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#### The three pillars of social death define the slave nature of Blackness explaining how Blackness is always situated as an object of accumulation and fungibility in civil society excluded from humanity

Wilderson ‘18 – Prof of Drama and African American Studies @ UC Irvine (Frank B. III, “Afro-Pessimism and Friendship in South Africa: An Interview with Frank B. Wilderson III,” Interview from “Ties that Bind: Race and the Politics of Friendship in South Africa” by Shannon Walsh, Wits University Press, April 2018, page)//Amogh

SW So this dualism is fundamental to social life? There always must be a slave necessary? FW Yes. I know that it is a very controversial point to make. Patterson says, every *socius* has to understand itself. In order to understand itself, it needs a psychological grounding wire. And that psychic grounding wire is a slave in its midst. Patterson sees slavery as kind of a necessary reproduction so that, if you’re talking about the Choctaw Indians before Columbus, or people in the Amazon, or the Ashanti before contact with the Portuguese. ... Slavery is necessary to this psychic coherence of a socius. What’s interesting about this is for me—not for cultural nationalists, not for Afro-centrists, not for integrationists, but for me—Blackness and slaveness cannot be dis-imbricated. This is where Patterson might say I’ve bastardized his ideas. But I’ve argued this; I haven’t simply asserted it. **You can’t know yourself in relation to yourself**. You can only know yourself in relation to those beings that are adjacent to you, and those beings that are completely opposed to your identity. That’s how you create knowledge. The slave is necessary to the creation of knowledge about collectivity. For the rst time in the long durée of what we call the Human, **slavery has become not just an experience** that some people go through, **but the actual dynamic of a certain position**. Despite where [Achille] Mbembe would like us to take his work, *On the Postcolony* actually says more about Africa as a *slave estate* than as a colony. His work has actually done a lot more than he intended, just as Patterson’s did a lot more than he intended. As Jared Sexton says, if Africa and slaveness cannot be dis-imbricated, and Blackness and slaveness *cannot* be dis-imbricated, then we’ve got a real problem. **It’s a problem that** must be addressed, but **cannot be redressed**. The reason it cannot be redressed is because **to redress** it, you have to have coherence, diachronically or synchronically. For it to have coherence diachronically, **you have to be able to point to** the concept of Africa, to **the concept of Blackness prior to slaveness**; a plenitude prior to the condition of natal alienation—which I theorize, by extension, as being *af lial* alienation as well. And I don’t think anyone can do that. The **Dred Scott** decision is just one of many texts that **reminds** people (here it is a message to the lower courts) **that** Black people are guilty a priori not because they did something but because they have, nor have they ever had, any standing as juridical subjects. To work on it synchronically, you’d have to point to a scale of abstraction, whether it’s the psyche, the unconscious, the conscious, the family, the city, the state, or the globe, you have to factor some kind of scale of geographic abstraction where Blackness exists outside of a condition of gratuitous violence. What Marriot is saying is that the Black unconscious is always anchored by this churning of violence. That means that there’s no scale of abstraction in which Blackness actually exists in a state of repose. This is why it is so, so hard for politics of redress to be developed when it comes to the recent spate of ( lmed and reported) murders of Black people. How do you redress a dynamic that subtends the psychic health of the world? SW Okay. That’s interesting. This is what you mean when you say this is an ontological and not an experiential question? Jared Sexton also talks about how we need to see this position of Blackness as a global phenomenon. We don’t need to only look at slavery in relation to the north Atlantic. This is one of the issues when talking about Afro-pessimism in South Africa. Many people get stuck on the idea of the slave, and whether it is useful in the South African context. People struggle with how to think about that, and often go to an abstraction with the term ‘slave’. Can you talk about how you have been thinking about slavery in relation to South Africa, or beyond the north Atlantic? FW The first move that I make is that slavery has to be re-conceptualized so that we take it away from the plantation. We take it out of the temporality of the nineteenth century, and we think about it in terms of its constituent elements. The constituent elements are natal alienation, general dishonor, and gratuitous violence. This is *absolutely* applicable to South Africa. As I indicated, I don’t think that the Marikana massacre would have happened, at least like it happened, if the police were who they were (Black Africans) and the workers were (so- called) colored. I’m not saying that no one would have gotten killed. What I’m saying is that there would be some kind of stoppage, some type of intervention in the psyches of those people pulling the triggers. They would have to momentarily adjust to remind themselves: ‘Oh yeah ... they are slaves also. We *can* kill them.’ And I think that if the workers were white, it wouldn’t have happened at all. What I’m suggesting is that the question of who is a slave, and who is not a slave, and does this slavery look like that slavery, is moving us more towards experience and away from ontology. I think that the importance should be placed on thinking paradigmatically—thinking less about political praxis and more about political ontology. People get tripped up by thinking paradigmatically when it is about Blackness and otherness in a way that they don’t get tripped up in thinking paradigmatically about capitalism and communism. The anxiety quotient is so much higher here, and that’s interesting. I think that the anti-Black psyche a) cuts through geography and b) cuts through time, and it cuts through individuals so that anti-Blackness is the generative mechanism that structures my unconscious and your unconscious. Not that it structures your unconscious and not my unconscious. Marriott says that Black **unconscious is usurped by** the eagle-eyed view of moving toward the light—whiteness—**an**d **understanding that one must garrison oneself against the intrusion of the Black phobic object**. That is as operative in the Black unconscious as it is anywhere else. I think that dynamic was at work during the Marikana massacre. You can slow down that dynamic with a so-called colored person, or someone like Halle Berry. But, then the dynamic picks up again, once it is recognized that ‘oh no, this is Blackened esh, just a little less so’, then it comes up again. It comes up in weird ways, like that person might not be thought of as a Negrophobic object, but rather thought of as a Negrophilic object: someone to possess with passion as opposed to someone to be afraid of and repel with violence. The same dynamic is still there, the so-called colored or bi-racial person in the United States is as fungible as the very dark skinned person, they’re just put to different uses. The fungibility of Blackness allows for the absence of thought, when it comes to what to do with that. Whether it is absence of the thought of what to do with that pleasurably, the absence of the thought of what to do with that violently. It is the absence of thought that is really important here. And the Marikana policemen were implements of that. They are not agents or the beneficiaries of their own aggressivity against Blackness, even though it saturates their psyches in ways similar to White racists.

