# Global Fluidity:
# Coalitional Worldbuilding in the Afterlife of Posthumanism

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**Abstract**

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*Global Fluidity* argues that contemporary queer of color poetry, fiction, and popular culture theorize the relationships between property, gender, sexuality, and race in the current environmental crisis. Across genre and form, these texts respond to cultural preoccupations with death and "the human," using representations of water to articulate the conditions of livability. Representing water as matter for building anti-racist and anti-colonial queer and crip worlds, contemporary queer of color literature and popular culture articulate alternate livabilities across languages and borders as much as genres and forms.

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# DEDICATION

This project enters the academic databases as a dissertation because of intersecting LGBTIQA+, non-white, decolonial, and crip communities and individuals who have relentlessly fought and died for a world we are still building today. This starting point and the subsequent iterations are only possible because of you who are both living now and haunting the now. This project is dedicated to you.

Introduction

## Introduction

In Spring of 2013, activist media accounts began responding to water shut offs in Detroit alongside lead poisoning of water in Flint. These conflicts sparked national and international debates around the privatization and regulation of water. The two, localized sites of racially charged violence around necessary, life-giving and life-sustaining resources also became a launching pad for filmic and literary posthuman responses, such as *Only Lovers Left Alive* showing vampires in Detroit and activist poetics such as Danez Smith's *[insert] boy* offering a Black Lives Matter response that implicates natural ecologies with urbanization. News responses, in turn, took up photography and other mediums to participate in the larger debate around the relationship between race, postcolonialism, and resources such as water and air with the acceleration of global warming and production of postindustrial landscapes. From these sites, I began reading water as one, pervasive nexus in contemporary environmental and resource management debates that re-materializes "racial capital's" (Hong loc 377) historical violence. In particular, I began seeking out worldbuilding, coalitional, affirmative strategies for otherwise relations to water and livability in contemporary, multimedia literatures post-1960 and into the present. This temporal framework brought together a lineage of activist poetry and poetics across mediums and modes from the early Civil Rights era to the contemporary #blacklivesmatter and #metoo movements

In reading contemporary activist poetry, poetics, and filmic responses to water and racial capital, I found a larger story emerging around the contested site of "the human," but also approaches to theorizing the "posthuman": these included, among others, environmental critiques of the Anthropocene (Wolfe), to technological arguments around postindustrial machine and computer use (Haraway), to histories of "the human" as an exclusionary, racialized, gendered status (Cacho). In particular, these iterations in response to water surfaced in molecular biology

recognitions of DNA replication, Anthropocene anxiety around the human's relationship to environmental crisis, and activist poetics in literary and non-literary modes around legal and historical violence based on exclusion from protected "human" status as "property-owning" status. Tracing these posthumanisms revealed three lineages of posthuman thought that coalesce in water motifs and narratives: critical race and gender studies' histories of property-based rhetorics, environmental literary studies' histories of resource management at "end of the natural world," and life science rhetorics on understanding and managing the building blocks of living matter itself.

As I will outline in my chapter summaries and argue throughout this dissertation, human and posthuman categories alike emerge at the point where dominant environmental, economic, life science, and literary spheres intersect. This intersection undergirds, I will argue, modes of racialized and gendered violence enacted through water's privatization, management, and border enforcement. In turn, however, critiquing dominant human and posthuman rhetorics alike at this intersection yields coalitional intersections between queer, antiracist, crip/disability studies, and decolonial activist poetics. These coalitional responses, I will argue, critique historical exclusions to protected human or posthuman status, but moreover, offer what I will term an "antiracist posthumanist" method for responding to late capitalism and global capitalism's violences. More concretely, these texts across niche print poetry and popular audio-visual genres suggest a haunting of 1960's activist poetics into the present. This haunting offers impactful worldbuilding methods into the present, which are methods this project hopes to not only read, but also join in coalitional work. To that end, the following chapters are energized by four guiding questions:

What forms of anti-racist and queer posthumanism emerge from cross-mode and genre texts' watery grounds and polluted skies?

How might these forms function in coalition to re-materialize their historical violence, but also build out otherwise possible worlds?

How do representations of water scarcity uniquely illuminate the contemporary racial and gender violence enacted through humanist ecological warfare and property frameworks?

What otherwise relationships to "the human" and livability emerge in contemporary queer of color poetry and multi-media texts that refuse making water into property as their primary framework?

