## 1 – K – Islamic Comradery

#### Forms of fragmented politics – AKA a lack of a movement – completely cedes the political to capitalism. Engagement in individualized communication resists collective and concrete change, constituting enjoyment of melancholic pleasures of being distanced and accommodated to the real world, stopping any possibility of solving oppression – Dean 13:

“Communist Desire”, Jodi Dean, , 2013, LHP AM

An emphasis on the drive dimension of melancholia, on Freud's attention to the way sadism in melancholia is 'turned round upon the subject's own self', leads to an interpretation of the general contours shaping the left that differs from Brown's**. Instead of a left attached to an unaclmowledged orthodoxy,** **we have one that has given way on the desire for communism, betrayed its historical commitment to the proletariat, and sublimated revolutionary energies into restorationist practices that strengthen the hold of capitalism**. **This left has replaced commitments to the emancipatory, egalitarian struggles of working people against capitalism - commitments that were never fully orthodox, but always ruptured, conflicted and contested - with incessant activity** (not unlike the manic Freud also associates with melancholia), and so **now satisfies itself with criticism and interpretation, small projects and local actions, particular issues and legislative victories, art, technology, procedures, and process**. It sublimates revolutionary desire to democratic drive, to the repetitious practices offered up as democracy (whether representative, deliberative or radical). **Having already conceded to the inevitably of capitalism, it noticeably abandons 'any striking power against the big bourgeoisie',** to return to Benjamin's language. For such a left, **enjoyment comes from its withdrawal from responsibility, its sublimation of goals and responsibilities into the branching, fragmented practices of micro-politics, self-care, and issue awareness**. Perpetually slighted, harmed and undone**, this left remains stuck in repetition, unable to break out of the circuits of drive in which it is caught** - unable because it enjoys. **Might this not explain why such a left confuses discipline with domination, why it forfeits collectivity in the name of an illusory, individualist freedom that continuously seeks to fragment and disrupt any assertion of a collective or a common?** The watchwords of critique within this structure of left desire are moralism, dogmatism, authoritarianism and utopianism - watchwords enacting a perpetual self-surveillance: has an argument, position or view inadvertently rukeo one of these errors? Even some of its militants reject party and state, division and decision, securing in advance an inefficacy sure to guarantee it the nuggets of satisfaction drive provides. **If this left is rightly described as melancholic, and I agree with Brown that it is, then its melancholia derives from the real existing compromises and betrayals inextricable from its history - its accommodations with reality, whether of nationalist war, capitalist encirclement, or so-called market demands.** Lacan teaches that, like Kant's categorical imperative, the super-ego refuses to accept reality as an explanation for failure. Impossible is no excuse - desire is always impossible to satisfy. A wide spectrum of the contemporary left has either accommodated itself, in one or another, to an inevitable capitalism or taken the practical failures of Marxism-Leninism to require the abandonment of antagonism, class, and revolutionary commitment to overturning capitalist arrangements of property and production. **Melancholic fantasy (the communist Master, authoritarian and obscene) as well as sublimated, melancholic practices (there was no alternative) shield this left, shield Ltd, from confrontation with guilt over such betrayal as they capture us in activities that feel productive, important, radical.**

#### The affirmative reinscribes a notion of anti-blackness that gleans over alternate understandings of identity. It doesn’t matter if you’re queer, disabled, or of a different class: so long as you’re black, you’re always a relationless object. That creates a triple consciousness – the tie between numerous conflicting understandings of the self – that recreates psychological violence.

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” ] MK

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 informed 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 identity, 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.

#### The alternative is to embody the Sufi aesthetics. Like a chaotic painting – full of abstract motifs and sharp lines of spontaneity – identity is complex and multifaceted, but realizing we are unified by one canvas – through mystic encounters with the nature of the world, the substance of our immanent yet humanist encounters – the symbolic basis for oppression collapses. This is the route through which comradery happens. The ummah is the comrade.

Oladi 17 [Dr. Soudeh Oladi (Postdoctoral fellow at the University of Toronto’s Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Specialization: Critical pedagogy, wisdom leaning, curriculum, and social justice education). “The Deleuzian Footprint in Rumi’s War Machine of Love.” The Journal of East-West Thought. 2017.] MK