#### The affirmative is articulated through the grammar of class exploitation and alienation which presupposes a mode of relation and being only possible through direct relations of force waged against black flesh – locating capital as the central matrix of domination commits a ruse of analogy by highlighting the conflictual violence between human subjects which crowds out the slave’s grammar of suffering, indexed at the level of nonbeing

Barber 16 (Daniel Colucciello Barber, researcher at the Humboldt University of Berlin, PhD from Duke University, 2016, “The Creation of Non-Being,” *Rhizomes* Issue 29, footnotes 18 and 20 included in curly braces, modified) gz

[28] This is to name the essential limit of Lazzarato's account as the failure to analyze the ways in which **the domination of capitalism is constituted by the domination of anti-blackness**. In making this claim, I am following Wilderson's argument that "the **privileged subject** of Marxist discourse is a **subaltern** who is approached by variable capital—a wage. In other words, Marxism assumes a subaltern structured by capital, not by white supremacy" (Wilderson 2003: 225). The essential limit of Marxism, he argues, is its theorization of capitalism in terms of "*exploitation* (rather than accumulation and death)" (Wilderson 2003: 234). **Marxism thus begins from and stays within the being of whiteness**, a being whose coherence is premised on the denial of the fact that capital "was kick-started by approaching a particular body (a Black body) with **direct relations of force**, not by approaching a White body with variable capital" (Wilderson 2003: 230).

[29] The position of the worker, in virtue of its raced difference from the position of the slave, asserts a **capacity for analogical relation**—even amidst exploitation—**with the exploiter**. The exploited and the exploiter, despite their asymmetry, **share a being that is made through the denial of blackness**, which is positioned as the slave; **the worker possesses an analogical relation to the owner that the slave does not**. To presume that the slave position can be analogized with the worker position is thus to attribute the latter's analogical capacity to the former, which is **without analogy**. It is to presume an analogy between what is capable of being analogous with what *is not*: **"the ruse of analogy"** (Wilderson 2010: 37).

