

Beyond Black Men as Breeders:

White Men and the Commodity of Blackness

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“The black male outlaw identity is a commodifiable character open to all who would like to perform it.” So writes Carl Hancock Rux in his essay “Eminem: The New White Negro” (23). “Black masculinity, as fantasized in the white racist imagination, is the quintessential embodiment of man as ‘outsider and rebel’” (96). So observes the renowned cultural critic bell hooks in her work *Black Looks*. What Rux and hooks point to is, for this black male, a troubling phenomenon, as their words suggest that, even in this new millennium, black men have been relegated to the plantation, albeit a cultural one. Moreover, the nature of this plantation is that black men are yet “breeders,” while white men have free (and seemingly irresponsible) access to the (cultural) offspring of these black male breeders in a way not unlike how white men benefited from black men’s progeny during slavery. This appropriation by white men of the style of black men makes a loud and clear statement: that which we (black men) breed can *still* be bought and sold by you (white men).

In his essay Rux points to the actions of figures as diverse as Eminem and Bill Clinton, white men who become, in the words of Norman Mailer, the “White Negro,” to quote Mailer’s famous phrase. From the viewpoint of the White Negro, the black man’s cool detachment, poise, and existential alienation are more visible than the historical racism that helps produce these qualities. Witness Mailer’s words, “Knowing in the cells of his existence that life was war, nothing but war, the Negro . . . kept for his survival the art of the primitive, . . . relinquishing the pleasures of the mind for the more obligatory pleasures of the body, and in his music he gave voice to the character and quality of his existence, to his rage and the infinite variations of joy, lust, languor, growl, cramp, pinch, scream and despair of his orgasm” (340). Although written in the 1950s, these words still ring true from the viewpoint of the white men who “perform” or adopt blackness. From such a viewpoint, the burdens of blackness are rendered almost invisible and replaced with highly visible romantic notions of suffering and rage. Thus, in looking at the phenomenon of the White Negro and his appreciation of and penchant for the appropriation of blackness, there are crucial questions that must be addressed. One, what are (or, what should be) the responsibilities of this assumption of “blackness” on the part of the white men who are appropriating the style of black men? And two, as one examines the adoption of black culture by white men, one must ask another question: What is in it for the brothers? Or, to ask another way, when (if ever) will this appropriation of the style of black men lead to tangible benefits in the lives of those who are being emulated?

In addressing the above, I would like to focus on the work of another white male whose words and works suggest that he fits the category of the White Negro, the renowned actor and director Clint Eastwood. Eastwood, like Eminem, uses black cultural expression—black music—as one of the primary vehicles by which to “become” black. Eastwood, unlike the white rapper, has been at this business a long time, building a body of work that invariably touches on issues of race and masculinity. In *Clint Eastwood: A Cultural Production*, Paul Smith discusses Eastwood’s directing of the movie *Bird*, particularly Eastwood’s filming of Forest Whitaker’s

body: “To understand what is happening here with Eastwood’s forming of Whitaker’s body, it might be informative to refer back to a comment Eastwood makes during the promotion of *Bird*. Recounting his enthusiasm for jazz while he was growing up, he says, ‘I think I was really a black guy in a white body.’” Further, Smith continues, “This . . . is strongly reminiscent of what Homi Bhabha says of the colonialist’s relation to the body of the subaltern other. The white man both desires to and fears to resemble the black body, and it is this ambivalence that is a primary component of the racist gaze” (240). As a black male, I find such ambivalence troubling; moreover, I find Eastwood’s statement equally troubling. Statements such as it, which suggest an attraction to or fascination with blackness, seem to suggest the possibility of alliance and true fraternity. However, it also brings to mind notions of the white male as interloper, freely partaking of “blackness,” whatever it means to him, without compulsion and with no real sense of responsibility. Taken alongside the perceptions of Rux and hooks, Eastwood’s statement points to a persistent problem and to the resultant need for a set of standards by which one can interrogate the “performances” and stances of white men who either audibly or by their actions state, “I was [or am] really a black guy in a white body.” Through an examination of some of the filmmaker’s recent work, I would like to address not only the problem inherent in black men breeding a commodity that white men feel free to co-opt, but also that concerning how to evaluate this phenomenon beyond mere critique.