**Dissertation Summary and Method**

In response to these questions, my dissertation, *Coalitional Fluidity: World Building in the Afterlife of Posthumanist Literature*, turns to contemporary queer of color poetry and popular audio-visual media from 1960 to the present. I read film, music, and print poetries and fiction that not only theorize the contemporary moment's racial and gendered modes of violence but envision coalitional alternatives through otherwise relationships to resources such as water. These coalitions respond to the intersections of racial capital, environmental warfare, and constructed categories of protected "human" and "posthuman" alike in the Anthropocene. Out of this critique, I argue that each text builds livable worlds that do not necessitate a propertied relationship to environmental. Such texts lay bare the obvious fact that water is necessary to life, but regulated in highly racialized and gendered ways; however, these texts move beyond critique to build out otherwise present and future methods for living in the Anthropocene. This makes a historical literary intervention that intersects with cultural studies disciplines and contemporary activist arts. For instance: the history of finance capital as racial capital mobilized by and mobilizing early environmental rhetorics has not yet been written from the vantage point of activist poetics. Melinda Cooper has published already a history of how finance capital, molecular biology, and genetics evolved through mutually reinforcing strategies. She explicates how finance capital and molecular biology were formed together as a contemporary matrix of knowledge production coinciding with life management. Her argument goes on to suggest how these turns in capital's management and biological life management at levels "invisible to the

naked eye" undergird present conceptions of who counts as "human." That is: she argues that while molecular biology claims its knowledge as objective research outside of cultural and financial capital flows, and finance capital claims its capacity to regulate human life without the interference of human life sciences, the two emergences in fact functioned together as a way of justifying access to resource, livability, and political safety. However, her historical work presumes a colorblind history of finance capital. That is: she defines finance capital as a colorblind economic system. She also leaves unexamined the role of global climate change and environmental rhetorics emergent at the same time as her finance capital and molecular biology analysis comprising popular conceptions of "the human." Critical race, gender, and sexuality scholars such as Lisa Cacho and Grace Hong have meanwhile argued that finance capital depends on the extension of racial capital, or the racializing and gendering of populations in order to justify their exploitation in service of capital's circulation. However, such critiques of racial finance capital do not examine, as Cooper notes, how molecular biology emerged with finance capital through critical rhetorics of life and livability, as well as how environmentalist discourses began emerging at the same time.

In contrast, popular climate justice accounts, such as Robert Nixon and Sarah Ensor, argue that race, gender, sexuality, and even an eco-posthumanism must remain critical of historically exclusive human categories reemerging in contemporary environmental and ecocritical work – work that builds off of the early 1960's activisms. Their arguments presume racial finance capital, akin to work such as Hong's and Cacho's, and look toward literature, film, and other modes of cultural life to build out their histories of environmentalism; however, they, too, neglect molecular biology's role in the turn to racial finance capital. In addition, the fields of literary and cultural studies above focus primarily on fiction, film, and other forms of cultural life, such as live drag and dance performances; the activist poetics of the period, such as Audre Lorde and Cherríe Moraga, through contemporary poetics across Danez Smith's print poetry to Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's mass popularity, remain

understudied in critical race, gender, sexuality, finance capital, and environmental fields alike. Hong's work does use Audre Lorde and Cherríe Moraga's work to build out her history of racial finance capital, but her history stops at their work without turning to contemporary iterations that, I argue, build critically on this foundation to more fully explicate the role of molecular biology and popular environmentalisms. This is not to say that contemporary poetry and poetics studies do not grapple with finance capital, life science research, or environmentalism: Joshua Clover and related scholars have examined the relationship between poetry and finance capital, while "ecopoetics," made most famous perhaps by CA Conrad, have become an emergent field. However, at the time of this writing, such histories and analyses of contemporary poetry and poetics do not accounting for finance capital's production of racial and gendered difference; like Cooper's history of finance capital and molecular biology, Clover, for instance, reads race as tangential to capitalism. In *Coalitional Fluidity*, I synthesize these different accounts to argue that the relationship between finance capital, molecular life management in environmental discourse, and gender, race, and sexuality have not as yet been historicized together, much less with the status of "property-owning," or even more simply, "water-owning," as both human and posthuman formations. Throughout this project, I argue that understudied activist poetry, when placed in dialogue with popular audio-visual texts, offers a critique of these how intersecting violences are difficult to see, but critical to the perpetuation of racialized and gendered violence in the present moment. More shortly: the poems I read offer a queer of color analytic that articulates previously unexamined relationships between property, life science rhetoric, gender, sexuality, and race in the current environmental crisis. By making these intersections evident in water's privatization, regulation, and border-enforcing work, they also offer otherwise possibilities for building coalitions between publics as disparate popular music videos and niche print poetry texts and matter as disparate as water in flint and water at nation-state borders.

