pregnancy outcomes. Contemporary "new" middle-class (Landry 1987) Black women believe that they possess a unique empathic motivation and ability to maintain ties with poor and working-class women. Furthermore, their strategy for intervention, born from a conscious, collective need to resist racist and sexist oppression, is one passed down for many generations by their Black activist foremothers. This article revolves around two main tasks. First, it seeks to highlight socio- logically cross-class maternal support of urban Black women and to politicize the community mothering practices of those from the middle class. My analysis of this tradition is guided by a theory- and data-driven framework, "normative empathy," constructed as a way of interpreting middle-class Black maternalist motivations to maintain cross-class networks among Black women in the 1980s and 1990s. The data were drawn via intensive interviews with volunteers from "The Birthing Project," an organization established to service the needs of young and poor Black mothers. Second, this article argues that the struggle of Black activist women to evoke a sense of cross-class gender/ethnic solidarity in the provision of maternal support stems from a long tradition of maternal activism among middle-class Black women. One feature of this tradition has been the tailoring of activism to meet the needs of unique historical periods. Today, the women of the Birthing Project must confront an epidemiological crisis of Black childbearing qualitatively different from that which embattled the Black community 50 years ago. The dislocation of urban Black women from one another has reached unimaginable new heights, resulting in an often difficult, frustrating struggle for gender/ethnic solidarity among the activist women. The research reported herein further elaborates a theory of social support (Cramer and McDonald 1996) that helps to expose the often unforeseen and unanticipated political and practical problematics of such support. More specifically, this article examines the contours of maternal activism among middle-class Black women, the ideological precedent for this activism, and how the consciousness of social class difference shapes the middle-class Black activist discourse and experience.

#### Black women experience class based oppression unequally, but through common gendered experiences of slavery and antiblackness. Only a black feminist lens allows for a re-examination of cross-class solidarity and makes it possible to conceptualize the motivations and actions of the maternal activist – the aff is a prerequisite to class based analysis

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NORMATIVE EMPATHY: FRAMING BLACK ACTIVIST MOTHERING Social psychologists have identified two basic types of social helping behavior differentiated by the source of motivation. An actor, they contend, can be motivated to empathic helping behavior by a feeling for another's affective experiences; a personal, emotional response is summoned by a sense of connectedness to the condition of another person (Henderson 1984; Wood 1994). The actor's empathy is apparently not necessarily thought to jeopardize the selflessness with which activism is carried out and, therefore, it is possible for activism to fulfill nonegoistic and egoistic needs. An actor can also be motivated to normative helping behavior by general social norms-the moral and ethical principles generated by members of a community who share a common social history and vision for social develop- ment (Montada and Bierhoff 1991). This distinction between types of activism and their motivation, however, fails to capture the unique and historically driven experiences that have fed the Black activist mothering tradition. The analyses of Black women's maternal activism conducted for this study suggest that normative empathy, a synthesis of both personal and social motivation, is a more appropriate framework for analyzing the community mothering practices of African American women. Black women's activist motivations derive from a conjunction of empathy for other Black women who suffer or have suffered similar social disadvantages and of African American norms of solidarity, responsibility, and accountability. That this moral obligation to enhance gender/ethnic survival inherently has egoistic as well as other-oriented bases demonstrates that existing frameworks for interpreting their activism are too simplistic for a full appreciation of this tradition. Scholarship on Black women's social history is laced with references to Black women as important intergenerational resources in the African American commu- nity (Christian 1985; Collins 1991; DuBois 1939; Giddings 1984; Gilkes 1989; Joseph and Lewis 1981; McDonald 1995; Rodgers-Rose 1980; Sudarkasa 1988). According to Giddings, educator and clubwoman Julia Cooper identified the special role of women's activism as "the fundamental agency under God in the regeneration ... of the race, as well as the groundwork and starting point of its progress upward" (1984, 81). From a very young age, Black women are reportedly socialized to yield to the call of responsibility to "hold the Black community together" (Joseph and Lewis 1981, 106) and preserve the race and gender. Central to the sociological framing of Black women's community activism is a unique gender/ethnic motivation. Black women's gender identities help distinguish their motivations for social activism from that of Black men; their community activism is driven by their shared, gendered experience of slavery and has devel- oped primarily out their mothering practices (Jones 1990). Furthermore, Black women's motivations for activism are distinguishable from White women's moti- vations. Their unique race/gender status has strongly influenced how they define family and community and how they determine which political strategies are best suited to meet the needs of Black women, their families, and the race as a whole (Gilkes 1988; Hine 1990; Morgen 1988; Morgen and Bookman 1988; Naples 1991, 1992). This norm of solidarity and collective survival through community mother- ing practices has been characterized as Black "activist mothering" (Naples 1992) or community "othermothering,"' a transplantation of traditional African tribal principles (Peterson 1992). The community work of Black women, like that of other women of color, is a complex practice of biological mothering, community other- mothering, and political activism (Naples 1992). Normative empathy also emphasizes the significance of social class in politiciz- ing the task of Black women to serve their community. It is frequently noted that middle-class status compounds Black women's sense of "social debt" to the community (Higginbotham and Weber 1992, 430; McDonald 1995; Naples 1992). The "races as families" analogy promoted by the "race school" of sociology for decades, and founded on the philosophies of W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington (Dawson 1994), strongly elevates race obligations over those of class. Individual women of the middle class are said to be held "morally culpable" (Lawson 1992, 94) if they do not live up to the expectation that successful Black women should help their less fortunate "sisters." Every woman's middle-class success story must also be a tale of how she fulfilled her moral obligation to uplift others of the race less fortunate than she (Collins 1991; Dawson 1994). The analyses of Higginbotham (1993) and Boris (1993) speak instead to an intersection of social class and Black activism that produces a variety of maternal activist strategies operating at different levels of class and reflecting varying, class-based expressions of normative empathy. Normative empathy appears more likely to find expression among the middle class as an obligation and duty to the disadvantaged; by virtue of belief in their superior moral upbringing, middle-class women would be inclined to teach lower-class women to be more like themselves. Normative empathy among middle-class women serves not only as motivation for social activism but also as a basis for critiquing the mothering practices of the disadvantaged. Far less attention is paid to how class intersects with the community practices of disadvantaged Black women. Whereas it could be understood that their access to fewer material resources would place restrictions on what poor Black women offer as community othermothers, the historical literature suggests that their rever- ence for, and political commitment to, solidarity is no less than that of their middle-class counterparts. In contrast to that among the middle class, normative empathy among the disadvantaged appears more likely to be formed from a view of all Black women and mothers as the source of uplift and to take the form of intraclass social support. In addition, the practice of normative empathy is temporally sensitive to the conditions of Black women's lives. The form and content of Black activist moth- ering have changed somewhat with the increasing polarization of Black social classes. As the problems suffered by the most disadvantaged women of the community worsen, middle-class Black activists step up their efforts to lift them up, and perhaps in doing so overshadow the maternal activism still operating among the disadvantaged and focus a biased lens on the mothering practices of poorer Black women. This study seeks to understand the motivations of the Birthing Project volunteers who are overwhelmingly middle class. No data were collected from disadvantaged populations or about them other than those that are offered from the perspective of the middle class and, therefore, this particular study does not speak to the experience of being the recipient of middle-class maternal care. It demonstrates how strongly middle-class Black women cling to the legacy of their foremothers and to a middle-class display of normative empathy.

#### A black feminist ethic of caring is in itself an act of radical mothering, affirming black existence and cutting across class lines – the Birthing Project is a specific example of how the aff is a necessary first step in interrogating neoliberalism at the personal level

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THE BIRTHING PROJECT: RE-CREATING MATERNAL SUPPORT The research site for the observation of contemporary, middle-class Black maternal activism was "The Birthing Project," a volunteer organization founded in Sacramento, California, in 1988. The Project grew out of a resurgence of African American women activist groups after their decline and suppression around the late 1940s (Giddings 1984), a decline that may have reflected the African American intelligentsia's failure to embrace the broad spectrum of racial uplift efforts in the Black community (Gaines 1996). A recent survey of 22 Black women leaders representing 11 different African American voluntary associations revealed that today there are many formal and informal Black organizations that claim to provide moderate or extensive support to Black women (Dickerson 1994). Founded by Kathryn Hall, a health administrator, the Birthing Project offers the opportunity for young pregnant African American women at risk of having children of low birth weight and of infant mortality to increase their chances for delivering healthy Black babies. It strives to re-create informal social support lacking or nonexistent for many young mothers and to do so in the spirit of their activist foremothers. Early Black clubwomen were well-known for having been instrumen- tal in laying a Black communal infrastructure to "re-create the intimacy of village life they left behind" (Mathews 1992, 192). In 1985, Hall became agitated by the statistical data circulated within the state health office where she worked, which showed that the mortality rate for Black infants (age one and younger) in California was 16 per 1,000 births; the rate for Whites was 9 per 1,000. Paralleling these statistics were the related figures on low birth weight, an equally disturbing phenomenon. Hall's experience in state health administration made her keenly aware of the limitations of maternal health and family research and policies in removing this peril from the African American community. Frequently, state and federal administrators concluded that the problem was related to the poor "viability of black genes"; therefore, nothing, they said, could be done to lessen the racial disparity. Hall, who had herself lost a child that she believed could have been saved with proper medical care, was understandably infuriated by this racist analysis, and she set out to warn the Black community of the widespread adoption of this perspective in the health community. Little assis- tance could be expected from within the official maternal health infrastructure; as earlier reformers had put it, the Black community had to be told not to wait for the deliverers (Gordon 1994). Hall explains that the mission of the Project is "to catch a [Black] baby and pay witness to the birth." The Project reestablishes a collective of witnesses to Black births to legitimate the children's existence and to ensure that elder women will be there to give them guidance.2 The Project relies on the willingness of middle-class "sister-friends" to offer intimate, informal social support to underprivileged young expectant mothers during their pregnancies and for a year or more postpartum. Its founders were confident that the capacity of activist women-upwardly mobile women from poor and working-class backgrounds-to restore gender/ethnic soli- darity across class could assist underprivileged young urban mothers and, in particular, reduce the severe risks to maternal health faced by this population. Hall put out a call to "the 10 toughest sisters" in the Sacramento area to work with her in combatting the Black infant mortality problem from within the Black community. Eventually, nine women (and one man) formed the original founding "sister-friends" (and "brother-friend") for the Project. Together, this group devised a plan to secure the future of the Black family and Black culture. They sought to use the maternal gifts of Black women by exploiting the resources and resource- fulness of middle-class women who were better situated socioeconomically to tend to the maternal needs of other African American families and who could relate to the social disadvantage suffered in those families. As is true for most charismatic founders of community organizations, Hall personifies the Project's ideals. Her word and tone are almost theological, resonat- ing with that of many of her famous foremothers like Mary Church Terrell, who once proclaimed that Black women's "peculiar status in this country" called them to "the great firm of progress and reform."3 Hall's concern for the witnessing of a child's birth, literally and figuratively speaking, is a concrete demonstration of what Collins contends is a Black feminist "ethic of caring": "Nurturing children in the Black extended family networks stimulates a more generalized ethic of caring and personal accountability among African-American women who often feel account- able to all the Black community's children" (1991, 129). It is familiar folk talk among African Americans that historically anyone witnessing a child's birth (i.e., either being attentive to the mother around the time of the pregnancy, physically present at the birth, or involved in some way with the christening/blessing) assumed the right later in that child's life to intervene in any way he or she felt was appropriate, Hall explains. This included rightfully disci- plining the child when necessary, thereby showing community love and concern. Community members of all social class backgrounds accepted and desired this intervention and saw it as a natural extension of the family. When there are no witnesses to a marriage, the union is not valid; when there are no witnesses to a baptism, one's salvation is not recognized by that church. Thus, Hall argues by analogy that when the only onlookers to a Black baby's birth are its mother, an impersonal county hospital staff, and perhaps a social worker or a prison guard, that child's life goes largely unattended. Hall feels strongly that by re-creating much needed maternal support in the African American community, the Birthing Project reestablishes an interclass collective of witnesses to Black births to legitimate the children's existence and to ensure that elder and more socioeconomically stable women will be available to give them guidance. Prospective sister-friends are introduced to the Project first through printed media, through a public presentation by Hall, or through word of mouth. The formal introduction is made when the volunteer attends one of the official training sessions typically managed by the Project's chief administrator. Training sessions primarily are meant to instruct the volunteer to regularly convey the importance of prenatal care to her "little sister,"4 to suggest ways to assist tangibly in her prenatal care, such as providing her transportation to medical appointments, and to emphasize the need for the volunteer to be readily available to assist her little sister in any other way she could, such as providing her referrals to other agencies for information and support. In the extreme, the volunteer is told, one could be called upon by the Project to intervene on the little sister's behalf should an authority's action (e.g., social worker, judge, teacher) pose a potential threat to the healthy progress of the pregnancy or to the little sister's personal development overall. During these sessions, volunteers are also informed about ways to minimize the stress involved in befriending the little sisters. What the Project can reasonably accomplish and certain limits on the relationships, such as not lending money, are explained in detail. These sessions were redesigned somewhat in the early 1990s to accommodate the volunteers' need to better understand the nature of the social class tensions that were likely to emerge. The training sessions are not only useful for dispensing practical materials and information; they are often one of the few opportunities, if not the only opportunity, for the administration to transmit the overall mission of the Project and its norms and values to the sister-friends. In some cases, however, volunteers bypass the training session to help meet the overwhelming, immediate need to service pro- spective little sisters. Still, the Project estimates that 100 trained sister-friends were active each year,5 probably fewer in the first five years. Although the Project is most frequently referred to as a mentoring program, its social service is better understood as one that provides young mothers a personal confidante. The sister-friends opt for a more meaningful, reciprocal, personal relationship with the little sisters that, although ultimately intended to help ensure an uneventful pregnancy and birth, is shaped by the unique personal and social circumstances of both the young mothers and the volunteers. In sum, this relation- ship is intended to extend the kinship bonds and networks of both parties and to politically empower all members of the community. The Birthing Project is but one component of a larger self-help effort by community women to supplement government agency programs or to provide services nonexistent in Sacramento County. This multifaceted enterprise addresses a wide range of social and political issues, revealing a Black feminist vision of welfare akin to Black women and other women activists of an earlier era (Gordon 1994; Hamilton 1978; Harley and Terborg-Penn 1978; Jenkins 1984; Lerner 1974; Neverdon-Morton 1989; Townes 1993). Under the umbrella of the Center for Community Health and Well-Being, Inc., are parallel programs: "Imani," which provides support to women who engaged in or who are potentially at risk of child abuse and/or substance abuse; the Economic Development Program, which trains and employs women to provide in-home support services to families; and the Comprehensive Perinatal Services Program, which offers maternal health care. The Birthing Project is acknowledged as the heart and soul of the Center, and in 1993 it became Birthing Project USA with its program replicated in 15 cities around the country. A program module produced by Hall has been used by social service agencies across the nation as well. Between 1988 and 1997, Project-related pro- grams were established in 48 U.S. cities and 1 Canadian city; thirty of these programs remain active.

#### Although we recognize pop culture criticisms of capitalism can’t dissolve capitalism on it’s own, Monae’s music is a defiance of capitalism’s attempt to control by framing her calls for enjoyment as resistance.

Hassler-Forest 14 (Hassler-Forest, D. (2014), assistant professor of film and literature at the University of Amsterdam, publishes widely on comics, American cinema, popular literature, and critical theory. The Politics of World-Building: Heteroglossia in Janelle Monáe's Afrofuturist WondaLand. Para-doxa, 26, 284-303. <<http://dare.uva.nl/search?identifier=defcf5f6-c6df-4df3-950c-bc51ebd5485c>>.)

But while these contradictions obviously diminish some of the more exaggerated claims concerning Monáe’s semi-messianic image, her unique approach to world-building together with the inclusive spirit of her neo-Afrofuturist vocabulary still puts her at the forefront of politically productive popular artists working in fantastic genres. While incorporating Afrofuturism’s critical and subversive response to fantastic fiction’s tendency towards racist and white-centric story-worlds, her world-building mobilizes not only an imaginative form that can challenge and question these traditions, but can also engage with them joyfully and productively. Her immaculately produced, highly accessible, and commercially viable music is not only a collection of branded commodities, but also an explicit celebration of “non-productive” human activity. By placing her contagious call to dance, enjoyment, and creative collaboration in a story-world that frames these things as acts of political resistance, her music becomes an acts of defiance within neoliberalism’s “relentless capture and control of time and experience” (Crary 40). While popular culture will quite obviously never change the political organization of post-democratic neoliberal capitalism by itself, it can still contribute to the vital work of imagining alternative futures without simultaneously repressing the very problems it would dissolve (Jameson 265).

## Queer Theory Answers

#### Afrofuturism queers mainstream cultural production and questions the channels through which racism, sexism, heteronormativity, etc are produced.

Stotter 16 (Stotter, Magdalena. "Did You Say Afrofuturism? On Labelling Art." Wikis Der Freien Universität Berlin. N.p., 3 Feb. 2016. Web. 01 July 2017. <http://wikis.fu-berlin.de/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=646989083>.)

At this point of the essay it is important to link the idea of 'resistance' to our field of interest in this Wiki - the term 'queer' and its various relations to African and diaspora art practices. When Afrofuturism is read as a critique on a centralized White Western imagination of the future by the use of stereotypical settings and characters closely linked to imperialistic thinking, it can be interpreted as a strategy of queering mainstream cultural production. A strategy of queering, that Alexis Pauline Gumbs calls “intervention”[21] and José Esteban Muñoz names “great refusal”[22] introduces concepts of questioning existing structures and asymmetries concerning seemingly fixed categories like race, class, sexual orientation and gender within the arts and beyond. An artistic queer intervention’s impact on real life manifests itself by “[…] revealing the channels through which racism, sexism and homophobia are reproduced as terms of living and offers an alternative meaning of life […] for a world free from oppression.”[23] By us[e]ing the word queer “[…] beyond being the name for those of us who scare the status quo with our blatant desire for each other […]”[24] but in the sense of questioning “[…] how the world is made and remade […].”[25] both, Gumbs and Muñoz, see the great potential of using this term as a tool for reshaping thought, “because art manifest[s; M.S.] itself in such a way that the political imagination can spark new ways of perceiving and acting on a reality that is itself potentially changeable.”[26] Both authors demand a more fluid concept of imagining a borderless reality through the concept of queering, that, when applied on the broad spectrum of Black futuristic art, due to the narration’s location outside our contemporary spatiotemporal setting (e.g. in the future or in space) can function as a catalyzer for discussions on current political issues.[27]

## Science Fiction Good

**Our creation of utopian thinking is able to create a revolutionary pedagogy of hope to transgress suffering**

**Freedman 2000** (Carl Freedman, Professor of English at Louisiana State University, “Critical Theory and Science Fiction” Wesleyan University Journal )

As a version of critical theory, then, the utopian hermeneut ic of Bloch not only ranks in importance with Bakhtinian stylistics and Lukacsian genre analysis but illustrates more emphatically than they do a crucial dialectical doubleness at the heart of the whole critical-theoretical project. On the one hand, utopia, the supreme *positive* value, nonetheless implies a ruthless negation and demystification of actuality: "The essential function of utopia is a critique of what is present. If we had not already gone beyond the barriers, we could not even perceive them as barriers." 31 The perspective of utopia alone makes completely clear how banal and corrupt are the barriers of the status quo that utopia works to transcend. Indeed, the fact that utopian plenitude can only be apprehended in the most elusive and fragmentary anticipations-that utopia emerges only in the teeth, as it were, of the mundane – is the most devastating commentary upon the latter. On the other hand, the specifically negative dimension of the utopian dialectic-the dimension of critique in the familiar sense of astringent demystification -can never, as we have seen, remain wholly self-identical: in every concrete instance it points to a corresponding positivity and plenitude, that is, to authentic utopian fulfillment. Of course, a substantially similar dialectic does operate in the theories of Bakhtin and Lukacs. For the former, the critical heteroglossia or multiaccentuality of novelistic style – as opposed to the closed monologism of the poetic- possesses a potentially revolutionary charge in its grasp of the diverse and contradictory interconnectedness of the social field. Indeed, one might even argue that, for Bakhtin, the open, polyvalent style of the novel actually functions, in Blochian terms, as a utopian figure of a multicultural liberated humanity. For Lukacs, authentic critical realism, through its concrete historical-materialist ontology and epistemology that negate (and sublate) the abstractions of naturalism and psychologism, directly serves the revolutionary project; as we have already seen, a purely realistic text could only be composed from the standpoint of utopia- the standpoint, that is, of the transparency that only a postrevolutionary classless society could enable. Indeed, we can go so far as to say that the telos of critical theory in general can only be the transformation (in thought, language, and action) of reality into utopia. The elaborate demystifying apparatuses of Marxist (and, though to a lesser degree, Freudian and even some poststructuralist) thought exist, ultimately, in order to clear space upon which positive alternatives to the existent can be constructed. Of all versions of critical theory, however, it is perhaps Bloch's that provides the amplest, most explicit demonstration of the reciprocity and indispensability of the negative *and* positive moments of the critical dialectic; not accidentally, it may well be Bloch's utopian hermeneutic that bears the deepest affinity with science fiction. For Bloch all genuine art- virtually by definition- finds its true significance in utopian construing. Nevertheless, there are discriminations to be made, not only among individual artworks but, perhaps more pertinently, among whole genres, some of which participate more fully in the utopian dialectic than others. Though Bloch (like Bakhtin and Lukacs) exhibits little or no personal acquaintance with science fiction as such, he indirectly provides a guide to the utopian dimension of science fiction in his two great companion essays in genre criticism, "A Philosophical View of the Detective Novel," and "A Philosophical View of the Novel of the Artist."33 Bloch sees the two genres as comparable, frequently "popular" forms (but such a juxtaposition might more likely pair detective fiction with science fiction), which are, however, philosophically antithetical. Detective fiction is a deeply conservative form in which utopia is at a minimum. The essentially Oedipal structure of the detective novel is oriented decisively toward the *past,* when the crime that constitutes the chief datum of the text was committed. The plot of the novel is thus devoted to the strictly reactionary project of solving the crime and identifying the culprit in order that the status quo ante – the as-if-unproblematic condition of the detective's society prior to the (singular) crime-may be restored. Now, although Bloch himself does not pursue this line of thought, there is no doubt that a comprehensively Blochian reading would be capable of constructing anticipatory pre-illuminations of utopian collectivity even from such regressive Tory loci as a rural English village in Agatha Christie or an Oxford college in Dorothy Sayers. What Bloch actually stresses, however, is the much greater utopian energy at work in the novel of the artist. Here the chief structuring datum is a real Novum, namely, the imaginary works of art that give the protagonist his generic identity *as* an artist, but that can be located only on the Front, as works that may be coming into being but possess no established empirical validation yet. "Whereas the detective novel," as Bloch summarizes, "requires a process of collecting evidence, penetrating backward to a past crime, the novel of the artist requires recognition of an interest in the creative person who brings out something new instead of something past" *(Utopian Function* 267). For the German-speaking Bloch, Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947) is the principal exemplar of the novel of the artist, but Joyce's A *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), which probably occurs more readily to the Englishspeaking reader, provides an even more pertinent illustration of the Blochian point. Stephen Dedalus, after all, is not, precisely, an artist (for that title cannot be earned by a single haunting villanelle ), but a *future* artist, an artist *as a young man.* The great artworks that constitute Stephen as the hero of a *Bildungsroman* about an artist are not only imaginary but, even within the world of the text, exist only on the level of the Not-Yet, as pure though concrete potentiality. In strictly utopian manner, it is the future – the fractional anticipations of that which is coming into existence – that structures Stephen: and not only him individually but, as he himself suggests in his determination to "forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race," 34 our entire view of the society that his artistic achievements will retroactively redefine. Bloch's fundamental generic point about the novel of the artist is even more relevant to science fiction. The estranging novelties that characterize the genre correspond precisely to the Blochian Novum-which, as we have seen, is never a single new element inserted into an essentially unchanged mundane environment, but is instead such a *radical* novelty as to reconstitute the entire surrounding world and thus, in a sense, to create (though certainly not ex nihilo) a new world. Likewise, the science-fictional text is, as we have also seen, defined by its creation of a new world whose radical novelty estranges the empirical world of the status quo. And this is equally true whether the Novum of science fiction is expressed by the wholesale production of new worlds (as in *Last and First Men* or its even more wide-ranging sequel, *Star Maker* [1937]), or whether (as in *Frankenstein)* the Novum manifests itself as one novelty of such radical and profound newness that (as was discussed in the preceding section) the superficially mundane context is dynamically reconstituted as a potential future, new and strange. Furthermore, the utopian aspect of such science-fictional futures is heightened by the cognitive and critical nature of science-fictional estrangement. Although (as Bloch himself makes clear) the longings expressed in fantasies and fairy tales may well possess authentic utopian value, utopia cannot finally be understood as simply cut off from the empirical world of actuality. It is the *transformation* of actuality into - utopia that constitutes the practical end of utopian critique and the ultimate object of utopian hope. In other words, such shards of utopia as may be found in fantastic representations of Cockaigne or Never-Never Land involve the recasting of utopia into irrationalist form. By contrast, the cognitive rationality (at least in literary effect) of science fiction allows utopia to emerge as more fully itself, genuinely critical and transformative. In this way, the dynamic of science fiction can on one level be identified with the hope principle itself. The reading of science fiction drives us into lands where we have never set foot and yet which-because they are cognitively linked to the world we do know and are invested with our actual longings-do indeed amount to a kind of homeland. Even more than in the novel of the artist, the defining features of science fiction are located on the In-Front-of-Us, at the level of the Not-Yet Being, and in the dimension of utopian futurity.