[30] This means, as well, that **there can be no question of an intersection between separate but equal spheres of class and anti-black racism**, much less of an account that takes up anti-blackness as a means of proceeding toward a supposedly essential antagonism of class. Against such accounts, Wilderson remarks that, within them, "racism is read off the base, as it were, as being derivative of political economy" (Wilderson 2003: 225). On the contrary, **what is essential is anti-black racism**, or the **incommensurability between non-being and being**: class division concerns **relations between analogizable terms** (owner and worker) that, however conflictual or exploitative, **presume a common being**, a being whose making—and being made coherent—**is premised on** (the *denial* of) **the real non-being of the slave**.

[31] All this is to say that **anti-black racial ontology is the condition of *possibility* for the Marxist demand**—central to Lazzarato's own version of autonomist Marxism—**for *being* free from exploitation**. As Christina Sharpe remarks: "**The legal captivity of Africans and their descendants was central to the codification of rights and freedoms for those legally constituted as white and their legally white descendants**. That is, freedoms for those people constituted as white **were and are produced through an other's body legally and otherwise being made to wear unfreedom and to serve as a placeholder for access to the freedoms that are denied the black subject**" (Sharpe 2010: 15). The being of freedom, or the articulation of a free being – that is, *the very link between being and freedom*—is **premised upon a denial of blackness, or non-being**. This is the case even (or especially) when freedom is expressed as a *possibility*, for such possibility—pertaining only to that which has already emerged as being—**cannot articulate that which this emergence denies**. As Saidiya V. Hartman remarks, the "language of freedom no longer becomes that which rescues the slave from his or her former condition, but the site of the **re-elaboration of that condition**" (Hartman and Wilderson 2003: 185).

[32] Freedom names the **modulative, mutational possibilities of being(s)**. Marxist discourse, however innovative, addresses free beings, or the being of freedom. It **leaves unthought non-being**, the reality of which is **logically prior to all being**, and thus to all possibilities of being. It is for this reason that Lazzarato's account of capitalism in terms of debt, while an extremely innovative form of contemporary Marxism, still **fails to articulate the essential antagonism of non-being**.[17] When Lazzarato speaks of the indebted man, of the "we" of debt inheritance, he is speaking of the position that Marxism ascribes to the worker—instead of a capital-work relation we have, in Lazzarato, a credit-debt relation.[18] {18. In fact, Wilderson's analysis and refusal of Marxism's account of the worker **holds just as much for Lazzarato's account of the debtor**. To see this, it is enough to cite an instance of Wilderson's analysis, but in doing so to replace "civil" society with "debt" society, "hegemony" with "communicative control," "worker" with "debtor," and "wages" (or "waged") with "debts" (or "indebted"): "[Debt] society is the terrain where [communicative control] is produced, contested, mapped. And the invitation to participate in [communicative control's] gestures of influence, leadership, and consent is **not extended to the Black subject**. We live in the world, but **exist outside of [debt] society**. This **structurally impossible position** is a paradox because the Black subject, the slave, is **vital to [debt] society's political economy**: ~~s/he~~ [they] **kick-start**s **capital** at its genesis and **rescues it from its over-accumulation crisis** at its end—**Black death is its condition of possibility**. [Debt] society's subaltern, the [debtor], is coded as [indebted], and **[debts] are White**" (Wilderson 2003: 238).} Debt innovatively re-defines the meaning of work, but it **does not change the positionality of the worker**, which remains as the position of the debtor.[19] His critique proceeds in virtue of a link—foreclosed by debt—between being and freedom, without ever articulating that ***the very possibility* of this link is premised on the denial of non-being**, on **the making of blackness as that which is without the possibility of being free**. Lazzarato thereby fails to address how **the being of the worker, now the indebted man, is rendered visible by standing out against the background of (black) flesh**.[20] {20. As Spillers writes: **"before 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—out of West African communities in concern with the African 'middleman,' we regard this **human and social irreparability** as **high crimes against the *flesh***, as the person of African females and African males registered the wounding. If we think of the 'flesh' as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship's hole, fallen, or 'escaped' overboard" (Spillers 1987: 67).}

#### Their arguments about bringing some measure of relief or change constitute cruel optimism --- they rely on a trick of time that retreats to “could be” or “maybe later” --- refusing the blackmail of “doing politics” in a rejection of this trickery – this is not a link from their solvency

**Warren 15** [Calvin K., Assistant Professor of American Studies at George Washington University, “Black Nihilism and the Politics of Hope,” *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Volume 15, Number 1, Spring 2015]