II. Deleuze and Rumi: Point of Contact Rumi’s Sufi-based philosophical dispositions provide a potential point of contact between Sufi practices and the Deleuzian poststructuralist position on nomadism. In the spirit of Deleuze's orientations toward nomadism and becoming, unpacking the Sufi approaches that shape for which Rumi’s thought is essential. Although Rumi’s penchant for humanism is in clear contrast with Deleuzian anti-humanism, it should be pointed out that **the humanism Rumi embraces is not one born of Western liberalism. Humanism in the Sufi tradition is** an **unattainable** goal and **an individual** in **search of this form of humanism is in perpetual movement. Individuals can never reach such a state because it is relative, plural, diverse, and inaccessible**. While for the poststructuralist this might indicate the lack of space that breeds creativity, Marks (2010) maintains **that** it in fact “**allows a great deal of play to the individual—distracted, contemplative, imaginative, mystical—and thus it does create space for pure difference**” (Marks, 2010, p. 11). Deleuze’s rhizomatic thinking is perceptible in Sufism’s emphasis on the annihilation of the self (fana) and transformation into a being that is neither fixed nor permanent. This act of becoming is not a journey into death, but **a new beginning that nurtures possibilities for an infinite existence.** In this respect, Marks (2010) points to an important similarity between Deleuzian thought and Sufi traditions: “**For Islamic mysticism, awareness of the nonexistent side of every existent thing stimulates fana’, the mystical obliteration of the difference between things and God, I and thou**. This idea finds a parallel in Deleuze’s argument, following Bergson, that **the more that perception becomes dissociated from our immediate needs, the further it opens onto the universe of images and opens us to the flow of time. The two processes, one mystical, one epistemological, are strikingly similar**.” (Marks, 2010, p. 17) Although Sufis aim for a mystical end, it is the one never achieved which in turn inspires an endless intellectual and spiritual struggle. **Sufism, as the mystical** core of Islam, **focuses on spiritual development and self-realization as well as identifying all the barriers to the awakening of one’s consciousness.** As an existential basis of Sufi practices, the self is regarded as a multidimensional and flowing entity. The directionless in nomadic wandering resonates with the Sufi notion of flowing like a river (Chapline, 2011). When the great Sufi master Rumi states, ‘Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I’ll meet you there’, **it is a call to distance oneself from inflexible ways of thinking and being. This inspires a de-territorialization of the mind that moves beyond dominant hegemonic thought as it taps into the individuals’ raw capacity to reach their creative potential.** III. Rumi’s War Machine of Love The Deleuzian war machine is a vantage point through which Rumi’s writings are explored as individuals enter a space where the target of the war machine moves from the State to the self. The Deleuzian war machine is about metamorphosis and transformation within a discourse that is fundamentally exterior to the State. The aim of this discourse is to unsettle the sedentary culture and aspire for “[a]nother justice, another movement, another space-time (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 354). According to Reid (2003), the ‘nomadic war machine’ is a radical way of thinking involving the formation, invention and fabrication of new concepts that violently differs from existing orders of thought imposed by the State (Reid, 2003, p. 3). As a form of resistance on the move, the nomadic war machine refuses to be subordinate to formal possibilities of thought (Reid, 2003). In adopting the language offered by Deleuze, Rumi’s writings open the way for new interpretations regarding the creative potential of the war machine as a machine of production directed against the baser elements of the soul. Rumi contends **through the practice of selfless love, the individual is no longer confined to predetermined paths but is alive in an open and empty “field of possibilities”** where life unfolds and transformation is a never-ending reality. Rumi encourages the awakening of the powerful voice of longing and transformation by advocating the release of the infinite power of love. Harvey (1999) reflects on **Rumi’s view toward longing and love**, stating that “**evolution is an infinite process that never ends on any of the planes of any world, and that the journey into embodying and living Love is as infinite and boundless as Love Itself**” (p. xvi). Here, **love becomes the “missing link that brings together moral reasoning and critical discernment with moral values, character, responsibility and compassion into a qualitatively different consciousness, empowered, resilient and authentically moral**” (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004, p. 260). Rumi encourages seekers of knowledge to be involved in a process of ongoing self-reflection. **Through intense self-examination and the subsequent purification of the heart, a moral identity is formed, which awakens a feeling of intense love** or ishq **and “provides the basic motivations in humans. The generative impulse is the desire to generate something enduring**. Ishq is **procreation**, it is **creation**; it is **birth. It is more than the love of the beautiful; it is beauty incarnate** (Zaimaran, 1985, p. 256). For Rumi, love never loses its nomadic quality because, "Like Adam and Eve, Love gives birth to a thousand forms; the world is full of its paintings but it has no form" (Rumi, Divan, 5057, as cited in Chittick, 1983). Thus, crossing the threshold of love leads to transformation and transcendence. With its potential to energize everything, love as a life force that animates is “The Sea of Non-Being: there the foot of the intellect is shattered” (Rumi, 1995). Similar to a nomad, a being enveloped in love is indeed a “Non-being”, that which is not (absent), that which is yet to be (come into being)” (D’Souza, 2014, p. 13). It is in this context that Rumi’s war machine of love comes into being: it thrives in a third space where there are multiple versions of reality. A third space perspective, according to Barrera et al. (2003), “does not ‘solve the problem.’ Rather it changes the arena within which that problem is addressed by increasing the probability of respectful, responsive, and reciprocal interactions” (p. 81). **Rumi’s war machine of love is a deterrent force that enables the construction and re-construction of identity where a new understanding of the self is continuously being negotiated as the individual experiences the death of the false self**. Within the third space, there is a hybrid reinvention of identity where “the very categories of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ emerge as fluid and negotiable” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56). Rumi’s war-machine of love offers a conceptual tool for revisiting hegemonic discourses with the potential to resist them. The war machine of love relies on its nomadic qualities to create ruptures in static spaces through fluid and indeterminate action. Similar to the Deleuzian war machine (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), Rumi’s war machine of love has the ability to spring up at any point and deconstruct thought in nomadic fashion. IV. Rumi and the Spiritual Activist Story after story and poem after poem, Rumi highlights one of the most ubiquitous interconnections linking knowledge with action: spiritual activism. Embracing a form of knowledge that advocates spiritual activism leads to action and humility and renounces inaction and stagnation much like a nomad. Like a nomad who vacillates between being and becoming, the spiritual activist chooses openness over any fixed and finite field. What the nomad and the spiritual activist have in common is humility, creativity, and an openness to difference as they both connect to all the creative forces that move through an individual. **Rumi advances a form of knowledge that cultivates spiritual activism and moral imagination and leads to enlightened action.** Bucko and Fox (2013) establish that **authentic spirituality is the union of action and spirituality and without critical engagement, it is empty and dissipative. To navigate challenges that may arise, critical spirituality lessens the gap between thought and action and enables transformative practice to emerge. In this space, the experience of embarking on an inward journey is encouraged through constant self-reflection for seekers of knowledge. Since reflection can only lead to change if it is accompanied with action, Rumi resurrects the notion of the spiritual activist who is morally grounded, historically informed, and socially functional.** A close reading of Rumi’s story How a Hare Killed a Tyrannical Lion offers a nuanced understanding of the concept of the spiritual activist. The story chronicles the schemes concocted and successfully executed by an intelligent hare to avoid becoming the lion’s next pray and to rid other animals of a similar fate in the future. The story, which addresses determination and freewill, is about a tyrannical lion that terrorizes other animals' lives by killing them in order to feed himself. The animals are left with little choice but to submit to the sacrificial ritual until a clever hare decides to take action. When it is his time to be sacrificed, the hare takes his time to get to the lion, inevitably finding him enraged and fuming with anger. At this point, the hare tells a story about how another lion had eaten a friend of his just as they were to be sacrificed. The pride of the lion was hurt because he simply could not accept another great power roaming around in his territory. The lion demanded that the hare take him to where his arch nemesis had attacked earlier. Pretending to be scared, the hare went on the lion’s back and directed him toward a well. When the lion looked down into the well, he saw what appeared to be another lion with a hare on its back and plunged into the well to attack his enemy. The hare was quick to jump off the lion’s back before he fell into the well and drowned. The lion in this story is the symbol of the false self and ego; he is first a dominating force among other animals but is at the same time a slave to his own self-serving desires. The lion’s overbearing conduct does not make him welcome in the kingdom and his mere presence strikes fear into the hearts of all the weaker animals. Moores (2014) maintains that, “the machinations of the lesser animals might suggest to a Sufi reader the tricks the mind plays in preventing one from accepting the wisdom and directions of the master (p. 73). Hence, the hare’s refusal to surrender to the lion represents the nafs (ego) and the intellect’s interference with the soul’s progression. Rumi reminds us of the importance of introspection and the need to confront our ‘inner lion’. Through the lion, Rumi conveys the message that we must free ourselves from baser elements of the soul that prevent us from being free. While the lion is the symbol of the nafs that can take away all feelings of safety and security in an instant, the smaller animals symbolize baser elements of the soul. The hare, who is aware of the lion’s weakness, symbolizes practicality and logic on the path toward inner peace. In this dynamic space, the wise hare cajoles the lion of the nafs to look at his own reflection and to rail against his ego. The lion’s downfall is his pride, as the reflection of the nafs becomes the reason behind his destruction. After sending the tyrannical lion to his death, the hare urges the now ecstatic animals to engage in the more difficult warfare against the desires of the nafs. While the well can be the manifestation of the baser elements that exist in the human soul, the hare can also be considered a spiritual activist. After the lion has been eliminated, the hare notices how easily pride has taken over the animals and to guide them, he moves beyond logic into a realm that can best be described as spirituality. In this sphere, the hare cautions the animals against letting the baser qualities of their souls run loose and encourages them to go to war against these elements: Dear kings, we’ve killed the enemy outside, A worse foe still remains for us inside; Your brain does not know how to kill this foe: A hare can’t bring this inner lion low! (Mathnawi I, 1382-1384) It is at this point that the hare transitions into **a spiritual activist; constantly in motion; always questioning; travelling tirelessly from the struggle with the outer enemy to the one within.** In essence, Rumi **celebrates the dawn of the spiritual activist who explores limitless possibilities for alternative modes of knowledge seeking. The spiritual activist values engagement as essentially a prerequisite for social transformation. Exploring the tapestry of identities** in Rumi’s writings reveals a continuous struggle between various forces that swing the pendulum of opposites in the direction of the ‘field of possibilities’. **Embracing Rumi’s vision of the Insān-e-Kamil (the perfect human being) requires that we, too, move beyond restrictive discourses and allow new spaces to present themselves.**

#### Materiality net benefit – despite being cracked-down and oppressed as deviant, Sufi mysticism has been used to proactively dodge and breathe life into spaces of negativity, offering a radical politics against oppression.

Stepanyants 09 [Mariatta Stepanyants (PhD Philosophy – Academy of Sciences USSR, and Professor at Institute of Philosophy, Russia Academy of Sciences). “Sufism in the Context of Modern Politics.” From the Journal Of Oriental Studies. Tokyo: The Institute of Oriental Philosophy. Vol. 19, 2009, pp.166.] MK