**The generative capacity of the aff**

**Freedman 2000** (Carl Freedman, Professor of English at Louisiana State University, “Critical Theory and Science Fiction” Wesleyan University Journal )

It is, then, the general circumstances of postmodernity that necessarily define the status and importance of science fiction today. As I have already discussed, science fiction is, at least in our time, the privileged generic tendency for utopia; that is, for those anticipatory figurations of an unalienated future that constitute the deepest critical truth of which art is capable. More difficult to attain even than critique in its negative, demystifying dimension, utopia has never been so desperately needed as it is now, in our postmodern environment that ruthlessly tends toward total reification. Indeed, not since before the October Revolution itself (whose ultimate overthrow in 1991 constituted only the sickening final chapter of a downward narrative begun with bureaucratization and Stalinist betrayal almost six decades earlier) has it been harder and lonelier to imagine a social organization beyond alienation and exploitation, or to imagine sociopolitical forces more decisive than the regime of exchange-value (of "the market," in currently fashionable jargon). Such imagining, however close to impossible it may be, must now be the principal vocation of science fiction. To what degree science fiction will prove adequate to the task cannot be predicted. Yet there is at least one sense in which science fiction is particularly well suited to the postmodern situation (however hostile, in most other respects, postmodernity may be to the critical and utopian power of science fiction at its most radical). Science fiction has, as we have seen, its general orientation primarily toward the future. Indeed, it should be remembered that the advent of science fiction during the moment of Mary Shelley is inseparable from the very invention of history and the future as these terms are now meaningful. Though this does not, as we have also seen, imply any sort of futurism in the positivistic sense, it does mean that of all literary modes science fiction ought to be the least tempted by the kind of premodern regressivity whose strength still largely defines the moment of modernism itself. Accordingly, even more than the modernist fictionality-still very far from formally exhausted-of Joyce or Proust, science fiction must scorn the concept of regression to the premodern, even while encountering substantial difficulty with the kind of progression that postmodernity has in fact entailed. In other words, it is in the generic nature of science fiction to confront the future, no matter how unpromising a critical and utopian activity that may seem (as now) to be. “No one,” as Nieztsche writes, “is free to be a crab. … One *must* go forward – step by step further into decadence (that is *my* definition of mondern ‘progress’).”

### Science Fiction Good for education

**Reynolds 77** – Associate Professor of Education in the Profes- sional Laboratory Experiences Department of the University of Georgia. (John C., “Science Fiction in the 7-12 Curriculum” *The Clearing House,* Vol. 51, No. 3, Nov., 1977, JSTOR)

Some techniques utilized by these teachers in- cluded building models of cities of the future, see- ing earth through alien eyes, and inventing a planet or spaceship for human use. It appears that there are as many basic purposes for utilizing sci- ence fiction in the classroom as there are teachers with innovative ideas. Many of the teachers sur- veyed mentioned the application of science fiction to the study of the social foundations of educa- tion, history, economics, and the social sciences. They found that the science fiction short story or novel is particularly adaptable to pedagogical ob- jectives. An analysis of the science fiction short story or novel reveals usually that the theme is developed in the context of an action-filled back- ground, meaningful situations, and characters which the classroom teacher can utilize in discus- sions and written assignments. What are

**Woodcock 1979** – (John, professor at Connecticut State University , “ Teaching Science Fiction: Unique Challenges (Proceedings of the MLA Special Session, New York, December 1978)//KM

I do have a theoretical overlay which explains, to me at least, why SF can indeed be such a successful tool for teaching both literature to science majors and science to literature majors. This theoretical overlay is based on the work of Jean Piaget. To brutally reduce the idea I have borrowed from him, it is that, whatever you are trying to teach, people will learn it much faster and better if they can manipulate it – preferably physically, but cerebral manipulation works, too. If we want students to appreciate something about a concept in physics or in the design fiction, we need to let them design some fiction, we need to let them manipulate some physics. The best thing about SF as an educational tool is that it can be manipulated. It invites you to manipulate it, to manipulate science, to manipulate literature. If you listen to science students telling each other about literature, they're telling each other plots. But if those plots are SF plots, the students begin almost immediately to manipulate them. It goes something like: "I read a neat story somewhere about people who changed their sex every month. I wonder what it would be like if they only changed it once a year. Or if someone else could change your sex without your consent once a year. " You see, you have manipulation of an idea. That's something we don't permit students to do enough of in introductory science courses or, as far as I can tell, in introductory literature courses, either. But SF almost forces you to do this, to look back at the story and ask yourself "what if. . . " and to reinvent the story for yourself - all this being the manipulation which Piaget says encourages people to learn something about unfamiliar topics. And that's why I'm so hopeful that SF may help us in closing the two-cultures gap.

**Smith, 15** ([Clint Smith](http://www.clintsmithiii.com/about/) is a teacher, poet, and doctoral candidate in education at Harvard University with a concentration in Culture, Institutions, and Society (CIS). “Teach black students they can change communities they don't have to escape”, <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/jul/07/teach-black-students-change-communities-not-escape?CMP=share_btn_fb> )//KM

When my students and I found out about the [shooting of nine black people in Charleston](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jun/18/charleston-church-shooting-nine-dead-after-hate-attack), South Carolina, our breath was pulled from our lungs, our minds spun with disillusionment, and our hearts filled with rage and despair. We wanted to escape. My students are black and brown, living in communities that have been subjected to generations of underinvestment and discrimination. As a teaching artist in Boston public schools and a former high school English teacher just outside Washington DC, I’ve seen how the violence against people of color in the past year has left many in fear that their lives are in perpetual danger. As it happened, we did escape. The news came on the eve of a long-planned school trip to France. Hours later, when we met at the airport, we hugged one another and exchanged words – a reminder that we mattered, if not to the rest of the world, then at least to each other. When we arrived in Paris, I was reminded of the American writer James Baldwin. His departure from Harlem in 1948, aged 24, with only $40 (£25) in his pocket was an attempt to escape the pernicious racism of the US. This decision, he claims, saved his life. “It wasn’t so much a matter of choosing France – it was a matter of getting out of America,” he said in a 1984 interview with the [Paris Review](http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/2994/the-art-of-fiction-no-78-james-baldwin). “My luck was running out. I was going to go to jail; I was going to kill somebody or be killed.” For my entire life, I have watched the realities of racism slowly kill those around me. I have watched food insecurity and unequal access to healthy meals saturate black communities with diabetes and [heart disease at disproportionate rates](http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/african-american-hunger/african-american-hunger-fact-sheet.html). I have watched the residue of federally-sanctioned [redlining](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redlining) create small apartheids in cities for decades, generating breeding grounds for crime and poverty. In Baltimore, for example, local policies have existed since 1910 to isolate the city’s black population. To the present day federal housing subsidy policies still result in low-income black families being [segregated from richer neighbourhoods](http://www.epi.org/blog/from-ferguson-to-baltimore-the-fruits-of-government-sponsored-segregation/). With all of that said, a part of me struggles to accept that Baldwin, a literary hero of mine, felt the only thing he could do was leave. When I discuss Baldwin with my students, the questions surrounding his departure inevitably arise. It is a difficult yet necessary conversation. I tell them it is a choice he made, one he had the right to – one they have the right to as well. In the midst of these conversations, however, I do not want to suggest to my students that the only way to be successful, or to have value, is to escape. This is a message already deeply embedded in the social fabric of schools in poor communities. Teachers, administrators and others propagate a “do well so you can leave this place” narrative. I have witnessed this in the schools where I have taught and been on the receiving end of it growing up. As someone not currently living in my own hometown of New Orleans, I even wonder to what extent I internalised such a message as a child. Education, at its best, gives students the option to make a life however and wherever they choose. That is different, however, to defining one’s ambition or dreams by how far removed they are from the places of their childhood. A child in Chicago, Detroit, New Orleans, or any other city across the country, should not have to dream of escaping their neighborhood to make a meaningful life for him or herself. How will our communities ever grow into their true potential if we continue to tell our most successful students to leave? And still, I am not sure anyone can be faulted for desiring to escape a paradigm in which your humanity, and your body, are both questioned and assaulted. It is not as simple as telling our students to stay. No. We, as educators, must directly address the realities that cause them to want to leave in the first place. That, in part, means we must discuss racism candidly – both the interpersonal and the systemic. This does not mean adding a perfunctory Martin Luther King Jr speech to be skimmed over during [Black History Month](http://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/). It does not mean reading the only writer of color in the curriculum and analyzing their work devoid of any historical context. This means holistically broadening the range of texts we expose our students to and having them interrogate why certain voices have been, and continue to be, left out of the literary and historical canons. We cannot discuss what led Dylann Roof to take the lives of nine innocent black people as they prayed inside their church with students unless we also discuss our country’s history of racial violence. We cannot discuss what the confederate flag represents without also wrestling with what it means that many of our founding fathers owned slaves. These are not loosely tied phenomena; they are intrinsically linked realities and shape the country we live in. Americans often define racism singularly as direct verbal or physical abuse. This, however, is only one way it manifests itself. As teachers, we have a responsibility to our students to provide a more holistic and honest definition of what racism is in this country, so that we might better push back against it as we move forward. While systemic injustice is suffocating and can often seem immutable, things can change. But we must engage our students honestly, and remind them that we are the architects of the world we live in. That is what I would have wanted my teachers to tell me. That is what I try to tell my students. Perhaps then we can collectively re-create our reality so that one day no one is forced to “escape”.

## Solvency Methods/Possible Alts

### Alien

#### Afrofuturism disrupts traditional chronologies of history and disrupts the futurisms that condemn black bodies to prehistory. Afrofuturism reconciles diasporic thought through it’s futuristic readings of a grammar of alienation

Eshun 03 (Eshun, Kodwo, author of numerous pieces on music, culture, and the arts, associateeditor of the 21C, author of More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction (Quartet Books, 1998), editor of Afrofuturist Reader from Duke University Press. "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism." The New Centennial Review 3.2 (2003): 287-302. Project Muse. Web. 30 June 2017. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/48294>.)

Afrofuturism is by no means naively celebratory. The reactionary Manichaenism of the Nation of Islam, the regressive compensation mechanisms of Egyptology, Dogonesque cosmology, and the totalising reversals of Stolen Legacy–style Afrocentricity are immediately evident. By excavating the political moments of such vernacular futurologies, a lineage of competing worldviews that seek to reorient history comes into focus. In identifying the emergence and dissemination of belief systems, it becomes critical to analyze how, in Gilroy’s words, “even as the movement that produced them fades, there remains a degree of temporal disturbance.” By creating temporal complications and anachronistic episodes that disturb the linear time of progress, these futurisms adjust the temporal logics that condemned black subjects to prehistory. Chronopolitically speaking, these revisionist historicities may be understood as a series of powerful competing futures that infiltrate the present at different rates. Revisionist logic is shared by autodidact historians like Sun Ra and George G. M. James of Stolen Legacy, and contemporary intellectuals such as Toni Morrison, Greg Tate, and Paul D. Miller. Her argument that the African slaves that experienced capture, theft, abduction, and mutilation were the first moderns is important for positioning slavery at the heart of modernity. The cognitive and attitudinal shift demanded by her statement also yokes philosophy together with brutality, and binds cruelty to temporality. The effect is to force together separated systems of knowledge, so as to disabuse apparatuses of knowledge of their innocence. Afrofuturism can be understood as an elaboration upon the implications of Morrison’s revisionary thesis. In a  interview with the writer Mark Sinker, cultural critic Greg Tate suggested that the bar between the signifier and the signified could be understood as standing for the Middle Passage that separated signification (meaning) from sign (letter). This analogy of racial terror with semiotic process spliced the world of historical trauma with the apparatus of structuralism. The two genealogies crossbred with a disquieting force that contaminated the latter and abstracted the former. Kodwo Eshun ● 297 T H E U SES OF A LIENATION Afrofuturism does not stop at correcting the history of the future. Nor is it a simple matter of inserting more black actors into science-fiction narratives. These methods are only baby steps towards the more totalizing realization that, in Greg Tate’s formulation, Afrodiasporic subjects live the estrangement that science-fiction writers envision. Black existence and science fiction are one and the same. In The Last Angel of History, Tate argued that “The form itself, the conventions of the narrative in terms of the way it deals with subjectivity, focuses on someone who is at odds with the apparatus of power in society and whose profound experience is one of cultural dislocation, alienation and estrangement. Most science fiction tales dramatically deal with how the individual is going to contend with these alienating, dislocating societies and circumstances and that pretty much sums up the mass experiences of black people in the postslavery twentieth century.” At the century’s start, Dubois termed the condition of structural and psychological alienation as double consciousness. The condition of alienation, understood in its most general sense, is a psychosocial inevitability that all Afrodiasporic art uses to its own advantage by creating contexts that encourage a process of disalienation. Afrofuturism’s specificity lies in assembling conceptual approaches and countermemorial mediated practices in order to access triple consciousness, quadruple consciousness, previously inaccessible alienations.

#### Starting from the point of the alien abductee provides a lens through which best to understand the peculiarities of antiblack violence

**Womack 13** - (Ytasha, Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture, , p.32-33)

British writer Mark Sinker was arguably the first to ask, “What does it mean to be human?” in what would later be called the Afrofuturistic context. Sinker, then a writer for Wired, posed the question and explored the aspirations, sci-fi themes, and technology in jazz, funk, and hip-hop music. “In other words, Mark made the correlation between Blade Runner and slavery, between the idea of alien abduction and the real events of slavery,” writes Kodwo Eshun. “It was an amazing thing, because as soon as I read this, I thought, my God, it just allows so many things.” 2 Dery identified the parallels in “Black to the Future” as well. “African Americans are, in a very real sense, the descendants of alien abductees,” Dery writes. He compares the atrocities of racism experienced by blacks in the United States to “a sci-fi nightmare in which unseen but no less impassable force fields of intolerance frustrate their movement; official histories undo what has been done; and technology is too often brought to bear on black bodies (branding, forced sterilization, the Tuskegee experiment, and tasers come readily to mind).” 3 Dery and Sinker were not the first to explore the deplorable need of some to dehumanize others in the quest for power. Yet their frameworks led to Afrofuturistic writings that for the first time linked the transatlantic slave trade to a metaphor of alien abduction. What does it mean to be nonhuman? As a nonhuman, your life is not valued. You are an “alien,” “foreign,” “exotic,” “savage”— a wild one to be conquered or a nuisance to be destroyed. Your bodies are not your own, fit for probing and research. You have no history of value. You are incapable of creating culture in general, but when you do, it is from an impulse or emotion, never intellect. Humans, well meaning or otherwise, can’t relate to a nonhuman. Even the term “illegal alien,” often used for undocumented workers moving to nations across the world, plays off fears of otherness, invasion, and takeover. The fear fanned by the fastapproaching minority-majority nation shift in the United States has led to hotly debated laws and policies that mostly target Latino immigrants. Advocates charge that racial profiling and other human-rights violations are on the upswing as undocumented workers and those who fit the ethnic description of the stereotyped “illegal alien” fall prey to unjust attacks, violence, or surveillance. The greater part of the civil rights movement in the United States, as well as self-rule movements in precolonial India, the Caribbean, and on the African continent, were efforts to ensure equal rights for all. And this struggle paralleled equal efforts to prove that people of color, women, LGBTQ people, the working class, and others were in fact human. The burden of having to prove one’s humanity has defined the attainment of some of the greatest human rights achievements of our times as well as some of the greatest artistic works. However, this notion of otherness prevails. the other side of the rainbow The alien metaphor is one of the most common tropes in science fiction. Whether they are invading, as in Independence Day; the ultimate enemy, as portrayed in Alien; or misunderstood, like in E .T., there is a societal lesson of conquering or tolerance that reminds viewers of real-life human divisions. Other films are more explicit in the racial metaphor. District 9, a film set in South Africa about segregated alien settlements, was inspired by the horrors of Cape Town’s District Six during the apartheid era. Avatar is a thinly veiled commentary on imperialism and indigenous cultures. And The Brother from Another Planet depicts an extraterrestrial in the form of a black man confused by the racial norms of the day. Much of the science fiction fascination with earthbound alien encounters is preoccupied with how both cultures could merge and the turmoil that would ensue from overcoming perceptions of difference. But other artists have compared their wrestling with W. E. B. Du Bois’s double consciousness or the struggle of being both American and black with alien motifs. Artists from Sun Ra to Lil Wayne have referenced being alien to explain isolation. Author Saidiya Hartman wrote in her book Lose Your Mother about feeling trapped in a racial paradox: “Was it why I sometimes felt as weary of America as if I too had landed in what was now South Carolina in 1526 or in Jamestown in 1619? Was it the tug of all the lost mothers and orphaned children? Or was it that each generation felt anew the yoke of a damaged life and the distress of being a native stranger, an eternal alien?” 4

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#### By analogizing the middle passage to an alien abduction, the implications of slavery are rerouted through fiction.

Eshun 03 (Eshun, Kodwo, author of numerous pieces on music, culture, and the arts, associateeditor of the 21C, author of More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction (Quartet Books, 1998), editor of Afrofuturist Reader from Duke University Press. "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism." The New Centennial Review 3.2 (2003): 287-302. Project Muse. Web. 30 June 2017. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/48294>.)

Afrofuturism uses extraterrestriality as a hyperbolic trope to explore the historical terms, the everyday implications of forcibly imposed dislocation, and the constitution of Black Atlantic subjectivities: from slave to negro to coloured to evolué to black to African to African American. Extraterrestriality thereby becomes a point of transvaluation through which this variation over time, understood as forcible mutation, can become a resource for speculation. It should be understood not so much as escapism, but rather as an identification with the potentiality of space and distance within the high-pressure zone of perpetual racial hostility. It is not that black subjectivities are waiting for science-fiction authors to articulate their lifeworlds. Rather, it is the reverse. The conventions of science fiction, marginalized within literature yet central to modern thought, can function as allegories for the systemic experience of post-slavery black subjects in the twentieth century. Science fiction, as such, is recast in the light of Afrodiasporic history. Afrofuturism therefore stages a series of enigmatic returns to the constitutive trauma of slavery in the light of science fiction. Isolating the enigmatic phrase “Apocalypse bin in effect” from the  Public Enemy track “Welcome to the Terradome,” Mark Sinker’s  essay “Loving the Alien” argued that this lyric could be interpreted to read that slavery functioned as an apocalypse experienced as equivalent to alien abduction: “The ships landed long ago: they already laid waste whole societies, abducted and genetically altered swathes of citizenry. . . . Africa and America—and so by extension Europe and Asia—are already in their various ways Alien Nation.” T EMPORAL S WITCHBACK Afrofuturism approaches contemporary digital music as an intertext of recurring literary quotations that may be cited and used as statements capable of imaginatively reordering chronology and fantasizing history. The lyrical statement is treated as a platform for historical speculation. Social reality and science fiction create feedback between each other within the same phrase. The alien encounters and interplanetary abductions people experienced as delusions in the Cold War present had already occurred in the past, for real. All the symptoms specific to a close encounter had already occurred on a giant scale. The collective delusion of the close encounter is transplanted. The effect is not to question the reality of slavery, but to defamiliarize it through a temporal switchback that reroutes its implications through postwar social fiction, cultural fantasy, and modern science fiction, all of which begin to seem like elaborate ways of concealing and admitting trauma

#### The Middle Passage represents an alien abduction as the slave was transported from their homeland and shuttled to the slave plantations which were more reminiscent of the future in their efficiency.

Fisher 13 (Fisher, Mark, author of Capitalist Realism (2009) and Ghosts Of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Future, Programme Leader of the MA in Aural and Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London and a lecturer at the University of East London. "The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology." Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture, n.d. Web. 29 June 2017. <https://dj.dancecult.net/index.php/dancecult/article/viewFile/378/391>.)

Sonic hauntology similarly “blurs contemporaneity” with elements from the past, but, whereas postmodernism glosses over the temporal disjunctures, the hauntological artists foreground them. e Caretaker’s 2005 six CD box set was entitled eoretically Pure Anterograde Amnesia, in reference to the neurological disorder which makes su erers incapable of encoding new experiences in their long-term memory. An abstract soundscape of crackle, zz and noise which is interrupted only occasionally by the traces of familiar old tunes, eoretically Pure Anterograde Amnesia simulates the condition of anterograde amnesia, providing what is in effect a new diagnosis of the pathology of postmodernity. Our problem, for e Caretaker as much as Jameson, is not so much that we are seduced by our memories of long ago, but that we cannot produce new memories. What has all this to do with Afrofuturism? Put bluntly, we might say that postmodernity and hauntology confront “white” culture with the kind of temporal disjunction that has been constitutive of the Afrodiasporic experience since Africans were first abducted by slavers and projected from their own lifeworld into the abstract space-time of Capital. Far from being archaic relics of the past, slaves were thus already in the future. As Žižek put it recently, Haiti’s “slave plantations (mostly sugarcane) were not a remainder of premodern societies, but models of e efficient capitalist production; the discipline to which slaves were submitted served as an example for the discipline to which wage-laborers were later submitted in capitalist metropolises” (Žižek 2009: 124). Forcibly deprived of their history, the black slaves encountered “postmodernity” three hundred years ago: “the idea of slavery itself as an alien abduction . . . means that we’ve all been living in an alien-nation since the 18th century” (Eshun 1998: A[192]). Without

### Afrofuturist Chronopolitics

**Afro-futurist chronopolitics calls attention to the relegation of black subjects to pre-history, and challenges the very framework of linear time.-**

**van Veen 13** (Tobias C., writer, sound-artist, tech arts curator, editor of *Other Planes of There: Afrofuturism Collected*, Postdoctorate in Communication at University of Montreal, *Vessels of Transfer: Allegories of Afrofuturism in Jeff Mills and Janelle Monáe*, Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture 5(2): 7–41)//KM

[Thus Afrofuturism (for Public Enemy) begins with the End Times. Time is the accumulation of the apocalypse and its aftershocks. Lisa Yaszek also draws attention to how Afrofuturism interprets the present as already science fictional in its accumulation of past futurisms and their aftermaths: a post-Armageddon wasteland of exile and “Alien Nation” following from the abduction experience of Atlantic slavery (2006). Thus, like Monáe, Sinker suggests a more complex allegorical operation at work, in which representation exceeds its symbolic correlative to a referent and becomes a Weltanschauung—a worldview of cyclic perception and interpretation, a way of being/becoming in the world that accelerates the reality of the irreal, drawing the cycles of the future into the present in the same moment that it unearths the past’s futurisms, the effect of which is an abandonment of consensual “reality” and its norms: The ships landed long ago: they already laid waste whole societies, abducted and genetically altered swathes of citizenry, imposed without surcease their values. Africa and America—and so by extension Europe and Asia—are already in their various ways Alien Nation. No return to normal is possible: what “normal” is there to return to? (Sinker 1992) Sinker’s text provocatively demonstrates how Afro-futurology, inclusive of its cyclic reinterpretations of the past, alters the coordinates of the present: the contemporaneous “as-is” is revealed by Afrofuturism in its constitutive temporal abnormality. Such temporal revelations are thus transformed by Afrofuturism to un-earthings. Both Sinker and Mark Dery (1994) recognised how the Afrofuturist undertaking is disruptive to white-washed visions of the future, just as it likewise exposes the colonization of the past, what Sun Ra called the “real fictions” and “manufactured memories” that make up the all-but-erased deep history of the Afrodiaspora (Ra 2005). If the Afrodiaspora rarely saw itself represented in mid twentieth century futurology—notable in the absence of Africanist representations in the 1964 New York World’s Fair (Samuel 2007)—today the past of Atlantic slavery is at stake, with recent educational reforms in the Lone Star state attempting to erase its traumatic history through underhanded semiotics, as Atlantic slavery is abstracted into the “Atlantic Triangular Trade”.15 In all these cases, and as Gilroy reminds us, we need to “be alert to the politics of temporalization” (2004: 339). Kodwo Eshun, in his 2003 essay on chronopolitics, outlines the dynamics of one of Afrofuturism’s signature operations, its temporal politics: By creating temporal complications and anachronistic episodes that disturb the linear time of progress, these [Afro]futurisms adjust the temporal logics that condemned black subjects to prehistory. Chronopolitically speaking, these revisionist historicities may be understood as a series of powerful competing futures that infiltrate the present at different rates (Eshun 2003: 297).]

