### Transhumanism

#### The net benefit is that there is no value in their nihilist project -- vote aff to affirm the joy of becoming in Black Studies

**Moten 7** Fred, Professor of English and African American Studies, Duke University "black optimism/black operation", Chicago -- working text for "Black Op" Source: [PMLA](http://www.mlajournals.org/loi/pmla), Volume 123, Number 5, October 2008, pp. 1743–1747 (5)

http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&ved=0CDQQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Flucian.uchicago.edu%2Fblogs%2Fpoliticalfeeling%2Ffiles%2F2007%2F12%2Fmoten-black-optimism.doc&ei=1fE2UO65KuG8yAHpiIHYCg&usg=AFQjCNE8N66fQjQ7TP0PkJ0eYZDI6cNLvA&sig2=BUrcwC5Cfz5Ero2I14PBsg

My field is black studies. In that field, I’m trying to hoe the hard row of beautiful things. I try to study them and I also try to make them. Elizabeth Alexander says “look for color everywhere.” For me, color + beauty = blackness which is not but nothing other than who, and deeper still, where I am. This shell, this inhabitation, this space, this garment—that I carry with me on the various stages of my flight from the conditions of its making—is a zone of chromatic saturation troubling any ascription of impoverishment of any kind however much it is of, which is to say in emergence from, poverty (which is, in turn, to say in emergence from or as an aesthetics or a poetics of poverty). The highly cultivated nature of this situated volatility, this emergent poetics of the emergency, is the open secret that has been the preoccupation of black studies. But it must be said now—and I’ll do so by way of a cool kind of accident that has been afforded us by the danger and saving power that is power point—that there is a strain of black studies that strains against black studies and its object, the critique of western civilization, precisely insofar as it disavows its aim (blackness or the thinking of blackness, which must be understood in what some not so strange combination of Nahum Chandler and Martin Heidegger might call its paraontological distinction from black people). There was a moment in Rebecca’s presentation when the image of a black saxophonist (I think, but am not sure, that it was the great Chicago musician Fred Anderson) is given to us as a representative, or better yet a denizen (as opposed to citizen), of the “space of the imagination.” What’s cool here, and what is also precisely the kind of thing that makes practitioners of what might be called the new ~~black~~ studies really mad, is this racialization of the imagination which only comes fully into its own when it is seen in opposition, say, to that set of faces or folks who constituted what I know is just a part of Lauren’s tradition of Marxist historiographical critique. That racialization has a long history and begins to get codified in a certain Kantian discourse, one in which the imagination is understood to “produce nothing but nonsense,” a condition that requires that “its wings be severely clipped by the imagination.” What I’m interested in, but which I can only give a bare outline of, is a two-fold black operation—one in which Kant moves toward something like a thinking of the imagination as blackness that fully recognizes the irreducible desire for this formative and deformative, necessarily supplemental necessity; one in which black studies ends up being unable to avoid a certain sense of itself as a Kantian, which is to say anti-Kantian and ante-Kantian, endeavor. The new black studies, or to be more precise, the old-new black studies, since every iteration has had this ambivalence at its heart, can’t help but get pissed at the terrible irony of its irreducible Kantianness precisely because it works so justifiably hard at critiquing that racialization of the imagination and the racialized opposition of imagination (in its lawless, nonsense producing freedom) and critique that turns out to be the condition of possibility of the critical philosophical project. There is a voraciously instrumental anti-essentialism, **powered in an intense and terrible way by good intentions**, that is the intellectual platform from which **black studies’ disavowal of its object** and aim is launched, even when that disavowal comes in something which also thinks itself to be moving in the direction of that object and aim. I’m trying to move by way of a kind of resistance to that anti-essentialism, one that requires a paleonymic relation to blackness; I’m trying to own a certain dispossession, the underprivilege of being-sentenced to this gift of constantly escaping and to standing in for the fugitivity (to echo Natahaniel Mackey, Daphne Brooks and Michel Foucault) (of the imagination) that is an irreducible property of life, persisting in and against every disciplinary technique while constituting and instantiating not just the thought but that actuality of the outside that is what/where blackness is—as space or spacing of the imagination, as condition of possibility and constant troubling of critique. It’s annoying to perform what you oppose, but I just want you to know that I ain’t mad. I loved these presentations, partly because I think they loved me or at least my space, but mostly because they were beautiful. I love Kant, too, by the way, though he doesn’t love me, because I think he’s beautiful too and, as you know, a thing of beauty is a joy forever. But even though I’m not mad, I’m not disavowing that strain of black studies that strains against the weight or burden, the refrain, the strain of being-imaginative and not-being-critical that is called blackness and that black people have had to carry. Black Studies strains against a burden that, even when it is thought musically, is inseparable from constraint. But my optimism, **black optimism**, is bound up with what it is to claim blackness and the appositional, runaway black operations that have been thrust upon it. The burden, the constraint, is the aim, the paradoxically aleatory goal that animates escape in and the possibility of escape from. Here is one such black op—a specific, a capella instantiation of strain, of resistance to constraint and instrumentalization, of the propelling and constraining force of the refrain, that will allow me to get to a little something concerning the temporal paradox of, and the irruption of ecstatic temporality in, optimism, which is to say black optimism, which is to say blackness. I play this in appreciation for being in Chicago, which is everybody’s sweet home, everybody’s land of California, as Robert Johnson puts it. This is music from a Head Start program in Mississippi in the mid-sixties and as you all know Chicago is a city in Mississippi, Mississippi a (fugue) state of mind in Chicago. “Da Da Da Da,” The Child Development Group of Mississippi, Smithsonian Folkways Records, FW02690 1967 The temporal paradox of optimism—that it is, on the one hand, necessarily futurial so that optimism is an attitude we take towards that which is to come; but that it is, on the other hand, in its proper Leibnizian formulation, an assertion not only of the necessity but also of the rightness and the essential timelessness of the always already existing, resonates in this recording. It is infused with that same impetus that drives a certain movement, in Monadology, from the immutability of monads to that enveloping of the moral world in the natural world that Leibniz calls, in Augustinian echo/revision, “the City of God.” With respect to C. L. R. James and José (Muñoz), and a little respectful disrespect to Lee Edelman, these children are the voices of the future in the past, the voices of the future in our present. In this recording, this remainder, their fugitivity, remains, for me, in the intensity of their refrain, of their straining against constraint, cause for the optimism they perform. That optimism always lives, which is to say escapes, in the **assertion of a right to refuse**, which is, as Gayatri Spivak says, the first right: an instantiation of **a collective negative tendency** to differ, to resist the regulative powers that resistance, that differing, call into being. To think resistance as originary is to say, in a sense, that we have what we need, that we can get there from here, that there’s nothing wrong with us or even, in this regard, with here, even as it requires us still to think about why it is that difference calls the same, that resistance calls regulative power, into existence, thereby securing the vast, empty brutality that characterizes here and now. Nevertheless, however much I keep trouble in mind, and therefore, in the interest of making as much trouble as possible, I remain hopeful insofar as I will have been in this very collective negative tendency, this little school within and beneath school that we gather together to be. For a bunch of little whiles, this is our field (i.e., black studies), our commons or undercommons or underground or outskirts and it will remain so as long as it claims its **fugitive proximity to blackness**, which I will claim, with ridiculousness boldness, **is the condition of possibility of politics**.