IT is really amazing that not only political analysts but evenly scholars for years ignored Sufism as a factor of political life in the Muslim world. It has been common to list as main trends in the modern Islamic political thought the orthodoxes (traditionalists), the modernists, the reformers, the fundamentalists (revivalists). The **Sufis have not been taken into account, though the long history of Islamic mysticism proves that it often gave up its neutral role as a non-political, contemplative theology and actively joined political fights. The involvement in politics was both on individual and collective levels.** Mostly, the orders took a particular side: either against an established order, injustice and oppression, or, on the contrary, in support of a ruling power. Thus, for example, “The Suhrawardi shaykhs in general never accepted the idea of revolt against any king, no matter how unjust....In Ottoman lands the Mevlevi order in particular, and also the Bektashi to some extent, had close alliances with the ruling power...During the Mughal period, the Naqshbandi order, which had a strong tradition of association with kings in central Asia, became prominent in political affairs; Shaykh Sirhindi sought to change Mughal religious policies, Shah Wali Allah invited the Afghan king Ahmad Shah to invade India and fight the Marathas and later Sayyid Ahmad Shahid led militant activists against the Sikhs... In Hindustan, the Chishti order is best known for its consistent refusal to ask kings for financial support.”2 Sufi writers of the post-Mongol period inscribed treatises that glorified monarchy as equal to or even superior to prophecy. Najm al-Din Razi (d. 654/1256) claimed that a just king is a true vice-regent of God, and manifests the divine attributes of lordship. Likewise Husayn Wa‘iz Kashifi (d. 910/1504–05) rated kingship as equal in some respects to prophethood.3 The heads of the orders could be indifferent to political power, but they, as well, could aspire it in revolt against established authority, and sometimes actually be successful in founding a dynasty. The most remarkable example of such a movement was that, which led to the foundation of the Safawi dynasty in Persia. The movement of Turkish self-assertion led to the foundation of the dynasty of the Qaramanoghlus in Qonya, which traced its origin back to a dervish named Nura Sufi.4 Why then there is an underestimation of the role played by Sufism in the modern politics? Partly, it is because of a factual decline of the influence of the orders in the XXth century due to their degradation. Muhammad Iqbal, a great Indo-Pakistan poet-philosopher and Muslim reformer, who was so much affected by Sufism that he called Djalal ad-Din Rumi as his preceptor and guide on the path to Truth, however, was to confess that medieval mysticism was a cause of social stagnation for the Muslims.” And in the Muslim East,—he stated,—it has, perhaps, done far greater havoc than anywhere else. Far from reintegrating the forces of the average man’s inner life, and preparing him for participation in the march of history, it has taught him a false renunciation and made him perfectly contented with his ignorance and spiritual thralldom.”5 The orders have failed to respond adequately to the challenges of the new time, hence, it is hardly to be wondered that they are in decline everywhere.6 Yet, **one should differentiate between an institutional Sufism presented by the orders and the Sufi teachings. “It is through the Sufi tradition primarily that the springs of spiritual vitality have flowed in** recent centuries in **the Islamic world** and it is perhaps still in this tradition, with all of its accumulated corruptions, that they mainly flow. Certainly nothing has replaced it...Whether an intellectual Sufism can call forth the degree of commitment and provide the sense of social relevance necessary for a major spiritual revival is a question...”7 My answer to that question: everything is possible, it depends. There is no doubt that there is a worldwide reanimation of the interest in Sufism. It is sufficient to have a glance at the shelves in the bookstores so that to find out that this mystical trend of thought has returned to the international stage. The publishers and the authors would not choose that subject until there is a demand for it on behalf of a wide public. The latter is caused by a number of factors. There is a general intellectual and spiritual atmosphere in the contemporary world marked by a crisis of rationality, and a certain degree of a dissolution with an institutionalized religion, which turns an attraction of some stratas of the society (intellectuals, youth, etc.) to mystical trends of thought in general, and Sufism, in particular. However, it seems to be even more important that **the course of the events in the Muslim world itself makes vital a search for responses to the challenges of the Islamic fundamentalism**—a real peril to the future of the Muslims (by taking them back to an idealized past, and thus preventing from putting an end to backwardness), as well as to the world community in itself by greatly contributing to the scenario with a clash of civilizations. Consequently, **Sufism is looked at as an alternative to fundamentalism**.8 Let us consider in a more elaborate way whether Sufism can in fact “rescue” from Islamic fundamentalism? **The very existence of Sufism implies criticism of and challenge to the orthodox** theology. Fazlur Rahman **It is well known that the history of the Muslim world presents a great number of examples of a traditionally tensed relations between the Sufis and** the ulema with **orthodox** and fundamentalist views of the latter. Sometimes, that strain led to the extremes: the **Sufis were prosecuted, punished and publicly martyred.** The **hostility was firmly set up** both on theological differences and mundane considerations. The ulema accounted a danger to their orthodox-traditionalist belief to be rooted in many aspects of Sufis teachings: in its ontology, epistemology, ethics and social views. On ulema’s estimations the speculative Sufism, at best represented by Ibn ‘Arabi, was the “the single great enemy that threatened to destroy the very fabric of Islamic faith: at-tauhid.”9 The concept of wahdat-al-wujud was “different from the Muslim theological concept of Divine Unity derived from the Koran. **By refusing to see a difference between the divine and human realms** it did not only struck at the essentially transcendental character of the God of Muslim theology, **it reduced the very question of Divine, Justice, Will, Reward, Punishment, and different religions to gross absurdities**.”10 In the field of epistemology Sufis might be considered to be “the brothers” (Ibn Sina) with the philosophers in the search of Truth. The speculative Sufis do not deny the validity of rational knowledge itself, though they comprehend its limited possibilities. As Rumi said: “Reason is excellent and desirable until it brings you to the door of the King. Once you have reached His door, divorce reason;...surrender yourself to Him; you have no use then for how and wherefore.”11 To what the Sufis feel a real aversion is the rationality of the ulema. In Muhammad Iqbal’s words, **Sufi revolted** “against the verbal quibbles” of Muslim theologists and thus they could be qualified as “a form of free thought in a alliance with rationalism.”12 The Sufis regard skeptically any belief forced upon man externally. To the latter they counterpose the faith born in the internal, individual experience of a “loving heart.” Sufi ma‘rifa denotes knowledge gained in personal experience, mystically revealed. The idea that “each does not know of God except that which he infers from himself”13 is most clear and ample expression of the Sufi concept of knowledge. While Muslim theologians’ epistemological skepticism signifies the senselessness of attempts at attaining the Truth and the necessity of compliance with the letters of Koran and with the legal prescriptions of the ulema, **Sufi skepticism contains** something quite different. For **a mystic the impossibility of perfect realization of the Absolute means not submission to the dogma and blind acceptance of it but incessant striving to achieve maximum realization. Sufi notion about the incomprehensibleness of the Absolute does not close the ways of cognition;** on the contrary, **it asserts the infinity of the process of cognition, the necessity of perpetual quest for Truth**. “Anguish after the hidden” is a cryptical Sufi formula denoting constant seeking for Truth. **That unquenchable thirst for knowledge, that anguish after the hidden, has been both an immense challenge to the stand of the ulema and a great attraction for floundering minds and souls.** The Sufis believe that perfect conduct transcends the boundries of legalized religious doctrins, sometimes they even ignore or deny the latter. Observance of Shari‘a injuctions is obligatory for the Sufis at the initial stage of the path to perfection. But mystics can not be satisfied with the legalistic code of behaviour since they strove to something greater than righteousness as admitted by orthodox canons. Shari‘a for them is the law of the phenomenal world, of the visible, while so that to enter the ‘hidden world’ one has to pass along the more difficult path of tariqa. For a mystic aspiring fana’, that is union with God, religious laws seem to be of no great importance or even useless at all. Fana’ realized through attention to religious do’s and don’ts is considered deficient. It requires that consciousness must be lost so that man is unable to see anything other than the Real.14 Sell intelligence and buy bewilderment, intelligence is opinion, while bewilderment is (immediate) vision.15 Theological differences between the ulema and the Sufis have been so great that even in those places where tassawuf is not proclaimed as a heresy and the activity of the orders is not banned (as it is done in the Saudi Arabia, for example), still Sufi writings have been generally excluded from the system of education at the madrasas. Yet, more than those theoretical differences, the challenge from the side of Sufism to the very authority and the power of the ulema (through their special role in society) have caused hostility of the latter towards the former. The Sufis prescribe an adept who seek the Pass to choose a preceptor and follow him like his guide. That naturally undermines the position of traditional theologians and heightens the role of the shaykhs. The practice of the Sufi orders shows that shaykhs used to become masters of unquestioned authority; their disciples (murids), as a rule, absolutely obeyed them. Hence, the orders have been real rivals for the ulema both in spiritual and worldly affairs. (One of many proofs for that is that the French encouraged the Sufi orders in North Africa over orthodox Islam of the ulema, which they feared as their real enemies). It is true that the orders are not any more so great in numbers as they used to be in the past. It is also evident that the capacity of the existing orders to impact on the political affairs has decreased significantly in most of the Muslim countries. Yet, they are still influential in a number of regions, in particularly where tribal and clan relations maintain (like in Africa or the North Caucasia). However, It is not the orders but **speculative Sufism that could be looked for as an alternative to Islamic fundamentalism**. Tassawuf’s speculative doctrines may once again get their “corruptive” (from the point of view of the ulema) influence on popular psychology by their fascinatingly personal concept of God. **They can succeed in undermining the authority of the ulema by capturing the minds of rank and file Muslims because they respond to human innate spiritual needs for religiosity rather than for formal attachment to any institutionalized and dogmatic religion**. The relevance of Sufism to modern politics is not limited by its traditional opposition to the orthodoxy. There are some other aspects of Sufism which make its teaching attractive to the contemporaries.

#### The role of the ballot is fidelity to the truth – dedication to a shared horizon is liberatory, Dean 19:

Dean, Jodi. Comrade: An essay on political belonging. Verso, 2019. // LHP BT + LHP PS