#### Afro-futurist chronopolitics call attention to the relegation of black subjects to pre-history, and challenge the nature of linear time

**van Veen 13** (Tobias C., writer, sound-artist, tech arts curator, editor of *Other Planes of There: Afrofuturism Collected*, Postdoctorate in Communication at University of Montreal, *Vessels of Transfer: Allegories of Afrofuturism in Jeff Mills and Janelle Monáe*, Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture 5(2): 7–41,)//KM

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### Janelle Monae

**Our use of Monae's speculative readings of the world frustrate debate's attempt to render an authrotiative stability onto our argumentation- rather,**

**Redmond 2011** ( Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at USC. Ph.D. in Black Studies from Yale "Marking the Margins: Janelle Monáe's 'Cold War' Landscape":“This Safer Space: Janelle Monae’s´ "Cold War"”)//KM

While the cultural work of Afrofuturists has survived in several forms within mainstream pop music, where its subversive influence is noticeable in places as unlikely as the oeuvre of Michael Jackson (see Steinskog), its usefulness for world-building as a cultural form that facilitates political imagination requires a more inclusive framework. The difference between Janelle Monáe’s work and most phallocentric forms of Afrofuturism is the very distinction Gilbert makes between “formations which only constitute defensive enclaves and those which seek to widen their sphere of activity” (198). Unlike the “Afrocentric, masculinist, and messianic overtones” of George Clinton’s Parliament/ Funkadelic collective (English and Kim 220), Monáe’s collection of on- and off-stage android and human personas is as much post-gender as it is posthuman, playfully negotiating the tightrope of celebrity culture and performativity. Her ongoing series of concept albums together with her “emotion pictures,” stage performances, and media appearances o**ffer a new, more radical perspective on world-building that builds on Afrofuturism as much as it does on 21st-century convergence culture and post-genre fantastic fiction.** While certain elements across these media cohere loosely into narrative patterns and recognizable structures, **these strands are interwoven with many others that frustrate any attempt to separate fictional characters, locations, and futures from a Primary World that insistently infects the**m. In this sense, Monáe’s “WondaLand,” both as a description of a central location within her imaginary world and as the name of her Atlanta-based artist collective, resonates strongly with Lewis Carroll’s Secondary World, in which Alice is never sure what she is going to be from one minute to another, and in which the question “Who in the world am I?” **constantly frustrates our desire for any sense of “authoritative” stability. The story Monáe tells in her work is overwhelmingly elliptical and endlessly ambiguous, evading straightforward storytelling and instead constantly embellishing its imaginary world with new ideas, clues, and puzzles that are spread out across several different texts and across various media.** The lavishly illustrated booklet that accompanies the “Special Edition” of Monáe’s first official release, Metropolis: The Chase Suite (2008), includes a “brief primer” on the artist’s imaginary world and its central character, Monáe’s android alter ego Cindi Mayweather. When read together with the booklet illustrations, liner notes, the elaborate “official short film” for the track “Many Moons,” and the singer’s many published interviews on the project, her imaginary world seems to take shape along familiar, easily recognizable patterns: a post-apocalyptic dystopian future ruled by “evil Wolfmasters,” an oppressed class of androids sold to and exploited by “partying robo-zillionaires,” and a heroic android protagonist whose “programming includes a rock-star proficiency package and a working soul.”5 This Android No. 57821 has already achieved celebrity in this future Metropolis as “the leading voice of a rebellious new form of pop music known as cybersoul” when she is forced to go on the run, chased by chainsaw-wielding bounty hunters, for having committed the crime of falling in love with an actual human being. This is the point where the album begins, the opening track “March of the Wolfmasters” summarizing the most crucial narrative points in its rousing proclamation of Cindi’s newly decreed outlaw status. By appropriating a wide variety of familiar tropes from sf, Monáe’s first transmedia project establishes a basic narrative situation, but one which merely serves as an entrance point into an imaginary world of competing allegorical patterns. Neither the lyrical content of her first EP nor the elaborate music video offers any kind of narrative resolution, as Cindi is last seen in a disembodied “cyberpurgatory” state. Instead, **her central figure of the android as an oppressed worker class of “othered” bodies relates back not only to the Afrodiasporic trauma of slavery and institutionalized racism, but also provides a remarkably flexible and slippery signifier that opens up any number of identification processes along lines of gender, sexuality, class, and religion**: “androids are the ultimate exploitable ‘other,’ a human-like being who does not need to be afforded the rights of humanity” (Brandt). Unlike the general tendency in hip-hop music, pan-Africanism, and many other strands of black culture to insist on “keeping it real” by rejecting whiteness and “adhering to the standards of the ‘black community’” (Rambsy 205), **Monáe’s posthuman android figure points instead towards the socially constructed nature of identity**. The album cover demonstrates the inherent fluidity of this grounding concept most clearly, taking the ubiquitous eroticization of women’s bodies on album covers by shedding not just her clothing, but her very skin, revealing beneath it the uncanny “robotic ultra-whiteness” of her androidal endoskeleton (English and Kim 222).

**Our presentation of the joyful affect of Janelle Monae transcends the logic of status quo debate, which necessitates the creation of productive and political capitalist frameworks of knowledge production- rather reading joy *itself* as a political act that helps us move beyond purely neoliberal mentalities.**

**Redmond 2011** ( Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at USC. Ph.D. in Black Studies from Yale "Marking the Margins: Janelle Monáe's 'Cold War' Landscape":“This Safer Space: Janelle Monae’s´ "Cold War"”)//KM

But while these contradictions obviously diminish some of the more exaggerated claims concerning Monáe’s semi-messianic image, her unique approach to world-building together with the inclusive spirit of her neo-Afrofuturist vocabulary still puts her at the forefront of politically productive popular artists working in fantastic genres. While incorporating Afrofuturism’s critical and subversive response to fantastic fiction’s tendency towards racist and white-centric story-worlds, **her world-building mobilizes not only an imaginative form that can challenge and question these traditions, but can also engage with them joyfully and productively.** Her immaculately produced, highly accessible, and commercially viable music is not only a collection of branded commodities, but also an explicit celebration of “non-productive” human activity. **By placing her contagious call to dance, enjoyment, and creative collaboration in a story-world that frames these things as acts of political resistance, her music becomes an acts of defiance within neoliberalism’s “relentless capture and control of time and experience”** (Crary 40). While popular culture will quite obviously never change the political organization of post-democratic neoliberal capitalism by itself, i**t can still contribute to the vital work of imagining alternative futures without simultaneously repressing the very problems it would dissolve** (Jameson 265). On its website, the WondaLand Arts Society expounds its fundamental belief in “something futuristic and ancient that we call WISM,” a force made up of Love, Sex, Wisdom, Magic, and Wonder. This mantra resonates not only with the various cultural movements from the post- 1968 moment of emerging countercultures and progressive politics, but also with 21st-century radical politics and its insistence on love and hopefulness as vital political forces. While moving beyond the essentialist humanism and technocratic frameworks of traditional sf, Monáe’s project can be read in alignment with Hardt and Negri’s utopian description of “multitudinous energies” alongside their adoption of Spinoza’s description of joy: The path of joy is constantly to open new possibilities, to expand our field of imagination, our abilities to feel and be affected, our capacities for action and passion. In Spinoza’s thought, in fact, **there is a correspondence between our power to affect (our mind’s power to think and our body’s power to act) and our power to be affected**. The greater our mind’s ability to think, the greater its capacity to be affected by the ideas of others; the greater our body’s ability to act, the greater its capacity to be affected by other bodies. And we have greater power to think and to act, Spinoza explains, the more we interact and create common relations with others. Joy, in other words, is really the result of joyful encounters with others, encounters that increase our powers, and the institution of these encounters such that they last and repeat. (Hardt and Negri Commonwealth 379) **While the affective experience of joy is clearly one of the primary goals of Janelle Monáe’s blissfully eclectic neo-Afrofuturist soul music, the inclusiveness of her approach to style, genre, and identity does indeed seem to facilitate and even organize exactly this kind of “joyful encounters with others.**” There may be nothing inherently political in the momentary communal release of infectious dance music, but when experienced in the context of her unstable imaginary world, it can provide an entrance point towards more radical political perspectives. Both her imaginary world-building practices and their real-life community-building counterparts meanwhile give structural shape to “the institution of these encounters such that they last and repeat,” even in their supposedly low-impact pop-cultural forms. In this sense at least, her work does contribute in its own way to the development of forms, narratives, and identity formations **that help us think beyond the confines of capitalist realism and neoliberalism’s purely instrumental ontolog**y.

**The imagination of a world without violence and otherization v black women’s bodies is a utopian possibility that helps us to develop new methodiologies to counter violence**

**Redmond 2011** ( Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at USC. Ph.D. in Black Studies from Yale "Marking the Margins: Janelle Monáe's 'Cold War' Landscape":“This Safer Space: Janelle Monae’s´ "Cold War"”)//KM

Monae´ s questions to us throughout the song are met with definitive statements as she narrates a story of dispossession and alienation**.** Her second verse, which argues, "If you want to be free / below the ground's the only place to be / 'cause in this life / you spend time running from depravity," details a space not of death ("below the ground") but of safety that is shared by a self-selected group who choose freedom over flight ("running from depravity"). It is an underground, a shelter, where political consciousness might best be fostered and utilized safe from the culture wars fought outside. Monae’ s spatial realignments signal a powerful departure from conventional narratives of black suffering; unlike much of the disaster and tourist photography of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which purports to display black reality without allowing the subject to speak, we are forced, through viewing her moving image, to brace ourselves for her next utterance as she looks us in the eye and uses her emotional intensity to displace our intentions for her body. Through this effort she becomes the subject through which the forces under consideration are elucidated. Raw emotion punctuates this possession; at the moment of revealing, "I was made to believe there's something wrong with me / And it hurts my heart," Monae´ s eyes well up with tears. She breaks character as the emotions escalate, missing the lines of her playback, and shaking her head and hands in acknowledgement of the emotions that originally inspired the song's composition and that are now replayed in the act of performance. This rupture dismisses the standard ventriloquism of music video lip synchronization in favor of vulnerability before a knowing audience, signaling her investment in using her own "Cold War" for new ends**:** it is no longer a contained project (war) or a historical object (music video) but it is, through her, an entire field of play and performative engagement that traverses period, ideology, and method. This radical act of self-exposure spurns the longstanding surveillance practices of the United States and offers an alternative to the subterfuge used by oppressed peoples.

**Monáe's chronopolitical deconstruction of black humanity CHALLENGES essentialists readings of hisotry and moves beyond humanist readings of race**

**van Veen 13** (Tobias C., writer, sound-artist, tech arts curator, turntablist, editor of *Other Planes of There: Afrofuturism Collected*, Postdoctoral Researcher in Communication at the Université de Montréal, *Vessels of Transfer: Allegories of Afrofuturism in Jeff Mills and Janelle Monáe*, Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture 5(2): 7–41, )//KM

Monáe’s alter-ego, the alien-android Cindi Mayweather, draws attention to the technologies of othering. The android, which is a robot constructed to appear as if human, is nonetheless a second-class, mechanistic, subaltern subject. The cover of Metropolis: The Chase Suite depicts Mayweather/Monáe as a half-dismembered robot, her white metallic body, replete with protruding wires and a head implant, missing an entire arm, a hand, and a lower torso. The number “57821” is visible on her chest, along with a circuitboard and a series of buttons. That her body is white suggests that her erstwhile blackness is a skin that has been removed, revealing the cold metallic truth of her construction. That this “truth” appears as white suggests a complicated dialectic at play between black/white, which is elsewhere reflected in her costuming, and appreciation for uniforms, from primarily black tuxedos (circa The ArchAndroid (2010)) to white (The Electric Lady (2013)). **Monáe’s play between white/black suggests a more complex operation at work than that of a grounded, allegorical referent to either white or black bodies.** Or humans. It suggests, in the words of Paul Gilroy, an operation that makes “raciology appear anachronistic” (2004: 335). But the meaning of such an anachronism, when the future appears to recall the past, is also more complex than at first appears. But what form might this new other take? The opening to Metropolis: The Chase Suite (2008), begins by narrating the plight of Cindi, who is on the run—from the authorities and their bounty hunters—as she has fallen in love with a human: I’m an a-a-alien from outer space (outer space) I’m a cybergirl without a face, a heart, or a mind (a product of the man, I’m a product of the man) I’m a slave girl without a race (without a race) On the run cause they hate our ways and chase my kind They’ve come to destroy me! — Janelle Monáe, “Violet Stars Happy Hunting!” (2008) Cindi is a product of the (hu)man: an androidal technology. “She”—as in Monáe’s world, androids have genders13—is also “slave girl without a race”. **If she is not categorizable by race, this is because she is not human and thus (one speculates) not subject to racial ideologies of hierarchical biologism**. She is nonetheless “a new form of the other”. What “other” is this, if the android does not represent—or cannot solely be reduced to—race per se? Monáe’s strategic deployment of Cindi Mayweather is successful precisely because it unearths a straightforward allegorical reading of Afrodiasporic conditions of otherness—or, as I would like to suggest, because such otherness is already an allegory. The fictive reality of the android folds back on itself, **reaching an uncomfortable point where the allegory of the android to blackness, and the real experience of becoming an android, have already met in the historical trauma of slavery**. The android “is a product of the man:” it has been engineered to undertake certain servile tasks—**much like how African subjects were enslaved (and thus purchased, traded, and sold) as commodities**. The commodification of subjectivity is emphasized by Ian Baucom in his Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History (2005). Baucom argues that it is because humans are already “represented” as commodities—the modernity of the “Subject $”—that modern commodity capitalism gets its jumpstart. Baucom goes on to demonstrate that “it is to finance capital rather than to the French Revolution [as argued by Hegel] . . . that we should look for the birthplace of the modern subject, the origins of a philosophical discourse on and of the modern” (Baucom 2005: 55). In short, modern subjectivity is not born in the fire of radical democracy and the overthrow of the monarchy by the bourgeoisie: it is born in the advent of slavery as the complete commodification of the subject. It is this complete commodification of the subject, argues Baucom, that is an effect of the general structure of allegory. Baucom quotes Halpern: “The commodity renders allegory obsolete by perfecting and globalizing the latter’s logic of representation. Under mature capitalism, allegory is no longer simply a literary technique but is rather the phenomenology of the entire social-material world” (Halpern 1997: 13; in Baucom 2005: 21). Allegory is thus not the “effect” of commodity capital, or to put it in crude Marxian terms, the aesthetic form of superstructure to capital’s commodity base. As Baucom writes, allegory is “something closer to an epistemological condition of possibility: a mode of representation which enables and clears the grounds for a form of capital which is an intensification and a wider practice of it” (2005: 21). The commodity—the human commodity qua slave, qua android—is “practical allegory—allegory in the sphere of social practice” (Halpern, in Baucom 2005: 21). That the Afrodiasporic slave marks the birth of modernity in the commodity form is a point already made by novelist Toni Morrison, as Kodwo Eshun remarks: In an interview with critic Paul Gilroy in his 1991 anthology Small Acts, novelist Toni Morrison argued that the African subjects that experienced capture, theft, abduction, mutilation, and slavery were the first moderns. They underwent real conditions of existential homelessness, alienation, dislocation, and dehumanization that philosophers like Nietzsche would later define as quintessentially modern. **Instead of civilizing African subjects, the forced dislocation and commodification that constituted the Middle Passage meant that modernity was rendered forever suspect** (Eshun 2003: 288). T**he “new form of the other”, in the form of the android, the cyborg, the alien, or the posthuman in general, is thus the cyclic return of an old form that marks the birthplace of modernity: the enslaved-commodified human**. That the new form of the other resurrects a past is a central motif of Afrofuturism, where its futurological operations tend to themeatize ancient Africanist MythSciences. On the cover of The ArchAndroid (2010), Janelle Monáe appears in what appears to be a gold, Pharoahnic headdress, though uncannily so as an android, the ancient Egyptian wear transformed into a technological skyline of Metropolis itself. In doing so, Monáe plays on the Afrofuturist trope of the ancient black alien or android Pharoah, as initiated by Sun Ra’s playful (but altogether serious) deconstruction of Afrocentric historical revisioning, the latter exemplified in texts such as James’ Stolen Legacy (2001 [1954]), and what Gilroy outlines as “popular ‘afrocentric’ assertions that the great discoveries of Western science and technology were known to ancient Africa, stolen from their ancient sources, and then assigned by white supremacist historians to the Greeks” (2004: 339). While there is some effective reality to be gleaned from Afrocentrism’s historically revisionist claims—a debate that rages around the more careful work of Martin Bernal’s Black Athena (2002)—I **would suggest that when Afrocentric historical revisioning attempts to establish monolithic historical claims that support an essentialist raciology, *rather than challenge it*, the black political culture that results tends toward a confined, static elaboration of both race and history that forecloses the imaginative unfolding of the future, and thus, is at odds with Afrofuturism**. The coordinates of the present at stake here, as Paul Gilroy outlines, is the “Romantic and sentimental distaste for the racial capitalism that, at an earlier point, had made blacks themselves into commodities, [and that] is a profound factor that influences the moral conditions in which black political cultures take shape” (2004: 333). At stake in Afrofuturist temporal operations—what we will explicate shortly as its chronopolitics (Eshun 2003)—is a symbolic combat that challenges what Gilroy outlines as “militant vindicative [black] nationalism”, and its historical revisionism that seeks to establish an essential blackness as original or superior (2004: 338–9). In this respect, the Afrofuturist appropriation of Kemetian motifs, for example in Earth, Wind, and Fire’s pyramidal and Pharoahnic fantasies, or Killah Priest’s pharoahnic headdress on The Psychic World of Walter Reed (2013), expands rather than contracts such mythos: it elevates it to a MythScience, in which the future reveals a past transformed, and in which blackness, and black identity, is likewise unshackled from its restraints—**including the programmatic referral to “blackness” as the central marker of difference.** By exploring alternate forms of becoming that unbind the confines of race, Afrofuturism implicitly affirms a “widely shared sense of race consciousness as earthbound and anachronistic” just as it explicitly pursues “another mode of recognition in the most alien identity” that carries it “beyond the human altogether

#### Our imagination creates an alternative reality different than the norm and performance of the black body that stands out to be seen and known, without consent

**Redmond 2011** ( Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at USC. Ph.D. in Black Studies from Yale "Marking the Margins: Janelle Monáe's 'Cold War' Landscape":“This Safer Space: Janelle Monae’s´ "Cold War"”)//KM

Monae´s performative unveiling sensitizes us to questions of truth as the layers of history, identity, and resistance collapse on one another. Yet her engagement with and demand for the rights of access and voice are consistent throughout. Her performance makes the space to critique how dissemblance may have "contributed to the development of an atmosphere inimical to realizing equal opportunity or a place of respect"; yet the method of exposure—performance—signals another intervention (Hine 915). The music video, which has offered a platform for display and critique since the 1970s, is used by Monae´ in "Cold War" as a confessional site, a shelter ae where the struggles of the ordinary black women described by Hine, and embodied by Monae´ might be discussed and responded to. Too often safe spaces are limited in their availability for the disenfranchised, yet Mon´ae is able, through various creative and organizing techniques, to construct a "Cold War" free speech zone—a task and location little known during the historical moment that the song references. Her "Cold War" imagination therefore creates an alternative reality that is recognizably different from those of her contemporaries within the shared "superpublic" described by Richard Iton, in which black bodies and performances are conspicuous in the visual cultures grown from hip hop and the Internet. Mon´ae s willingness to challenge history situates her as a spectral figure representing the unfinished work of the past, even as she leads a cohort in the present and envisions a future beyond her own critique.

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#### Although we recognize pop culture criticisms of capitalism can’t dissolve capitalism on it’s own, Monae’s music is a defiance of capitalism’s attempt to control by framing her calls for enjoyment as resistance.

Hassler-Forest 14 (Hassler-Forest, D. (2014), assistant professor of film and literature at the University of Amsterdam, publishes widely on comics, American cinema, popular literature, and critical theory. The Politics of World-Building: Heteroglossia in Janelle Monáe's Afrofuturist WondaLand. Para-doxa, 26, 284-303. <<http://dare.uva.nl/search?identifier=defcf5f6-c6df-4df3-950c-bc51ebd5485c>>.)

But while these contradictions obviously diminish some of the more exaggerated claims concerning Monáe’s semi-messianic image, her unique approach to world-building together with the inclusive spirit of her neo-Afrofuturist vocabulary still puts her at the forefront of politically productive popular artists working in fantastic genres. While incorporating Afrofuturism’s critical and subversive response to fantastic fiction’s tendency towards racist and white-centric story-worlds, her world-building mobilizes not only an imaginative form that can challenge and question these traditions, but can also engage with them joyfully and productively. Her immaculately produced, highly accessible, and commercially viable music is not only a collection of branded commodities, but also an explicit celebration of “non-productive” human activity. By placing her contagious call to dance, enjoyment, and creative collaboration in a story-world that frames these things as acts of political resistance, her music becomes an acts of defiance within neoliberalism’s “relentless capture and control of time and experience” (Crary 40). While popular culture will quite obviously never change the political organization of post-democratic neoliberal capitalism by itself, it can still contribute to the vital work of imagining alternative futures without simultaneously repressing the very problems it would dissolve (Jameson 265).

## Framework Answers

### Science Fiction K2 PolicyMaking

#### Science Fiction as a an educational method is necessarily preferable to their model of debate- our transgression of argumentative boundaries is net better for education

**Reynolds 77** – Associate Professor of Education in the Profes- sional Laboratory Experiences Department of the University of Georgia. (John C., “Science Fiction in the 7-12 Curriculum” *The Clearing House,* Vol. 51, No. 3, Nov., 1977, JSTOR)

Some techniques utilized by these teachers in- cluded building models of cities of the future, see- ing earth through alien eyes, and inventing a planet or spaceship for human use. It appears that there are as many basic purposes for utilizing sci- ence fiction in the classroom as there are teachers with innovative ideas. Many of the teachers sur- veyed mentioned the application of science fiction to the study of the social foundations of educa- tion, history, economics, and the social sciences. They found that the science fiction short story or novel is particularly adaptable to pedagogical ob- jectives. An analysis of the science fiction short story or novel reveals usually that the theme is developed in the context of an action-filled back- ground, meaningful situations, and characters which the classroom teacher can utilize in discus- sions and written assignments. What are

#### Science Fiction as a METHOD is key to learning about insitutions and the wolrd- their miodel of debate leads to calcifies forms of thought

**Woodcock 1979** – (John, professor at Connecticut State University , “ Teaching Science Fiction: Unique Challenges (Proceedings of the MLA Special Session, New York, December 1978)//KM

I do have a theoretical overlay which explains, to me at least, why SF can indeed be such a successful tool for teaching both literature to science majors and science to literature majors. This theoretical overlay is based on the work of Jean Piaget. To brutally reduce the idea I have borrowed from him, it is that, whatever you are trying to teach, people will learn it much faster and better if they can manipulate it – preferably physically, but cerebral manipulation works, too. If we want students to appreciate something about a concept in physics or in the design fiction, we need to let them design some fiction, we need to let them manipulate some physics. The best thing about SF as an educational tool is that it can be manipulated. It invites you to manipulate it, to manipulate science, to manipulate literature. If you listen to science students telling each other about literature, they're telling each other plots. But if those plots are SF plots, the students begin almost immediately to manipulate them. It goes something like: "I read a neat story somewhere about people who changed their sex every month. I wonder what it would be like if they only changed it once a year. Or if someone else could change your sex without your consent once a year. " You see, you have manipulation of an idea. That's something we don't permit students to do enough of in introductory science courses or, as far as I can tell, in introductory literature courses, either. But SF almost forces you to do this, to look back at the story and ask yourself "what if. . . " and to reinvent the story for yourself - all this being the manipulation which Piaget says encourages people to learn something about unfamiliar topics. And that's why I'm so hopeful that SF may help us in closing the two-cultures gap.