#### Returning micro-politics to macro-level structures like the state is important for effectiveness

**Patton, 05** (Paul Patton, *Deleuze and Democracy*, Contemporary Political Theory, http://www.palgrave-journals.com/cpt/journal/v4/n4/full/9300236a.html)

Mengue turns this difference into opposition in suggesting that the position of majority is by nature opposed to the creativity of the minoritarian: majoritarian democratic politics inevitably 'crushes' creative becomings (Mengue, 2003, 102). According to this view, to adopt the standpoint of the majority is always to abandon the standpoint of the untimely and the creative in favour of the state and established values. This is a misrepresentation of Deleuze and Guattari's view and an implausible view of democratic politics. Legislative measures introduced in a number of democracies in recent years have served to broaden the standard to include non-whites, non-males and even to allow equal rights to homosexual partners. These measures suggest that, far from 'crushing novelty' as Mengue suggests, democratic politics can have its own forms of creativity. No doubt such measures have been implemented in response to micropolitical changes already underway. For this reason, William Connolly reminds us that in order to be responsive to new claims for the reconfiguration of the standard democratic political life needs to be infused with a public ethos of critical engagement (Connolly, 1999, 51). For Deleuze and Guattari, the different forms of minority becoming provide the impulse for change at the level of social and political institutions, but this change only occurs to the extent that there is **adaptation and incorporation** on the side of the majority. When they say that the power of minorities 'is not measured by their capacity to enter into and make themselves felt within the majority system, nor even to reverse the necessarily tautological criterion of the majority', they mean that the majorities do not determine the limits of the potential for transformation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 471). They do not mean to suggest that minorities do not enter into and produce effects upon the majority. On the contrary, they insist upon the importance of piecemeal changes to the form and content of a given majority: 'molecular escapes and movements would be nothing if they did not return to the molar organizations to reshuffle their segments, their binary distributions of sexes, classes and parties' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 216–217).6 Deleuze and Guattari's insistence on the transformative potential of minoritarian becomings does not imply a refusal of democratic politics, much less a rejection of democratic principles. The irreducible character of the difference in kind between majority and minority aligns them firmly with the proponents of democratic pluralism such as Connolly, for whom the key to an open-ended democratic process lies in the 'productive tension' between majoritarian governance, rights and recognition on the one hand, and minoritarian becoming on the other (Connolly, 2002, 172). For Deleuze and Guattari, it is precisely those excluded from the majority as defined by a given set of axioms who are the potential bearers of the power to transform that set, whether in the direction of a new set of axioms or an altogether new axiomatic. These are the source of minoritarian becomings that carry the potential for new earths and peoples unlike like those found in existing democracies.

#### Our Black ops are far more nuanced than an argument about escaping identity -- rather it is that Blackness as a static ontological category must be resisted -- Wilderson's attempt to describe Black ontology as an abjection bound to slavery is a pessimism from which voting negative escapes -- if their vision of Black Studies is an endless articulation of slavery, ours attends to the way that Blackness is always escaping from static framing of its past. Whether those framings come from within the black scholarship community or outside -- our position of privilege is not relevant to how THEY have chosen to characterize blackness -- their framing is not productive for any sort of emancipatory politics, which means if they win that Blackness is terminally screwed, any risk that escape is possible means you vote negative

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http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&ved=0CDQQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Flucian.uchicago.edu%2Fblogs%2Fpoliticalfeeling%2Ffiles%2F2007%2F12%2Fmoten-black-optimism.doc&ei=1fE2UO65KuG8yAHpiIHYCg&usg=AFQjCNE8N66fQjQ7TP0PkJ0eYZDI6cNLvA&sig2=BUrcwC5Cfz5Ero2I14PBsg