The idea that comrades are those who belong to the same side of a political struggle leads to the fourth thesis: **The** relation between comrades is mediated by **fidelity to a** truth**;** practices **of comradeship** materialize **this** fidelity**. The “same side” points to the truth comrades are faithful to—the political truth that unites them**—**and the fidelity with which they work to realize this truth in the world.** “Belonging” invites attention to the expectations, practices, and affects that being on the same side generates. The notions of truth and fidelity at work here come from Alain Badiou. In brief, **Badiou rejects the idea of truth as a proposition or judgment, arguing instead that** truth is a process**. The process begins with the eruption of something new, an event.** **Because an event changes the situation, breaks the confines of the given, it is undecidable in terms of the given; it is something entirely new**. Badiou argues that this undecidability “induces the appearance of a *subject* of the event.”[60](about:blank) **This subject isn’t the cause of the event. It’s an effect of or response to the event,** “the decision to *say* that the event has taken place.” Grammar might seduce us into rendering this subject as “I.” **We should** avoid this temptation and **recognize the subject** **as** designating an inflection point, **a response that extends the event.** **The decision that a truth has appeared, that an event has occurred, incites a process of verification**, the “infinite procedure of verification of the true,” **in** **what Badiou calls an “exercise of fidelity**.”[61](about:blank) **Fidelity is a working out and working through of the truth, an engagement with truth that extends out into and changes the world. We should recognize here the unavoidably collective dimension of fidelity: in the political field, verification is a struggle of the many.** Peter Hallward draws out some implications of Badiou’s conception of truth. First, it is subjective. Those faithful to an evental truth involve themselves in working it out, exploring its consequences.[62](about:blank) Second, fidelity is not blind faith; it is rigorous engagement unconcerned with individual personality and incorporated into the body of truth that it generates. Hallward writes:Fidelity is, by definition, ex-centric, directed outward, beyond the limits of a merely personal integrity. To be faithful to an evental implication always means to abandon oneself, rigorously, to the unfolding of its consequences. **Fidelity implies that, if there is truth, it can be only cruelly indifferent to the private as such.** **Every truth involves a kind of anti-privatization, a subjective collectivization. In truth, “I” matter only insofar as I am subsumed by the impersonal vector of truth—say, the political organization, or the scientific research program.**[**63**](about:blank) **The truth process builds a new body**. This body of truth is a collective formed to “work for the consequences of the new” and this work, this collective, disciplines and subsumes the faithful.[64](about:blank)Third, collectivity does not imply uniformity. The infinite procedure of verification incorporates multiple experiments, enactments, and effects.Badiou writes, “An organization lies at the intersection between an Idea and an event. However, this intersection only exists as process, whose immediate subject is the political militant.”[65](about:blank) We should amend this statement by replacing *militant* with *comrade*. Comrade highlights the “discipline of the event,” the way that political fidelity cannot be exercised by a solitary individual—hence, the Marxist-Leninist emphasis on the unity of theory and practice, the barren incapacity of each alone. Comrade also affirms the self-abandonment accompanying fidelity to a truth: its vector, its unfolding, is indifferent to my personal experiences and inclinations. For communists, the process of truth has a body and that body is the party, in both its historical and formal sense. Already in *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou recognizes the necessity of a political body, the party as the “subject-support of all politics.”[66](about:blank) He writes:The party is the body of politics, in the strict sense. The fact that there is a body by no means guarantees that there is a subject … But for there to be a subject, for a subject to be found, there must be the support of a body.[67](about:blank) **As a figure of political belonging, the comrade is a faithful response to the evental rupture of crowds and movements, to the egalitarian discharge that erupts from the force of the many where they don’t belong, to the movement of the people as the subject of politics.**[**68**](about:blank) **Comrades demonstrate fidelity through political work; through concerted, disciplined engagement. Their practical political work extends the truth of the emancipatory egalitarian struggle of the oppressed into the world.** Amending Badiou (by drawing from his earlier work), we can say that the comrade is not a faithful subject but a political relation faithful to the divided people as the subject of emancipatory egalitarian politics.[69](about:blank) **For us to see the revolutionary people as the subject in the struggles of the oppressed, for their subject to be found, we must be comrades.** In *Ninotchka*, Nina Ivanova Yakushova can’t tell who her comrades are by looking at them. The party has told her who to look for, but she has to ask. After Iranoff identifies himself, Yakushova tells him her name and the name and position of the party comrade who authorized her visit. Iranoff introduces Buljanoff and Kopalski. Yakushova addresses each as comrade. But it’s not the address that makes them all comrades. They are comrades because they are members of the same party. **The party is the organized body of truth that mediates their relationship. This mediation makes clear what is expected of comrades—disciplined, faithful work.** Iranoff, Buljanoff, and Kopalski have not been doing the work expected of comrades, which is why Moscow sent Yakushova to oversee them in Paris. That Kopalski says they would have greeted her with flowers demonstrates their *embourgeoisment*, the degeneration of their sense of comradeship. But they are all there for work. Gendered identity and hierarchy don’t mediate relations between comrades. The practices of fidelity to a political truth, the work done toward building that truth in the world, do. The solidarity of comrades in political struggle arises out of the intertwining of truth, practice, and party. It’s not reducible to any of these alone. **Comrades are not simply those who believe in the same truth—as in, for example, the idea of communism. Their fidelity to a certain truth is manifested in practical work.** Work for the realization of a political truth brings people into comradely relation. **But carrying out similar tasks in fidelity to the same truth isn’t sufficient for comradeship. The work must be in common; no one is a comrade on their own. Practices of comradeship are coordinated, organized. The party is the organization out of which comradeship emerges and that comrade relations produce. It concentrates comradeship even as comradeship exceeds it.**

## AC

#### Defining blackness as occupying a space of negativity fails to account for the mystical interventions that breathe life into our experience. While blackness is shaped and inseperable from anti-blackness, it is always more than that – a mystical experience without ontology. Turns case – failure to recognize the power of believing in a prior, alternate ontology for blackness recreates anti-blackness.

Warren 17 [Calvin L. Warren (Ph.D., Department of American Studies, Columbian College of Arts and Sciences). “Black Mysticism: Fred Moten’s Phenomenology of (Black) Spirit.” De Gruyter. DOI 10.1515/zaa-2017-0022. 2017] MK