## AT: Edelman/Queer Theory

#### Theorizing the future is to reproduce a present where value of life is inaccessible to black children

**Gumbs 10 (**Alexis Pauline, poet, independent scholar, and activist. She is coeditor of Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines and the Founder and Director of Eternal Summer of the Black Feminist Mind, an educational program based in Durham, North Carolina, “We Can Learn to Mother Ourselves: The Queer Survival of Black Feminism 1968-1996”, Pages 299-302)

**The effective poetic response must *risk the present****.* (kill/ *yourself instead of your children)* This is important because **unlike the dominant hetero/homonormative politics of the future through the figure of “the child” that Lee Edelman decries in his polemic No Future, Lorde is advancing a queer politics that refuses the reproduction of the present, while at the same time affirming the value of life, so pervasively denied to Black youth. We** continue to **live in a time where to imagine the survival of Black children is a utopian dream.** As Sharon Holland argues through Spillers, Black women’s bodies have become the symbolic space between life and death.58 And Thomas Shea is heard on tape telling Clifford Glover to return to the dead space of Black maternity, “die you little motherfucker.” Police brutality enforces the narrative that a “culture of poverty” discourse sells. The police embody and enact the policy. Black children are doomed because of their proximity to death, death being the other name for the Black mother. In *Passed On: African-American Mourning Stories,* Karla Holloway demonstrates the ways in which the likelihood of “untimely” death for Black people in the United States shapes a cultural relationship to death.59 I am extending this argument to examine the queer, untimely ways that Black feminist literary production relates to both death and life in response to the death waged on Black children in the 1970’s and 1980’s. The untimely, early deaths of Audre Lorde and June Jordan and the early deaths of so many Black children make an intergenerational relationship particularly difficult to imagine. The desire for an intergenerational relationship is haunted by the violence in the word “motherfucker” the threat that seeks to transform the poetic reach, **the living attempt to create a future in which love could survive, into pathology at every step.** The state affirms the statement. *Die you little motherficker.***This difficult miracle of intergenerational reach is made necessary by the continuing deadly effects of the narrative of inherited worthlessness that threatens racialized young people today. Recounting the numerous recent murders of queer young people of color Jose Munoz contradicts Edelman’s dystopic presentism with an unapologetic utopianism.** Munoz builds on Ernst Bloch’s temporalities of hope to “**call on a utopian political imagination that will enable us to glimpse another time and place: a “not-yet” where queer youths of color actually get to grow up.**”60 In collaboration with the Blochian “not-yet-here” is the resource of the “no longer conscious,” those sections of the past that have not become historical. In the next section of this chapter I explore the uncelebrated labor of Audre Lorde and June Jordan as English teachers. I draw on this “no longer conscious” past in order to intervene in a literary historical mode that can only see poetic products, and to argue against the erasure of lived poetic practice in our criticism and in our classrooms. **But more importantly I examine the labor of teaching to demonstrate the extent to which** June Jordan and **Audre Lorde deployed intergenerational reaching to create untimely presents in which they could collaborate with young people towards non-reproductive future possibilities.**

## Answers to neg arguments

#### The permutation solves- Afrofuturism as a METHOD -

**Womack 2012** (L. Ytasha, Afrofuturism: An Aesthetic and Exploration of Identity)//KM

The world of science fiction is known for its absence of cultural diversity. While history texts are still recovering from the conspicuous absence of the contributions of non-European cultures across the world and in America, there’s an equal need to claim the future as well. Hijacking the imagination and perpetuating limiting views on culture and humanity in the imaginative future just won’t do. Enter Afrofuturism. Afrofuturism is a term that emerged in the mid 90s, coined by cultural critic Mark Dery who affixed the term to the growing artistic movement and critiques that followed narratives of people of African descent in a sci-fi, futuristic treaties. Afrofuturists seek to inspire and forge a stronger self-identity and respect for humanity by encouraging enthusiasts to reexamine their environments and reimagine the future in a cross cultural context. For example, one digital Afrofuturist painting of a young African American girl in the future depicted her in metallic space boots and pants; her hair was styled in an Afro and she wore an ankh, an ancient Kemetic symbol on her green-friendly T-shirt. The image bound the future with the past, celebrated culture and universality, and positioned the teen smack dab in the latter part of the 21st century. For many, simply placing a young African American girl in a futuristic context challenges the absence of such images and rearticulates the relevance of such cultures and world views in art depicting the future. The aesthetic includes the music, visual art, literature, film, critical essays and other mediums dedicated to futuristic explorations primarily through the arts. Works range in theme and story lines but they are typically characterized by compelling insights, both cosmetic and analytical into black identity in the Americas, Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa and beyond. From soul singer Erykah Badu’s “Next Lifetime” video which highlights West African traditions in a futuristic society to Nnedi Okorofor’s book “Who Fears Death” chronicling a mystical young girl in post-apocalyptic Africa, the depictions are culturally rich takes on the future through fiction that explore identity, too. Artists like jazz composer Sun Ra, 70s funk pioneer George Clinton, science fiction writer Octavia Butler, or DJ/multimedia artist DJ Spooky are among the more popular purveyors of the genre (although Sun Ra, Clinton and Butler did work long before the term came into vogue). There are a bevy of new wave artists, musicians and filmmakers creating new works as well as a cadre of established professors now chronicling and teaching it. In fact, Afrofuturism is now taught in several universities as an artistic aesthetic, a tool for critical cultural analysis, a platform for rethinking the impact of modernization on cultural creations as well as an exploration of identity. Pioneers created works largely to challenge color-based social structures, caste systems and the realities of second-class citizenship, which plagued the experience of black people, particularly in America and across the world for much of the modern era. In many cases, particularly in music, they re-imagined technologies to create new artistic works or reinvented processes that created new sounds. The creations of avant-garde jazz, funk, dub, house, hip-hop and other genres are as innovative for their musicality as for their experimentations with electronic sounds and machinery. The use of a turntable needle in hip-hop to create music or the multi-layering of prerecorded noises in dub are as Afrofuturist as Motown Record’s Berry Gordy looking to Detroit’s car assembly lines as a basis for creating a new system in artist development. Each explores the impact of modernization and environment on the creation of artistic movements, identity and perspectives by people of color.An extensive body of critical analysis using Afrofuturism as the prism currently exists. DJ Spooky, for one, is most known for reediting the film Birth of a Nation, a film which was technically advanced at the time but also reinforced horrific stereotypes of blacks during the Reconstruction period in the US and established ethnic stereotypes in films for years to come. DJ Spooky linked the images on the screen to his turntable and mixed and scratched along with the revisioning of the film. Many Afrofuturist works are characterized by a synchronicity between the past and the future. While many science fiction works heavily disavow the past, Afrofuturism has a great deal of reverence for ancestors and ancient societies as well as an active celebration of movements in history that countered the active dehumanization of people of color through power systems. This reverence is rearticulated in a futuristic context. References to Egyptian deities and other African Traditional Religions (Yoruba, etc), African Derived Religions (Santeria, Candomble, Hoodoo) and Native American folklore and spirituality are common as are references to Asian fighting arts and the civil rights movement in the US. Spirituality and mysticism are frequent threads. Humanity, freedom and self-determination are common themes.While all works dubbed Afrofuturist aren’t created by people of African descent or don’t deal with black identity on the surface (the pop culture favorite “The Matrix” or the original “Night of the Living Dead” film for example) they share themes, symbolism or imagery that evokes cultural markers.In essence, many Afrofuturists aim to challenge society’s limits to the imagination and this limitation includes a very narrow reflection on race, culture and ethnicity in fictional and artistic works on the future. Afrofuturism celebrates new takes on modernization and the histories that have facilitated social change. Although some might argue that the term itself is as freeing as it is constricting, the growing body of work categorized in this genre is fascinating and enriching.

### UTIL/Disads

**Terminal Impacts are a science fiction from civil society. They are using the same technologies of control to oppress black bodies**

**Eshun 2003**

(Kodwo; University of London; “Further Considerations on Afrofuturism,” CR: The New Centennial Review 3:2; Summer 2003, pp.287-302)//KM

Because the practice of countermemory defined itself as an ethical commitment to history, the dead, and the forgotten, the manufacture of conceptual tools that could analyze and assemble counterfutures was understood as an unethical dereliction of duty. Futurological analysis was looked upon with suspicion, wariness, and hostility. Such attitudes dominated the academy throughout the 1980s. For African artists, there were good reasons for disenchantment with futurism. When Nkrumah was deposed in Ghana in 1966, it signalled the collapse of the first attempt to build the USAF. The combination of colonial revenge and popular discontent created sustained hostility towards the planned utopias of African socialism. For the rest of the century, African intellectuals adopted variations of the position that Homi Bhabha (1992) termed “melancholia in revolt.” This fatigue with futurity carried through to Black Atlantic cultural activists, who, little by little, ceased to participate in the process of building futures. Imagine the archaeologists as they use their emulators to scroll through the fragile files. In their time, it is a commonplace that the future is a chronopolitical terrain, a terrain as **hostile and** as **treacherous** as the past. As the archaeologists patiently sift the twenty-first-century archives, they are amazed by the impact this realization had on these forgotten beings. They are touched by the seriousness of those founding mothers and fathers of Afrofuturism, by the responsibility they showed towards the not-yet, towards becoming. Control Through Prediction. Fast forward to the early twenty-first century. A cultural moment when digitopian futures are routinely invoked to hide the present in all its unhappiness. In this context, inquiry into production of futures becomes fundamental, rather than trivial. The field of Afrofuturism does not seek to deny the tradition of countermemory. Rather, it aims to extend that tradition by reorienting the intercultural vectors of Black Atlantic temporality towards the proleptic as much as the retrospective. It is clear that power **now** operates predictively as much as retrospectively. **Capital continues to function** through the dissimulation of the imperial archive, as it has done throughout the last century. Today, however, **power also functions** through the **envisioning,** management**, and delivery** of reliable futures. In the colonial era of the early to middle twentieth century, avantgardists from Walter Benjamin to Frantz Fanon revolted in the name of the **future** against a power structure that **relied on control and representation** of the historical archive. Today, the situation is reversed. The **powerful employ futurists and draw power from the futures they endorse**, thereby condemning the disempowered to live in the past. The present moment is stretching, slipping for some into yesterday, reaching for others into tomorrow. SF Capital. Power now deploys a mode the critic Mark Fisher (2000) calls SF (science fiction**)** capital. SF capital is the **synergy**, the positive feedback **between future-oriented media and capital**. The alliance between cybernetic futurism and “New Economy” theories argues that information is a direct generator of economic value. Information about the **future** therefore circulates as an increasingly important commodity. It exists in mathematical formalizations such as computer simulations, **economic projections**, **weather reports, futures trading,** think-tank reports, consultancy papers—and through informal descriptions such as sciencefiction cinema, science-fiction novels, sonic fictions, religious prophecy, and venture capital. Bridging the two are formal-informal hybrids, **such as the global scenarios** of the professional market futurist. Looking back at the media generated by the computer boom of the 1990s, it is clear that the effect of the futures industry—defined here as the intersecting industries of technoscience, fictional media, technological projection, and market prediction—has been to fuel the desire for a technology boom. Given this context, it would be naïve to understand science fiction, located within the expanded field of the futures industry, as merely prediction into the far future, or as a utopian project for imagining alternative social realities. Science fiction might better be understood, in Samuel R. Delany’s statement, as offering **“**a significant distortion of the present” (Last Angel of History 1995). To be more precise, science fiction is neither forward-looking nor utopian. Rather, in William Gibson’s phrase, science fiction is a means through which to preprogram the present (cited in Eshun 1998). Looking back at the genre, it becomes apparent that science fiction was never concerned with the future, but rather with engineering feedback between its preferred future and its becoming present. Hollywood’s 1990s love for sci-tech fictions, from The Truman Show to The Matrix, from Men in Black to Minority Report, can therefore be seen as product-placed visions of the reality-producing power of computer networks, which in turn contribute to an explosion in the technologies they hymn. As New Economy ideas take hold, virtual futures generate capital. A subtle oscillation between prediction and control is being engineered in which successful or powerful descriptions of the future have an increasing ability to draw us towards them, to command us to make them flesh. The Futures of Industry Science fiction is now a research and development department within a futures industry that dreams of the prediction and control of tomorrow. **Corporate** business seeks to manage the unknown through decisions based on scenarios, while civil society responds to future shock through habits formatted by science fiction. Science fiction **operates through** the power of **falsification**, the drive to **rewrite reality**, **and** the will to **deny plausibility**, **while** the **scenario operates through** the **control and prediction of plausible alternative tomorrows**. Both the science-fiction movie and the scenario are examples of cybernetic futurism that talks of things that haven’t happened yet in the past tense. In this case, futurism has little to do with the Italian and Russian avant-gardes; rather, these approaches seek to model variation over time by oscillating between anticipation and determinism. Imagine the All-African Archaeological Program sweeping the site with their chronometers. Again and again, they sift the ashes. Imagine the readouts on their portables, indicators pointing to the dangerously high levels of hostile projections. This area shows extreme density of dystopic forecasting, levels that, if accurate, would have rendered the archaeologists’ own existence impossible. The AAAP knows better: such statistical delirium reveals the fervid wish dreams of the host market. Market Dystopia. If **global** scenarios are **descriptions that are primarily** concerned with making futures safe for the market, then Afrofuturism’s first priority is to recognize that Africa increasingly exists as the object of futurist projection. African social reality is overdetermined by intimidating global scenarios, doomsday economic **projections**, weather **predictions,** medical **reports on AIDS, and life-expectancy** forecasts, all of which predict decades of immiserization. These powerful descriptions of the future demoralize us; they command us to bury our heads in our hands, to groan with sadness. Commissioned by multinationals and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), these developmental futurisms function as the other side of the corporate utopias that make the future safe for industry. Here, we are seduced not by smiling faces staring brightly into a screen; rather, we are menaced by predatory futures that insist the next 50 years will be hostile. Within an economy that runs on SF capital and market futurism, Africa is always the zone of the absolute dystopia. There is always a reliable trade in market projections for Africa’s socioeconomic crises. Market dystopias aim to warn against predatory futures, but always do so in a discourse that aspires to unchallengeable certainty.

### Politics good

#### Afrofuturism is a material movement that uses aesthetics to challenge white universalist racism.

Rollefson 08 (Rollefson, J. Griffith, lecturer at University of College Cork, wrote *Flip the Script: European Hip Hop and the Politics of Postcoloniality*. “The ‘Robot Voodoo Power’ Thesis: Afrofuturism and Anti-Anti-Essentialism from Sun Ra to Kool Keith.” Black Music Research Journal, vol. 28, no. 1, 2008, pp. 83–109. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25433795.)

Does the fact that3opted out of humanity in the mid-1950s just as the civil rights movement was gaining steam in the United States cast him as a race traitor? Do Parliament's pverindulgent "Spacepimps" undermine the project of racial equality? Can Keith's "Black Elvis" be considered anything more than a postmodern joke? In short, are Myth-Science, P-Funk, and Robot Voodoo Power signs of resignation and hopeless fantasy or "real" answers that have meaning in the material world a world that cannot seem to escape the perpetuation of racism? I would like to assert that they do have real political efficacy because they problematize the rigid binary of blackness/whiteness and the matrix of binaries that are inscribed upon this central set. Remarkably, Afrofutur ism performs this destabilization from a staunchly oppositional position that is decidedly black because it is rooted in the historical reality of white universalist racism and continuously works against that history. While Du Bois advises African Americans to maintain their race identity until the United States meets them on their terms, the Afrofuturists diversify black ness while recuperating Du Bois's steadfastness. As Sun Ra explained in A Joyful Noise: "I have to judge a tree by the fruit. I don't like what I see and I don't want to be a part of it." The materialist foundations of this seemingly idealist project are nowhere more evident. I would argue that the broadly defined Afrofuturist project takes its lead from this position. Although Afrofuturism draws on tropes of exodus and seems to promote an escape from reality, it instead does very real social and cultural work. Afrofuturism is itself a mode of meaning-making and historical production that navigates, counters, and ultimately transcends the history of African-American oppression while retaining a critical blackness. While Afrofuturist dialectics recognize myths and collapse ossified binaries into dynamic unities, the episteme is grounded in its material opposition to white racist universalism. By stepping outside of the white liberal tradition and rewriting blackness in all its complexity, Afrofuturism offers a novel form of revolution that is rooted in a long history of black opposition. Indeed, the Afrofuturist project speaks to a very broad group of people and a broad range of material issues. The AfroFuturism listserv itself has over three hundred members and the music, literature, art, drama, and sports that are discussed in that forum reach countless millions. The recent success of Gnarls Barkley the critically acclaimed collaboration of Cee Lo and Danger Mouse?is indicative of Afrofuturism's continued popular appeal. On the track "Transformer," Cee-Lo speaks from the perspective of a "microchip off the old block," an identity-shifting robot who echoes De La Soul's "I Am I Be," rapping: "I'm just being myself / Plus I gotta be me too / Silly of me to think that / I couldn't bring myself to be you" (2006). Reporting on an August 2006 concert in New York's Central Park, Billboard, corn's Michael Ayers wrote of the group: "What seemingly was a one-off side project has turned into mega-success, and will probably carry them right into Grammy nods galore. But on this night, the Gnarls camp was in good spirits and celebrating a newly confirmed platinum award for 1 mil lion U.S. shipments of its debut, 'St. Elsewhere.' Part of the Gnarls Barkley shtick is their playful identity, where they never really assume themselves, but instead riff on past popular culture entities" (2006). Notably, this "shtick" is in fact part of a larger movement that employs the past to envision new futures. Yet whether critics or fans conceive of Afrofuturist culture as such seems beside the point. By engaging people in an active appreciation of such fantastic visions, Afrofuturism primes the mind and body to both imagine and live in a world apart from that depicted in the rationalized histories of Western civilization. Perhaps just as impor tantly, the visibility of Afrofuturism in the African American artistic canon should offer some sense of the power of this project. Thoughtful authors such as Ralph Ellison, Amiri Baraka, and Ishmael Reed, brilliant artists such as Basquiat, Fatimah Tuggar, and the increased scholarly attention to street art, in addition to the countless musicians that are most visible in the field all attest to Afrofuturism's political and material power. It is no mistake that the Afrofuturist critique makes its case most poignantly in the realm of the arts, for aesthetic creation bypasses the strictures of rhetorical logic in favor of an embodied position. For the literary and cultural theorist Fred Moten the experience of double consciousness is intimately tied to the bifurcations and ruptures of Enlightenment thought and its central mind/body binary. As he argues in his In the Break: The Aes thetics of the Black Radical Tradition (2003), a place where counter-meanings can be constructed and (white) rationality can be critiqued. Moten writes: "This disruption of the Enlightenment linguistic project is of fundamental importance since it allows a rearrange ment of the relationship between notions of human freedom and notions of human essence" (2003, 7).

#### Afrofuturism is key to inspiring movements – like #BlackLivesMatter and linking up the energy of activism with new forms of technology.

Porter 17 (Porter, Lavelle, writer and scholar of African-American literature, Assistant Professor of English at the New York City College of Technology, CUNY. "Dry Bones Breathe." The New Inquiry. The New Inquiry, 18 Apr. 2017. Web. 01 July 2017. <https://thenewinquiry.com/dry-bones-breathe/>.)

This (Afro)futuristic vision of Dumas’s writing has something to offer to the bibliography of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. It was through Sun Ra that I first encountered the name Henry Dumas, on the syllabus for Ra’s “Black Man in the Cosmos,” a course he taught as an artist-in-residence in 1971 at UC Berkeley. Among the books of literature, history and esoteric philosophy on that syllabus were Dumas’s Ark of Bones (a story collection) and Poetry for My People, the only two books of his writing available at the time. Dumas himself met Sun Ra sometime around 1965. He attended the Arkestra’s shows at Slug’s Saloon in the East Village, and eventually befriended the cosmic bandleader. They collaborated on a 1966 recorded interview at Slug’s called watch it here “The Ark and the Ankh.” Dumas was already working in the same Afro-Baptist tradition that Ra came from, had already tapped into the black nationalism of the 1960s, and was already exploring spiritual alternatives to his Christian upbringing. In the biography Jeffrey Leak analyzes an unpublished essay that Dumas wrote while stationed in Saudi Arabia in 1954 where he observed Muslim religious practices and revised some of his own prejudices informed by derogatory depictions of Arabs in American pop culture. Eventually Sun Ra’s philosophy led him even further along the path toward cosmic consciousness. Though his years with Sun Ra were brief, Dumas’s most mature work in short stories and poems show a distinct engagement with an Afrofuturistic thought, as he took up an interest in the African languages and spiritual practices and melded them with Sun Ra’s unique brand of black futurism. Ytasha L. Womack, in the anthology Afrofuturism, describes this movement as one which “combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity and magic realism with non-Western beliefs.” Afrofuturism seems to be in its maturity as an artistic movement with museum shows, film festivals, a plethora of blogs and other digital media, university sponsored panels, and a steady stream of books and articles on the subject. The Sun Ra Arkestra itself, now led by the 91 year old saxophonist Marshall Allen, keeps plugging along with an impressive tour schedule that has the band regularly circling the globe. Parliament Funkadelic, Samuel R. Delany, Octavia Butler, Nalo Hopkinson, Tananarive Due, DJ Spooky, and many others have been clustered together in this critical field. But there are skeptics. In his own time, Sun Ra’s burlesque was dismissed by some black folks as frivolous, escapist nonsense. I’ve also heard similar grumblings about Afrofuturism among black intellectuals. I recall a conversation with a black writer at the 2014 Harlem Book Fair who insisted that the popularity of Afrofuturism is a sign that the black left is “out of ideas,” that young black artists retreat into this spiritual mumbo-jumbo because they have no answers for the stifling structural inequalities that entrap black people in poverty and incarceration. Her challenge has been buzzing in my ear ever since. Certainly a movement like this, with its visions of outer space and alternate realities, hazards becoming a newer, hipper version of the same pie-in-the-sky theology of the black church, with Heaven being replaced by The Mothership. But I don’t think Henry Dumas, Sun Ra, Parliament Funkadelic or Octavia Butler were ever out of ideas, nor are the artists being inspired by them today. In fact, it seems the #BlackLivesMatter movement is directly drawing on Afrofuturism’s theories of black mythmaking, on the importance of creating alternatives to the iconography, culture and thought of white supremacy. Accusations of escapism have been lobbied against nearly all forms of artistic expression when faced with the material realities of injustice and oppression. (“Poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” goes the mangled aphorism attributed to Theodor Adorno.) In the refrain of #BlackLivesMatter, I hear what Sun Ra referred to as The Alter-Destiny, a new way of thinking and being that diverges from the destructiveness of life as it exists on the planet now. In the film Space is the Place he asks the people who come to his OuterSpaceways Incorporated, “are you ready to alter your destiny?” And in one of my favorite tunes he says that the way to alter your destiny is to “find fate when fate is in a pleasant mood.” Though this movement is driven by the brutal murders of black people at the hands of the police, by mass incarceration and by ongoing structural inequality, Fate seems to be in a pleasant mood for a movement that is syncing up the energy of youth activism with new communications technologies. At its best this movement is seeking alternatives to the relentless incarceration of the prison industrial complex, and the over-criminalization of black and brown people. This is a movement that is challenging some of the orthodoxies of the black old guard as well, revising their sexism and homophobia, taking the concerns of black feminist and queer activism seriously, and rejecting black pathology discourses that hinge on respectability for inclusion.

### Afrofuturism is Humanist

#### Afrofuturism upsets the Western distinction between real and imaginary by presenting impossibilities as truths and questioning the fiction of biological inferiority

**van Veen 13** (Tobias C., writer, sound-artist, tech arts curator, turntablist, editor of *Other Planes of There: Afrofuturism Collected*, Postdoctoral Researcher in Communication at the Université de Montréal, *Vessels of Transfer: Allegories of Afrofuturism in Jeff Mills and Janelle Monáe*, Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture 5(2): 7–41, )//KM

[Afrofuturism confronts the participant with these mythical figures that nonetheless “walk the Earth”. Such fantastical becomings—what Sun Ra called the “Living Myth” of his own impossibility—confront the scholar with a choice, or rather, upset the divide in Western thought between myth and science, fact and fiction, the real and the imaginary. In the close to his interview “Motion Capture” in More Brilliant Than The Sun (1999), Kodwo Eshun argues that either one begins by accepting the interesting effects of the impossibility, for example, that Sun Ra was born on Saturn, and is the return (from the future) of an ancient alien deity who once ruled Kemet—the Afrocentrist name for the revisionist history/myth of black Pharoahnic Egypt—or one dismisses Ra’s extravagance as merely fiction, his thought as merely poetic, his jazz as merely music, his entire strategy here on Earth as merely that of an intriguing but irreverent artist, who nonetheless isn’t as “serious” or “politically effective” compared to his fellow travellers of the era, such as Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam, or the Black Panthers. To bow to the latter dismissal, which would eschew all that strays from the gravity of the supposedly serious path of outright political action, however, is to leave the greatest fiction of all—consensual reality and its imperial history—unquestioned. It is also to ignore the equally fantastical elements of the Black Panthers (who housed Sun Ra when he taught at Berkeley in 1971; see Kreiss 2008), and the Yacub/Mother Plane mythotheology of the Nation of Islam.10 To sidestep the tricky dynamics by which myth informs reality, in which fiction builds fact, is to not only enact a puritanical division that in-itself is fictive, but it is to close the door upon creative strategies of manifesting other worlds and AlterDestinies—which is to say, transformed Afrofutures, futures otherwise for us all—just as it is to leave unquestioned the reality that, apparently, we are all human—**just some more human than others**. It is also to decisively ignore the fact that for hundreds of years, Africanist peoples were subjected to the fiction of biological inferiority and thus, the **fact of slavery**. This constitutively contaminated relation between fact/fiction is known in the work of Sun Ra as MythScience. Thus Afrofuturism challenges the invisible paradigm of unquestioned reality—the “reality” that in the past has proclaimed the inferiority of blackness and the de jure privilege of white supremacy, that has denied certain peoples the status of “human” and cast them as alien slaves, the invisibly “white” reality where blackness is alienated—through the construction of MythSciences and the intervention of chronopolitics (Eshun 2003). In what follows I will seek to provide provisional encounters with these concepts, thereby aiding in the development of a shared lexicon for Afrofuturist studies that, at the same time, complicates what are becoming a set of assumptions concerning the role of allegory in Afrofuturism. I seek to articulate these concepts—hinge them to practices, or better, demonstrate how such (technological) practices demonstrate the operational force of a concept (in Eshun’s language, conceptechnics)—by way of an immersion in two contemporary Afrofuturists, both of whom engage with electronic music and are deeply invested in dance cultures: the techno releases and DJ performances of Jeff Mills; and the android Afrofunk of Janelle Monáe. But first I begin with allegory.]