What is at work in Clint Eastwood’s film about Africa, *White Hunter, Black Heart* (1990), is a complex and confusing vision of race, privilege, patriarchy, and, finally, politics. There is, in the film, a definite critique of white male privilege and patriarchy. The invading white hunter, the white male, in this work is not the Tarzan figure or the great white hunter of the fifties. Here is Eastwood the revisionist, subverter of the dominant ideology, as this film seems to exhibit his sensitivity toward issues of race and class. Over and over again, within the Eastwood canon of films, there is an acknowledgment of race that reminds one of an observation by William Carlos Williams in his essay “Advent of the Slaves.” In it, Williams discusses “a racial irreducible minimum” that gives the black man “poise in a world where he has no authority” (Williams, 207). The “racial irreducible minimum” of the black in Eastwood’s films is the poise, the coolness of the alienated and oppressed “other” who is in control of self despite, or perhaps because of, the experience of oppression or alienation. This is the coolness that has traditionally been associated with black males, particularly black musicians. As bell hooks notes, “White men seeking alternatives to a patriarchal masculinity turned to black men, particularly black musicians” (95). Moreover, both the poise and the position of the black, in Eastwood’s films, are, much of the time, shared by Eastwood himself. As Dennis Bingham notes in *Acting Male*, “Many of the films position the Eastwood figure partway between white and minority cultures, fully belonging—like the classical western hero—to neither . . . [and] suggest that the Eastwood figure ‘has an affinity’ for those on the margins of society” (188).

In the films of Eastwood, there is an acknowledgment of racial difference, which brings to mind not only Williams’s above observation, but that of Houston Baker in *Long Black Song*, characterizing black culture as “oral, collectivistic, and repudiative” (15). In Eastwood, we consistently see the white male who has not only the coolness of the black male, the black musician, but also the sense of alienation and rebellion, the repudiative stance that has come to signify black masculinity. As Bingham notes, “Although *White Hunter* seems a new departure in almost every way, it reveals a structure similar to that of many of the ‘persona’ films, especially

the Dirty Harry formula. As in those films, the Eastwood character is larger than life. He defies authority and balks at obeying orders” (224).

Eastwood’s *White Hunter* is, of course, a film based on the filming of John Huston’s 1951 classic, *The African Queen*, of which Kenneth Cameron, in *Africa on Film*, observes the following:

[*The African Queen*] accepts an unstated assumption about colonialism that is repulsive: the one that says Germans and English have a right to contest for ownership of an African lake. This assumption is the essential imperial one, already archaic in 1950 but accepted by Huston and therefore by his audience, and thus comforting to that audience as a result: see, the film says, Africa is really white. (72)

The Eastwood persona of *White Hunter* seems to say: “See, this white man is really black.” And his status as nigger/black is signified by either of two means. One means is by appropriating the “blackness” of the black oral tradition as expressed, for example, in jazz music; a second means is by repudiating whiteness, or that which signifies whiteness, such as white male tradition.

Consequently, Eastwood the revisionist is, in this and other recent films, in actuality Eastwood the nigger-lover, the nigger protector: Eastwood the black. As John Wilson, the main character of *White Hunter*, remarks about a fistfight in which he engages due to the mistreatment of a black servant: “We fought the preliminary for the kikes. We’ll fight the main event for the niggers.” Fighting for the niggers—in this case, subjecting himself to a terrible beating at the hands of a racist hotel manager—is more than simply combating racism. It also represents an assuming of blackness. And this assumption of symbolic blackness is not, in Eastwood, a new phenomenon; rather, it seems to represent a mind-set that Eastwood has held for quite some time. He thinks, his films suggest, that blackness is a cloak into which a white man can slip and live and move for a while, but a question that he does not seem to consider is can one stay (black)? And by “staying black,” what I am calling for is an attendant sense of political and moral responsibility, concerns that I will address in more detail later.

In the film *In the Line of Fire* (1993), which Eastwood did not direct but in which he stars, there is a scene early on that supports this point. Eastwood plays Frank Horrigan, an aging Secret Service agent, *the* agent who should have saved Kennedy in Dallas but failed. We have already seen this agent’s toughness, smartness, and tenderness. He has already apprehended and/or killed three bad guys, counterfeiters, and saved the life of his young partner, to boot. And it has already been established, in an earlier scene, that this agent plays a nice, very nice, jazz piano, “Willow Weep for Me.” Further along, in a scene following one in which the film’s/Horrigan’s antagonist has been established, a crazed would-be assassin of the president, we have Horrigan coming home; this is our first time, and one of the few times within the film, that we view Horrigan’s apartment.