I am gonna do something called "Black Ops." In addition to the notion of a black operation I am also interested in something I would like to call black optimism, something that will illuminate the convergence of the condition of possibility and the end of politics (something james would think as "the future in the present," something King would discuss under the rubric of the "fierce urgency of now" where fierce urgency denotes not only pain but also pleasure--I'm talking about an exigency that, above all, inheres in and radiates from, The Music). Eventually, and it's too much to go into here, this will open up some ways to link up some questions emerging out of Leibniz and extended by Russell and Deleuze and my old teacher Ann Banfield that will allow me to consider some interplay between blackness and the baroque and will, therefore, link up to the essay on Glenn Gould, Beethoven and filmic practice. Ultimately, there are some things I want to say about Gould and Cecil Taylor that will, I hope, allow an articulation of something, in relation each to the other, regarding the political history of the present. Obviously, what I'm contemplating will either be one hundred pages or ten very dense and poetic ones. Some aphorisms, some variations or, perhaps more precisely, some rhythmic figures, some heads invoking arrangement, as it were, or anarrangement. Black ops. Back Sites. What is it that now one has to forge a paleonymic (r)elation to black, to blackness? The word persists, now, under erasure or eclipse, ceded to the state of law/exception. The word is begrudged, grungy, dingy, encased in a low tinge, always understood as being in need of a highlight it already has or that chromatic saturation that it already is. Resistance and (the auto-poetics of) organization (flight + inhabitation). optimism/monad/baroque/blackness Nomad and monad. N gets a letter from M. What’s the relationship between saying, “utopia is submerged in or in the interstices or on the outskirts of the present” and saying, “this is the best of all possible worlds” (a Leibnizian optimism) and saying, “the history of abolitionism is not the history of a set of wholly rhetorical exhortations, whether rational or ecstatic, but is, rather, the history of an infinite set or line of quotidian “escape acts” (as Daphne Brooks might say) which operate at the level of rhetoric as well as the aesthetic and which, therefore, might include but need not be reduced to this or that particular instance of abolitionist rhetoric?” Laid back, spread out, stretched out, laid out. Part of what’s necessary is the realization of an analytic that moves through the opposition of voluntary secrecy and forced exposure. What’s needed is some way to understand how the underground operates out in the open and, perhaps deeper still, as the open in something like the ways Agamben/Rilke/Santner have tried to approach. What’s the relation between the border/limit and the open? Between blackness and the limit/edge? Between a quite specific and materially redoubled finitude or being-limited and the open? What a certain discourse on the relation between blackness and death seems to try to get to—in the best (which is to say least tragically neurotic) instances of that discourse—lies, at least, in vicinity of this question. Leibniz/Russell/Deleuze/Banfield: The monad and the thing. The blues as black op (undercover, off the books, in the service of resistance or rearguard, assassination or non-violent refusal while at the same time being not just violently commodified but, more precisely and viciously, of the commodity or, at least, of her trace): In honor of Chicago and of a vast range of sweet homes: between Robert Johnson and Leo Smith, Leland Mississippi, right between Greenville and Indianola, right on 61 Highway (the monad is nomadic, at least in her head). On the relation between blackness and the baroque, an irregular pearl, following from Deleuze’s thought regarding the relation between baroque and minimalism. Seeking out the state is all bound up with frowning on things. Seeking out the state is not the same thing as looking after what does not escape. The fugitive escapes but she does not escape. Escape is not accomplished but is a thing(liness) we love. Seeking out the state is a kind of piety. I worked in prisons. So did I. I talk with the spirits. I seek out the state. Puritanism hurtles towards secularism. An all too verifiable past, lives crowded with incident, smothered by precedent. One has a choice to face up to not having a choice. There is no unheard appeal. Poetry will have never been obscene having been a haven. Holding fast is not the opposite of running away, is not in between. The dismal swamp is a jam, an open waterway. Why seek out the state? Comfort under the state’s protection, which is a kind of brutality. We appeal to the future we imagine. We imagine what we are. Blackness as appeal, as escape. We are always also walking in another world. My archive is a dehiscence at the heart of the archive and on its edge—a disorder, an appeal. My political desire scratches discontent. On the very idea of the passage—what do Deleuze and Krauss mean by it? Where does it come from? From a long time ago, via Uncle Toliver and Equiano, working out the notion of ensemble, I try to speak of an “improvisatory whole” in relation to the barest beginnings of a more critically aware understanding of “passage”: what is the relation between passage in this context and those passages of sculpture of which Krauss and Deleuze speak? Deleuze invokes Tony Smith; Krauss is more inclined towards David Smith. Deleuze is specific in his invocation of T. Smith as a kind of precursor to his own extension of the monadology. He invokes those same passages in Smith that Fried derides. The improvisatory whole, the monad, the icon, the thing. Jazz, oratorio and baroque. Blackness and the baroque. What is exposure? What is an aesthetics of exposure? The bright side is the dark side, the black hand side, the west side, the south side, where they be talking about in the evening when the sun go down as if it has not nothing but something else, something other

#### Reject their totalizing understandings of race – only by abandoning essentialism can we construct new understandings of blackness in the world and challenge the nihilism threatening productive movements.

bell hooks 90 [“POSTMODERN BLACKNESS”, Postmodern Culture vol.1 <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Postmodern_Blackness_18270.html> //liam]