**The politics of hope**, then, **constitutes** what Lauren Berlant would call “**cruel optimism**” for blacks (Berlant 2011). **It bundles certain promises about redress, equality, freedom, justice, and progress into a political object that always lies beyond reach**. **The objective of the Political is to keep blacks in a relation to this political object**—**in an unending pursuit of it.** **This pursuit**, however, **is detrimental because it strengthens the very anti-black system that would pulverize black being**. **The pursuit of the object certainly has an “irrational” aspect to it**, as Farred details, but it is not mere means without expectation; instead, it is a means that undermines the attainment of the impossible object desired. In other words, the pursuit marks a cruel attachment to the means of subjugation and the continued widening of the gap between historical reality and fantastical ideal.

**Black nihilism is a “demythifying” practice, in the Nietzschean vein**, **that uncovers the subjugating strategies of political hope and de-idealizes its fantastical object. Once we denude political hope of its axiological and ethical veneer**, **we see that it operates through certain strategies**: 1) **positing itself as the only alternative** to the problem of anti-blackness, 2) **shielding this alternative from rigorous** historical/philosophical **critique by placing it in an unknown future**, 3) **delimiting the field of action to include only activity** recognized and **legitimated by the Political, and** 4) **demonizing critiques** or different philosophical perspectives.

**The politics of hope masks a particular cruelty under the auspices of “happiness” and “life.” It terrifies with the dread of “no alternative**.” “**Life” itself needs the security of the alternative**, and, through this logic, **life becomes untenable without it**. **Political hope promises to provide this alternative**—a discursive and political organization beyond extant structures of violence and destruction. The construction of the binary “alternative/no-alternative” ensures the hegemony and dominance of political hope within the onto-existential horizon. **The terror of the “no alternative”**—the ultimate space of decay, suffering, and death—**depends on two additional binaries**: “problem/solution” and “action/inaction.” **According to this politics, all problems have solutions**, and hope provides the accessibility and realization of these solutions. **The solution establishes itself as the elimination of “the problem”; the solution**, in fact, **transcends the problem and realizes** Hegel’s aufheben in **its constant attempt to sublate the dirtiness of the “problem” with the pristine being of the solution. No problem is outside the reach of hope’s solution**—every problem is connected to the kernel of its own eradication. **The politics of hope must actively refuse the possibility that the “solution” is**, in fact, **another problem in disguised form; the idea of a “solution” is nothing more than the repetition and disavowal of the problem itself.**

**The solution relies on what we might call the “trick of time” to fortify itself from the deconstruction of its binary**. Because the temporality of hope is a time “not-yet-realized,” **a future tense unmoored from present-tense justifications and pragmatist evidence, the politics of hope cleverly shields its “solutions” from critiques of impossibility or repetition**. **Each insistence that these solutions stand up against the lessons of history or the rigors of analysis is met with the rationale that these solutions are not subject to history or analysis because they do not reside within the horizon of the “past” or “present.”** Put differently, **we can never ascertain the efficacy of the proposed solutions because they escape the temporality of the moment, always retreating to a “not-yet” and “could-be” temporality. This “trick” of time offers a promise of possibility that can only be realized in an indefinite future**, and this promise is a bond of uncertainty that can never be redeemed, only imagined. In this sense, the politics of hope is an instance of the psychoanalytic notion of desire: **its sole purpose is to reproduce its very condition of possibility, never to satiate or bring fulfillment**. **This politics secures its hegemony through time by claiming the future as its unassailable property and excluding (and devaluing) any other conception of time that challenges this temporal ordering. The politics of hope**, then, **depends on the incessant (re)production and proliferation of problems to justify its existence**. **Solutions cannot really exist within the politics of hope, just the illusion of a different order in a future tense.**

The “trick” of time and political solution converge on the site of “action.” **In critiquing the politics of hope, one encounters the rejoinder of the dangers of inaction**. **“But we can’t just do nothing! We have to do something.”** **The field of permissible action is delimited and an unrelenting binary between action/inaction silences critical engagement with political hope**. **These exclusionary operations rigorously reinforce the binary between action and inaction and discredit certain forms of engagement, critique, and protest**. **Legitimate action takes place in the political**—the political not only claims futurity but also action as its property**. To “do something” means that this doing must translate into recognizable political activity**; **“something” is a stand-in for the word “politics”—one must “do politics” to address any problem. A refusal to “do politics” is equivalent to “doing nothing”**—th**is nothingness is constructed as the antithesis of life, possibility, time, ethics, and morality** (a “zero-state” as Julia Kristeva [1982] might call it). **Black nihilism rejects this “trick of time”** and the lure of emancipatory solutions**. To refuse to “do politics” and to reject the fantastical object of politics is the only “hope” for blackness in an anti-black world**.