Entering, Horrigan tosses down his coat, retrieves a decanter of spirits, and hits the remote control for his stereo—Miles Davis’s classic tune “All Blues.” Horrigan moves with his decanter to the coffee table, on which sheet music and a Davis tape lie, and he proceeds to discard, onto the table, his weapons—handcuffs, firearm, and a gun clip. They are placed, significantly, on top of the music. But the real point here is that none of this is important to the plot of the film. This is a work of suspense/action, about an aging Secret Service agent who must,

it becomes clear, capture or kill this madman, or another president will be assassinated. This isn't a film about race or the power of black music, but that is precisely what this scene is about. This scene changes the way we view Horrigan: he is not simply an aging Secret Service agent; his connection with jazz, with the music and mystique of Miles, shows us another aspect of this man, symbolized clearly by the weapons being layered directly on top of the music. This symbolic action states: "Ain't gone study war, for a moment." Gonna be, for a moment, not a Secret Service agent, nor perhaps even a white man, but a "black guy in a white body," a nonwhite. It's just that easy. (Again, the image of the black man as "breeder" comes to mind. In this scene, the Miles Davis album acts as a symbol that suggests "otherness," the otherness typically associated with black men.) And, just as easily, Horrigan is pulled back to whiteness, by a telephone call from the crazed would-be killer. (Clearly, however, the symbolism would be stronger if the weapons were placed under the music.) But after viewing this scene several times, one has to say, "It ain't that easy, Clint; it simply isn't." And if in *White Hunter* the protagonist's assumption of symbolic blackness is, perhaps, a bit more complicated, it remains questionable.

Blackness in *White Hunter* is the repudiating of whiteness, and it takes several forms, including the defending of the outsider/other (Jews and blacks). As Boris Zmijewsky and Lee Pfeiffer note in their work *The Films of Clint Eastwood*, "[Wilson] sabotages a potential sexual liaison by insulting the lady when he discovers her anti-Semitism. He later indulges in a brutal beating after initiating a fight to protest a bully's treatment of the black servants at a posh hotel" (271). Wilson's psychic and physical movement in the film is toward blackness and away from whiteness, as evidenced by his first defending a Jew and then a black; and by his insisting upon filming progressively farther and farther away from London, "civilization," and even the comforts of the white Western world in Africa. Wilson's repudiating of whiteness also includes the conferring of "heightened humanity" upon the other: the African tracker Kivu. Of this, Kenneth Cameron observes, "The director [Wilson] becomes enchanted with the kind of manhood embodied by an illiterate African tracker" (177). This is the Kivu of whom Wilson says, "I could use him in Hollywood," presumably for his poise, presumably for his essential blackness. And, presumably, Wilson could use Kivu for what his connection and even sense of kinship with Kivu says about himself, Wilson. Here is a white male who has more in common with an inscrutable black African tribesman than with those of his own Anglo-American tribe, or at least that is what Wilson wishes to believe; moreover, he desperately wishes that those around him believe this; and bringing a strong, silent, cunning, "inscrutable" black back to Hollywood would, for Wilson, be the perfect statement of his own difference from *that* world of whiteness and celluloid. For a powerful white man to bring a "primitive" African to Hollywood would be the quintessential symbolic statement of rebellion, but that is all it would be, period.

In her work *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison makes a point regarding race that is apropos here. While discussing the signification of blackness, that which Morrison terms the "Africanist presence" in American literature written by whites, she explains:

The rights of man, for example, an organizing principle upon which the nation was founded, was inevitably yoked to Africanism. Its history, its origin is permanently allied with another seductive concept: the hierarchy of race. As sociologist Orlando Patterson has noted, we should not be surprised that the Enlightenment could accommodate slavery; we should

be surprised if it had not. The concept of freedom did not emerge in a vacuum. Nothing highlighted freedom—if it did not in fact create it—like slavery.