**For Afro-Pessimists, blackness is the product and property of political ontology. It emerges as the violent technology and discourse to pulverize, subject, and eviscerate African being.** Blackness is always already a political non-relationality, and it is pure instrumentality – or a metaphysical body in the Heideggerian and Spillerian sense. As Bryan Wagner astutely puts it in Disturbing the Peace, “Blackness does not come from Africa. Rather, Africa and its diaspora become black at a particular stage in their history. It sounds a little strange to put it this way, but the truth of this description is widely acknowledged. Blackness is an adjunct to racial slavery” (Wagner 2009, 1–2; emphasis added). **Blackness signals the reduction of African being to a schematized, scientific object of commerce** – African being becomes a play-thing for the New World. Hortense Spillers would describe this vicious process as the theft of the “flesh,” that primary narrative, and the imposition of the “body” (Spillers 2003, 206) – an anti-black invention, in which the body forcefully eclipses the flesh, rendering the African a ‘being for the other.’ The problem with humanism, according to Afro-Pessimists, is that it attempts to provide an inaccurate etiology of blackness – blackness emerges as an object of commerce and science and not as a feature of human difference. Blackness, then, is not an identity capable of infinite deconstructions or hasty universalizations, but is a specific technology of modernity for certain beings. Within modernity, blackness is functional and instrumental – it provides the permanent violation of Kant’s categorical imperative; blackness is pure means. **Afro-Pessimists demystify ontology, stripping it of its assumed ‘purity’** in the Western tradition, and expose ontology as the product of political processes. Ontology does not precede the political, and this assumption is often the basis of flawed emancipatory logic. According to Frank Wilderson, modernity has created a “new ontology” (Wilderson 2010, 18) – **an ontology that is non-ontological, in the sense that it provides the necessary condition of negativity**. Thus, blackness is an instance of ‘non-adequation’ – blackness is not a being proper to itself, it is always fractured, doubled, and rebounded. Afro-Pessimists would argue that Du Bois’s Double Consciousness is the product of a foreclosure of “ontological narcissism,” as William Connolly (Connolly 2002, 30) and Elizabeth Anker might call it (Anker 2014, 149–180). **Blackness cannot lay claim to the capacities that constitute human subjectivity** in the world **because blackness is a commodity in corporeal form**; it is the devastating inverse of ontological narcissism – we might call black being ‘ontological deprivation’ in an anti-black world. And because it does not participate in the narcissistic ontogenesis that founds human subjectiv- ity, blackness poses problems for any copula formulation. 4 **Black Mysticism** Fred **Moten’s etiology of blackness begins elsewhere – at something we might call the paraontological**: What emerges in the desire that constitutes a certain proximity to that thought is not (just) that blackness is ontologically prior to the logistics and regulative power that is supposed to have brought it into existence but that blackness is prior to ontology; or in a slight variation of what Nahum Chandler would say, blackness is the anoriginal displacement of ontology, that it is ontology’s anti- and ante foundation, ontology’s underground, the irreparable dis- turbance of ontology’s time and space. (Moten 2013, 738–739) **The** etiology (origin) and **nature of blackness are woven together tightly in his theory of blackness**. Unlike Afro-Pessimists, Moten believes that “blackness is ontologically prior to the logistics and regulatory power” of anti-Blackness (Moten 2013, 739). **Blackness is not an adjunct to racial slavery, but is violently appropriated during slavery. If blackness is ontological, its ontological constitution precedes its ontological captivity. What is the ontology of blackness** – the blackness **that precedes anti-Blackness**? This is not a philosophical road that Moten explores much, given that he ultimately wants to dispense of ontology. We might read this silence as a certain concession to Afro-Pessimists because Moten’s line of inquiry would lead us to an ontology untainted by the political. This would place Moten in the tradition of ‘pure ontologists’ who believe in being in-and-of- itself (e.g. the Platonic tradition). But how do we comprehend and apprehend such a being without recourse to the tools of the political (e.g. rationality, science, schematization, instrumentalization, and probability)? This ontology becomes something like Kant’s noumenon, but since Moten does not rely on phenomenal rationality (because this is the realm of anti-black death), there is not much he can do with this ontology, other than to fervently insist that it exists (which seems to be a strategy he employs with his 2004 essay “Knowledge of Freedom,” and he, ironically, attempts to read Kant against Kant in an understanding of esthetic judgment). The brilliance of Moten, however, is that he refuses this double-bind, and instead of insisting on the pure ontology of blackness prior to anti-Blackness, he dispenses with ontology altogether – thus shifting ground from ontological origins to blackness without ontology. What, then, is ‘blackness without ontology’? Answering this single question seems to be his philosophical project. Moten wants to excavate **the ancient etiology** of that **which precedes ontology itself** – that which is in excess to ontology and with this excess has the potential to destroy it – what he would call black- ness as paraontological “pathogen” (Moten 2013, 739). Moten’s enterprise desires to escape, or flee, ontology – understanding that ontology is an exceptionally hostile place for blackness and renders blacks homeless within such a structure. Ontology is the site of pulverized being, abusive power, and systemized mute- ness. And given that **we might not have access to the ‘pure’ ontology of blackness,** if it does indeed exist, his enterprise turns away from ontology toward the anoriginal site of blackness – paraontology: blackness and ontology are unavailable for one another; on the other hand **blackness must free itself from ontological expectation, must refuse subjection to ontology’s sanction against the very idea of black subjectivity**. This imperative is not something up ahead, to which blackness aspires; it is the labor, which must not be mistaken for Sisphean, that blackness serially commits. The paraontological distinction between blackness and blacks allows us no longer to be enthralled by the notion that blackness is a property that belongs to blacks (thereby replacing certain formulations regarding non-relationality and non/ communicability on a different footing and under a certain pressure) but also because ulti- mately it allows us to detach blackness from the question of being. (Moten 2013, 749–750) Furthermore, “Blackness or the thinking of blackness, [must] be understood in what some not so strange combination of Nahum Chandler and Martin Heidegger might call its paraontological distinction from black people” according to Moten (Moten 2007, n. pag). Maintaining the distinction between black people and blackness entails the crucial metaphysical objective for Moten’s work. His critique of **Afro-Pessimism** is that it **collapses this distinction, confusing blackness with black things, and once this distinction is collapsed, or obliterated, blackness and black things are presented as pathological, wanting, inadequate, and deathly.** It is not surprising, then, that Moten relies on Heidegger as a philosophical inter- locutor, and exemplar, in this project; for Heidegger attempted to do precisely the same thing with his distinction between Being and beings in Being and Time (2008) and The Introduction to Metaphysics (2014). Moten is interested in how the troubled, illicit commerce between fact and lived experience is bound up with that between blackness and the black, a difference that is often concealed, one that plays itself out not by way of the question of accuracy or adequation but by way of the shadowed emergence of the ontological difference between being and beings. (Moten 2008b, 180) He wants to disentangle blackness and blacks **by positing his own (para)ontological distinction, a distinction that serves as a mystical ground for the ‘escape’ he believes is possible** (of course, Afro-Pessimists would argue that there is nothing to escape from since the distinction that Moten posits is itself the product of political ontology, and he is caught in somewhat of a performative contradic- tion). Moten carries Heidegger’s ontological difference between being/Being and ontic/Ontological into the distinction between blacks (ontic/political-ontology) and blackness (paraontology). Perhaps, blackness is what Heidegger was after all along. In Being and Time **Heidegger offered the strategy of Destruktion to combat the obliteration of the ontological distinction, which he considered the source of human misery and suffering**. De-struktion would involve **the intense weaken- ing of metaphysical being, a self-consumption of its violent arrangements. One would turn metaphysics against metaphysics and expose the utter irrationality and misery of its vacuous core**. Moten, however, does not offer such a strategy, and this makes his paraontology difficult to embrace – especially in the face of brutal anti-Blackness. Indeed, Moten’s philosophical translation and appropriation of Heidegger stops short of Heidegger’s ‘solution’ to the problem of metaphysics; Moten offers no solution to the problem of anti-Blackness other than the assertion that black- ness in an anti-black world functions as a “pathogen” and that it “bears or is the potential to end the world” (Moten 2013, 739). But how exactly does black- ness destroy anti-Blackness as pathogen? It is certainly the case that Moten is primarily concerned with blackness and not anti-Blackness; but given this, it becomes difficult for Moten to convince African American Criticism of its need to shift emphasis when blacks are suffering daily from anti-Blackness. Afro- Pessimists would argue that the idea of a solution to anti-Blackness is a myth, since the analytic tools used to eradicate anti-Blackness are themselves infused with anti-Blackness. Moten might well agree with this double-bind, but he avoids this sense of pessimism by not discussing anti-Blackness explicitly. He is much more interested in the paraontology of blackness than a phenomenology of anti- Blackness. But to shift emphasis from the obsessional object of political ontology to the wonder of blackness will require a strong philosophical justification for paraontology over the phenomenology of anti-Blackness – if not, paraontology could very easily become an anti-black structure within discourses seeking to deny or avoid the reality of black suffering. But does blackness have an obligation to black people? And if not, why not? What is the relationship between anti-black suffering and blackness? Is it pos- sible to have blackness without black people? (This mirrors the provocative ques- tion asked at a conference on Black Studies: Can we ethically ‘practice’ Black Studies without black scholars and black students?) Moten seems to suggest as such: blackness is present (as E.P. Thompson said of the English working class) at its own making and that all the people who are called black are given in and to that presence, which exceeds them (in an irrevocable, antenational combination of terror and enjoyment, longing and rejection, that Hartman, in particular illuminates). **Ultimately, the paraontological force that is transmitted in the long chain of life and death performances that are the concern of black studies is horribly misunderstood if it is understood exclusive, which is to say eve- ryone can claim blackness**. That claim is neither the last anticipatory reorientation but is, rather, an irreducible element of the differentially repeating plane that intersects and ani- mates the comparativist sphere. (Moten 2008a, 1746) Black people are ‘touched by blackness’ (blackness is presented to them much like Being is presented to Dasein for Heidegger), but blackness is not the property of black people. Blackness becomes what philosopher Mary Jane Rubenstein might call “strange wonder” (cf. Rubenstein 2010) – a wonder that Heidegger described as the groundlessness of Being. Because it is without ground, this wonder cannot be objectified or owned as the property of this or that group of persons. The rela- tionship between black people and blackness is not one that Moten explicitly articulates, primarily because he is attempting to detach blackness from black people and conceptualize blackness as a mystical abstraction appearing to the world. Blackness, here, becomes the site of a looking away, a desire to escape that for which we no longer will engage. (But if we close our eyes to political ontology, do we risk additional injuries? Is there a certain value to our obsession with the entity that has the potential to destroy us? Can we escape that which we do not fully know?) This impasse is precisely the violence that Afro-Pessimists see at the heart of such enterprises of escape, fugitivity, freedom, and emancipation. When Moten describes the paraontological as the “not so strange combina- tion of Nahum Chandler and Martin Heidegger” (Moten 2007, n. pag.), we might suggest that the juxtaposition of Chandler and Heidegger invokes Derrida’s cri- tique of Heidegger, since Nahum Chandler is our finest proponent of deconstruc- tion in Black Studies. Derrida’s critique of Heidegger, of course, was that he was entangled in the very metaphysical structure he sought to destroy. Destruktion disclosed itself as reinscription and repetition. It is the re-inscription of ontology within the paraontological that haunts Moten’s philosophical enterprise, for indeed, can we ever truly wrest paraontology from the ontology that distin- guishes it? Does not the trace of the other (ontology) inevitably infuse itself into the sphere that purportedly excludes it (paraontology) – as its illegitimate foun- dation? Is the ‘para’ here an actuality or a yearning for reprieve? In other words: Does the pathogen need its host to survive? To put this somewhat differently, if the issue with African American Criticism is that it is preoccupied with ontology and formations of anti-Blackness that sustain it, according to Moten, then we might say that it is ontological thinking that is at the root of this problem. We forget blackness because we are unable to disentangle our investigations from the thinking and procedure of Western ontology and metaphysics. To address this, Moten wants to ‘think otherwise’ (much like Heidegger attempted to do with his concept An-denken). But herein lies the problem: Moten is still entan- gled in the very metaphysical-ontological enterprise he wants to escape because his analytic depends on the distinction between blackness and blacks. The sig- nificance of this is two-fold: not only is this binary opposition between black- ness and blacks a product of binary-metaphysical/ontological thinking – thus a reproduction of the very thing he wants to flee – but he lacks an analytic frame- work and a lexicon that can transcend the constraints of ontology. Moten still operates within ontology through binary oppositions and terminology. The dif- ficulty of such an enterprise is that we do not have a grammar outside of ontol- ogy to describe the paraontological, which means that his idea of paraontology is still tethered to that which it is designed to escape. Paraontology becomes another version of ontology. Moten is as much obsessed with ontology as Afro- Pessimists. But this obsession is inescapable; there is no way out (which is what Afro-Pessimists have been emphasizing). We can become creative with preposi- tions and prefixes and say that paraontology is not ‘outside’ of ontology, but ‘through it’ ‘within it,’ ‘alongside,’ etc. – but these prepositional distinctions do not rectify the fundamental problem of repetition and re-inscription. The same binary thinking that stains ontology (e.g. between subject/object, free/slave, and white/black) lingers in the paraontological framework (e.g. between black- ness/blacks, fugitivity/stagnation, pathological/pathogenic, etc.). If blackness and ontology are unavailable for one another, then blackness and paraontology are just as unavailable and incompatible. Since, for Moten, **blackness indexes an atavistic being – before the reign of metaphysics and ontology, and any other organizing system for that matter – then no-thing is compatible with blackness.** And **because we can only approach blackness with the instruments, grammars, and analytics of ontology** (‘para’ or otherwise), **we will never really know blackness as Moten would desire – only our metaphysical engagement with it. Our desire to move beyond “ontological Blackness”** – as Victor Anderson would describe it (cf. Anderson 1995) – **becomes something similar to the psychoanalytic notion of objet** (a) (Lacan 2015, 12). **Blackness is the imaginary wholeness or origin that we are in constant pursuit of, but never can quite approach – indeed, if we successfully capture it, we die. There is, then, a certain majesty, terror, and mysticism about blackness**. Moten’s brilliant work re-members **the majesty and mysticism of blackness, even if it brackets the terror of blacknes**s (and this, perhaps, is the job of the Afro-Pessimists, to describe this terror). His **desire to escape ontology – to flee it as an existential fugitive – expresses an impossibility that nonetheless enlivens his texts**.