#### The role of the ballot is to vote for the best theoretical lexicon for understanding Black suffering – if we demonstrate that the 1AC’s conceptualization of power generates a series of contradictions when it approaches blackness, that is a sufficient reason to vote negative.

Wilderson ‘16 **–** Prof of Drama and African American Studies @ UC Irvine (Frank B. III, “HSI Podcast 52,” February 25, 2016, Accessed From: <http://www.podcastgarden.com/episode/hsi-podcast-52_71843>, transcribed from audio 5:33-12:25, modified) | Saurish

But here’s why I would say that the things can’t be reconciled and why I’m fascinated with the way high school and college debaters are using it. I think it was—I don’t know what sociologist—Max Weber (you know, I quote all sorts of people except right out fascists)—I believe he said that the power to pose the question is the greatest power of all. And the way that the question is posed in the world of debate in January—the question that carries one through the entire twelve months—is posed in a way that cannot be reconciled with the basic lens of interpretation of Afropessimism**.** The question is always posed on what I call and others call an arch of redemption. In other words, the question assumes an instance of plenitude, say, the free association and the free assembly—the right to free assembly—of citizens, and then it moves from that assumption to a rupture. So it moves from equilibrium to disequilibrium, which is to say the manifestation of the surveillance state. And so the third move in the tripartite arc of narrative is, of course, the move of redemption, which is to say how can the plenitude—whether it’s a historical materialist plenitude, a social formation having its rights and liberties disrupted—how can that be restored. It’s that movement from equilibrium to disequilibrium to equilibrium restored which is precisely at the center of the critique of Afropessimism.Afropessimism is not an offering for historical redemption; it’s not an offering for the restoration of a body in need of redress the way that post-colonialism is, the way that Marxism is, the way that radical feminism is, the way that indigenism is. It’s a critique of the rhetorical structure of those lenses of interpretation, critiquing them as toa) what they don’t or are unable to say about the violence that subjugates and positions Blacks and b)why it is that they actually need Blackness as slaveness to be outside of their lens of interpretation So there’s a way in which—to come full circle to where I started—there’s a way in which the rhetorical structure of debate, the demand of debate, the protocols are already ideologically laden. It doesn’t matter what question you pour into those protocols**.** The protocols, themselves, are all ideological ~~straightjackets~~ [constrictions] which preclude the kind of investigation of suffering. In order for Black suffering to be part of the debate question, it would have to go through a structural adjustment to begin to look like the suffering of some other group**.** The way Hartman talks about this is by suggesting that what you have in the world of subalterns—degraded humans who suffer—you have narratives of the possibility of real or imagined redemption**,** which is to say, narratives which are structured around the question of how to relieve the suffering that didn’t happen before the invasion of some sorts. But what she says with respect to Blacks is that you cannot tell the story of before the invasion, before the destruction. So, without being able to do that, she says when you think of narrating Blackness, you have to think of repetition as opposed to redemption. And so when we were off the air, one of the things I said to Marquis and to Josh is that one of the foreseeable problems with the future of Afropessimism is people kind of cherry-picking from it to enhance the explanatory power of their own suffering. And that cherry-picking will actually, inevitably, leave by the wayside the very deliberate absence in Afropessimism, **and that is the absence** of redemptive theorization, which is present in everything else. Redemptive theorization is theorized through all three volumes of Das Kapital; it’s theorized in the psychoanalytic feminism of Hartman and people like Julia Kristeva; it’s theorized in the work of Ward Churchill and Vine Deloria. It’s not only theorized. I should take a step back. It’s assumed. It’s assumed. And so, these are metacritiques of relationality. What Afropessimism isa metacritique of the metacritique, to show how pure and simple relations are dependent upon—they’re parasitic—using blacks as a parasitic host.