It is sadly ironic that the contemporary discourse which talks the most about heterogeneity, the decentered subject, declaring breakthroughs that allow recognition of otherness, still directs its critical voice primarily to a specialized audience, one that shares a common language rooted in the very master narratives it claims to challenge. If radical postmodernist thinking is to have a transformative impact then a critical break with the notion of "authority" as "mastery over" must not simply be a rhetorical device, it must be reflected in habits of being, including styles of writing as well as chosen subject matter. Third-world scholars, especially elites, and white critics who passively absorb white supremacist thinking, and therefore never notice or look at black people on the streets, at their jobs, who render us invisible with their gaze in all areas of daily life, are not likely to produce liberatory theory that will challenge racist domination, or to promote a breakdown in traditional ways of seeing and thinking about reality, ways of constructing aesthetic theory and practice. From a different standpoint Robert Storr makes a similar critique in the global issue of Art in America when he asserts: To be sure, much postmodernist critical inquiry has centered precisely on the issues of "difference" and "otherness." On the purely theoretical plane the exploration of these concepts has produced some important results, but in the absence of any sustained research into what artists of color and others outside the mainstream might be up to, such discussions become rootless instead of radical. Endless second guessing about the latent imperialism of intruding upon other cultures only compounded matters, preventing or excusing these theorists from investigating what black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American artists were actually doing. Without adequate concrete knowledge of and contact with the non-white "other," white theorists may move in discursive theoretical directions that are threatening to and potentially disruptive of that critical practice which would support radical liberation struggle. The postmodern critique of "identity," though relevant for renewed black liberation struggle, is often posed in ways that are problematic. Given a pervasive politic of white supremacy which seeks to prevent the formation of radical black subjectivity, we cannot cavalierly dismiss a concern with identity politics. Any critic exploring the radical potential of postmodernism as it relates to racial difference and racial domination would need to consider the implications of a critique of identity for oppressed groups. Many of us are struggling to find new strategies of resistance. We must engage decolonization as a critical practice if we are to have meaningful chances of survival even as we must simultaneously cope with the loss of political grounding which made radical activism more possible. I am thinking here about the postmodernist critique of essentialism as it pertains to the construction of "identity" as one example. Postmodern theory that is not seeking to simply appropriate the experience of "otherness" in order to enhance its discourse or to be radically chic should not separate the "politics of difference" from the politics of racism. To take racism seriously one must consider the plight of underclass people of color, a vast majority of whom are black. For African-Americans our collective condition prior to the advent of postmodernism and perhaps more tragically expressed under current postmodern conditions has been and is characterized by continued displacement, profound alienation and despair. Writing about blacks and postmodernism, Cornel West describes our collective plight: There is increasing class division and differentiation, creating on the one hand a significant black middle-class, highly anxiety- ridden, insecure, willing to be co-opted and incorporated into the powers that be, concerned with racism to the degree that it poses constraints on upward social mobility; and, on the other, a vast and growing black underclass, an underclass that embodies a kind of walking nihilism of pervasive drug addiction, pervasive alcoholism, pervasive homicide, and an exponential rise in suicide. Now because of the deindustrialization, we also have a devastated black industrial working class. We are talking here about tremendous hopelessness. This hopelessness creates longing for insight and strategies for change that can renew spirits and reconstruct grounds for collective black liberation struggle. The overall impact of the postmodern condition is that many other groups now share with black folks a sense of deep alienation, despair, uncertainty, loss of a sense of grounding, even if it is not informed by shared circumstance. Radical postmodernism calls attention to those sensibilities which are shared across the boundaries of class, gender, and race, and which could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy--ties that would promote recognition of common commitments and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition. "Yearning" is the word that best describes a common psychological state shared by many of us, cutting across boundaries of race, class, gender, and sexual practice. Specifically in relation to the postmodernist deconstruction of "master" narratives, the yearning that wells in the hearts and minds of those whom such narratives have silenced is the longing for critical voice. It is no accident that "rap" has usurped the primary position of R&B music among young black folks as the most desired sound, or that it began as a form of "testimony" for the underclass. It has enabled underclass black youth to develop a critical voice, as a group of young black men told me, a "common literacy." Rap projects a critical voice, explaining, demanding, urging. Working with this insight in his essay "Putting the Pop Back into Postmodernism," Lawrence Grossberg comments: The postmodern sensibility appropriates practices as boasts that announce their own--and consequently our own--existence, like a rap song boasting of the imaginary (or real--it makes no difference) accomplishments of the rapper. They offer forms of empowerment not only in the face of nihilism but precisely through the forms of nihilism itself: an empowering nihilism, a moment of positivity through the production and structuring of affective relations. Considering that it is as a subject that one comes to voice, then the postmodernist focus on the critique of identity appears, at first glance, to threaten and close down the possibility that this discourse and practice will allow those who have suffered the crippling effects of colonization and domination to gain or regain a hearing. Even if this sense of threat and the fear it evokes are based on a misunderstanding of the postmodernist political project, they nevertheless shape responses. It never surprises me when black folk respond to the critique of essentialism, especially when it denies the validity of identity politics, by saying "yeah, it's easy to give up identity, when you got one." Though an apt and oftentimes appropriate comeback, this does not really intervene in the discourse in a way that alters and transforms. We should indeed suspicious of postmodern critiques of the "subject" when they surface at a historical moment when many subjugated people feel themselves coming to voice for the first time. Criticisms of directions in postmodern thinking should not obscure insights it may offer that open up our understanding of African-American experience. The critique of essentialism encouraged by postmodernist thought is useful for African-Americans concerned with reformulating outmoded notions of identity. We have too long had imposed upon us, both from the outside and the inside, a narrow constricting notion of blackness. Postmodern critiques of essentialism which challenge notions of universality and static over-determined identity within mass culture and mass consciousness can open up new possibilities for the construction of the self and the assertion of agency. Employing a critique of essentialism allows African-Americans to acknowledge the way in which class mobility has altered collective black experience so that racism does not necessarily have the same impact on our lives. Such a critique allows us to affirm multiple black identities, varied black experience. It also challenges colonial imperialist paradigms of black identity which represent blackness one-dimensionally in ways that reinforce and sustain white supremacy. This discourse created the idea of the "primitive" and promoted the notion of an "authentic" experience, seeing as "natural" those expressions of black life which conformed to a pre-existing pattern or stereotype. Abandoning essentialist notions would be a serious challenge to racism. Contemporary African- American resistance struggle must be rooted in a process of decolonization that continually opposes reinscribing notions of "authentic" black identity. This critique should not be made synonymous with the dismissal of the struggle of oppressed and exploited peoples to make ourselves subjects. Nor should it deny that in certain circumstances that experience affords us a privileged critical location from which to speak. This is not a reinscription of modernist master narratives of authority which privilege some voices by denying voice to others. Part of our struggle for radical black subjectivity is the quest to find ways to construct self and identity that are oppositional and liberatory. The unwillingness to critique essentialism on the part of many African-Americans is rooted in the fear that it will cause folks to lose sight of the specific history and experience of African-Americans and the unique sensibilities and culture that arise from that experience. An adequate response to this concern is to critique essentialism while emphasizing the significance of "the authority of experience." There is a radical difference between a repudiation of the idea that there is a black "essence" and recognition of the way black identity has been specifically constituted in the experience of exile and struggle. When black folks critique essentialism, we are empowered to recognize multiple experiences of black identity that are the lived conditions which make diverse cultural productions possible. When this diversity is ignored, it is easy to see black folks as falling into two categories--nationalist or assimilationist, black-identified or white-identified. Coming to terms with the impact of postmodernism for black experience, particularly as it changes our sense of identity, means that we must and can rearticulate the basis for collective bonding. Given the various crises facing African-Americans (economic, spiritual, escalating racial violence, etc.) we are compelled by circumstance to reassess our relationship to popular culture and resistance struggle. Many of us are as reluctant to face this task as many non-black postmodern thinkers who focus theoretically on the issue of "difference" are to confront the issue of race and racism.