### Ontology

#### Violence against black people is oftentimes conditioned on religion – only the kritik can understands the specific ways in which antiblack violence and religion interact

[<https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/>

[Muriam Haleh Davis](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#bio)   |   [Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA)](https://csalateral.org/archive/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/), [Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)](https://csalateral.org/archive/issue/10-1/). Muriam Haleh Davis is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her book, forthcoming with Duke University Press, looks at how understandings of Islam were central for economic policy in colonial and post-colonial Algeria. She is a co-editor of the Maghreb page for *Jadaliyya*, and has published in a number of journals including the *Journal of Contemporary History*, the *Journal of European Integration History*, and *Middle East Critique*.]

In the summer of 2019, a new polemic emerged around the seemingly inexhaustible topic of Islam in France. During a meeting of the summer school held by *la France insoumise*—a left-wing populist party—the philosopher Henri Peña-Ruiz argued that one had the right to be Islamophobic (“*on a le droit d’être islamophobe”*).[1](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-1) Peña-Ruiz subsequently defended this statement, claiming that “it is not racist to attack (*s’en prendre*) a religion, but it is racist to attack a person because of their religion.” His comments were part of a broader argument about the very nature of racial discrimination itself: racism, he claimed, was discrimination of people for what they are, not for what they believe. Therefore, critiques of Muslims as a group—like critiques of atheists—were permitted, even if one could not reject individuals because of their faith. Unlike homophobia, he argued, Islamophobia does not target people for an essential element of their identity but represents a legitimate critique of a corpus of ideas. If it may seem shocking for a leftist to uphold Islamophobia not only as permissible, but as a right which must be defended, understanding this statement requires a longer reflection on the intersection of racial and religious categories in France. The image of a planetary network of people immediately brings to mind the global conspiracy once attributed to Jews. As Sandrine Sanos has written, “both Jews and Muslims have, in different ways, been “saturated” by an embodied identity from which republicanism demanded they must free themselves.”[2](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-2) Moreover, in the leftist imaginary, revolution and emancipation are necessarily secular. Peña-Ruiz’s argument, which constructs a strict partition between race (as skin color or appearance) and religion (as personal belief or theology), effectively forecloses any dialogue on anti-Muslim discrimination that borrows from the tools of anti-Black racism. Similarly, the discourse on “*Islamo-gauchisme*” (awkwardly translated as “Islamic-Leftism”) has become a common insult wielded against those on the left whose allegedly pro-Islamic sympathies, evident in their critique of Islamophobia, make them the unlikely bedfellow of terrorists. Once again, (legitimate) anti-racist commitments are assumed to occupy a different analytical space from discussions on the place of Muslims in the French Republic.[**3**](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-3) **In the United States, a particular anti-racist commitment rooted in ontological approaches to race** also highlights the political dangers of placing discussions of Islamophobia alongside anti-Black racism. **Scholars who espouse Afropessimist approaches**, such as Frank B. Wilderson III, view Blackness as coterminous with slavery and social death, **argu**ing **that anti-Blackness *cannot*be analogous to other forms of racism**. By defining Blackness as a transhistorical ontology, they also locate this particular form of racism outside historical time since “one cannot know a plentitude of Blackness distinct from Slaveness.”[4](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-4) **Stated differently, the hope for the restoration of native land—present in the emancipatory horizons of current-day Palestinians, colonized Algerians, as well as other postcolonial subjects—are necessarily foreclosed to the Slave**. The “ruse of analogy,” Wilderson writes, “erroneously locates Blacks in the world.”[5](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-5) This framework makes a distinction between anti-Blackness and anti-Black *racism;* while it acknowledges that racisms can be compared, it views anti-Blackness as a singular phenomenon that has structured the modern world and that is, unlike other forms of discrimination, based on an ontological difference rather than the drive to exploitation. **Thus, even revolutionary subjects like Palestinians are complicit with anti-Blackness in that their humanity depends on black suffering**.[6](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-6) **In addition to eliding the historical links between anti-colonial revolution and anti-racist struggle, this analytical approach also risks positing Muslim Arabs and Black Africans as “incommensurate ontologies.**”[7](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-7) In both the French and American cases, historical circumstances have conditioned a specific reluctance to thinking about anti-Black and anti-Muslim racial projects together. In the US, the experience of chattel slavery remains the paradigm for understanding the dehumanizing effects of racism. In France, on the other hand, postwar attempts to erase the lexicon of race have led to the adoption of a Republican color-blindness. Both approaches raise deeper questions: Is it possible to consider Islam as the basis of a racial project, or has it merely operated as a marker of personal belief? When we speak of Blackness, are we referencing an epistemology that structured racial binaries? Or should the concept be reserved for the bodies that have been defined as Black by dominant schemes of racial classification**? My point** in this article **is** not to call for comparison or to determine a hierarchy of suffering, but rather to **think relationally about** how **anti-Muslim** **racism** was “tied to extra- and trans-territorial conceptions and expressions” that “circulate[d] in wider circles of meaning and practice.”[8](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-8) **Colonial officials** **drafted** **techniques of rule based on** an international circulation of ideas about racial difference and governance. Structures of **anti-Black racism** were articulated **alongside** (**and** **sometimes against**) **anti-Muslim racism**. **The French colonial army, for example, often contrasted the docile African to the savage Arab.** The years following decolonization, which in many ways signified a global struggle for racial equality, saw creative borrowings of racial categories and anti-racist strategies; Asian youth movements in Britain adopted Blackness as a political identity in the 1970s and 1980s, for example.[9](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-9) While it may be jarring for French Republicans to accept that discrimination against Muslims, much like anti-Semitism, should occupy the terrain of anti-racist struggle, **Algeria’s colonial history demonstrates how Islam exceeded the frame of personal conviction and formed the basis of a political and economic project.** If analogizing American discussions centered on chattel slavery risks universalizing a geographically-specific understanding of race and racism, this article seeks to elucidate shifting ways Blackness has been understood and lived outside of the United States. French Republican colorblindness and **American investments in Blackness as a transhistorical ontology** both **foreclose the possibility of thinking historically about how anti-Muslim racism might be elucidated by studies of Blackness**. In contrast, this article argues for a recovery of a more capacious, and indeed relational, understanding of Blackness by analyzing **the “racial regime of religion” constructed in French Algeria** **and** revisiting **the work** of Frantz **Fanon**.[10](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-10) When scholars in the US invoke Fanon’s writings to establish the “absolute dereliction” of Blackness, they insist on an analytic divide between the native and the Slave. Yet **Fanon’s** **work** **borrowed from** **his experience of anti-black** (epidermal) **racism** in France as he theorized the Manichean system of settler colonialism in **Algeria**, **where the French state did not treat Islam as a question of** individual **faith** or belief. Instead, **religion formed the basis of the exclusionary legal, social, and economic binary of settler colonialism**. Both as a lived experience and a mode of governance, **meanings of Blackness varied dramatically as they circulated among Martinique, mainland France, Algeria, and the United States**. Stretching these reflections even further, this article suggests that thinking about how racial binaries structure political projects based on religion helps shed new light on questions of sectarianism and personal status laws in the Middle East. It may seem counterintuitive to argue that **anti-Muslim discrimination constituted a racial project in French Algeria**. Yet much like anti-Semitism, the line between religion and race is more porous than the secularizing myths of colonial modernity suggest. For example, early debates on colonization flirted with the options of exterminating, assimilating, or relocating the native population, invoking comparisons between the Arabs of Algeria and the indigenous populations of the United States. The physician Eugène Bodichon argued that native Algerians would experience “self-genocide” upon contact with European.[11](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-11) In contrast, the Arabophiles who surrounded Napoleon III dreamed that the noble features of the Arab race would complement France’s technical prowess and create an “Arab Kingdom.” In 1870, the Third Republic reasserted a civilizing mission claiming that the progress of native subjects would occur through their adoption of French cultural mores rather than evolution within their own cultural milieu. This albeit rough sketch of the different modalities of race-thinking highlights the shortcomings of speaking of a blanket “racialization” of the Muslim population, even within one particular colonial territory. Instead, it is imperative that we account for the specific ways that racial characteristics were imparted on Muslim bodies at particular moments.  While Islam became a marker of absolute difference in the late nineteenth century, earlier histories of slavery under the Ottoman Empire point to how religion, as well as anti-Blackness, were central to the distinction between free and enslaved peoples. **In the context of the Atlantic world, Blackness was synonymous with** slavery as the condition **of “social death**,” a status that Orlando Patterson defines by gratuitous violence, natal alienation, and general dishonor.[12](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-12) **Unlike Wilderson, Patterson uses this notion to describe common features of various systems of bondage rather than associating it narrowly with skin color.** Yet the distinctiveness of Mediterranean slavery have led some historians to argue that this term does not capture the status of enslaved populations in North Africa.[13](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-13) Moreover, even scholars in the Black radical tradition such as Cedric Robinson reject that slavery in the Mediterranean established a singular link between Blackness and enslavement.[14](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-14) In North Africa, corsairs engaged in so-called “white” slavery that targeted Europeans for economic and military motives while relying on a discourse of religious difference.[15](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-15) Christian boys, often from the Balkans, were enslaved and formed an elite corps of janissaries after conversion to Islam. Other enslaved Christians worked in the grueling domains of construction and sometimes rowed the corsair galleys. These forms of bondage existed alongside the trans-Saharan slave trade, making the question of whether Blackness was synonymous with enslavement a heated debate among historians of the region.[16](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-16) These arguments in no way deny the existence of anti-Black racism in pre-colonial North Africa, but rather highlight how skin color was conjugated alongside other factors such as religion, social standing, language, and ethnicity. It is therefore problematic to transpose Wilderson’s understanding of social death—where skin color is synonymous with an ontological absence—to Mediterranean histories of slavery. The French colonization of Algeria provided a link between the “old” colonies in the Atlantic world, which were based on slavery, and the “Second Empire,” which divided humanity into the categories of citizen and subject.