#### Afrofuturism provides subjectivity to the Afrodiasporic identity outside of a humanist future

**van Veen 13** (Tobias C., writer, sound-artist, tech arts curator, turntablist, editor of *Other Planes of There: Afrofuturism Collected*, Postdoctoral Researcher in Communication at the Université de Montréal, *Vessels of Transfer: Allegories of Afrofuturism in Jeff Mills and Janelle Monáe*, Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture 5(2): 7–41, )//KM

[The development and imaginative embrace of alien, machinic, astral, and cyborg subjectivities in Afrofuturism, all of which abandon or modify the archetypal, Enlightenment form of the human—from Janelle Monáe’s ArchAndroid to Jeff Mills’ Messenger—offer an escape hatch from paradigms for Afrodiasporic identity that are all too often restricted to the violence and capitalist bling of ghetto realism, confined to post-slavery resonances of subalternity, or entrapped within the lingering effects of the Civil Rights era, in which African-American subjects had to struggle, over the course of a long century since the Emancipation Proclamation, for the right to be considered Enlightenment subjects. To this end, as Kodwo Eshun argues, “It’s in music that you get the sense that most African- Americans **owe nothing to the status of the human**. African-Americans still had to protest, still had to riot, to be judged Enlightenment humans in the 1960s” (1999: A[193]). Hence the transformative capacity of the alien, and of Afrofuturist science fictional approaches, that explore unEarthly universes, timelines, and identities. When the “human” is nothing but the historical entitlement of white supremacy, signifying an embodied technology of exclusion, there is little reason to invest within the very same paradigm that was once deployed to systemically oppress and enslave one’s ancestors.

### AT: Psychoanalysis

#### Alt fails – assumes a non-black subject whose psychological violence stems from a fundamental transgression of societal normality – this can’t reconcile the violence that black people face because this violence is gratuitous, and they misunderstand how antiblackness structures signifiers and precedes language

Wun 12 [Connie C., Ph.D. in Education from University of California, Berkeley] The Anti-Black Order of No Child Left Behind: Using Lacanian psychoanalysis and critical race theory to examine NCLB, Educational Philosophy and Theory, 46(5): 462-74

Even with its usefulness in conceptualizing human subjectivities, psychoanalytic scholars have often failed to account for race, racism and its effects. For example, although both Brown, Atkinson, and England (2006) and Todd (2003) offer important discoveries into the applicability of psychoanalysis to educational theory, they deracialize the pedagogical subject and her learning environment. Either race generally fails to enter into the discourse or it is conveniently forgotten. Because psychoanalysis, Lacanian in particular, is considered a critical intervention into contemporary theories about human subjectivity, their psyches and experiences, the exclusion of race from this theoretical framework is even more problematic. For instance, theories surrounding how the subject exists through the Symbolic have rarely questioned the role that race, what Leonardo (2005) identiﬁes as the racial ideology, plays in informing the unconscious. Scholars such as Hortense Spillers are increasingly placing the idea of race as the paradigmatic structure that exists before language, and subsequently informs language. According to Spillers (2003), the ﬁrst violence is not language but race. The signiﬁerness of race covers the individual before language and its differential laws take hold of the speaking human organism (Viego, 2007, p. 18; italics in original). In Black skin, white masks, Frantz Fanon offered a well-known and important critique and intervention into the ﬁeld and practice of psychoanalysis. He questioned its applicability to and usefulness for the colonized subject’s condition and experiences. In particular, psychoanalysis did not attend to the particularities of the colonial subject’s social condition and psychic world. For instance, psychoanalysis failed to account for the Black subject’s experience with neurosis and phobia, which were not contingent upon transgressions as they were for the deracialized psychoanalytic subject. In this sense, whereas Freudian psychoanalysis theorized that childhood traumatic events contributed to neurosis, Fanon argued that a Black child’s neurotic reaction is an effect of living in a White world that imprisoned her as a racial imago. A Black child raised in a ‘normal family’ is rendered abnormal upon and with the slightest contact with the White world (1967, p. 143). Thus, he takes Freud’s psychogenic argument and replaces it with a sociogenic one. According to Fanon, Black bodies are imagined, characterized and ossiﬁed as the White world’s phobogenic object. Regardless of whether she commits transgressions, demonstrates evil, ugliness or actually possesses the overwhelming sexual prowess that the world fantasizes of her, she incites fear. These fantasies, similar to the system of signiﬁers, precede her. Fanon (1967) argued that psychoanalysis did not account for this existence or the cultural mechanisms that enabled these fantasies. He argued that ‘books, newspapers, school texts, advertisements, movies and radio’ (p. 131) helped to circulate Manichean fantasies of anti-Black images. Psychoanalysis did not account for the effects of these draconian productions and the social forces that objectify and fetishize Black racial subjects. He used his own experience with a young White boy and his fantasy of being eaten: ‘Mama, the [black man] is going to eat me up’ (Fanon, 1967, p. 93). The Black subject is constantly inscribed by civil society’s fantasy and articulations that she is not only antithetical to humanity but a threat to it. In ‘Bonding over phobia’, David Marriott (1998) also criticizes psychoanalysis’ relationship to race, racism and anti-Blackness in particular. He draws from Fanon and explores the fetishization and ﬁxation on Black subjects in an anti-Black world. According to Marriott, Blackness is an ‘instinctual component of the white psyche, linked inextricably to the psychic processes in which aggressive drives associated with phobic anxiety and fear become psychically effective through a racial subject or delegate’ (1998, p. 427). In other words, these aggressive drives and anxieties exist before the Black subject. Based upon Marriott’s analysis, these anxieties are activated and projected onto the Black subject even before she arrives on the scene. She becomes locked in as the screen for the projection of White phobic anxieties. Marriott astutely examines the collective White or more precisely the anti-Black unconscious that permeates society, shaping subjectivities.

#### The impact is the internalization of an antiblackness unconscious by black youth – this creates a psychic split that is both violence in and of itself and reifies the structure of white civil society

Wun 12 [Connie C., Ph.D. in Education from University of California, Berkeley] The Anti-Black Order of No Child Left Behind: Using Lacanian psychoanalysis and critical race theory to examine NCLB, Educational Philosophy and Theory, 46(5): 462-74

Marriott (1998) highlights the discursive effects of anti-Black racial fantasies on Western society.6 For some racial subjects, historical contexts and political climates have shaped the racial fantasies that inform how a subject is racialized. For instance, according to the theory of racial formations, there are political, economic and social contexts that govern how race is understood, constructed and contested (Omi & Winant, 1986). Marriott argues, however, that the ossiﬁcation of Black subjects as phobogenic objects is atemporal. That is, there is a collective anti-Black unconscious that undergirds Western civil society and is not contingent upon speciﬁc contexts or periods. An anti-Black culture precedes the Black subject and her unconscious desires. These fantasies of her savagery, deﬁciency and evilness are part and parcel of an impenetrable racist culture equipped with violent institutions and apparatuses to reproduce them. True to the function of the unconscious, these fantasies are articulated in and permeate the Symbolic, through law in ways that are inescapable. The penetration of the anti-Black unconscious into the Symbolic also shapes how Black youth relate to themselves and each other. He demonstrates this through a close reading of two historic case studies: Kenneth and Mamie Clark’s doll study from the famous Brown v. Board (1954) case and Erik Erickson’s study of a young Black girl who attempts to scrub Blackness off her skin and paints an already white piece of paper white again. He argues that the outcomes of these studies demonstrate that these Black children internalized the Manichean racist tropes associating Blackness with ugliness and negativity. According to Marriott, not only do the anti-Black unconscious and Symbolic exist to create psychic ﬁssures in Black children, thereby creating split selves, but these split selves are necessary to the formation and coherence of White civil society. The psychic states of these children were inextricably connected to the social world, one largely shaped by White anxieties and anti-Black fantasies. These racial fantasies of the threatening Black ﬁgure thwart the possibility of Black subjectivities independent from anti-Black fantasies. This condition is what he calls the ‘essence of blackness’ (Marriott, 2007, p. 226). Fanon, Spillers and Marriot offer challenges to psychoanalysis in ways that draw attention to this speciﬁc condition. They argue that an anti-Black unconscious is central to White society. These others are not only an effect of a racial hierarchy, but also imbued with racial fantasies that are necessary to the production of the illusion of a coherent and complete White society. Imagining Black ﬁgures as intrusive, dangerous, parasitic and different is part and parcel of the fantasy for a complete White society. It can take multiple forms.7 This fantasy that they need to protect themselves against Black ﬁgures is in part what enables the community to come together. Thus, not only is there a collective unconscious, but that collective is fastened together by the anti-Black unconscious. This does not mean that subjects do not resist. The resistance to being imprisoned by these fantasies and projections may be a part of what precipitates the compulsive reproduction and circulation of these fantasies. I would argue that resistance to antiBlackness——whether actively performed or not——can also operate as justiﬁcations for conscious and unconscious efforts to survey, further imprison and punish Black subjects. The reproduction and circulation of these are not only ideological. They are institutionalized, circulated and reproduced through various conduits, and none with more discursive effects than through law.

# Afrofuturism NEG

## Cap Links

### Science Fiction

#### Their obsession with a fictional, technological reality posits social interaction as irrelevant, locking in a consumerist individualism as the dominant mode of expressing humanity – this locks in the brutal efficiency of capitalism

Dinerstein 6  
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And isn't moving the machines inside the body the logical next step in technological evolution? Since the early 1980s, the consumer fruits of the electronic and computer revolutions have stirred every younger generation to a faith in a peaceful, plentiful, groovy future made possible by technological fables of abundance. In addition, ads now help young consumers visualize every individual as a mobile network, with iPods and Blackberrys enabling 24/7 mobile connectivity. GNR enthusiasts have simply reenvisioned the human body as a computer array. Brooks imagines implanting a screen in the part of the brain responsible for visual processing with an internal on/off system that jacks the mind into the Internet. Like many others, he is exalted by these ideas: "What if we could make all these external devices internal, what if they were all just part of our minds, just as our ability to see and hear is just a part of our mind?" As Garreau reflects, "for all previous millennia, our technologies have been aimed outward, to control our environment. . . . [Now] we have started a wholesale process of aiming our technologies inward." 39 This is perhaps most true for nanotechnology (N), the science of manipulating subatomic particles to take advantages of properties (such as conductivity) present only at that level. Medicine is its primary locus of application, and its researchers foresee robot surgeons dispatching tiny programmed "nanobots" into infected areas to cure the body without surgery or chemotherapy. Ray Kurzweil predicts that smart nanobots will easily "reverse the environmental destruction left by the first industrial revolution," provide safe, cheap, clean energy, and "destroy . . . cancer cells, repair DNA, and reverse the ravages of aging." Nanotech pioneer Robert A. Freitas, whose research concerns the potential for nanobots to perform brain scans, goes even further. Here's an FAQ from his website: "What would be the biggest benefit to be gained for human society from nanomedicine?" His response: "Nanomedicine will eliminate virtually all common diseases of the twentieth century, virtually all medical pain and suffering, and allow the extension of human capabilities, most especially our mental abilities." Humans will soon have the storage capacities of computers, according to Freitas, since a "nanostructured data storage device" is no bigger than a neuron and can hold "an amount of information equivalent to the entire Library of Congress." Once all human beings have "extremely rapid access to this [volume of] information"—and, I suppose, regular upgrades—Freitas [End Page 583] foresees immense social changes. What will be nanomedicine's biggest success? "The most important long-term benefit to human society" will be "the dawning of a new era of peace." Why will that occur? "People who are independently well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed, smart, well-educated, healthy, and happy will have little motivation to make war." Apparently, in the nanotech-powered utopia, immortality supplants the will to power and the seven deadly sins, since "human beings who have a reasonable prospect of living many 'normal' lifetimes will learn patience from experience." 40 As noted above, posthuman utopianism differs from all past visions—from Plato's to Thomas More's to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's—in being based not on social planning but on self-actualization. As one futurist rhapsodizes over the advantages of cyborg life: Just a small piece of silicon under the skin is all it would take for us to enjoy the freedom of no cars, passports, or keys. Put your hand out to the car door, computer terminal, the food you wish to purchase, and you would be dealt with efficiently. Think about it: total freedom; no more plastic. 41 This superficial notion of "total freedom" aside, the obvious context is our radically individualistic consumer society. Posthuman utopians ignore what Albert Borgmann simply calls—in response to their claims—"the social dimensions of human being." Humans are socialized by parents, siblings, teachers, and environments, and acquire consciousness (and self) in dialogue with friends, co-workers, and nature itself. As Borgmann claims about the relationship of individuality and socialization: "Each of us is a unique and inexhaustible locus of convergence and transmission through our ancestry, both evolutionary and historical, through our descendants, through the sensibility of each of our organs, through our pleasures and pains, through our wounds and our scars, through our attacks and our embraces." To assume that upgrading the "wetware" will lead to utopia misunderstands the mundane aspects of being human. As Borgmann claims for himself: "I shape my conduct in emulation, competition, or companionship with others." 42 To be reductive, GNR enthusiasts are able to evade the "social dimensions" of human being because they work from the "computational model" of the brain (the dominant paradigm of cognitive science). To GNR enthusiasts—as to cognitive scientists and philosophers—the human organism is simply a special kind of machine composed of electro-chemical networks. As Hayles has shown, in the decade after World War II, cybernetic theorists shifted the idea of mental processes from "thought" and "consciousness" to "information." As [End Page 584] they ratcheted up "analogs between machines and humans," early cybernetic theorists began to "construct the human in terms of the machine." 43 In other words, they externalized the model of the mind and bracketed off subjective experience as irrelevant. Over three generations, "information" supplanted "thought" and the speed of computation became the measure of mental power. According to John Searle, most cognitive scientists do not "regard consciousness as a genuine scientific question," and most textbooks on the brain "have no chapters on consciousness." There are alternative models ("the embodied mind," "the phenomenological mind"), but cognitive science remains devoted to the computational model, which has "virtually nothing to say about what it means to be human in everyday, lived situations." 44 GNR enthusiasts thus conceive of human organisms as nodes in technological networks rather than in social ones. To cognitive scientist Andy Clark, for example, human beings have always been "natural-born cyborgs," and the human organism is simply "tools all the way down." ("Tools-R-Us," he quips.) In reading back into history the model of the "man-machine," computationalists like Clark shift the idea of technologies (or tools) from prosthesis—tools used externally, by the body and as an extension of it—to something like techno-symbiosis (i.e., tools wired into the mind and body, neural subsystems as computer programs). As Hayles has shown, cyberneticists consider human beings as simply "body surfaces . . . through which information flows"; if so, she wonders, "who are we?" In Posthumanity (2004), philosopher Gerald Cooney spins it slightly differently: will a body outfitted with a dozen prosthetics—thin body armor, internalized electronics—feel "just as much my body and part of myself?" Is that kind of cyborg "as much a human being?" Either perspective "implies the deconstruction of the autonomous self," and both cognitive scientists and cultural theorists now meditate on how the cyborg "self" would work at the level of mind. 45

#### Sci-Fi has been coopted into a system of capital that functions through the futures industry, which aids in the distortion of the present to control the future. Power now commodifies information about the future and shapes predictions of the future. Their exclusion of marginalized groups condemns marginalized groups to live in the past.

Eshun 03 (Eshun, Kodwo, author of numerous pieces on music, culture, and the arts, associateeditor of the 21C, author of More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction (Quartet Books, 1998), editor of Afrofuturist Reader from Duke University Press. "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism." The New Centennial Review 3.2 (2003): 287-302. Project Muse. Web. 30 June 2017. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/48294>.)

It is clear that power now operates predictively as much as retrospectively. Capital continues to function through the dissimulation of the imperial archive, as it has done throughout the last century. Today, however, power also functions through the envisioning, management, and delivery of reliable futures. In the colonial era of the early to middle twentieth century, avantgardists from Walter Benjamin to Frantz Fanon revolted in the name of the future against a power structure that relied on control and representation of the historical archive. Today, the situation is reversed. The powerful employ futurists and draw power from the futures they endorse, thereby condemning the disempowered to live in the past. The present moment is stretching, slipping for some into yesterday, reaching for others into tomorrow. Kodwo Eshun ● 289 SF C APITAL Power now deploys a mode the critic Mark Fisher () calls SF (science fiction) capital. SF capital is the synergy, the positive feedback between future-oriented media and capital. The alliance between cybernetic futurism and “New Economy” theories argues that information is a direct generator of economic value. Information about the future therefore circulates as an increasingly important commodity. It exists in mathematical formalizations such as computer simulations, economic projections, weather reports, futures trading, think-tank reports, consultancy papers—and through informal descriptions such as science- fiction cinema, science-fiction novels, sonic fictions, religious prophecy, and venture capital. Bridging the two are formal-informal hybrids, such as the global scenarios of the professional market futurist. Looking back at the media generated by the computer boom of the s, it is clear that the effect of the futures industry—defined here as the intersecting industries of technoscience, fictional media, technological projection, and market prediction—has been to fuel the desire for a technology boom. Given this context, it would be naïve to understand science fiction, located within the expanded field of the futures industry, as merely prediction into the far future, or as a utopian project for imagining alternative social realities. Science fiction might better be understood, in Samuel R. Delany’s statement, as offering “a significant distortion of the present” (Last Angel of History ). To be more precise, science fiction is neither forward-looking nor utopian. Rather, in William Gibson’s phrase, science fiction is a means through which to preprogram the present (cited in Eshun ). Looking back at the genre, it becomes apparent that science fiction was never concerned with the future, but rather with engineering feedback between its preferred future and its becoming present. Hollywood’s s love for sci-tech fictions, from The Truman Show to The Matrix, from Men in Black to Minority Report, can therefore be seen as product-placed visions of the reality-producing power of computer networks, which in turn contribute to an explosion in the technologies they hymn. As New Economy ideas take hold, virtual futures generate capital. A subtle oscillation between prediction and control is being engineered in which successful or powerful descriptions of the future have an increasing ability to draw us towards them, to command us to make them flesh. T H E F UTURES I N D USTRY Science fiction is now a research and development department within a futures industry that dreams of the prediction and control of tomorrow. Corporate business seeks to manage the unknown through decisions based on scenarios, while civil society responds to future shock through habits formatted by science fiction. Science fiction operates through the power of falsification, the drive to rewrite reality, and the will to deny plausibility, while the scenario operates through the control and prediction of plausible alternative tomorrows. Both the science-fiction movie and the scenario are examples of cybernetic futurism that talks of things that haven’t happened yet in the past tense. In this case, futurism has little to do with the Italian and Russian avant-gardes; rather, these approaches seek to model variation over time by oscillating between anticipation and determinism. Imagine the All-African Archaeological Program sweeping the site with their chronometers. Again and again, they sift the ashes. Imagine the readouts on their portables, indicators pointing to the dangerously high levels of hostile projections. This area shows extreme density of dystopic forecasting, levels that, if accurate, would have rendered the archaeologists’ own existence impossible. The AAAP knows better: such statistical delirium reveals the fervid wish dreams of the host market.

#### Even if sci-fi is criticism of capitalism, it can still be commodified through it’s model of dispersal, which makes it a stabilization of the framework of capitalism.

Hassler-Forest 14 (Hassler-Forest, D. (2014), assistant professor of film and literature at the University of Amsterdam, publishes widely on comics, American cinema, popular literature, and critical theory. The Politics of World-Building: Heteroglossia in Janelle Monáe's Afrofuturist WondaLand. Para-doxa, 26, 284-303. <<http://dare.uva.nl/search?identifier=defcf5f6-c6df-4df3-950c-bc51ebd5485c>>.)

Approaching the concept of world-building from the perspective of radical politics, the subversive fan energies described by (amongst others) Henry Jenkins have at this point been appropriated and mobilized by the corporate cultures of neoliberalism. The critical potential recognized in sf by theorists like Suvin, Fredric Jameson, and Carl Freedman can clearly be reified and commodified as easily as the fantasy worlds of Tolkien and J.K. Rowling, making redundant the traditional ideological divide between fantasy and sf, while the commercial nature of contemporary “social media” make individual users’ appropriations all but irrelevant in terms of content. In the political economy of corporate convergence culture and ubiquitous social media, active engagement with a branded story-world is the overriding goal, while the systematic nature of these worlds’ spatial and temporal organization perfectly fits the objectifying framework of managerial neoliberal culture. The key political question about popular genre fiction therefore concerns not so much the ways in which the narrative contents of any given story-world articulate ideological values that can be described as conservative or progressive, but whether its organization helps destabilize the governing framework of capitalist realism (see Fisher Capitalist Realism). In other words, in a context where even the most subversive counter-narratives can be effortlessly appropriated and recycled within the very system they attack, the important work of imagining alternatives and creating productive resistance expands to the larger sphere of world-building.\

### Black Feminism

#### Yes, black women experience class in unique ways, but class continues to be a dividing factor that ultimately fractures coalitions between black women and destroys the potential for radical mothering. As the socioeconomic gap widens, it becomes clear that the alt is a prior question to the aff

McDonald 97 [Katrina Bell, Associate Professor of Sociology and Faculty Board Member for the Center for Africana Studies at John Hopkins] Black Activist Mothering: A Historical Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class, Gender and Society, Vol. 11, No. 6 (Dec., 1997), pp. 773-795, Sage Publications, Inc.

