RACIAL REGIMES OF OWNERSHIP: THINKING THROUGH PROPERTY WITH CEDRIC J. ROBINSON

Brenna Bhandar
• To think about distant places, to colonize them, to populate or depopulate them: all of this occurs on, about, or because of land. The actual geographical possession of land is what empire in the final analysis is all about. At the moment when a coincidence occurs between real control and power, the idea of what a given place was (could be, might become), and an actual place – at that moment the struggle for empire is launched. This coincidence is the logic both for Westerners taking possession of land and, during decolonisation, for resisting natives reclaiming it.
WALTER SCOTT, WAVERLY
“Mr. and Mrs. Andrews”, Thomas Gainsborough circa 1750
“Moving pictures appear at that juncture when a new racial regime was being stitched together from remnants of its predecessors and new cloth accommodating the disposal of immigrants, colonial subjects, and insurgencies among the native poor. With the first attempts at composing a national identity in disarray, a new whiteness became the basis for the reintegration of American society.”

Cedric J. Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and Regimes of Race in American Film and Theatre Before WWII.*
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OSCAR MICHEAUX’S WITHIN OUR GATES, 1920
COMMODITY LOGIC OF ABSTRACTION: TITLE BY REGISTRATION
“But the pecuniary loss is not the worse feature [of conveyancing]. The harassing, spirit-wearing perplexity in which the landowner is too frequently involved is yet more distressing… How many purchasers for bona fide consideration, having parted with their money, pass their days in anxiety and bitterness, dreading lawsuits, eviction and ruin.”

Robert Richard Torrens, South Australia parliamentary debates, 1857-58
RACIAL LOGICS OF ABSTRACTION:

Ruth Wilson Gilmore:

“Racism is a practice of abstraction, a death-dealing displacement of difference into hierarchies that organise relations within and between the planet’s sovereign political territories.”
“I imagine myself at seven [years of age] running through a stand of maples with the first warmth of spring marking my cheeks with warmth. I imagine everything good in the world. My heart, my mind and my spirit are open and engaged and I feel as if I could accomplish anything. I imagine myself grasping at feelings I haven’t felt before – that maybe life is so good that it is too short; that there really isn’t enough time to love everything.”

Leanne Simpson, “Land as Pedagogy” 2014