#### The only possible demand is one that calls for the end of the world itself—the affirmative represents a conflict within the paradigm of America but refuses to challenge the foundational antagonism that produces the violence that undergirds the that same paradigm – solves the aff but aff can’t solve the K

Wilderson, ’10 [2010, Frank B. Wilderson is an Associate Professor of African-American Studies at UC Irvine and has a Ph.D. from UC Berkeley, “Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms,”]

Leaving aside for the moment their state of mind, it would seem that the structure, that is to say the rebar, or better still the grammar of their demands—and, by extension, the grammar of their suffering—was indeed an ethical grammar. Perhaps their grammars are the only ethical grammars available to modern politics and modernity writ large, for they draw our attention not to the way in which space and time are used and abused by enfranchised and violently powerful interests, but to the violence that underwrites the modern world’s capacity to think, act, and exist spatially and temporally. The violence that robbed her of her body and him of his land provided the stage upon which other violent and consensual dramas could be enacted. Thus, they would have to be crazy, crazy enough to call not merely the actions of the world to account but to call the world itself to account, and to account for them no less! The woman at Columbia was not demanding to be a participant in an unethical network of distribution: she was not demanding a place within capital, a piece of the pie (the demand for her sofa notwithstanding). Rather, she was articulating a triangulation between, on the one hand, the loss of her body, the very dereliction of her corporeal integrity, what Hortense Spillers charts as the transition from being a being to becoming a “being for the captor” (206), the drama of value (the stage upon which surplus value is extracted from labor power through commodity production and sale); and on the other, the corporeal integrity that, once ripped from her body, fortified and extended the corporeal integrity of everyone else on the street. She gave birth to the commodity and to the Human, yet she had neither subjectivity nor a sofa to show for it. In her eyes, the world—and not its myriad discriminatory practices, but the world itself—was unethical. And yet, the world passes by her without the slightest inclination to stop and disabuse her of her claim. Instead, it calls her “crazy.” And to what does the world attribute the Native American man’s insanity? “He’s crazy if he thinks he’s getting any money out of us”? Surely, that doesn’t make him crazy. Rather it is simply an indication that he does not have a big enough gun. What are we to make of a world that responds to the most lucid enunciation of ethics with violence? What are the foundational questions of the ethico-political? Why are these questions so scandalous that they are rarely posed politically, intellectually, and cinematically—unless they are posed obliquely and unconsciously, as if by accident? Return Turtle Island to the “Savage.” Repair the demolished subjectivity of the Slave. Two simple sentences, thirteen simple words, and the structure of U.S. (and perhaps global) antagonisms would be dismantled. An “ethical modernity” would no longer sound like an oxymoron. From there we could busy ourselves with important conflicts that have been promoted to the level of antagonisms: class struggle, gender conflict, immigrants rights. When pared down to thirteen words and two sentences, one cannot but wonder why questions that go to the heart of the ethico-political, questions of political ontology, are so unspeakable in intellectual meditations, political broadsides, and even socially and politically engaged feature films. Clearly they can be spoken, even a child could speak those lines, so they would pose no problem for a scholar, an activist, or a filmmaker. And yet, what is also clear—if the filmographies of socially and politically engaged directors, the archive of progressive scholars, and the plethora of Left-wing broadsides are anything to go by—is that what can so easily be spoken is now (five hundred years and two hundred fifty million Settlers/Masters on) so ubiquitously unspoken that these two simple sentences, these thirteen words not only render their speaker “crazy” but become themselves impossible to imagine. Soon it will be forty years since radical politics, Left-leaning scholarship, and socially engaged feature films began to speak the unspeakable. In the 1960s and early 1970s the questions asked by radical politics and scholarship were not “Should the U.S. be overthrown?” or even “Would it be overthrown?” but rather when and how—and, for some, what—would come in its wake. Those steadfast in their conviction that there remained a discernable quantum of ethics in the U.S. writ large (and here I am speaking of everyone from Martin Luther King, Jr., prior to his 1968 shift, to the Tom Hayden wing of SDS, to the Julian Bond and Marion Barry faction of SNCC, to Bobbie Kennedy Democrats) were accountable, in their rhetorical machinations, to the paradigmatic zeitgeist of the Black Panthers, the American Indian Movement, and the Weather Underground. Radicals and progressives