Black slavery enriched the country's creative possibilities. For in that construction of blackness *and* enslavement could be found not only the not-free but also, with the dramatic polarity created by skin color, the projection of the not-me. (38)

In *White Hunter*, nothing helps highlight John Wilson's freedom like blackness. Within the film, Wilson seems obsessed with many things: "balling" women and bagging an elephant, to name two. However, Wilson is most obsessed with articulating or "highlighting" his freedom through a continual defiance of "whiteness" on behalf of blackness. Wilson needs Kivu in order to defy the colonial domination, whiteness, which is ironically enabling him to film his movie in Africa. And the extent to which Wilson, as privileged white male, as artist, confronts and opposes whiteness is the extent to which Wilson sees himself as free. (So, the white man's "freedom," psychic and otherwise, is at the expense of a black man, black life.) Kivu's value to Wilson lies precisely in Wilson's notion that Kivu is everything that Wilson is not. Kivu, black and colonized and silent, is the "not-me" for Wilson, who is white, in league with the colonizers, and anything but silent. Kivu carries or "breeds" a kind of "unforgivable blackness" that Wilson wishes to use in Hollywood and that will, perhaps bizarrely, provide Wilson with more power (over other whites). Wilson's bringing Kivu to Hollywood would truly prove his freedom, his defiance of the norms and expectations for Wilson's race and gender.

Likewise, in the fatal scene in which Kivu is killed, Wilson's insistence upon following Kivu's advice is done to prove his freedom. It is Kivu's black body that is valuable to Wilson, just as the elephant's body is valuable to him. Possessing the one and slaying the other will, for Wilson, confirm his sense of his own heightened masculinity. But in this scene, he possesses Kivu by following him, as though this shows that he is freer than other white men. This is clear in the film because there is an expert white guide who can clearly show Wilson how and where to hunt elephants, and in the scene in which Kivu dies, it is this white guide who cautions against pursuing the elephant. Kivu, perhaps because he knows this is Wilson's will, motions that the party should continue the hunt and, of course, he dies as a consequence.

In his work *Clint Eastwood: A Cultural Production*, Paul Smith, in discussing Eastwood and race, cites a passage from James Baldwin's *The Devil Finds Work*: "People who cannot escape thinking of themselves as white are poorly equipped, if equipped at all, to consider the meaning of black: people who know so little about themselves can face very little in another: and *one dare hope* for nothing from friends like these" (Smith, 225). Of this passage, Smith writes, "One of the problems of writing this section of the book has been my puzzlement over the meaning of Baldwin's phrase, 'People who cannot escape thinking of themselves as white,' and I wonder whether he is suggesting that it is my personal responsibility to stop thinking of myself as white, and what the consequences of that could possibly be in racist America. Alternatively, I wonder whether he is simply affirming that I cannot escape thinking of myself as white because the culture will not allow me to. The important point, perhaps, is not to expect to be able to excuse oneself from the limits of either position, but to try, nonetheless, to see how they might operate and perhaps be altered" (232).

I wish to respond to Smith's statements and, in doing so, to address what is perhaps the fundamental problem with *White Hunter*. Again, I wish to turn to James Baldwin; this time to his classic work of 1963, *The Fire Next Time*: "The *only thing* white people have that black people need, or should want, is power—and no one holds power forever. White people cannot, in the generality, be taken as models of how to live. Rather, the white man is himself in sore need of new standards" (130). The John Wilson of this film seems to acknowledge that; the Eastwood of recent films acknowledges that. In a taped interview, "The Man from Malpaso," Eastwood discusses how, regarding *Unforgiven*, he "liked the morality of this particular script" and how he "tried to demythologize the West." *Unforgiven* is, as Pat Kirkham and Lee Thumim note in their essay, "You Tarzan," "all about men and the contradictions of masculine identity" (20). And *White Hunter* is all about *white* men and the contradictions of *white* masculine identity. However, Eastwood does not, in this film, seem to fully grasp some of those contradictions.

Here are a few. The first is that one cannot both repudiate whiteness and retain it at the same time. The John Wilson who says to Peter Verrill, early in the movie, "We're gods, lousy little gods," is still that by the film's end. He has relinquished no power. Perhaps he cannot. But he has not tried. He is still in (not-so-remote) control of "All Blues," of blackness, and in control of all that white male privilege (and talent) has accorded him. Consequently, at the film's tragic conclusion, after Wilson has caused the death of Kivu and has returned to the director's chair (or throne) of his "lousy little godhead," when he speaks to the technicians of moviemaking and, sorrowfully, says, "Action," *action happens*. He has given up nothing, neither power nor privilege, but a black heart, a black life.