CONCLUSION This study sought to broaden an understanding of the tradition, nature, and significance of social class among Black, maternal activist women by employing the notion of normative empathy. The sister-friends of the Birthing Project share a concern for the plight of young, disadvantaged urban mothers and their children with their foremothers-the Black clubwomen of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries-who were equally conscious of the fact that their relative social progress separated them from the masses of Black women and obligated them to play a significant role in relieving the strain on Black urban mothers' lives. In modern times, however, the social dislocation of middle-class women from lower-class women has sharply increased, and the quality of life among the urban "underclass" mothers has rapidly deteriorated. The effort to "uplift" the race has been undermined by an increasing divergence of experiences, resources, and interests in the Black community along class lines. This divergence is realized for today's Black maternal activists, like the sister-friends at the Birthing Project, in the "burnout" they suffer in trying to meet the demands of upwardly mobile work, family, and community life; in the differentiated "street wisdom" exhibited by lower-class versus middle-class Black women that fosters resentment between them around issues of materialism, opportunism, and trust; and, most important, in their fear of, and frustration with, drugs and drug-related crime that is too often associated with urban Black existence. Although firsthand observation of the historical documents generated by Black clubwomen is necessary for conclusive- ness on this point, cross-class experiences to maintain gender/ethnic solidarity, such as those attempted through the Birthing Project, seem much more difficult today than they were for early Black clubwomen. In effect, the sister-friends' expressions of disillusionment about the delivery of cross-class support make a strong critique of the lower class and their lack of reverence for Black motherhood and for cross-class maternal cooperation. Reports of little sisters "too needy" for the level of support the volunteers were willing to give appear to be an indictment of the mothers and not, perhaps, of the volunteers' unrealistic expectations. The volunteers' upward mobility from disadvantage seems to be insignificant in the development of a close sisterhood with young mothers who encounter them now as the "other" class of Black women. Furthermore, helping to empower the young mothers through assistance with arranging intraclass cooperation and support was never mentioned; preoccupation on the part of the volunteers with lifting them up diverted attention from the possibilities for empow- ering the young mothers to collectively chart their own course for success through intraclass cooperation. Together, these observations suggest that normative empa- thy among contemporary middle-class Black women might be no more effective in alleviating the problems of the underclass than the benevolence of well-meaning middle-class White women. Systematic study of the sister-friends' practices over a longer period of time would provide for a more complete analysis of the Project's successes and failures. Such a research effort would be greatly enhanced by data from the lower-class young women for whom these practices are intended on their views of normative empathy and their perceptions and experiences with middle- class maternal activism. Nonetheless, the fact that contemporary maternal activists are willing to accept the difficult challenge of offering support to underprivileged urban mothers under these conditions calls into question the claim that self-interested middle-class Blacks have retreated from the inner city. The mere existence of the Birthing Project demonstrates that the analysis of Black middle-class flight fails to recognize that many members of the middle class are attempting to transcend the social class gap. The work and experience of Project women strongly suggests that whereas class consciousness may be strong among Black women, gender/ethnic solidarity also remains strong. I have proposed that activist mothering of this sort is best explained by a strong sense of normative empathy that historically has been shared among Black women, particularly those of relative privilege. Their consciousness and experiences as Black women bind them to one another, and their privileged status as upwardly mobile women compounds their sense of obligation to the disadvantaged. Thus, this study reemphasizes the significance of race, gender, and class in the socializa- tion and political interaction of urban Black women. Finally, I believe that the evidence of class tension supports a view of cross-class social support that deromanticizes support relationships and exposes the often unforeseen realities of providing support under difficult social conditions (Cramer and McDonald 1996). Social support providers are frequently subject to inflated expectations and may suffer emotionally when support arrangements fail to pro- duce the results intended. In the case of the Birthing Project sister-friends, for instance, the expectations were sometimes inflated by the ideals of gender/ethnic solidarity and Black activist mothering. Therefore, I am committed to further research that helps determine the extent to which continued and increased urban social class tension threatens the survival of normative empathy and Black maternal activism as traditional, gender/ethnic-specific tools of community resistance and self-preservation.

## Afrofuturism Bad

#### Past-oriented approaches towards whiteness neglect the way future discourse affects the present – futurity is key to full awareness

Baldwin, 11 (Andrew, Co-Director of the Institute of Hazard at the University of Durham’s Department of Geography, “Whiteness and futurity: Towards a research agenda,” Progress in Human Geography 2012, originally published August 3, 2011, <http://phg.sagepub.com/content/36/2/172>, )

My argument is that a past-oriented approach to accounting for geographies of whiteness often neglects to consider how various forms of whiteness are shaped by discourses of futurity. This is not to argue that a historicist approach to conceptualizing white geographies is wrongheaded; the past continues to be a crucial time-space through which to understand whiteness. It is, however, to argue that such a past-focused orientation obscures the way the category of the future is invoked in the articulation of whiteness. As such, any analysis that seeks to understand how whitenesses of all kinds shape contemporary (and indeed past) racisms operates with only a partial understanding of the time-spaces of whiteness. My argument is that we can learn much about whitenesses and their corresponding forms of racism by paying special attention to the ways in which such whitenesses are constituted by futurity. I have offered some preliminary remarks on how we might conceptualize geographies of whiteness qua futurity, but these should only be taken as starting points. Much more pragmatically, what seems to be required is a fulsome investigation into the way the future shapes white geographies. What might such a project entail? For one, geographers would do well to identify whether and how the practice of governing through the future inaugurates new and repeats old forms of whiteness. It would also be worth comparing and contrasting how the future is made present in various dialectical accounts of whiteness. For instance, what becomes of whiteness when understood through the binary actual-possible as opposed to an actual-virtual binary, which has been my main concern? Alternatively, what becomes of the category of whiteness if it is shown to be constituted by a future that has no ontology except as a virtual presence? And, perhaps more pressing, how might whiteness be newly politicized? Futurity provides a productive vocabulary for thinking about and challenging whiteness. It does not offer a means of overcoming white supremacy, nor does it provide white people with a normative prescription for living with their whiteness guilt- or worry-free. Futurity is, however, a lacuna in the study of whiteness both in geography and outside the discipline, and this alone suggests the need to take it seriously. But equally, and perhaps more urgently, there is the need to study whiteness and futurity given how central the future is to contemporary governance and politics. Indeed, at a moment when the future features prominently in both political rhetoric – in his inaugural speech, Obama implores America to carry ‘forth that great gift of freedom and [deliver] it safely to future generations’ – and everyday life, how people orient themselves towards the future is indelibly political. The future impels action. For Mann (2007), it is central to interest. For Thrift (2008), ‘value increasingly arises not from what is but from what is not yet but can potentially become, that is fromthe pull of the future’. Attention to whiteness and futurity may at minimum enable us to see more clearly the extent to which the pull of whiteness into the future reconfigures what is to be valued in the decades ahead.

#### Afrofuturism’s lack of a coherent solution mean it can never combat the structure of violence it seeks to escape

Miller ’11 (Miller, Paul D. a Washington DC-born electronic and experimental [hip hop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hip_hop) musician whose work is often called by critics or his fans as "[illbient](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illbient)" or "[trip hop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trip_hop)". He is a [turntablist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turntablist), a producer, a philosopher, and an author The Book of Ice. Brooklyn, NY: Mark Batty, 2011. Print.)

Every movement has its sell-by date. I think that there were a lot of flaws in the way that Afro-Futurism unfolded, and I think it missed certain pressure points in the flow of how culture evolves in this day and age. It wasn’t digital enough, it didn’t have a core group of people with any kind of coherent message. It was conceptually open ended without any kind of narrative. People tend to like that kind of thing. I speak of Afro-Futurism in the past tense because I think that the culture at large caught up to and bypassed many of the issues it was dealing with. Forget the idea of the “permanent underclass” that people like Greg Tate (no disrespect) kept pushing. Forget the idea that blacks are outside of any system—we are the system. I guess that many people outside of the arts have awakened to the day and age and moved on. It seemed like Afrofuturism just didn’t have a cohesive situation to have music, art and literature evolve from. Sure, Afrofuturism can be used, as you put it to be a “descriptor of a body of knowledge, which does not die and outlives its progenitors (like jazz, hip-hop, deconstruction, or philosophy itself)”—but only by sleight of hand (which is sampling, anyway). It’s basically a hall of mirrors, a smoke and fog routine in a middle brow cheap magic show. But hey... even that can be interesting sometimes.

#### Idealizing the world leads through Science fiction leads to aa totoalization that erases the PRESENT as a tool of policing bodies in the status quo- reimagining the past erases it’s necessary trauma

Jacob 2K5 (Jacoby, Russell. professor of history at the University of California Los Angeles an author, and critic of academic culture Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age. New York: Columbia UP, 2005. Print. Page 12-13)

The common wisdom that utopias inexorably lead to dystopias not only derives from texts, it appeals to history to make its case. New words help make the argument. Like “dystopia,” the term “genocide” belongs to the twentieth century. Inevitably these new terms seem related; they seem to address kindred experiences. Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish refugee, coined “genocide” in  “to denote an old practice in its modern development”—the annihilation of a national or ethnic group. He believed the Nazi practices occasioned a new word.43 While Lemkin worked tirelessly to spread the news about genocide—with few rewards44—he did not associate it with either utopia or dystopia.45 Yet scholarly and conventional opinion today consistently links genocide and utopia and bills the blood bath of the twentieth century to “utopians” such as Stalin, Hitler, and Mao. From Hannah Arendt’s  Origins of Totalitarianism to Martin Malia’s  Soviet Tragedy—its last chapter is titled “The Perverse Logic of Utopia”—scholars have thrown communism, Nazism, and utopia into one tub. Prestigious savants like Isaiah Berlin and Karl Popper have persuasively argued that utopia leads to totalitarianism and mass murder. “We must beware of Utopia,” wrote Ralf Dahrendorf. “Whoever sets out to implement Utopian plans will in the first instance have to wipe clean the canvas, on which the real world is painted. This is a brutal process of destruction;” it leads to hell on earth.46 To question this approach requires asking what utopias are actually about—and why, for instance, Nazism should not be deemed a utopian enterprise. Even the vaguest description of utopia as a society inspired by notions of happiness, fraternity, and plenty would apparently exclude Nazism with its notion of Ayrans dominating inferiors in a Thousand Year Reich. What An Anarchic Breeze

#### Futurism empirically isn’t grounded on tangible things- they empirically are not able to create sstructural change

Salam ’06(Salam, Reihan.  American political commentator, columnist, and author. He is the executive editor of "[National Review](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Review)" "The Future of Futurism." Slate. The Slate Group, 09 June 2006. Web. <http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2006/06/the\_future\_of\_futurism.html>.)

The problem is that we mean different things by “future.” The reality is that there are other ways of imagining our relationship to time. Steffen outlines six 1. THE PAST. Character is history; character is destiny. We have a way of rewriting history to suggest what the future will be. To wit: The Alamo. It has been purposed and repurposed to be a lesson that substantiates Manifest Destiny, multi-cultural origins, and even anti-tax rhetoric. It positions where we’re going in the past. Steffen suggests that it’s worth knowing that there is often a huge gap between what professional historians think/believe and how retellers of these stories reflect these stories. 2. SIMPLE PREDICTION. Most predictions are glaringly wrong. It is important to know the difference between predictions grounded on data and articulated as probabilities, and predictions that are simply personal opinion founded on a set of individual, qualitative beliefs. The latter is not always wrong, but the inquirer needs to be careful about them. One huge example: Climate Change. One side has assigned a set of probabilities, data, and created peer-reviewed work to predict our trajectory. Based on this scientific effort, the globe is on a track toward 7 degrees warming. There are very few predictions about what 7 degrees means because it represents such a profound change; there is no meaningful prediction. So academics and media talk about is 4 degrees and 2 degrees. “Business as usual” will land us at 4. But business as usual is not a fair way of dealing with the future. The climate models accepted by the scientific community give us budgets, curves and timelines; these are effectively predicting our future scientifically. If we want to have a more reasonable task, we must start to lower our emissions on an individual and national level. In fact, what we do now about carbon matters in a way that few moments have mattered. Impacts will be with us for thousands of years. All of this is a direct read of the world’s largest peer reviewed process of prediction. This is very real. We can look and feel despair, but Steffen believes that in fact there are many incentives aligning for the private sector to re-think its relationship to carbon. One of the reasons why change will happen is that the sheer size of the assets at risk from climate change, added to how much can be made from switching to new platforms and technologies, far outweigh the fossil fuel business. Steffen maintains that, fundamentally, there is only one question: how long will politics allow this delay to continue? 1. PREDICTING THE PRESENT. Building on William Gibson, author of Neuromancer, this way of approaching time suggests that we predict the future by looking at things that have already been built in the present. (Gibson’s famous quote is some semblance of: “The Future is here; it’s not evenly distributed.”) We can look for things in our current environs that suggest where change will take place. 1. ANTICIPATION OR PROVOCATION. This relationship to time uses new products as provocation. Steffen put up a fake-product picture of “panda jerky” (lab-grown panda meat, made into jerky, and packaged like any other FMCG). Concept cars brought to the auto shows are an example of anticipation or provocation. The TV show “Black Mirror” is this sort of speculative science fiction; its construct is that it takes one unintended consequence of a new technology and “blows it out,” trying to see how technology would change the future if its taken to an extreme conclusion. Many other types of science fiction (e.g., Mad Max) are themselves provocations, and not all of them are silly. (The Red Mars, Green Mars, Blue Mars Trilogy by Kim Stanley Robinson is one such example. Its premise: What if we tried settling Mars and the people who settled decided to rethink society?). Provocation can become the grounds for more detailed and thoughtful examination. 2. VISIONARY FUTURES. “Dune” is a detailed systems future using things that aren’t possible, but an excellent vision of a different reality. These works are often about “world building.” World building itself has become a popular cultural activity. It’s evident in role-playing games, and the way people look at programs like “Lost”. Often these visionary futures are pure entertainment. We can think of this as escapism being a future function of our society. We don’t necessarily believe in what this outlines, but we are entertained.

#### We should build plausible and specific scenarios—that’s key to improve policymaking and avoid existential threats

**HUNTLEY et al 2010** (Wade L. Huntley, US Naval Postgraduate School; Joseph G. Bock, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies; Miranda Weingartner, Weingartner Consulting; “Planning the unplannable: Scenarios on the future of space,” Space Policy 26)

On 16 March 1966 Neil Armstrong deftly piloted the Gemini VIII within 0.9 meters of the pre-launched Agena Target Vehicle, then slowly accomplished the world’s first orbital docking. Armstrong and co-pilot David Scott were still in a celebratory mood, when Scott noticed the Gemini beginning to roll. Armstrong used the Orbit Attitude and Maneuvering System thrusters, but the moment he throttled down, they started to roll again. Turning off the Agena seemed to stop the problem for a few minutes. But when it began again, the roll was accelerating. They undocked and with a long burst of translation thrusters moved away from the Agena. But the roll continued to accelerate. Tumbling now at one revolution per second, the astronauts were in danger of impaired vision and loss of consciousness. But Armstrong was able to bring the wild oscillations under control thanks in part to preparation by a flight simulation training exercise that many pilots disliked, believing the simulation was too unlikely to waste their scarce training time and energy on.26 Fortunately, NASA did not plan the astronauts’ training based on the most likely scenarios. Instead, they planned on the basis of plausible and important scenarios. Developing plausible scenarios helps us take the long view in a world of great uncertainty.27 Scenarios are narratives of the future defined around a set of unpredictable drivers, intended to expand insight by identifying unexpected but important possible directions and outcomes. Scenarios have a timeline over which meaningful change is possible. They are a useful tool for examining a number of different possible futures. They provide a means to stimulate new thinking, challenge assumptions, and provide an effective framework for dialogue among a diverse group of stakeholders. They can inspire new ideas and innovations by helping identify common goals and interests that transcend current political divides. Scenarios thus help to develop the means to work towards preferred futures.28 Scenarios are stories about the way the world might turn out tomorrow; they do not need to be likely, but they ought to be plausible, internally consistent, and relevant. It is precisely by considering possible, even if not necessarily likely, scenarios that we are best prepared for the unpredictability of the future. By encouraging creative thinking beyond the future we anticipate, scenarios help us become more resilient to unexpected events. With respect to their utility in guiding policy development, three features distinguish good scenarios from simple speculations, linear predictions or fanciful musings of the future: Scenarios are decision focused. Successful scenarios begin and end by clarifying the decisions and actions the participants must make if they are to deal successfully with an uncertain future. One common misconception of scenarios is that they are prescient, path dependent predictions of the future. On the contrary, scenarios are used to order our thoughts amid uncertainty, build common ground among differing perspectives, and think rationally about our options. The value of a set of scenarios accrues not from their accuracy or likelihood, but from their plausibility and the insights they generate. Scenarios are imaginative. In examining a decision within the context of a number of different futures, scenarios require us to look behind fixed assumptions. They encourage participants to challenge conventional wisdom, create new contexts for existing decisions, and think creatively about options for surmounting obstacles. At their core, then, scenarios are about learning.29 Scenarios are logical. The scenario process is formal and disciplined in its use of information and analysis. The creativity and imagination inspired by scenarios can only be as effective as it is based in realistic assessments. In requiring participants to challenge each others’ thoughts, perceptions, and mind-sets, the process helps clarify that reality. Scenarios first emerged following World War II as a method of military planning. This approach was reflected in Herman Kahn’s assertion of the need to ‘‘think the unthinkable’’ concerning the possibilities and implications of war in the atomic age. ‘‘In our times’’, Kahn wrote in 1966, ‘‘thermonuclear war may seem unthinkable, immoral, insane, hideous, or highly unlikely, but it is not impossible’’. 30 Kahn’s motivation was, in part, recognition of the counter-intuitive notion that planning could be a necessary means of avoidance. Analyzing scenarios reached greater methodological sophistication with the work of Pierre Wack, a planner at the London offices of Royal Dutch/Shell. Wack and his colleagues refined the application of scenario thinking to private enterprise. This work helped Shell anticipate the consequences of the emergence of a cartel among oil exporting countries, and to develop various plans to cushion the blow that would (and did) result from formation of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1960. Shell was also able to anticipate massive economic and political change in the then USSR in the late 1980s.31 Scenario analysis came to be used in the political arena when associates of Wack assisted stakeholders in South Africa in the peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy. Many doubted the country’s prospects; in 1987, the Guardian Weekly quoted Margaret Thatcher’s former spokesman Bernard Ingham as saying that anyone who believed the African National Congress (ANC) would one day rule South Africa was ‘‘living in cloud cuckoo land.’’32 But with operations in South Africa and an interest in preventing anarchy following the downfall of apartheid, Shell sent some of Wack’s prote´ge´s, including Adam Kahane, to convene meetings of top governmental, religious, civic and business leaders at a conference site there called Mont Fleur. From February 1990, when Nelson Mandela was released from prison, to April 1994, when the first all-race elections were held, participants identified relatively certain and uncertain but plausible factors, and then formed into teams to research various alternative futures. In the midst of deep conflict and uncertainty, ‘‘Mont Fleur’’ brought people together from across ideological and political divides to think creatively about the future of their country. The collaboratively drafted scenarios were not a panacea, but did contribute to establishing a common vocabulary and enough mutual understanding for participants to find common ground on complex decisions. In particular, the consensus on the undesirability of three particular scenarios contributed to developing the perception of shared interests that was an important element in the success of the governmental transition.33 Scenario-building and analysis has become a distinct tool of US government policy making, and has been applied directly to future space security issues. For example, one major US Air Force scenario-based study evaluated 25 emerging technologies and 40 separate potential weapons systems through the lens of six ‘‘alternative futures’’ in an effort to guide future Air Force policy choices.34 This exercise (and others like it) exemplifies the potential for applying nonlinear future planning methodologies to large-scale public policy topics, including the future of space. The principal deficiency of such government-sponsored efforts is simply the narrowness of their focus e they are, by design, only concerned about a single government’s decision points and are shaped by the goals, dilemmas and uncertainties most relevant to that single party. Lacking is a parallel process to achieve the same kind of expansive thinking while also incorporating a full range of stakeholders. Such exercises can hardly be generated by governments.

#### They can’t effect tangible change- they literally allow existing power structures to make the situation net worse

**Berger 1976** – award winning science fiction author (July, Albert I., “ The Triumph of Prophecy: Science Fiction and Nuclear Power in the Post-Hiroshima Period” Science Fiction Studies, Vol. 3, No. 2, JSTOR)

This naivete about politics and preoccupation with technological solutions was the obverse of the prevailing SF distaste for politics. Politics had always had a bad press in the science-fiction magazines, being portrayed as the captive of technologically, if not socially reactionary special interests. The appalling scientific ignorance and prejudice displayed by Congress after Hiroshima, and its general unwillingness to be educated, merely compounded the problem in the eyes of science-fiction writers and readers. This distaste for politics was testified to not only by letters-to-the-editor in Astounding and the fan magazines but also by an article by W.B. de Graeff, "Congress is too Busy" (Sept 1946), detailing with a gleeful contempt the most mundane and ridiculous chores of a member of Congress. By 1950 even an old stalwart like E.E. Smith could take up nearly a third of a novel-First Lensman (not serialized; Fantasy Press 1950)-with a detailed account of an election in which military heroes act both as police forces and as candidates arrayed against a corrupt political machine. The use of conspicuously armed poll watchers and what amounts to a military coup are justified by the criminal tactics of the opposition. Smith's villains are supposed to be the pawns of a sinister conspiracy of aliens, but their methods are described as normal American practice.

#### Attempting to reclaim origins distracts from contemporary attempts at liberation

Hartman, **2002**, specialist in African American literature and history and a professor at Columbia University (Saidiya, “In Time of Slavery” The South Atlantic Quarterly 101.4 Project Muse)

What becomes apparent, despite the proclaimed unanimity of the ancestors [End Page 765] and their descendants in the commonplace pronouncement "You are back" is the ambivalence of the identification with Africa forged in these encounters. After all, the origin identified is the site of rupture and, ironically, the forts and castles built by Europeans come to approximate home. Loss predominates at this imagined site of origin, since the genesis of the diaspora is located in this commercial deportation. This unhomely home hints that this state of exile and estrangement might well be inescapable. 14 Nor is an African identity easily reclaimed, since one is as likely to be called obroni, which means "foreigner" or "white," as "sister" and these salutations actually achieve a strange equality as designations of exchange relations, markers of foreignness, and inducements to buy. While remembering the "anguish of the ancestors" is a central aspect of the pilgrimage to these monuments of the transatlantic trade, recursion is also informed by the imperatives and longings of the present. That is, dispossession is itself an inheritance that tethers us to "that event." Racial subjection, incarceration, impoverishment and second-class citizenship: this is the legacy of slavery that still haunts us. 15 The duration of injury and the seemingly intractable character of our defeat account for the living presence of slavery, and as well for the redress proffered by tourism. A reverse middle passage? At the Door of No Return—the passage from the dungeon to the slave ship—the tour guide declares, "It is not really the Door of No Return because now you are back!" These words cast the tourist as the triumphant captive and returning descendant. This proclamation, regularly issued at the final exit, is the ultimate moment of convergence between the past and the present and one that reveals the dilemma of mourning as both a recognition of loss and replacement of the lost object by way of identification. The return is a fantasy of origins; it is in the class of fantasies that Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis describe as primal. Akin to collective myths, such fantasies "provide a representation of and solution to whatever constitutes a major enigma for the child" and "dramatise the primal moment or original point of departure of a history. In the ‘primal scene,' it is the origin of the subject that is represented." 16

#### Afro-futurism centers the genre on Africa, which distorts the message many Afro-futurist artists are putting out.

Stotter 16 (Stotter, Magdalena. "Did You Say Afrofuturism? On Labelling Art." Wikis Der Freien Universität Berlin. N.p., 3 Feb. 2016. Web. 01 July 2017. <http://wikis.fu-berlin.de/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=646989083>.)

So, if Milumbe Haimbe is queering the genre of science fiction as well as the genre of graphic novels through establishing a counter narrative to given stereotypes parallels to the sub-genre of Afrofuturism can be drawn at least in two main points: 1. by adding “new dimensions about identity, considering intersectionality regarding race, gender, sexual orientation, otherness, humanness, across time and space”[36] and 2. by “decentering whiteness, Eurocentrism and Western cosmologies” and simultaneously offering “new visions of what could come to be”[37] As queering can be a tool for every artist speaking from a subaltern position (or not) to challenge fixed categories like heteronormativity, address gender inequalities from a feminist position or speak up against racial biases in popular culture there is no need to establish parallels between Milumbe Haimbe and Afrofuturism. Calling futuristic art by Black artists or futuristic art with Black protagonists[38] - no matter where they come from, what intention they share or which art form they use - Afrofuturist is not concrete enough as African positions in the genre of science fiction haven’t reached the mainstream audience yet and are only recently displayed in group exhibitions concerning Afrofuturism. Botswana-born artist Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum argues that African futuristic approaches should be labeled as “African futurism”.[39] Substituting the term Afrofuturism with African futurism is, according to my reading a move in the right direction of labeling but still not fully satisfying as the aim should be to see art and popular culture on a global scale without geographical restrictions. Besides everything Afrofuturism has to offer this concept would never include an African perspective, which is, with regard to the continent’s history (e.g. colonization or its victimization in Western media through images of famine, war, destruction and poverty)[40] an important and not deniable fact. Furthermore, African science fiction can create links to African cosmologies such as Wanuri Kahiu does in her film “Pumzi” (2010).[41] Afrofuturist works, Black science fiction and African futurism may address similar issues, but still African futurists have not merely achieved the same agency yet and therefore, as Kahiu affirms, “have to be very clear about the messages they are putting out.”[42] Milumbe Haimbe is probably doing a very conscious move toward the future unlabeling of artworks by saying the she will “own that label” [43] Afrofuturism for the moment. It makes her art accessible and visible to a broader audience by letting it be labeled although she thinks that this causes a sort of othering.[44] She is right when saying that there “has to be more representing”[45] and when there will be more artists from the continent who create science fiction speculative fiction or other futuristic oriented genres that are known around the globe, the need to target artists from the Global South by the country they come from or the suffix 'afro-' will hopefully vanish on its own. Unless this definition is used in a beneficial way to oppose White Western or Black Western futurist approaches and art practices to identify the position and perspective the artists are speaking from to underline their artistic expressions it could be abandoned in the future. Subsuming can be said, that speculative fiction, science fiction, Afrofuturism and other forms of storytelling can be described as ways of imagining a past, future or present that can be strikingly different from our current realities and can catalyze fruitful discussions about contemporary issues. Science fiction has been used as a form of social critique from its beginnings, but there have been imagined futures and cosmologies long before the creation of this genre, all over the world.