could deride, reject, or chastise armed struggle mercilessly and cavalierly with respect to tactics and the possibility of “success,” but they could not dismiss revolution-as-ethic because they could not make a convincing case—by way of a paradigmatic analysis—that the U.S. was an ethical formation and still hope to maintain credibility as radicals and progressives. Even Bobby Kennedy (a U.S. attorney general and presidential candidate) mused that the law and its enforcers had no ethical standing in the presence of Blacks. One could (and many did) acknowledge America’s strength and power. This seldom, however, rose to the level of an ethical assessment, but rather remained an assessment of the so-called “balance of forces.” The political discourse of Blacks, and to a lesser extent Indians, circulated too widely to credibly wed the U.S. and ethics. The raw force of COINTELPRO put an end to this trajectory toward a possible hegemony of ethical accountability. Consequently, the power of Blackness and Redness to pose the question—and the power to pose the question is the greatest power of all—retreated as did White radicals and progressives who “retired” from struggle. The question’s echo lies buried in the graves of young Black Panthers, AIM Warriors, and Black Liberation Army soldiers, or in prison cells where so many of them have been rotting (some in solitary confinement) for ten, twenty, thirty years, and at the gates of the academy where the “crazies” shout at passers-by. Gone are not only the young and vibrant voices that affected a seismic shift on the political landscape, but also the intellectual protocols of inquiry, and with them a spate of feature films that became authorized, if not by an unabashed revolutionary polemic, then certainly by a revolutionary zeitgeist. Is it still possible for a dream of unfettered ethics, a dream of the Settlement and the Slave estate’s destruction, to manifest itself at the ethical core of cinematic discourse, when this dream is no longer a constituent element of political discourse in the streets nor of intellectual discourse in the academy? The answer is “no” in the sense that, as history has shown, what cannot be articulated as political discourse in the streets is doubly foreclosed upon in screenplays and in scholarly prose; but “yes” in the sense that in even the most taciturn historical moments such as ours, the grammar of Black and Red suffering breaks in on this foreclosure, albeit like the somatic compliance of hysterical symptoms—it registers in both cinema and scholarship as symptoms of awareness of the structural antagonisms. Between 1967 and 1980, we could think cinematically and intellectually of Blackness and Redness as having the coherence of full-blown discourses. But from 1980 to the present, Blackness and Redness manifests only in the rebar of cinematic and intellectual (political) discourse, that is, as unspoken grammars. This grammar can be discerned in the cinematic strategies (lighting, camera angles, image composition, and acoustic strategies/design), even when the script labors for the spectator to imagine social turmoil through the rubric of conflict (that is, a rubric of problems that can be posed and conceptually solved) as opposed to the rubric of antagonism (an irreconcilable struggle between entities, or positionalities, the resolution of which is not dialectical but entails the obliteration of one of the positions). In other words, even when films narrate a story in which Blacks or Indians are beleaguered with problems that the script insists are conceptually coherent (usually having to do with poverty or the absence of “family values”), the non-narrative, or cinematic, strategies of the film often disrupt this coherence by posing the irreconcilable questions of Red and Black political ontology—or non-ontology. The grammar of antagonism breaks in on the mendacity of conflict. Semiotics and linguistics teach us that when we speak, our grammar goes unspoken. Our grammar is assumed. It is the structure through which the labor of speech is possible. Likewise, the grammar of political ethics—the grammar of assumptions regarding the ontology of suffering—which underwrite Film Theory and political discourse (in this book, discourse elaborated in direct relation to radical action), and which underwrite cinematic speech (in this book, Red, White, and Black films from the mid-1960s to the present) is also unspoken. This notwithstanding, film theory, political discourse, and cinema assume an ontological grammar, a structure of suffering. And the structure of suffering which film theory, political discourse, and cinema assume crowds out other structures of suffering, regardless of the sentiment of the film or the spirit of unity mobilized by the political discourse in question. To put a finer point on it, structures of ontological suffering stand in antagonistic, rather then conflictual, relation to one another (despite the fact that antagonists themselves may not be aware of the ontological positionality from which they speak). Though this is perhaps the most controversial and out-of-step claim of this book, it is, nonetheless, the foundation of the close reading of feature films and political theory that follows.

## Case

### Presumption

Dm if u need

### Solvency

Dm if u need