Moreover, it is a black heart that Wilson does not understand, nor has he tried to. During the film *In the Line of Fire*, Eastwood's character, Horrigan, says, more than once, "I know things about people." In *White Hunter, Black Heart*, Wilson utters a similar line regarding Kivu, "Kivu knows." Kivu possesses this heightened masculinity, nobility, if you will. And why?—because the lousy little white god has conferred it upon him. Consequently, while I applaud Wilson when he "stands up for the kikes and the niggers" and applaud Eastwood for his critique of white male privilege, I am reminded by *White Hunter* of Kenneth Cameron's statement that "most films about Africa were made by whites for whites" (183). And this is a film for whites precisely because, while it critiques the abuses of white male privilege and patriarchy, it does nothing more. It seems to suggest that the real problem is Wilson's obsession and stubbornness, but the real problem is not that at all. The real problem is that fundamental questions haven't been even whispered about power, about the distribution of resources, about change, real change, not only in the life of a white male, like Wilson, but in the lives of the blacks, like Kivu.

In *White Hunter*, John Wilson, for all of his repudiation of whiteness, never gets past this notion of blackness. One of the real ironies of the film is that while "whiteness" is reversible, blackness is not. The white male in this work, from his position of political dominance, has the luxury of choice; he can choose to be "black" in a way that Kivu cannot choose to become "white." As Frantz Fanon notes in his work *Black Skin, White Masks*, "For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it on themselves to remind us that this proposition has a converse. I say that it is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man" (110). Kivu's irreversible and essential blackness is the reason for Wilson's desire to take the African hunter back to Hollywood. Further in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon makes the following statement: "The

Negro is a toy in the white man's hands" (140). And Kivu is just that in the hands of Wilson, a toy, to be played with, in this instance, in order to establish Wilson's symbolic opposition to whiteness. The Negro, the black man, breeds an essential blackness that is useful to white men but that, ultimately, leads to black death (as in this film) or to the continuation of black deprivation (usually from financial and other resources).

Greg Tate examines this notion of the black man as toy in the introduction to his anthology, *Everything but the Burden: What White People Are Taking from Black Culture*. Tate's introduction to the volume, "Nigs R Us, or How Blackfolk Became Fetish Objects," articulates the dilemma in this way: "[Blacks] grapple with feelings of political inferiority, creative superiority, and ironic distance in a market-driven world where we continue to find ourselves being sold, as hunted outsiders and privileged insiders in the same breath. In a world where we're seen as both the most loathed and the most alluring of creatures, we remain the most co-optable and erasable of cultures, too" (14). In recent scholarly works such as that of Tate, Todd Boyd, and others, as well as in films as diverse as *Tough Guise* and *Black and White*, the white male's fascination with black male style is depicted. However, as Tate's title suggests, part of the problem of this adopting of black style is that the white male has not adopted, perhaps because it is inconvenient for him to do so, the burdens and struggles that produce that style. Hence, the problem continues: white men, black breeders, and black culture as the commodity. To move beyond this will require more than mere recognition of the problem. Addressing the history of white racism in *The Fire Next Time*, James Baldwin suggests that the white man must become black; that he must cease thinking of himself as white. Along with this, Baldwin calls for a reordering of the values of white men and of the West. However, I would like to ask, "What should be the nature of this blackness that the white man must adopt?" In his essay "Afro-Kitsch," Manthia Diawara offers up an informative definition of "blackness," one that might prove useful here: "Blackness is a compelling performance against the logic of slavery and colonialism by those people whose destinies have been inextricably linked to the advancement of the West, and who, therefore, have to learn the expressive techniques of modernity—writing, music, Christianity, industrialization—in order to become uncolonizable. . . . Blackness is not removed from the material base of politics and theory. It always seeks to liberate spaces, to subvert orthodoxies, to give voice to the oppressed" (290). This, then, is a standard by which one can examine and evaluate the performance of "blackness" by white males who adopt blackness.