#### Turns their args – greatest comparative threat

**Miah quoting West in 94**

(Malik Miah, Cornel West's Race Matters, May-June, http://www.solidarity-us.org/node/3079)

In the chapter, “Nihilism in Black America,” West observes “The liberal/conservative discussion conceals the most basic issue now facing Black America: the nihilistic threat to its very existence. This threat is not simply a matter of relative economic deprivation and political powerlessness -- **though economic well-being and political clout are requisites for meaningful Black progress**. It is primarily a question of speaking to the profound sense of psychological depression, personal worthlessness, and social despair so widespread in Black America.” (12-13) “Nihilism,” he continues, “is to be understood here not as a philosophic doctrine ... it is, far more, the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaningless, hopelessness, and (most important) lovelessness.” (14) “Nihilism is not new in Black America. . . . In fact,” West explains,”the major enemy of Black survival in America has been and is neither oppression nor exploitation but rather the nihilistic Threat -- that is, loss of hope and absence of meaning. For as long **as hope remains and meaning is preserved, the possibility of overcoming oppression stays alive.** The self-fulfilling prophecy of the nihilistic threat is that without hope there can be no future, that without meaning there can be no struggle.” (14-15).

#### The neg orients themselves towards the end of the world – we orient ourselves towards the beginning

**Aker 12** [March 22, Futuristicallyancient.com, Aker, cultural critic in the style of the ancient Egyptian god, “What Is Afrofuturism? Part 7: From Urban Afrofuturism”]