#### Refuse the syntax trap the academy and debate produces for the black body one that tricks us into telling stories that engages in a mere romance of resistance reinforces the ability of the killer to define terms of our positionality  - Hartman’8

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**I chose not to tell a story** about Venus **because to do so would** have **trespas**sed **the boundaries of the archive. History pledges to be faithful to** the **limits of fact, evidence, and archive, even as those dead certainties are produced by terror.** I wanted to write a romance that exceeded the fictions of history—the rumors, scandals, lies, invented evidence, fabricated confessions, volatile facts, impossible metaphors, chance events, and fantasies that constitute the archive and determine what can be said about the past. I longed to write a new story, one unfettered by the constraints of the legal documents and exceeding the restatement and transpositions, which comprised my strategy for disordering and transgressing the protocols of the archive and the authority of its statements and which enabled me to augment and intensify its fictions. **Finding an aesthetic mode suitable or adequate to rendering the lives** of these two girls**, deciding how to arrange the lines on the page, allowing the narrative track to be rerouted** or broken **by** the sounds of **memory**, the keens and howls and dirges unloosened on the deck, and **trying to unsettle** the **arrangements of power by imaging Venus and her friend outside** the **terms of statements and judgments** that **banished them from** the **category of** the **human and decreed their lives waste**31—**all of which was beyond what could be thought within the parameters of history. The romance of resistance that I failed to narrate** and the event of love **that I refused to describe raise** important **questions regarding what it means to think historically about matters still contested in the present and about life eradicated by the protocols of intellectual disciplines. What is required to imagine a free state or to tell an impossible story**? Must **the poetics of a free state anticipate the event and imagine life after man, rather than wait** for the ever-retreating moment of Jubilee? **Must the future of abolition be first performed on the page? By retreating from the story** of these two girls, **was I simply upholding the rules of the historical guild and the “manufactured certainties” of their killers, and by doing so, hadn’t I sealed their fate**?32 **Hadn’t I too consigned them to oblivion? In the end, was it better to leave them as I found them?**

#### Performativity can’t account for the structural positioning of blackness—affect is structured by an antiblack violence that forecloses the recuperative possibility of performing identity

Aranke 13

(Sampada, PhD Candidate in Performance Studies at University of California at Davis, “Fred Hampton's Murder and the Coming Revolution”, Trans-Scripts?, <http://www.humanities.uci.edu/collective/hctr/trans-scripts/2013/2013_03_09.pdf>)

Whereas Phelan insists that performance is excessive expenditure that "saves nothing", for Roach, this excessive expenditure is not the nature of performance, but in fact the nature of violence. He insists that "violence is the performance of waste"— excessive, "because to be fully demonstrative, to make its point, it must spend things". This spending is "never senseless but always meaningful" (41). At first glance, it is almost as if Roach replaced Phelan's definition of "performance" with the word "violence"; but the theoretical implications of Roach's argument leads us to new understandings of how race and affect are produced by violence. If we take that which is excessive as constitutive of how we conceptualize both performance and violence, then the indication that some subjects come into being precisely through violent acts has striking theoretical implications, especially for black subjects, which is of main concern for both Roach's analysis and mine. Both aesthetics and violence "exist as forms of cultural expression" wherein the question of blackness is the auction block of the world (41). This is where Roach's definition of race occurs at a structural level, rather than that of identity. For Phelan, identity is marked by and through performance. Whether in their ephemerality or their repetition, representational strategies (performance's excessive expenditure) charge affect in the service of performatively engaging bodies. This affective charge mobilizes that which is not fully redeemable, understandable, legible, or visible as an indication of how bodies are marked through performance. What I find most generative in Roach's work is his insistence that some bodies — in his case and in mine, black bodies — are not marked, they are structurally positioned as affect is structured by that very antiblack violence that forecloses the recuperative possibility of performing identities and instead circulates performance as violent affirmation of the structural captivity of blackness.that which is always already saturated with violent meaning. Affect, here, takes an unprecedented turn away from that which has potential for either hegemonic or performative rupture, toward a more striking accusation: that

***Performance is not a mode of resistance - it gives too much power to the audience because the performer is structurally blocked from controlling the (re)presentation of their representations. Appealing to the ballot is a way of turning over one’s identity to the same reproductive economy that underwrites liberalism***

**Phelan 96**—chair of New York University's Department of Performance Studies (Peggy, Unmarked: the politics of performance, ed published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005, 146

**Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot** be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise **participate in the circulation *of representations of representations***: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. **To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it *betrays and lessens the promise of its own*** ontology. Performance’s being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance.

**The pressures brought to bear on performance to succumb to the laws of the reproductive economy are enormous**. **For *only rarely* in this culture is the “now” to which performance addresses its deepest questions valued**. (This is why the now is supplemented and buttressed by the documenting camera, the video archive.) Performance occurs over a time which will not be repeated. It can be performed again, but this repetition itself marks it as “different.” **The document of a performance then is only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present**.

### Essentialism Disad

#### Afrofuturism relies on the essentializing notion of the “digital divide,” which reproduces the same exclusion and violence that it critiques.

Rollefson 08 (Rollefson, J. Griffith, lecturer at University of College Cork, wrote *Flip the Script: European Hip Hop and the Politics of Postcoloniality*. “The ‘Robot Voodoo Power’ Thesis: Afrofuturism and Anti-Anti-Essentialism from Sun Ra to Kool Keith.” Black Music Research Journal, vol. 28, no. 1, 2008, pp. 83–109. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25433795.)

Since the term "Afrofuturism" first appeared, scholars have seized upon the idea as a way to critique the reified distance between racialized fictions of black magic and white science often in satirical and even playful ways. Yet, the very premise of Afrofuturism relies on the normalized disparity between blackness and the cybernetic technological future, a binary that is reflected in the racially coded phrase "digital divide." As Nelson explains: "Forecasts of a Utopian (to some) race-free future and pronouncements of the dystopian digital divide are the predominant discourses of blackness and technology in the public sphere.. .. Blackness gets constructed as al ways oppositional to technologically driven chronicles of progress" (2002, 1). Thus, the danger with the Afrofuturist strategy is that it can quickly turn into a reification of black inferiority through simple contrast with supposed "white" technologies.

## Afropessimism links

#### The Afrofuturist attempt to move towards the "posthuman" simultaneously disavows humanism while laying claim to it- the black "soul" gets co-opted by nonblack subjects

**Weheliye 02** (Alexander G. Weheliye - professor of African American studies at Northwestern University, "Feenin": Posthuman Voices in Contemporary Black Popular Music)//KM

Afro-diasporic thinking has not evinced the same sort of distrust and/or outright rejection of “man” in its universalist, post-Enlightenment guise as Western antihumanist or posthumanist philosophies. Instead, black humanist discourses emphasize the historicity and mutability of the “human” itself, gesturing toward different, catachrestic, conceptualizations of this category.12 However, wielding this particular and historically contingent classification should not be read, as is often the case, as a mere uncritical reiteration, as if there were such a thing, of humanist discourses. **Black discourses have consistently laid claim to “humanity” in multifarious ways,** starting with Phyllis Wheatley’s poetry at the end of the eighteenth century and continuing throughout the nineteenth century, as exemplified by the works of David Walker, Maria Stewart, Martin Delaney, and Anna Julia Cooper. While invocations of humanism in the twentieth century surely stem from different motivations than those historically preceding them, these ideas are elaborated by such thinkers as W. E. B. DuBois, Alain Locke, Jessie Fauset, Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston, Aimé Césaire, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Frantz Fanon, Audre Lorde, and Edouard Glissant, to name a few. **Far from renouncing “humanity,” these intellectuals have all focused on this category.** Clearly this emphasis on “humanity” results from the histories of slavery and colonialism and the racial, gender, and sexual violence ensuing from these forces. Indeed, as Ishmael Reed’s epigraph to this essay conveys, the “middle passages” of black culture to and in the New World are not marked so much by “humanity” as by an acute lack thereof; a “black hole” of humanity, so to speak. Since black subjects were deemed the radical obverse of enlightened and rational “man,” various black discourses have sought to appropriate this category. In the words of Frantz Fanon: “We must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man.”13 This new “man” is the subject of Ishmael Reed’s “cosmic slave hole,” where “humanity” neither begins nor ends with the white masculine liberal subject. Thus, any consideration of the posthuman should contemplate the status of humanity from the vantage point of this “cosmic slave hole.”Afro-Caribbean theorist Sylvia Wynter’s attempt to recast the human sciences in relation to a new conception of “man” provides contexts in which to think the “human” that not only bridge the ever widening gap between the cognitive life sciences and humanities but also incorporate the colonial and racialist histories of the “human.”14 Tracing the longue durée of Western modernity, Wynter maintains that the religious conception of the self gave way to two modes of secularized subjectivity: first, the Cartesian “Rational Man” and then, beginning “at the end of the eighteenth century, . . . Man as a selected being and natural organism . . . as the universal human, ‘man as man’” (“Beyond the Word,” 645).15 In the discursive and material universe of “biological idealism,” the second of Wynter’s modes of secularized being, black subjects served as limit cases by which “man” could define himself as the universal “human” (“Disenchanting Discourse,” 436). Here, “man” appears as “man” via dis-identification, wherein whiteness connotes the full humanity only gleaned in relation to the lack of humanity in blackness. Moreover, “the black population groups of the New World [acted] as the embodied bearers of Ontological lack to the secular model of being, Man, as the conceptual Other” (“Beyond the Word,” 641).16 Because New World black subjects were denied access to the position of humanity for so long, “humanity” refuses to signify any ontological primacy within Afro-diasporic discourses. In black culture this category becomes a designation that shows its finitudes and exclusions very clearly, thereby denaturalizing the “human” as a universal formation while at the same time laying claim to it. **Put differently, the moment in which black people enter into humanity, this very idea loses its ontological thrust because its limitations are rendered abundantly clear.** Black humanism disenchants “Man as Man,” bringing “into being different modes of the human” because it deploys the very formulation of “man” as catachresis (“Disenchanting Discourse,” 466). Current debates about the posthuman might do well to incorporate these ontological others into their theories in order to better situate and analyze the porous perimeters of the “human.” Black humanism has found one of its most persistent articulations in the vexed discursive entanglements around black people’s souls over the course of the last 150 years, most markedly in relation to black popular music. In Blackness and Value: Seeing Double, **Lindon Barrett holds that the black voice functions as a figure of value within African American culture, particularly as it is contrasted with the lack of value ascribed to blackness in American mainstream culture.**17 In a complex argument, Barrett distinguishes the singing voice from the signing voice of Euro-American alphabetical literacy, writing that the singing voice “provides a primary means by which African Americans may exchange an expended, valueless self inthe New World for a productive, recognized self” (57).18 The signing voice, on the other hand, represents the literacy of the white Enlightenment subject redacted above. As in Hayles’s account of Western thinking, the signing voice signals full humanity, whiteness, and disembodiment, where the singing voice metonymically enacts blackness, embodiment, and subhumanity. For Barrett the corporeality—“sly alterity,” as he terms it— furnishes the black singing voice’s most destabilizing feature (58). In this sense, **the black singing voice suggests a rather different access to the category of “humanity” than the signing voice and in the process undermines the validity of the liberal subject as the sign for the “human,” providing a fully embodied version thereof. T**hus black subjectivity appears as the antithesis to the Enlightenment subject by virtue of not only having a body but by being the body—within Enlightenment discourses blackness is the body and nothing else. **But what happens once the black voice becomes disembodied, severed from its source, recontextualized, and appropriated?** All these things occurred when the first collections of transcribed spirituals became readily available for public consumption during the Civil War and continued with the recording and reproduction through various media of the black voice in the twentieth century. Far from being transmitted “in [a] startlingly authentic form,” as Barrett will have it, the black singing voice, decoupled from its human source and placed in the context of spiritual collections and subsequently phonograph records, insinuates a much more overdetermined and unwieldy constellation within both black and mainstream American cultural discourses. As both Ronald Radano and Jon Cruz have shown, spirituals, once transcribed and compiled, served both white and black abolitionist purposes as embodiments of black humanity.19 Black sacred and later secular music took on two simultaneous functions: proving black peoples’ soul and standing in for the soul of all U.S. culture, keeping the racially particular and national universal in constant tension. Thus spirituals ushered in a long history of white appropriations of black music, ranging from the “slumming” patrons of the Cotton Club, Norman Mailer’s “white negroes,” to today’s hip hop “whiggers.” All of this goes to show that while the black singing voice harbors moments of value, as suggested in Barrett’s scheme, it can hardly be construed as a purely authentic force, particularly once delocalized and offered up for national and/or international consumption. **The “soul,” and by extension “humanity,” of black subjects, therefore, is often imbricated in white mainstream culture, customarily reflecting an awareness of this very entanglement.**

#### Afrofuturism relies on a grammar of futurity which assumes a chronopolitical landscape in which blackness has agency. This naïve simulation allows whiteness to predetermine and maintain predictable market futures.

**Eshun 2003** (Kodwo Eshun, Writer/Filmaker, MA in English, “Further Considerations on Afrofuturism” pubished in *The New Centennial Review* <http://muse.jhu.edu.go.libproxy.wakehealth.edu/journals/new_centennial_review/v003/3.2eshun.html>)

For African artists, there were good reasons for disenchantment with futurism. When Nkrumah was deposed in Ghana in 1966, it signalled the collapse of the first attempt to build the USAF. The combination of colonial revenge and popular discontent created sustained hostility towards the planned utopias of African socialism. For the rest of the century, African intellectuals adopted variations of the position that Homi Bhabha (1992) **[End Page 288]** termed "melancholia in revolt." This fatigue with futurity carried through to Black Atlantic cultural activists, who, little by little, ceased to participate in the process of building futures. *Imagine the archaeologists as they use their emulators to scroll through the fragile files. In their time, it is a commonplace that the future is a chronopolitical terrain, a terrain as hostile and as treacherous as the past. As the archaeologists patiently sift the twenty-first-century archives, they are amazed by the impact this realization had on these forgotten beings. They are touched by the seriousness of those founding mothers and fathers of Afrofuturism, by the responsibility they showed towards the not-yet, towards becoming.* **Control through Prediction** Fast forward to the early twenty-first century. A cultural moment when digitopian futures are routinely invoked to hide the present in all its unhappiness. In this context, inquiry into production of futures becomes fundamental, rather than trivial. The field of Afrofuturism does not seek to deny the tradition of countermemory. Rather, it aims to extend that tradition by reorienting the intercultural vectors of Black Atlantic temporality towards the proleptic as much as the retrospective. It is clear that power now operates predictively as much as retrospectively. Capital continues to function through the dissimulation of the imperial archive, as it has done throughout the last century. Today, however, power also functions through the envisioning, management, and delivery of reliable futures. In the colonial era of the early to middle twentieth century, avant-gardists from Walter Benjamin to Frantz Fanon revolted in the name of the future against a power structure that relied on control and representation of the historical archive. Today, the situation is reversed. The powerful employ futurists and draw power from the futures they endorse, thereby condemning the disempowered to live in the past. The present moment is stretching, slipping for some into yesterday, reaching for others into tomorrow. **[End Page 289] SF Capital** Power now deploys a mode the critic Mark Fisher (2000) calls *SF* (science fiction) *capital.* SF capital is the synergy, the positive feedback between future-oriented media and capital. The alliance between cybernetic futurism and "New Economy" theories argues that information is a direct generator of economic value. Information about the future therefore circulates as an increasingly important commodity. It exists in mathematical formalizations such as computer simulations, economic projections, weather reports, futures trading, think-tank reports, consultancy papers—and through informal descriptions such as science-fiction cinema, science-fiction novels, sonic fictions, religious prophecy, and venture capital. Bridging the two are formal-informal hybrids, such as the global scenarios of the professional market futurist. Looking back at the media generated by the computer boom of the 1990s, it is clear that the effect of the futures industry—defined here as the intersecting industries of technoscience, fictional media, technological projection, and market prediction—has been to fuel the desire for a technology boom. Given this context, it would be naïve to understand science fiction, located within the expanded field of the futures industry, as merely prediction into the far future, or as a utopian project for imagining alternative social realities. Science fiction might better be understood, in Samuel R. Delany's statement, as offering "a significant distortion of the present" (*Last Angel of History* 1995). To be more precise, science fiction is neither forward-looking nor utopian. Rather, in William Gibson's phrase, science fiction is a means through which to preprogram the present (cited in Eshun 1998). Looking back at the genre, it becomes apparent that science fiction was never concerned with the future, but rather with engineering feedback between its preferred future and its becoming present. Hollywood's 1990s love for sci-tech fictions, from *The Truman Show* to *The Matrix,* from *Men in Black* to *Minority Report,* can therefore be seen as product-placed visions of the reality-producing power of computer networks, which in turn contribute to an explosion in the technologies they hymn. As New Economy ideas take hold, virtual futures generate capital. A subtle oscillation between prediction and control is being engineered in **[End Page 290]** which successful or powerful descriptions of the future have an increasing ability to draw us towards them, to command us to make them flesh. **The Futures Industry** Science fiction is now a research and development department within a futures industry that dreams of the prediction and control of tomorrow. Corporate business seeks to manage the unknown through decisions based on scenarios, while civil society responds to future shock through habits formatted by science fiction. Science fiction operates through the power of falsification, the drive to rewrite reality, and the will to deny plausibility, while the scenario operates through the control and prediction of plausible alternative tomorrows. Both the science-fiction movie and the scenario are examples of cybernetic futurism that talks of things that haven't happened yet in the past tense. In this case, futurism has little to do with the Italian and Russian avant-gardes; rather, these approaches seek to model variation over time by oscillating between anticipation and determinism. *Imagine the All-African Archaeological Program sweeping the site with their chronometers. Again and again, they sift the ashes. Imagine the readouts on their portables, indicators pointing to the dangerously high levels of hostile projections. This area shows extreme density of dystopic forecasting, levels that, if accurate, would have rendered the archaeologists' own existence impossible. The AAAP knows better: such statistical delirium reveals the fervid wish dreams of the host market.* **Market Dystopia** If global scenarios are descriptions that are primarily concerned with making futures safe for the market, then Afrofuturism's first priority is to recognize that Africa increasingly exists as the object of futurist projection. African social reality is overdetermined by intimidating global scenarios, doomsday economic projections, weather predictions, medical reports on AIDS, and life-expectancy forecasts, all of which predict decades of immiserization. These powerful descriptions of the future demoralize us; they command us to bury our heads in our hands, to groan with sadness. Commissioned by multinationals and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), these developmental futurisms function as the other side of the corporate utopias that make the future safe for industry. Here, we are seduced not by smiling faces staring brightly into a screen; rather, we are menaced by predatory futures that insist the next 50 years will be hostile. Within an economy that runs on SF capital and market futurism, Africa is always the zone of the absolute dystopia. There is always a reliable trade in market projections for Africa's socioeconomic crises. Market dystopias aim to warn against predatory futures, but always do so in a discourse that aspires to unchallengeable certainty.

#### Their performance forces empathetic identification which makes privileged bodies take the positionality of blackness in order to make your performance valuable- Makes black bodies commodities in White economies- Mann’13

{Regis Marlene; Phd from UC Riverside; Advisor(s):Edwards, EricaCommittee: Yamamoto, Traise, Nunley, Vorris; “Unsung, Unwavering: Nineteenth-Century Black Women's Epistemologies and the Liberal Problematic” UC Riverside Electronic Theses and Dissertations Pg 36-37; https://escholarship.org/uc/item/72m46234 }

Much of this also coincides with an earlier conversation between James and Aunt Abby in which the former recalls overhearing Frado sobbing in despair in the family barn. James proceeds to ventriloquize Frado’s bitter, suicidal rant before, in an abrupt shift, he informs his aunt that “I took the opportunity to combat the notions she seemed to entertain respecting the loneliness of her condition and want of sympathizing friends” (40; emphasis added). During the course of the remembered conversation, James positions the cruelty of his mother as the exception rather than the rule at the North, and declares that Frado surely “might hope for better things in the future” (ibid). In Scenes of Subjection, Saidiya Hartman usefully critiques such **processes of empathetic identification**, the **slippery politics of which reinscribes an unequal set of power relations along racial lines**. According to Hartman, **empathy installs a dynamic predicated upon a “phantasmic vehicle of identification,” a substitution contingent upon the disappearing, or invisibility of the racialized object**. Put another way, **interracial empathy “requires that the white body be positioned in the place of the black body in order to make this suffering visible and intelligible”** (19). Within the space of Wilson’s novel, **Frado’s** **striking claim that “No one cares for me [,] only to get my work”** only **accrues meaning via its displacement by** James’ subsequent **mediation and opportunistic shoring up of white liberal subjectivity and abolitionism**. When **James** later **discloses that “Having spoken these words of comfort**, I rose with the resolution that **if I recovered** my health I would take her home with me,” **one** indeed **wonders, comfort for whom**? In fact, **Frado remains voiceless for the entire interlude. Her understanding of (**black) **death as a site of resistive possibility**—“Why can’t I die? Oh, what have I to live for?” she cries—**is reduced to juvenile ignorance. Making visible the “ambivalent,” “repressive” qualities as well as the “facile intimacy” enabled by the empathy of which** Hartman theorizes, **James’ relationship** with Frado **demonstrates precisely how** black **captive bodies** (enslaved or free) **persistently serve as fungible commodities for white economies, material and ideological** (Hartman 19).

#### Black positionality renders their notions of resistance incoherent. Blackness can only be the total disconfiguration of civil society

Wilderson 2007 [Frank B., “The Prison Slave as Hegemony’s Silent Scandal” in *Warfare in the American Homeland* ed. Joy James, p. 31-2]

Slavery is the great leveler of the black subjects positionality. The black American subject does not generate historical categories of entitlement, sover­eignty, and immigration for the record. We are "off the map" with respect to the cartography that charts civil society's semiotics; we have a past but not a heri­tage. To the data-generating demands of the Historical Axis, we present a vir­tual blank, much like that which the Khoisan presented to the Anthropological Axis. This places us in a structurally impossible position, one that is outside the articulations of hegemony. However, it also places hegemony in a structurally impossible position because—and this is key—our presence works back on the grammar of hegemony and threatens it with incoherence. If every subject— even-the most massacred among them, Indians—is required to have analogs within the nations structuring narrative, and the experience of one subject on whom the nations order of wealth was built is without analog, then that sub­jects presence destabilizes all other analogs. Fanon writes, "Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder."12 If we take him at his word, then we must accept that no other body functions in the Imaginary, the Symbolic, or the Real so completely as a repository of complete disorder as the black body. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Real, for in its magnetizing of bullets the black body functions as the map of gra­tuitous violence, through which civil society is possible— namely, those bodies for which violence is, or can be, contingent. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Symbolic, for blackness in America generates no categories for the chromosome of history and no data for the categories of im­migration or sovereignty. It is an experience without analog—a past without a heritage. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Imaginary, for "whoever says 'rape' says Black" (Fanon), whoever says "prison" says black (Sexton), and whoever says "aids" says black—the "Negro is a phobogenic object."13 Indeed, it means all those things: a phobogenic object, a past without a heritage, the map of gratuitous violence, and a program of complete disorder. Whereas this realization is, and should be, cause for alarm, it should not be cause for lament or, worse, disavowal—not at least, for a true revolutionary or for a truly revolutionary movement such as prison abolition. If a social move­ment is to be neither social-democratic nor Marxist in terms of structure of political desire, then it should grasp the invitation to assume the positionality of subjects of social death. If we are to be honest with ourselves, we must admit that the "Negro" has been inviting whites, as well as civil society's junior part­ners, to the dance of social death for hundreds of years, but few have wanted to learn the steps. They have been, and remain today—even in the most antiracist movements, such as the prison abolition movement—invested elsewhere. This is not to say that all oppositional political desire today is pro-white, but it is usually antiblack, meaning that it will not dance with death. Black liberation, as a prospect, makes radicalism more dangerous to the United States. This is not because it raises the specter of an alternative polity (such as socialism or community control of existing resources), but because its condition of possibility and gesture of resistance function as a negative dialec­tic: a politics of refusal and a refusal to affirm, a "program of complete disorder." One must embrace its disorder, its incoherence, and allow oneself to be elabo­rated by it if, indeed, ones politics are to be underwritten by a desire to take down this country. If this is not the desire that underwrites ones politics, then through what strategy of legitimation is the word "prison" being linked to the word "abolition"? What are this movements lines of political accountability? There is nothing foreign, frightening, or even unpracticed about the embrace of disorder and incoherence. The desire to be embraced, and elaborated, by dis­order and incoherence is not anathema in and of itself. No one, for example, has ever been known to say, "Gee-whiz, if only my orgasms would end a little sooner, or maybe not come at all." Yet few so-called radicals desire to be em­braced, and elaborated, by the disorder and incoherence of blackness—and the state of political movements in the United States today is marked by this very Negrophobogenisis: "Gee-whiz, if only black rage could be more coherent, or maybe not come at all." Perhaps there is something more terrifying about the foy of black than there is in the joy of sex (unless one is talking sex with a Negro). Perhaps coalitions today prefer to remain in-orgasmic in the face of civil society—with hegemony as a handy prophylactic, just in case. If through this stasis or paralysis they try to do the work of prison abolition, the work will fail, for it is always work from a position of coherence (i.e., the worker) on behalf of a position of incoherence of the black subject, or prison slave. In this way, social formations on the left remain blind to the contradictions of coalitions between workers and slaves. They remain coalitions operating within the logic of civil society and function less as revolutionary promises than as crowding y out scenarios of black antagonisms, simply feeding our frustration. Whereas the positionality of the worker (whether a factory worker demand­ing a monetary wage, an immigrant, or a white woman demanding a social wage) gestures toward the reconfiguration of civil society, the positionality of the black subject (whether a prison slave or a prison slave-in-waiting) gestures toward the disconfiguration of civil society. From the coherence of civil so­ciety, the black subject beckons with the incoherence of civil war, a war that re­claims blackness not as a positive value but as a politically enabling site, to quote Fanon, of "absolute dereliction." It is a "scandal" that rends civil society asun­der. Civil war, then, becomes the unthought, but never forgotten, understudy of hegemony. It is a black specter waiting in the wings, an endless antagonism that cannot be satisfied (via reform or reparation) but that must, nonetheless, be pursued to the death.