With that in mind, and in an effort to address the opening questions regarding the need for white male responsibility and accountability, I would like to examine one more Eastwood film, one that perhaps offers an alternative vision of white male performance, *Million Dollar Baby* (2004). In the film Eastwood plays boxing trainer and gym owner Frankie Dunn, who has walled himself away from the world, in a fortress of masculinity, a boxing gym. Frankie's closest friend and confidant is a black man, Eddie Scrap-Iron Dupris, played by Morgan Freeman, who also serves as the film's narrator and voice of conscience. Into the lives of these two old men comes Maggie Fitzgerald (played by Hilary Swank), a thirty-one-year-old woman, stereotypical poor white trash, who sees boxing as a way to become somebody. With the help of Eddie, she convinces Frankie to coach and manage her, to go against his frequently repeated mantra, "I don't train girls." This refrain, "I don't train girls," is an apt metaphor for the traditional rigidity of the white patriarch, whose "rules" and "law and order" have been utilized traditionally to keep certain types out and to maintain the status quo. Yet, ironically, it is clear that both of these men

are outsiders, Eddie by virtue of his blackness and poverty; Frankie due to poor choices and a life lived wrong. Eddie works for Frankie; however, throughout the film it is to Eddie that Frankie turns when he needs guidance. Eddie provides moral stability, as evidenced by his protecting a lovable yet mentally unstable white kid by, at one point, beating up a black tough. In this film Eddie, who seems content to live in a prison-like room inside the gym, is presented as a man in complete control of himself, in spite of his poverty and seeming exclusion from the larger world. These traits remind one of William Carlos Williams's comments about the black having "poise in a world where he has no authority." This is the poise of a black man who has, existentially, carved out from his meager life a kind of moral and spiritual authority that the white male in this piece, Frankie, sorely needs. This is the influence of the black soul that Baldwin discusses in *The Fire Next Time*, and it reminds one of Mel Watkins's pronouncement in "A Black Criterion" that the black is "eye of the West." (Ironically, Eddie has lost the sight of one eye, due to boxing.) What Eddie "breeds" within the gym, which is owned by Frankie but which Eddie actually runs, is the moral authority of the Africanist presence that invariably critiques white abuse and lies, due to its rootedness in historical racism, alienation, and suffering. Eventually, Frankie, who has a nonexistent relationship with his own daughter, practically adopts Maggie as he guides her career, until she is seriously wounded in a fight for the championship, becoming paraplegic. When she asks him to shut down her life-support apparatus, Frankie is confronted with a deep moral dilemma. The nature of this decision is one that is illuminating in terms of issues of race, power, and gender. In asking Frankie to take her life, she is asking him to perform a criminal act, albeit a mercy killing, out of his love for her. Frankie turns to his priest, who warns him, "If you do this, you'll be lost somewhere so deep you'll never find yourself again." And in a locker room scene in the gym, as he is contemplating Maggie's request, Frankie is given words of wisdom by Eddie that speak to the existence of ordinary working-class people who simply wish to "get their shot." Eddie's final words to Frankie are, "If she [Maggie] dies today, you know what her last thought will be? I think I did all right. I know I could rest with that." In actuality, Frankie is counseled by two "priests," one white, one black, and it is the black one, Eddie, who gives him the go-ahead, the blessing, if you will, to perform a sacrificial act of love, although outside the "law." (Only a man [a black man?] who understands that "life is war, nothing but war," could speak with Eddie's authority in this scene.) Finally, as Frankie performs the act, we are shown Eddie, watching from the shadows. Once this deed is done, Frankie vanishes from the gym and the neighborhood, giving up all that he owns. In doing so, Frankie walks away from all that he seemingly holds dear, the brutality of boxing, his gym, and his home. In some way, by this act Frankie relinquishes (at least for a period) white male privilege and becomes more like Eddie, who is (along with Maggie) a heroic figure in the film. Frankie's is a criminal act against which his priest has warned him, an act outside of the law, on the other side of the line, if you will, the line that divides lawbreakers from lawmakers, even when the laws are unjust. Clearly, this is a "color" and class line; a line between orthodoxy and a higher law, and with this one act Frankie, counseled by Eddie, eschews orthodoxy and moves beyond white male patriarchy, to humanity.

Perhaps this is what Diawara and Baldwin and others are calling for; and what must happen, particularly for those "black men in white bodies," to truly become *black*. As Baldwin says, they must "become a part of that suffering and dancing country" (129). The only way for an Eastwood character, or any white male who has an affinity toward blackness, to truly become "black" is there must be a relinquishing of power, position, and privilege. Clearly, that can only

happen when there a deeper sensitivity to and understanding of the political and moral dynamic of blackness, of black “maleness” in the West, along with a resultant adoption of the burdens of blackness, as manifested in a “commitment to liberate spaces, subvert orthodoxies and give voice to the oppressed.” In other words, the burdens (of black masculinity) must be adopted.

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