[17](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-17) **In Algeria, it was not skin color that foreclosed access to citizenship** (and the attendant economic and legal advantages), **but** rather **religion**. According to the 1865 Senatus Consulte, Algerian Muslims and Jews were required to renounce their personal status, which applied religious law (as understood by the French) in order to apply for French citizenship. This exclusion was also based on the conviction that Islamic norms of gender and sexuality—particularly polygamy—were incompatible with the French Civil Code.[18](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-18) Yet five years later, Algerian Jews were offered citizenship *en bloc*(except in the Southern territories under military rule), and in 1889, non-French Europeans were offered French citizenship. Berbers, who were often seen as more “civilized” than Arabs in colonial ethnologies, were nevertheless denied citizenship on the basis of Islam. **A racial binary based on religion made Islam the unassimilable object for the French body politic.** **The legal status of Muslims dictated their access to citizenship, property, and survival**.[19](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-19) They were subjected to a number of legal and economic exclusions ranging from the indigenous code of 1881, which outlined a number of infractions that were only punishable when committed by Muslims, to the so-called “Arab tax” through which the natives disproportionately financed their own occupation. It is important to reiterate that being Muslim was not a question of individual belief or religious practice—and even conversion to Christianity did not attenuate the effects of these legal structures. This suggests that discrimination against Muslims was not necessarily, as Peña-Ruiz’s claims, a function of what one believesbut rather operated in a similar fashion to racism, which is based on unchangeable physical features (“what one is”). Many works in the canon of theorizing Blackness emerged from the multiple iterations of the color line debated by both colonized and black intellectuals during decolonization. A prime example of this is found in the work of Frantz Fanon, the philosopher, psychiatrist, and anti-colonial militant from Martinique who wrote about his experience of racism in France before departing for Algeria, where he ultimately supported the FLN (National Liberation Front) and became a key ambassador of the Algerian revolution in sub-Saharan Africa. His two most celebrated works, *Black Skin, White Masks*and *The Wretched of the Earth,*analyze his experiences as a Black man in France and the struggle against settler colonialism in Algeria, respectively. In the introduction *Black Skin, White Masks*, he highlights that Blackness in France is experienced differently by Caribbean people and Africans. Unfortunately, this insistence on historical context and the various instantiations of Blackness is obscured by the translation of “l’expérience vécue du noir” as “the fact of blackness ” in English. Borrowing from Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Fanon’s depiction of Blackness is fundamentally relational; even when defined as a lack of ontology, he specifies that this is only the case because of the white gaze (“Le Noir n’a pas de résistance ontologique aux yeux du Blanc”).[20](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-20) This brief Fanonian detour helps us interrogate how anti-Blackness might be used to study other forms of racism—rather than be partitioned off from colonial structures. **It is telling that Fanon notes that when dealing with the police in France, it is worse to be Arab than to be from Martinique**.[21](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-21) Another example of such an inversion is William Gardner Smith’s 1963 novel *The Stone Face,*which describes the October 17, 1961 massacre of Algerians based on his firsthand observations. The protagonist, Simeon, is at first puzzled to find that Arabs consider him “white” after his arrival in France. He later comes to realize that “the Algerians are the n\*g\*\*\*\* of France.”[22](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-22) James Baldwin made the same observation after his time in France.[23](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-23) In these accounts, Blackness is depicted as historically contingent and necessarily relational, something that confirms Michelle Wright’s observation that the fact of being black “cannot be located on the body because of the diversity of bodies that claim Blackness.”[24](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-24) Indeed, there are important continuities in Fanon’s two best-known works, despite their different objects of analysis. In detailing the binary aspects of the colonial world in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon refers the reader back to *Black Skin, White Masks* in a footnote, telling us that he has already explained the “mechanism of this Manichean world.”[25](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-25) At the end of his life, Fanon opted for Algerian nationality, distancing himself from his native Martinique. While sympathetic to the Négritude moment that was in part founded by his former teacher Aimé Césaire, he ultimately disagreed with its commitment to a preexisting black essence. Instead, he adopted Algeria as a homeland, a country whose national identity was based on an Arabo-Islamic culture rather than Blackness. For Fanon, the difference between the two colonial territories was political: while leaders in Martinique, including Césaire, supported postwar reforms that granted the old colonies the status of French departments, Algerian nationalists had waged a violent war of decolonization against any vestiges of French influence. During his time in North Africa, Fanon pressed for a continental and political (rather than narrowly racial) articulation of pan-Africanism, challenging leaders who he saw as too accommodating to France.[26](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-26) His personal trajectory thus suggests that he saw Blackness as a space of political struggle against various forms of European racisms, including settler colonialism, rather than a transhistorical paradigm based on slavery. In this regards, Fanon’s engagement with African and metropolitan realities made it impossible to define Blackness *only*in relationship to the historical experience of bondage. In contrast, Wilderson argues that “even as Settlers began to wipe Indians out, they were building an interpretive community with ‘Savages’ the likes of which Masters were not building with slaves.”[27](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-27) Like Native Americans, Algerians were clearly colonized and not enslaved—an important historical difference. Yet **Fanon’s writings, which combine insights as to the functioning of racial formations in the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa, can also be read as a warning against the temptation to straightjacket the multiple meanings of Blackness in the singular experience of chattel slavery.** After independence, a number of Algerian intellectuals criticized Fanon for his elision of Algeria’s Arabo-Islamic culture and his debt to Western thought.[28](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-28) The Algerian nation state, echoing colonialism’s racialization of religion, insisted that Islam was an indelible marker of Algerian identity that was not reducible to religious belief. As the Tripoli Congress of May 1962 stated, “Islam, stripped of all the excrescences and superstitions that have smothered or corrupted it, is to find expression in two essential factors *in addition* *to religion as such*: culture and identity.” The nationality law of 1963 once again made Muslim personal status the crux of national belonging. It stipulated that only those whose father and paternal grandfather came under the jurisdiction of Muslim personal status could become citizens. Europeans who had lived in Algeria for generations were forced to apply for citizenship on a case by case basis. The need to create a unitary national identity in Algeria after 1962 refashioned the meaning of Islam as well as indigeneity. The regime tended to view Berbers, who inhabited the region before the Arab conquest, as a linguistic and ethnic force of separatism.[29](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-29) In the 1960s and 1970s, Algeria adopted the mantle of Pan-Arabism as well as Pan-Africanism, a stance that sometimes led to tensions between African identity, which was often synonymous with Blackness, and its positioning in North Africa, which looked to the Middle East. Algeria used its international fame as the “Mecca of Revolutions” to address questions of anti-Blackness internationally despite the region’s uneasy history of slavery. This was epitomized when the 1969 Pan-African Festival, held in Algiers, brought together radicals from around the world—including Miriam Makeba from South Africa (who eventually took Algerian nationality) and Eldridge Cleaver from the United States—in Algiers. In her performance, Makeba sung in Arabic, proclaiming, “I am free in Algeria” (ana hurra fil-djazayir) while also noting also that “the time of slavery is over” (intaha ‘asru al-‘abid). Yet despite this revolutionary past, and the Algerian government’s attempts to position the country as a leader on the African continent in recent years, there is no doubt that anti-Black racism is rampant in the country. This was most recently evidenced around the denigration of Khadija Ben Hamo, who was crowned Miss Algeria in 2019. The long-standing notion that darker North Africans are part of a “diaspora” of slaves, rather than fully North Africa, has fed an uptake in anti-Black racism that accompanied the refugee crisis and the rise in sub-Saharan immigrants.[30](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-30) The fact that anti-Black racism exists in a country that once used anti-racism as a stamp of international revolutionary legitimacy should not lead us to conclude that this form of violence is timeless or irrational. Instead, it should compel us to interrogate the shifting and even contradictory operations of race in the post-colony.[31](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-31) The ways in which religious divisions structured imperial belonging played a key role in the subsequent construction of nation-states, which tended to incorporate (or suppress) religious, ethnic, and/or linguistic distinctions in the service of consolidating a national identity.[32](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-32) Thinking about the intersection of racial and religious categories also allows us to revisit discussions on sectarianism, which Ussama Makdisi describes as “the deployment of religious heritage as a primary marker of modern political identity.”[33](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-33) To the extent that the designation of sects has become a “technology of recognition,” religious belongings became a matter of state governance in the Middle East.[34](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-34) This has led certain groups—such as Maronite Catholics in Lebanon—to transform their Christian identity into “a racialized worldview,” as Ghassan Hage has argued.[35](https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/#fn-7755-35) In India, the British transformed the existing caste system into a rigid set of categories that overlapped with physical markers as well as religious hierarchies. **Rather than taking for granted the partitioning of ethnicity and religion from race, we might follow the shifting bases used by empires to interpellate their subjects and revisit the criteria on which they determined sameness or difference**. Postcolonial sectarianism might therefore be read as an afterlife of the regimes of religion constructed by empire rather than a trace of anachronistic modes of belonging. **Instead of an analytical certainty, the tendency to posit a stark divide between race and religion should be seen as part and parcel of the secularizing myths of modernity**. In discarding the commonly-held assumption that religion merely signifies transcendental concerns, we can instead turn our attention to how it was used as a form of statecraft that assigned bodies with meanings and structured access to political, economic, and social capital. In many cases, such as the French empire, this process occurred *in relation*to the maintenance of anti-Black structures. **Techniques of objectification, understandings of racial hierarchies, and even vocabularies of dehumanization circulated among imperial territories, so that without posing an equivalence, we can view the establishment of racial regimes of religion alongside the drive to objectify Black bodies. Rather than representing incommensurable forms of oppression, both forms of racism generated common strategies of objectification as well as shared imaginaries of liberation.**