Urban Afrofuturism posted on tumblr why afrofuturism is important to him:¶ “This started out rambling thoughts on my thoughts on Afro-Futurism. What it’s become is a long rambling essay/poem (!) on my worldview, my religious thoughts, and what I think of humanity and existence in general. I think I’ve finally found a framework that fully articulates all my thoughts while leaving so much room for growth and evolution. I’m very very happy with it. ¶ I’ve been wondering as of late why I’ve been so attracted to to the idea of of Afro-Futurism and what that means for me personally.¶ And as of late, I’ve been framing Afro-Pessimism and Afro-Futurism as flip sides of a coin, kind of the two halves that form the whole of my personal philosophy and can sort of describe my experiences. I’ve appropriated the term Afro-Pessimism here – it refers more specifically to the condition of Africa, especially post 1980’s and the economic declines the continent faced then, or at least it was formed in that context. But that’s neither here not there for me. For me, how I conceptualize it is in relation to this quote by Frank Wilderson (obviously taken out of a wider context),¶ ‘“[The Afro-Pessimists argue] that violence toward the black person happens gratuitously, hence without former transgression, and the even if the means of repression change (plantation was replaced by prison, etc.), that doesn’t change the structure of the repression itself. Finally (and this is important in terms of the self-definition of the white person), a lot of repression happens on the level of representation, which then infiltrates the unconscious of both the black and the white person…Since these structures are ontological, they cannot be resolved (there is no way of changing this unless the world as we know it comes an end…); this is why the [Afro-Pessimist relational-schema] would be seen as the only true antagonism (while other repressive relations like class and gender would take place on the level of conflict—they can be resolved, hence they are not ontological).”¶ Or essentially why I’m a misanthrope. I believe socially structures across the globe, while varying across the globe, will always situated to keep blackness and those of the African diaspora down. And by a wider extension, what I think this means is kyriarchal structures will be an ever present reality. I do not believe racism will ever disappear or not be a problem. I do not believe sexism will ever disappear or not be a problem. The same for any number of oppressions – cissexism, ableism, whatever, you name it, I think this are ever present realities. I do not believe that humans are inherently good. For me these are ontological claims. This simple is the way the world is, these are conditions of our existence. This is reality¶ And the truth is reality depresses me, but I also think it bores me. As much as I claimed to be a physicalist (a position I occupied until literally a few days ago), the implications of that position, and the reality that we occupy bores me. And this is on several scales – from the mundane: really, my future is predicated on the arbitrary scaling of my academic efforts on a scale from 1 to 4? Really I have to spend the rest of my life trying to accumulate capital just to live in this society?; Or, to the more abstract: we are still judging and oppressing people based on their skin tone or gender presentation or sexual orientation? This is institutionalized?¶ We, as humans, could do so much more, could beso much more! But simultaneously, it is our humanity that limits us.¶ On the other hand, Afro-Futurism is the theoretical space that we could occupy – what we and the world would look like if we fulfilled the potential that humanists cite when talking about greatness we could achieve, the world that the anti-oppression fights for, the world that the scientist imagines. For me as a black man, that’s a world of constant redefinition, where I don’t have to give up my historical identity, but I don’t have to be limited by it either. Right? Black is the color of the cosmos, the black man is the cosmic man (Sun-Ra). It flips the existential absurdity of what it means to be black in a world that would deny me my humanity, and flips it on its head. It embraces the absurdism! What? I exist? I occupy physical space? I affect the universe, I AM the universe? That in and of itself is amazing. I am not human, I can be transhuman, I can be greater than human, I am a part of a whole that is greater than humanity. It deals with potential.¶ And so those who engage with afro-futurism, the artists, the musicians, the poets, the scientists, the anti-oppression warriors, they are the ones who explore the spaces of our potential – what we could be, what we are from different perspectives. Astronauts, aliens from outerspace, androids, Dust, stardust, atoms, ancestors and descendants, angels and demons, kings and queens and pharoahs, bois, grrls,. They take the historical, and the contemporary, and explore the possibilities. This isn’t about race, it also creates futures for genders, for sexualities, and it’s greater than all of that. And every venture into the afro-futuristic space is a small glimpse of that potential. Every subversion of the norms imposed on us is an exploration of that space.¶ ¿Como el realismo mágico, el género metalingüístico? Es el mismo.¶ And paradoxically it’s an exploration of our humanity. Because humans make this happen. Sun-Ra, Octavia Butler, Janelle Monae, Colson Whitehead, Terence Nance, Audre Lorde, Malcolm X, Barry Jenkins, Nicki Minaj, – these are all people. All flawed – but there’s something greater there too right? Taking the parts, and making something greater than the sum.¶ And why Urban? For me, I’m a product of the city (urban youth, the metropolis kid). And the city, both real and imagined is where all of this coalesces. It represents the best and the worst of us – a monument to that potential that we have, so many people in concentrated physical spaces, so much technical and engineering achievement, structures that scrape the sky!, so many minds in one place, so much community, and yet simultaneously, always the cite of festering squalor, of high crime, of segregation, of apathy and antagonism. The urban environment, real and imagined, is the physical home of humanity, what we’ve done with nature.¶ I don’t believe in a God, and I don’t believe in the supernatural. But I do believe in something bigger, and when I say bigger I mean beyond human conception. But just because we can’t conceive of it doesn’t mean we aren’t a part of it. (My goodness…have I discovered religion? ( .\_.)) Maybe it’s irrational, but I’ve ceased to define everything irrational as inherently bad. Epistemological Claims.

#### We already know the mistakes embeddded within the genocidal dream of manifest destiny that has deemed populations slaves to a mythology which never came from their mouths. Disenfranchised by the technological myth of progress which make possible the everday cloack of invisibility that is thrown over bodies of difference. But we can find places where it is possible to combat both the white denial of black history and access to the future it is found within the performance, within the vibrations. Space is the place.

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

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

#### Afrofuturism is the best means by which to articulate black ontology, which in this world exist only to be hidden. The invisibility of blackness is proof of our own seemingly alien existence in which the mythological construction of difference can only be confronted by the potentiality of our performance

Stevphen **Shukaitis 2009** [Space is the (non)place: Martians, Marxists, and the outer space of the radical imagination University of London]//JR