#### Performative agency can only ever render the slave law’s violence *inapplicable* to the particular space of the affirmative, but not *inoperable,* which is key

Sexton 10 (Jared Sexton, Director of African American Studies at UC Irvine, 2010, “People-of-Color-Blindness: Notes on the Afterlife of Slavery”, pages 34-37)

In pursuit of her thesis, Hartman challenges the prevailing modes of historical writing about slavery, including the sort of folkloric ethnography for which Abrahams gained an international scholarly reputation. Hartman extends the work of Hayden White (in his Metahistory and Tropics of Discourse) in reading the text of Abrahams’s 1992 Singing the Master as typical of the pastoral genre that emplots history as comic romance. “When history is emplotted in the comic mode,” she suggests, “its mode of historical explanation tends to be organicist and its ideological implications conservative.”18 Abrahams celebrates the capacities of the slave to subvert the regime through her signifying beyond the master’s awareness and comprehension, but Hartman demonstrates how this celebration relies upon an erasure of the structural violence, the hardly discernible terror, of compelled performance. Mbembe thus defends Abrahams’s American pastoral against Hartman’s criticism when he mobilizes the former as support for the idea that in spite of the terror and the symbolic sealing off of the slave, he or she maintains alternative perspectives toward time, work, and self. This is the second paradoxical element of the plantation world as a manifestation of the state of exception. Treated as if he or she no longer existed except as a mere tool and instrument of production, the slave nevertheless is able to draw almost any object, instrument, language, or gesture into a performance and then stylize it. Breaking with uprootedness and the pure world of things of which he or she is but a fragment, the slave is able to demonstrate the protean capabilities of the human bond through music and the very body that was supposedly possessed by another.19 Mbembe’s conjectural phrasing—asserting a supposed possession of the body rather than a political-juridical order that enforces its actuality—has the effect of diminishing the violence of slave law in the very scenes of subjection that Hartman shows to be central to “the construction of racial difference and the absolute distinctions of status between free white persons and black captives.”20 It also seeks to discredit the scholarship that operates according to such assumptions. Put slightly differently, it seeks to resurrect the same problematic attributions of “humanity,” “agency,” and “personhood” that Hartman identifies as key components of the racial domination of blacks in “the tragic continuities between slavery and freedom.” Uncritical, and ultimately romantic, ethnographic claims, like those Mbembe draws upon, about the slave’s capacity and capability for “stylization” are theoretically untenable since the publication of Scenes of Subjection over a decade ago. I am talking broadly here about the sort of claims about slavery that rely on phrases like “In spite of the terror” and “ . . . nevertheless. . . .”21 This is not likely evidence of oversight or lack of rigor, but rather misrecognition of the theoretical level at which Hartman’s critique is posed. Hortense Spillers limns something like this critical distinction in her landmark 1996 essay on psychoanalysis and race, “ ‘All the Things You Could Be by Now, If Sigmund Freud’s Wife Was Your Mother.’ ”22 Midway through that study, Spillers quotes Jürgen Habermas from his 1968 Knowledge and Human Interests: “A critically mediated knowledge of laws cannot through reflection alone render the law itself inoperative, but it can render it inapplicable.” Her point will not be to endorse straightaway “Habermas’s self-reflection, in which case the laws are operative but do not apply,” both because it “appears to be predicated on the agency of self-knowing” that the Du Boisian figure of double consciousness significantly complicates and because, pace Marx (and, in his own social-democratic way, Habermas too), it is not enough simply “to see with greater clarity what the problem is.”23 Yet Spillers finds useful the conceptual discrimination between the domain of the operation of the law (in which it is historically determinate of social, political, and economic existence) and the domain of the application of the law (in which it solicits the consent of the governed or, in another parlance, the identification of the dominated position). A law may be or may become inapplicable, enabling an array of subversion and resistance at the level of infrapolitics or, better, providing preconditions for effective opposition, but that does not thereby make it inoperative—maybe not even a little bit. Ultimately, it is a question of evaluative criteria: are we judging the significance of a practice based on whether or to what extent it renders a law inapplicable or inoperative? One would think that the inevitably political dimension of analysis holds the latter firmly in place as its horizon.24 But even the inapplicability of the law cannot be safely assumed, given not only the complications of double consciousness for the slave but also the obscure versatility of slave law’s functioning. Again, Hartman is instructive: what appears in the first instance to be evidence of an agency that indexes the law’s inapplicability for the slave may upon closer scrutiny reveal a convoluted form of consent. There are questions of the operation and application of slave law for the free as well. Regarding the former, we note the fact that “the absolute submission mandated by law was not simply that of slave to his or her owner, but the submission of the enslaved before all whites.”25 The latter group is better termed all nonblacks (or, less economically, the unequally arrayed category of nonblackness), because it is racial blackness as a necessary condition for enslavement that matters most, rather than whiteness as a sufficient condition for freedom. The structural position of the Indian slaveholder—or, for that matter, the smattering of free black slaveholders in the United States or the slaveholding mulatto elite in the Caribbean—is a case in point.26 Freedom from the rule of slave law requires only that one be considered nonblack, whether that nonblack racial designation be “white” or “Indian” or, in the rare case, “Oriental”—this despite the fact that each of these groups has at one point or another labored in conditions similar to or contiguous with enslaved African-derived groups. In other words, it is not labor relations, but property relations that are constitutive of slavery.

#### Performativity can’t account for the structural positioning of blackness—affect is structured by an antiblack violence that forecloses the recuperative possibility of performing identity

Aranke 13

(Sampada, PhD Candidate in Performance Studies at University of California at Davis, “Fred Hampton's Murder and the Coming Revolution”, Trans-Scripts?, <http://www.humanities.uci.edu/collective/hctr/trans-scripts/2013/2013_03_09.pdf>)

Whereas Phelan insists that performance is excessive expenditure that "saves nothing", for Roach, this excessive expenditure is not the nature of performance, but in fact the nature of violence. He insists that "violence is the performance of waste"— excessive, "because to be fully demonstrative, to make its point, it must spend things". This spending is "never senseless but always meaningful" (41). At first glance, it is almost as if Roach replaced Phelan's definition of "performance" with the word "violence"; but the theoretical implications of Roach's argument leads us to new understandings of how race and affect are produced by violence. If we take that which is excessive as constitutive of how we conceptualize both performance and violence, then the indication that some subjects come into being precisely through violent acts has striking theoretical implications, especially for black subjects, which is of main concern for both Roach's analysis and mine. Both aesthetics and violence "exist as forms of cultural expression" wherein the question of blackness is the auction block of the world (41). This is where Roach's definition of race occurs at a structural level, rather than that of identity. For Phelan, identity is marked by and through performance. Whether in their ephemerality or their repetition, representational strategies (performance's excessive expenditure) charge affect in the service of performatively engaging bodies. This affective charge mobilizes that which is not fully redeemable, understandable, legible, or visible as an indication of how bodies are marked through performance. What I find most generative in Roach's work is his insistence that some bodies — in his case and in mine, black bodies — are not marked, they are structurally positioned as affect is structured by that very antiblack violence that forecloses the recuperative possibility of performing identities and instead circulates performance as violent affirmation of the structural captivity of blackness.that which is always already saturated with violent meaning. Affect, here, takes an unprecedented turn away from that which has potential for either hegemonic or performative rupture, toward a more striking accusation: that

#### Black feminism is a modern erasure of the violence of the middle passage. Chattel Slavery foreclosed the possibility of black subjectivity beyond ontological blackness- 3 Warrants.

Hodges, 12

(Asia Nichole Hodges, UC Irvine, School of Humanities, Undergraduate Critical Theory Conference, 2012, “Mama’s Baby & the Black Gender Problematic,” https://www.academia.edu/2027925/Mamas\_Baby\_and\_the\_Black\_Gender\_Problematic,)

In the spirit of black feminism, though its ensemble of questions cannot help me here, I must occasion an explanation of black positionality that accounts for the manner of existential negation and the modes of violence which position me, moving beyond the concerns with black patriarchy. Theoretically, antiblackness does not only lend itself to an argument against a gendered understanding of my condition, it also offers an opportunity for a more nuanced understanding of gender itself. This begs the question, what does a genderless black subject help us to understand that a more complicated rendering (or gendering) of the black subject would obscure? In my view, black political thought lags here, unable to describe its condition without relegating the particularities of the female black to the abyss. Moreover, it seems the black female labors in service of civil society in ways we have yet to fully understand. Spillers supports an argument for the necessity of this work in building a more robust theoretical foundation for black political thought, and afropessimism could be our point of departure.

For Wilderson, there is a line of recognition and incorporation. Above it are human beings, civil society made up of white men and women, and below it is the black in absolute dereliction, a concept he draws from Frantz Fanon writings on the black condition. I mean to suggest that the distinction we’re looking for under the line of recognition and incorporation is not “man” and “woman”, which Wilderson would reject, but that is not to say there is no distinction to be made whatsoever. It seems we may too hastily disregard the possibility for distinction for three reasons, described loosely as outlined by Spillers: 1) there was no distinction made between male and female slaves on the ships, 2) men and women performed the same hard, physical labor and lastly, 3) gender is a category requiring the symbolic integrity from which the black is barred. I am unable to go into each in detail here, but the validity of these points of contention is not what is in question for Spillers. The distinctions made on ships or on fields are not the only sites we should scourer for insight into the black gender problematic, and evidence that captives are not regarded as “men” and “women,” like their captors, is elucidating but not explanatory.

## SemioCapitalism Links/Academy K

#### Refuse the syntax trap the academy and debate produces for the black body one that tricks us into telling stories that engages in a mere romance of resistance reinforces the ability of the killer to define terms of our positionality  - Hartman’8

{Saidiya; African American and American literature and cultural history; slavery; law and literature; and performance studies B. A., Wesleyan University (1984); Ph.D., Yale University (1992). Professor Hartman's major fields of interest are African American and American literature and cultural history, slavery, law and literature, and performance studies. She is on the editorial board of Callaloo. She has been a Fulbright, Rockefeller, Whitney Oates, and University of California President's Fellow. She is the author of Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth Century America(Oxford University Press,1997) and Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route(Farrar,Straus and Giroux, 2007). She has published essays on photography, film and feminism. She is beginning a new project on photography and ethics.; “Venus in Two Acts” A History of Failure; Small Axe, Number 26 (Volume 12, Number 2), June 2008, pp. 1-14 (Article); Duke University Pressed Accessed on Project muse; Pg 9-10}

**I chose not to tell a story** about Venus **because to do so would** have **trespas**sed **the boundaries of the archive. History pledges to be faithful to** the **limits of fact, evidence, and archive, even as those dead certainties are produced by terror.** I wanted to write a romance that exceeded the fictions of history—the rumors, scandals, lies, invented evidence, fabricated confessions, volatile facts, impossible metaphors, chance events, and fantasies that constitute the archive and determine what can be said about the past. I longed to write a new story, one unfettered by the constraints of the legal documents and exceeding the restatement and transpositions, which comprised my strategy for disordering and transgressing the protocols of the archive and the authority of its statements and which enabled me to augment and intensify its fictions. **Finding an aesthetic mode suitable or adequate to rendering the lives** of these two girls**, deciding how to arrange the lines on the page, allowing the narrative track to be rerouted** or broken **by** the sounds of **memory**, the keens and howls and dirges unloosened on the deck, and **trying to unsettle** the **arrangements of power by imaging Venus and her friend outside** the **terms of statements and judgments** that **banished them from** the **category of** the **human and decreed their lives waste**31—**all of which was beyond what could be thought within the parameters of history. The romance of resistance that I failed to narrate** and the event of love **that I refused to describe raise** important **questions regarding what it means to think historically about matters still contested in the present and about life eradicated by the protocols of intellectual disciplines. What is required to imagine a free state or to tell an impossible story**? Must **the poetics of a free state anticipate the event and imagine life after man, rather than wait** for the ever-retreating moment of Jubilee? **Must the future of abolition be first performed on the page? By retreating from the story** of these two girls, **was I simply upholding the rules of the historical guild and the “manufactured certainties” of their killers, and by doing so, hadn’t I sealed their fate**?32 **Hadn’t I too consigned them to oblivion? In the end, was it better to leave them as I found them?**

#### They maintain a relation between them and you in which you consume their advocacy and simply maintains the same order of capitalism. They do this by consuming the sign that their case signifies. While they might say that their case is unique, it is still just a way of their winning the round and just becoming a good part of the order. They’ve run the same role of the ballot, same plan, or same narrative every round for the judge to consume and vote for.

Jean Baudrillard in 70’ (21, The Consumer Society) writes,

**Consumption is** neither a material practice, nor a phenomenology of “affluence.” It is **not defined by the food we eat, the clothes we wear**,**[nor] the car we drive**, nor by the visual and oral substance of images or messages**, but in the organization of all this as signifying substance.** Consumption is the virtual totality of all objects and messages presently constituted in a more or less coherent discourse. **Consumption, in so far as it is meaningful, is a systematic act of the manipulation of signs.** The traditional object-symbol (tools, furniture, even the house), mediator of a real relation or of a lived situation, clearly bears the trace, in its substance and in its form, of the conscious and unconscious dynamics of this relation, and is therefore not arbitrary. **This object, which is bound, impregnated, and heavy with connotation, yet actualized through its relation of interiority and transitivity with the human gesture or fact** (collective or individual**), is not consumed.** In order to become object of consumption, the object must become sign; that is, in some way it must become external to a relation that it now only signifies, a-signed arbitrarily and non-coherently to this concrete relation, yet **[It] obtain[s]**ing **its coherence , and consequently its meaning, from an abstract and systematic relation to all other object-signs. It is in this way that it becomes “personalized,”** and enters in the series, etc.: **it is never consumed in its materiality, but in its difference.** The conversion of the object to a systematized status of signs entails a concomitant modification in the human relation, which becomes a relation of consumption. That is to say, human relations tend to be consumed (in the double sense of the word: to be “fulfilled,” and to be “annulled”) in and through objects, which become the necessary mediation and, rapidly, the substitutive sign, the alibi, of the relation. We can see that what is consumed are not objects but the relation itself – signified and absent, included and excluded at the same time – it is the idea of the relation that is consumed in the series of objects which manifests it. This is no longer a lived relation: it is abstracted and annulled in an object-sign where it is consumed.

#### Whites eat this shit up - Farley’97

{Anthony P; prof at Boston college law school; “The Black Body as a fetish object” published in the Oregon Law Review originally presented at the Yale University Critical Race Theory Conference pgs. 465-466}

Looking through *The Bluest Eye,* we can see the way in which **whiteness** first **requires a black presence, and then must mask its requirement**: all of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed And all of our beauty which was hers first and which she gave to us. All of us- all who knew her- felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. **We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness made us believe we were eloquent. Her poverty kept us generous.** Even **her waking dreams we used- to silence our own nightmares**. And **she let us, and thereby deserved our contempt. We honed our egos on her, padded our characters with her frailty, and yawned in the fantasy of our strength**. That this strength is, **at some level a fantasy is borne out by the fact that it needs such constant reassurance**. James Baldwin explains that the fantasy of “race” must be critically examined: For, if it trouble don’t last always, as the preacher tells us neither does power, and it is on the fact or hope or the myth of power that that identity which calls itself white has always seemed to depend. That **strength is produced by the colorline by the division of the worthy from the unworthy on the basis of race**. A series of **major and minor aggressions and their attendant pleasures and humiliations**, which **are** sometimes **direct and** sometimes **voyeuristic, produce this division**.

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Whereas Phelan insists that performance is excessive expenditure that "saves nothing", for Roach, this excessive expenditure is not the nature of performance, but in fact the nature of violence. He insists that "violence is the performance of waste"— excessive, "because to be fully demonstrative, to make its point, it must spend things". This spending is "never senseless but always meaningful" (41). At first glance, it is almost as if Roach replaced Phelan's definition of "performance" with the word "violence"; but the theoretical implications of Roach's argument leads us to new understandings of how race and affect are produced by violence. If we take that which is excessive as constitutive of how we conceptualize both performance and violence, then the indication that some subjects come into being precisely through violent acts has striking theoretical implications, especially for black subjects, which is of main concern for both Roach's analysis and mine. Both aesthetics and violence "exist as forms of cultural expression" wherein the question of blackness is the auction block of the world (41). This is where Roach's definition of race occurs at a structural level, rather than that of identity. For Phelan, identity is marked by and through performance. Whether in their ephemerality or their repetition, representational strategies (performance's excessive expenditure) charge affect in the service of performatively engaging bodies. This affective charge mobilizes that which is not fully redeemable, understandable, legible, or visible as an indication of how bodies are marked through performance. What I find most generative in Roach's work is his insistence that some bodies — in his case and in mine, black bodies — are not marked, they are structurally positioned as affect is structured by that very antiblack violence that forecloses the recuperative possibility of performing identities and instead circulates performance as violent affirmation of the structural captivity of blackness.that which is always already saturated with violent meaning. Affect, here, takes an unprecedented turn away from that which has potential for either hegemonic or performative rupture, toward a more striking accusation: that

## Settler Colonialism Link

#### Afrofuturism traces its roots to an article written by a white guy trying to extend his colonial exploration into Black scholarship while homogenizing anything that doesn’t take a futurist standpoint – the impact is they re-entrench a Western exclusive mentality

Rose 14  
(Marika Rose, Winchester University, Department of Theology, Religion, and Philosophy. “The uncomfortable origins of ‘Afrofuturism’” 18 November 2014, accessed 12 February 2017, <https://itself.blog/2014/11/18/the-uncomfortable-origins-of-afrofuturism/> cVs)

The term ‘Afrofuturism’ was coined by Mark Dery in his article ‘Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose’. I finally got round to reading the piece recently; as you might infer, it’s not my area of expertise, so it’s more than possible that someone has made these observations better than me, before me. But I thought it was worth writing about: firstly because I was so taken aback by how uncomfortable it was to read, as a white person who’s minimally aware of the many perils that beset the work of white people like me writing about black culture; and secondly because after a throwaway comment I made on Twitter, Mark Dery took it upon himself to sealion me, and demand that I explain in detail my critique of his work: I’m doubtful as to the sincerity of this demand – the Panopticon is, after all, a tool of discipline rather than reflection. But as a scholar of Žižek, one thing I’ve learned is that sometimes the most ethical thing to do is simply to take a person at their word. ‘Black to the Future’ opens with a conundrum: ‘Why do so few African Americans write science fiction, a genre whose close encounter with the Other – the stranger in a strange land – would seem uniquely suited to the concerns of African-American novelists?’ Why is it that African Americans are not producing the sort of culture that Mark Dery, a white guy, thinks they should be producing? Dery does at least realise that if there’s an answer to this question he can’t figure it out on his own, and so the bulk of the article consists of interviews with Samuel Delany, Greg Tate and Tricia Rose. Most of the words are not Dery’s own. It’s not clear how closely the text itself hews to the original interviews, but on the account that Dery himself gives, the bulk of the analysis the article contains is Delany’s, Tate’s and Rose’s. They’re fascinating, smart, insightful interviewees, with a lot to say about the relationship between black culture and science fiction. Dery? Not so much. For someone who is so sure about his competence to assess the contributions of African American science fiction, Dery is remarkably unreflective about his own position in relation to the people he is interviewing. African American culture which engages with technological, sci-fi and futuristic imagery and concepts is a ‘largely unexplored psychogeography’ towards whose exploration Dery himself is taking ‘a first, faltering step’. That’s right: Dery, a white guy, is positioning himself as bold explorer into a largely unknown region populated by people of colour. A voyage into the heart of darkness, if you will. This ‘largely unexplored’ region is so unknown, so previously unthought, that Dery must appoint as his native guides an author and literary critic (Delany), a musician, producer and cultural critic (Tate) and a Professor of Africana Studies who is ‘currently at work on a book on rap music and the politics of black cultural practice’ (Rose). Dery is right, however, that his first steps into this region are faltering. His unfailingly gracious interviewees spent a truly remarkable amount of time gently correcting the assumptions which underlie the questions he asks them. It’s excruciating: Dery: One thing that intrigued me about your brief essay [on cyberpunk] is that you made no mention of the orbital Rastafarians in Gibson’s Neuromancer. I find that curious. Delany: Why should I have mentioned them? Dery: For me, a white reader, the Rastas … are intriguing in that they hold forth the promise of a holistic relationship with technology. Delany: You’ll forgive me if, as a black reader, I didn’t leap up to proclaim this passing presentation of a powerless and wholly nonoppositional set of black dropouts, by a Virginia-born white writer, as the coming of the black millennium in science fiction; but maybe that’s just a black thang…Your question is indicative of precisely what I was speaking about in the essay you cited: the interpretive idiocies that arise as soon as a book is lifted out of its genre and cut loose from the tradition that precedes and produces it. Dery: Why, then, would black youth be alienated by SF signifiers for high technology? Delany: The immediate answer is simply that the sign language is more complicated than you’re giving it credit for. Dery: Wasn’t there an elitist, if not crypto-right, slant to [science fiction] literature from the very beginning? Delany: Once again, that sounds to me like a simple historical misunderstanding about the history and tradition of science fiction … I’m not even sure what you could be referring to. Dery: Why has there been so little overtly gay SF? Delany: There is, of course, a whole bibliography full of gay science fiction … And there is a considerable gay fandom …. There is at least on annual gay science fiction convention … And the gay programming that regularly, today, turns up in other science fiction conventions is almost always among the most crowded, standing-room only event. Dery: Why hasn’t the African-American community made more use, either as writers or readers, of science fiction? Tate: I don’t know that that’s necessarily true. Dery: I sometimes wonder if there isn’t an inherent dichotomy in hip-hop between a displaced people’s need to reaffirm a common history and the quintessentially American emphasis on forward motion, effected through technological progress. Don’t these contradictory impulses threaten to tear hip-hop apart? Tate: No, because you can be backward-looking and forward thinking at the same time. It’s clear that Dery simply hasn’t done the work required to be a good interviewer. He asks his interviewees about areas of culture in which, as they make clear to him, they have no interest or expertise. Many of his questions draw not on Dery’s own observations but on work that has been done by other people. The article ends with the final interview: Dery writes no summary, and makes no attempt to sketch out a map of the terrain in whose exploration he describes himself as a pioneer. What’s interesting about the article, one of Dery’s best known works and the reason why his name is so omnipresent in discussions of Afrofuturism – a phenomenon which he both names and claims to have discovered – is precisely how little work he does. A great deal of intellectual labour is visible in the essay, but almost all of it is undertaken by Delany, Tate and Rose, who not only tolerate Dery’s ill-informed and – let’s be honest – occasionally racist questions, but offer smart and insightful accounts of the areas in which they are, after all, experts. There’s so much in here that I want to reflect on, to digest, and to be formed by intellectually. But I can’t cite this work on the part of Delany, Tate and Rose without citing Dery himself. What’s worst about ‘Black to the Future’ is that Dery has found a way to identify an area of black culture, declare it unknown territory, and, by appropriating the labour of black creators of both culture and critical reflection on that culture, has ensured that this terrain has come to bear the name that he chose for it.

1. Wilderson, III, Frank B., Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Spillers, Hortense. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe."*Diacritics*. (1987): 66. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid, 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1i3000.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Spillers, 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)