#### The comrade *cannot* be based in ethnicity

#### Dean 19:

Dean, Jodi. Comrade: An essay on political belonging. Verso, 2019. // LHP PS

**The relation between comrades is not the same as the relation between friends.** This is a crucial point today given the problems in left milieus that can seem exclusive and cliquish. People who would otherwise be on the same side may not come together because closed and unwelcoming friendship groups prevent them from feeling a sense of commonality and belonging. Conversely, personal animosities that destroy friendships can undermine the political work of comrades. Claudio Lomnitz’s *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* illustrates the point. Lomnitz describes the lifeworld of the Partido Liberal Mexicano, a transnational network of revolutionary libertarian communists operating in Mexico and the United States and engaging in the Mexican Revolution. Mexican emigres and exiles living in the United States intertwined political work and the work to survive under capitalist conditions. Devoting everything to their cause, some comrades opened themselves up to the opportunism of the less committed, to the exploitation of those who prioritized making their own way in the United States. Tensions around sharing and work, politics and commitment, bled into a suspicion of infiltrators. Lomnitz writes: If a comrade was thought to be opportunistic and had personal ambitions, that person could be prone to selling out and maybe even to selling out his comrades. For this reason, the line between personal dislikes and suspicions of treason could get thin, and work was required to keep them distinct.[34](about:blank) Comrades may be friends but friendship and comradeship are not the same.[35](about:blank) We see this most clearly when friendships fray. **Personal dislike does not mean that the person is not a comrade.** In tight associations, comrade and friend relations blur and overlap. Maintaining the difference and the distance between them takes work, important work. **Comradeship requires a degree of alienation from the needs and demands of personal life to which friends must attend.** We learn from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* that friendship is a direct relation between two people for the benefit of each other. It’s a relationship anchored in the person, for the benefit or excellence of the individual. In his reading of Aristotle on friendship, Jacques Derrida emphasizes the “individual singularity” of friendship. “One must prefer *certain* friends.”[36](about:blank) Friends are chosen, selected, on the basis of their excellence, goodness, and virtue. One can only have a small number of friends—there isn’t time to devote to more. For Derrida, this counting marks the “becoming-political” of friendship. Friendship isn’t originally or necessarily political.[37](about:blank) Comradeship’s egalitarian assertion, in contrast, is intrinsically political: **Comrades are bound together in ways that set them apart, that make them a party. Collectivity replaces the individual singularity of friendship. One doesn’t choose one’s comrades. That one doesn’t choose one’s comrades does not mean that comrades are not chosen. Nor does it mean they are uncountable. Rather the choosing and counting are matters of political organization; the building up, training, and distributing of forces. One doesn’t choose one’s comrades.** **The collective does**. **In contrast to the narrow exclusivity of friendship, comradeship is broad—bees and stars, someone previously unknown now revealed as a comrade. Comradeship extends from intimate relations all the way to relations with those we don’t know personally at all. Anyone can be a comrade, whether or not they like me, whether or not they are like me.** In a couple of places **in *Incognegro***, Frank **Wilderson gestures to the difference between comrades and friends**. He describes the long hours discussing politics and literature with Trevor, a white South African who was his student as well as comrade in an underground MK unit. Wilderson writes, “I once told Trever that he was the best friend I’d ever had.” Trevor responds that he doesn’t have friends. “Only comrades.”[38](about:blank) Wilderson says that he doesn’t know what to make of this. We might consider that Trevor was rejecting the preferential singularity of friendship, a relation that dwells apart from politics. The absorbing work of political struggle creates its own intimacies, its own attachments and intensities. Comrades are bound through their work toward a common goal, not through something merely personal. Wilderson reports another discussion, this one with his first wife, Khanya, a black South African. Khanya says, “You have many White friends … but you hate them all.”[39](about:blank) **Comradeship abstracts from the specifics of individual lives, from the uniqueness of lived experience. Friendship doesn’t. Wilderson’s friends remain white; he remains black. He can hate the whiteness of his friends, and his friends for their whiteness, in a way that is deeply personal, wrapped up in life and being. Comradeship is different—it’s about the politics, the struggle, the discipline of common work, and the deep sense of connection and accountability that results.** The distinction between the comrade and the friend also points to an inhuman dimension of the comrade: **Comradeship has nothing to do with the person or personality in its specificity; it’s generic.** Comradeship abstracts from the specifics of individual lives to consider how these specifics might contribute to collective goals. What matters is not the uniqueness of a skill or experience but its utility for party work. In this sense, the comrade is liberated from the eterminations of specificity, freed by the common political horizon. Ellen Schrecker makes this point in her magisterial account of anticommunism in the United States. During the McCarthy period of communist persecution, there was a common assumption that “all Communists were the same.”[40](about:blank) Communists were depicted as puppets, cogs, automatons, robots, even slaves. In the words of “one of the McCarthy era’s key professional witnesses,” people who became communists were “no longer individuals but robots; they were chained in an intellectual and moral slavery that was far worse than any prison.”[41](about:blank) The truth underlying the hyperbolic claims of anticommunism is the genericity of the comrade, of comrade as a disciplined and disciplining relation that exceeds personal interests. Comradeship isn’t personal. It’s political. **The “other relations”—kin, neighbor, citizen, friend—index degenerations of comradeship, errors that comrades make when they substantialize comradeship via race, ethnicity, nationality, and personality.** We see this substantializing error in Italian uses of comrade (*camerata*) as a term of address. In Italian, the literal translation of comrade is a fascist political name. Similarly, the German *Kamerad* has a strong military connotation. Yet these substantializations are clear degenerations: the fascist cannot say that anyone can be a comrade. Italian leftists thus use *compagno/compagna*. German socialists and communists use *Genosse/Genossin. Genosse* comes from the old German *ginôoz* and *ginôzo*, which designate the shared enjoyment or use of something, cooperative ownership or shared right of use, as I explain in [chapter two](about:blank).[42](about:blank) Back to my point: the emancipatory egalitarian energy of comrade, its life-giving capacity and ability to map social relations in a new way, is a product of its genericity: anyone but not everyone can be a comrade. **When comradeship bleeds into nationality, ethnicity, or race; when it is mistaken for a relation that is supposed to benefit an individual; and when it is equated with relations mediated by the state, the cut of the generic is lost.**