A shift toward a mythic terrain of conflict and image generation can be seen in **Afrofuturism,** which as a literary and cultural movement is **based on exploring the black experience through the relation between technology, science fiction, and racialization** (Kodwo, 2003; Nelson, 2000; Williams, 2001; Weiner, 2008; Yaszek, 2005). While Afrofuturism is a wide-ranging area of cultural production, what is of most interest for the purposes of this chapter is the way it provided a space for going ‘black to the future’, to borrow Mark Dery’s phrasing (1995): in other words, to fuse together an engagement with historical themes and experiences and the ways that they play out within a contemporary racialized experience. In Paul Miller’s Afrofuturist manifesto he framed it as a ‘**a place where the issues that have come to be defined as core aspects of African American ethnicity and its unfolding** . . . [are] replaced by a zone of electromagnetic interactions’ (1999). In other words, as **the space of publicness for the exploration of these dynamics that had faded** or withered, or has **become transformed into a paradoxical form of publicity without publicness through hypervisibility**, **Afrofuturism exists as an imaginal for this exploration, coded within** forms that are perhaps not instantly recognizable as **dealing with the political content they actually work throug**h. Afrofuturism was first elaborated by Sun Ra in the 1950s (Szwed, 1998; Cutler, 1992; Elms et al., 2007). The Sun Ra Arkestra continues to play to the present day, fusing together hard bop, experimental jazz and electronic music with outer space imagery and Egyptian themes. The Sun Ra Arkestra was one of the first ensembles to make extensive use of electronic musical equipment, synthesizers, and instruments in their performances. They directly combined a continued engagement with new forms of technology and experimentation at a time when most jazz performers who were trying to be taken seriously avoided them (but then again they also avoided appearing on stage in Egyptian garb, claiming that they were from another planet). Perhaps more importantly for the discussion here, Sun Ra elaborates a sort of mythological performance and cosmogony based around fusing together ancient Egyptian imagery and scientific themes. This is clearly expressed a scene from the 1974 film Space is the Place (in which Sun Ra engages in a cosmic duel over the fate of the black race, who Sun Ra hopes to transport to another planet in a form of space-age Marcus Garvey-esque exodus). In a discussion with some youth in a community, **Sun Ra, when asked if he is real, responds How do you know I’m real? I’m not real. I’m just like you. You don’t exist in this society. If you did your people wouldn’t be struggling for equal rights. If you were, you would have some status among the nations of the world. So we’re both myths. I do not come to you as the reality, I come to you as the myth, because that’s what black people are, myths. I came from a dream that the black man dreamed long ago. I am a present sent to you by your ancestors** (1974). As we can see from this quote, Sun Ra **used this as a means to formulate and develop a politics based around this mythological self-institution**. Over five decades the Arkestra released almost seventy albums and gave countless performances while living communally and elaborating forms of mythic narrative and imagery as part of the process of creating a philosophical system, or equation, as Sun Ra referred to it (Wolf and Geerken, 2006). **The potentiality in the creation of such imagery does not depend on whether or not Sun Ra is really from Saturn, but rather on thesocial energies and desires that flow through the creation of these images**. The Sun Ra Arkestra were also among the first ensembles to experiment in a serious way with collective improvisation, which can be understood in some an emergent model for a self-organized communist mode of production and social orga

#### Moreover, a rupture point is never an end point, much as our politics is not the sum of homogenizing several revolutionary ideas but rather, a continual process of creation and engagement with the political in a way that is conducive with existing social energies. View the affirmative as a new way of dancing with politics using music as a way of formulating social relations in a better world

Stevphen **Shukaitis 2008** [Dancing Amidst the Flames: Imagination and Self-Organization in a Minor Key, Compositions and Commons Co-Research Project,University of London, Queen Mary]//JR

Thus the particulars of events, campaigns and actions become enmeshed within the evolving collective assemblage of minor cultural politics. It is not that the various individual concerns and interests become subsumed within a collective homogenous general interest (for the sake of the movement and so forth), but rather than **individual intrigues are connected to other concerns**; each connection and concern, ‘thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, **magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it**’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986: 17). This dynamic can also be noted in the on going development of countercultural politics and organizing associated with punk rock5 and forms of collective authorship that have been employed from Dada to the shared names of Karen Eliot, Monty Cantsin, and Luther Blissett (Blissett 2005; Home, 1991). In other words it is not a process of forming a new collective subject that will act towards achieving certain political goals (the punk community will do this or that), but rather that it operat**es as an assemblage for developing and articulating ideas through intensive forms of social relations** created through the emergence and continuation of a dispersed and fluid community—for instance **in relations to various concerns about war, poverty, ecology, gender, gentrification**, and any other host of issues. In other words, there ‘isn’t a subject; there are only collective assemblages of enunciation’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986: 18). The self-organization of the punk community, which at face value is often seen to only reflect a kind of youthful nihilism of no political content, is in many ways **directly political through how the use of music and artistic expressions, the intensive usage of language, becomes an integral part of formulating non-alienating and often post-capitalist social relations in the present and connecting these emerging relations to what is more commonly recognized as politics** (Holtzman et al., 2004; Leblanc, 1999; McKay, 1998). It is this form of politics based not upon projecting an already agreed upon political solution or calling upon an existing social subject (the people, the workers), but rather **developing a mode of collective, continual and intensive engagement with the social world that embodies the politics of minor composition**. It is a mode that rather than relying upon notions of already understood subjective positions works from within particular sets of identities, relations, and fl ows of power to develop continually open and renewing intersubjective positions to organize from. These processes of minor composition are articulated through forms of collective enunciation. For instance, in the mid 1960s, the UK Diggers, a British group of radicals inspired by the 17th century radicals who they took the name from, put forth a conception of politics they argued was not based on representing the people but rather on electing them, that is to fi nd a form of concerted political action through which subjective position of the people is created (Stansill and Zane, 1999). In many ways the organizing of the IWW (as well as many other examples that can be grouped under the conceptual framework of minor composition) continue in longstanding dynamics of class formation and contestation that have been described by sociologists such as Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow, and social historians such as E. P. Thompson, Peter Linebaugh, Christopher Hill, and Silvia Federici.6 Arguably, by recovering such stories and histories of contestation and antagonism without needing to write them into an overarching linear progression of a grand historical narrative, social history written from below can inscribe these minor instances and protagonisms in a way fi tting to their form. This is very much the case for the history of a formation like the IWW, which is comprised more of stories told round the fi re in the hobo jungle and in songs than the formats often recognized as the key points of historical development. As Ricardo Blaug (1998) argued some ten years ago, there is a certain ‘tyranny of the visible’ that persists in social analysis and particularly in organizational research which has the effect of blinding one to much which is of interest. While these histories and movements have not received as much attention within organization studies as they merit, there have been some important contributions that have begun such an inquiry.7 The politics of minor composition is concerned with developing a form of politics not based upon fi xed identities, a consequent emphasis on the social relations formed with political organizing, and the intensive mode of engagement through which these emerge. The politics of minor composition are formed around particular situations and convergences of social forces 743-764 ORG\_093651.indd 749 5/22/2008 11:19:21 AM Process Black 750 Organization 15(5) Articles intensively engaged with and complicated. As described by Nick Thoburn (2003a: 44–45), ‘The particular thus **becomes the site of innovation** (not identity) **as minorities rework their territory and multiply their borders**. It is this form of engagement, a constantly open and intensive engagement self-organized through redirecting the social energies of everyday life, which comprises the processes of minor composition

### Case

#### We are students performing distinct pedagogies –despair and hopeless prevents social change and destroys value to life. Vote aff to endorse hope – this is an ethical action that is a precursor to all forms of political change

**Denzin** prof soc, comm, and humanities @ U Illinois urbana-champagne **2k3** (Norman, “Performing [Auto] Ethnography Politically” The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 25:257–278, www.citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.167.4086)

HOPE, PEDAGOGY, AND THE CRITICAL IMAGINATION As an interventionist ideology the critical imagination is hopeful of change. It seeks and promotes an ideology of hope that challenges and confronts hopelessness (Freire, 1999, p. 8). It understands that hope, like freedom, is “an ontological need” (Freire, 1999, p. 8). Hope is the desire to dream, the desire to change, the desire to improve human existence. Hopelessness is “but hope that has lost its bearings” (Freire, 1999, p. 8). **Hope is ethical. Hope is moral.** Hope is peaceful and nonviolent. Hope seeks the truth of life’s sufferings. Hope gives meaning to the struggles to change the world. Hope is grounded in concrete performative practices, in struggles and interventions that espouse the sacred values of love, care, community, trust and well-being (Freire, 1999, p. 9). Hope, as a form of pedagogy, confronts and interrogates cynicism, the belief that change is not possible, or is too costly. Hope works from rage to love. It articulates a progressive politics that rejects “conservative, neoliberal postmodernity” (Friere, 1999; p. 10). Hope rejects terrorism. Hope rejects the claim that peace comes at any cost. The critical democratic imagination is pedagogical in four ways. First, as a form of instruction, it helps persons think critically, historically, sociologically. Second, as critical pedagogy, it exposes the pedagogies of oppression that produce and reproduce oppression and injustice (see Freire, 2001, p. 54). Thirdly, it contributes to an ethical self-consciousness that is critical and reflexive. It gives people a language and a set of pedagogical practices that turn oppression into freedom, despair into hope, hatred into love, doubt into trust. Fourth, in turn, this self-consciousness shapes a critical racial self-awareness. This awareness contributes to utopian dreams of racial equality and racial justice. The use of this imagination by persons who have previously lost their way in this complex world is akin to being “suddenly awakened in a house with which they had only supposed themselves to be familiar (Mills, 1959, p. 8). They now feel that they can provide themselves with critical understandings that undermine and challenge “older decisions that once appeared sound” (Mills, 1959, p. 8). Their critical imagination enlivened, persons “acquire a new way of thinking . . . in a word by their reflection and their sensibility, they realize the cultural meaning of the social sciences” (Mills, 1959, p. 8). They realize how to make and perform changes in their own lives, to become active agents in shaping the history that shapes them.

, to do with the *Abendland*. To look with love at things, to look as if you so broke, so baroque, that you can’t pay attention.

#### We should challenge dominant structures through an examination of their goals – even if they seem to coopt our criticism, that sows the seeds for the breakdown of dominant paradigms.

**Triadafilopoulos 10** (Triadafilos; Assistant Professor of Political Science – University of Toronto, “Global Norms, Domestic Institutions and the Transformation of Immigration Policy in Canada and the US,” Review of International Studies, 36)

The concept of stretching speaks to the durability of governance paradigms and their propensity to channel policymaking along well worn paths.16 Existing frameworks define the broad goals behind policy, the problems to be tackled, and the instruments to be deployed, as well as mapping the respective responsibilities of the state, market and citizens in meeting societal challenges. Once institutionalised, a governance paradigm channels the thoughts and actions of a range of state and societal actors, reflecting shared policy knowledge and habitual decision-making routines. The result is broad continuity in both content and process of public policy.17 Contrary to theories of institutional change premised on models of ‘punctuated equilibrium’, changes in normative contexts did not ‘shock’ policymakers into devising and implementing radically new solutions.18 Rather, their initial response was to ‘stretch’ established policies to conceal anomalies generated by lack of fit without abandoning the fundamental premises of extant policy frameworks.19 Changes therefore tended to be cosmetic, aiming to diffuse and co-opt criticism while avoiding fundamental transformation. Nevertheless, these initial responses had unintended effects that accelerated the breakdown of established policy frameworks. Attempts to answer critics with ‘tactical concessions’ affirmed the normative validity of their claims, increasing pressure for more substantive reforms.20 Policy stretching thus gave rise to unravelling, as anomalies accumulated and an expanding constellation of critics pulled more determinedly at the most vulnerable strands of existing policy regimes – that is, those policies, practices and procedures which stood at odds with the liberal-democratic identity their state wished to craft for both internal and external audiences. The unravelling of established policy frameworks increased demands for innovative strategies, encouraging experimentation and opening space for the introduction of policies in line with the ascendant normative context. In time, new approaches to the migration-membership dilemma were developed by decision makers keen on aligning domestic immigration policies with the prevailing logic of appropriateness at the global level.The formulation and implementation of new approaches marked the transition from policy unravelling to shifting, during which new policies were institutionalised.21