Thus, as the primary texts illuminate and critique this ongoing violence into the contemporary moment, they also theorize and create methods for living that build critical, hopeful coalitions across feminist, anti-colonial, ecocritical, queer, anti-racist, and dis/ability discourses. These texts, in recruiting water to cross boundaries, genres, and borders, not only critique the conditions for living in the Anthropocene, but also draw together cross-discipline and diasporic coalitions through poetic language and embodied play. My dissertation thus stands at the intersections of racial finance capital scholarship, Black and queer feminism's attention to literature as necessarily lived and experienced theory, and queer ecocriticism's re-evaluation of "the human" as a decentered, constructed status in the Anthropocene. By working within these three traditions, I demonstrate that poetry's current popularity—apparent in the resurgence of popular performance venues and emergent Internet cultures alike (Lichtenstein)—creates new opportunities for meaningful coalition building between queer of color and queer ecocritical scholarly fields, and that these coalitions are needed to impactfully combat present racial and gender violence.

In each chapter, I argue that as global finance capital entities traverse national borders and waters, they attempt to anticipate climate change's risks to present and future private property; they aim intercede upon those risks in distinctly racialized, colonial, and gendered ways by managing resources, such as water, in formally colorblind, postcolonial, gender equality-based rhetorics. This argument historicizes global finance capital's relationship to wielding water in ongoing global colonialism, racial slavery's afterlives, and patrilineal property relations, from the birth of early environmentalisms in the 1960's onward. Such property and environmental life management discourses create and limit access to life itself by privatizing and regulating it down to its molecular level through twinned rhetorics of environmental and cultural propertied life management. Water in this archive functions as a queerly (non re-)productive, multifaceted motif that is also an undeniably material conduit; it leaks between global publics and readers to stage a "history of a future."

**Chapter Summaries**

Each chapter reads contemporary poetry and popular culture in dialogue, examining how queer of color poetics represent livability and water in response to and constitutive of environmental preoccupations with death and "the human." I foreground these readings in the Introduction's interdisciplinary discussion of three key terms for my project: "molecular life management," "antiracist posthumanism," and "otherwise possibilities." The first two chapters then build on this discussion to offer a critique of racial and gendered violence in the Anthropocene; the last two chapters build on this critique to offer more hopeful, creative worldbuilding coalitions. For the four Chapters of this project, water serves as an organizing motif: Chapter 1, for instance, traces how finance capital's "liquidation" rhetoric imbued early environmental ideas in the 1960's of posthuman and human status alike, participating in the perpetuation of racial capital into racial finance capital by disavowing its relationship to the regulation of resources, such as water. In Chapter 2, I explicate Bruce Brauns' term, "the molecularization of life," to mark Chapter 1's these early conceptualizations of water and posthumanism enable ongoing racialization and violence in areas such as Detroit. In Chapter 3, I turn to water representations in queer of color environmentalist texts to build coalitions with otherwise livabilities – livabilities that we need to "see" and "hear" in the present in order to materialize the past and present's possibilities. Chapter 4 extends Chapter 3's analysis to read diasporic waters' cross-border potential as also cross-discipline, examining the coalitions between diasporic and disability for crip and queer border crossings. The conclusion then turns toward modes of scholarship, such as video and pedagogy, as creating opportunities to extend text-based practices and build unexpected coalitions across platforms.

Chapter 1 historicizes the intersections of global finance capital, global climate change, and global multiculturalism in the 1960's, arguing that their intersection lives at the nexus of gender and

race. In this chapter, I recruit existing histories written by scholars such as Melinda Cooper, which argues that the 1960's environmental life science turn to the molecular building blocks for life, including water, participated in and supported finance capital's increasing globalization. I argue that these intertwined histories can be better understood when read through the seminal environmentalist text by Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, published in 1962. I argue in this chapter that not only do early environmentalist rhetorics participate in the 1960's finance capital and life science rhetorics, but that these three discourses intersect at the nexus of – and are even constituted by – modes of racialization and gendering. To make this argument, I contrast Audre Lorde and Cherríe Moraga's 1960's queer of color, feminist, and decolonial activist poetics with Caron's *Silent Spring*. I read Lorde and Moraga's poetry as writing the above discourses as racializing and gendering violence against their communities and bodies; however, I read their work as also haunting ongoing modes of resistance capable of building otherwise worlds. This chapter, then, reads countermemories of finance capital and early environmentalisms that mobilize, and even make possible, or "haunt" present activist literature and media.

This historical critique creates Chapter 2's framework, which asks how this historical relationship between finance capital, water, and racial violence is perpetuated through contemporary representations of the Anthropocene's "posthuman" in the Detroit and Flint water crises. I read Jim Jarmusch's 2012 pop vampire film *Only Lovers Left Alive*, set in Detroit, and contrast it with 2013-2016 media accounts of Flint and Detroit. I argue that *Only Lovers Left Alive* represents post-industrial and urban areas' access to water as a neutral resource. I term this representation "water neutrality" available to ahistorical "posthuman" subjectivities, such as Jarmusch's vampires bearing an apathetic relationship to "the human's" geographic and temporal constraints. This water neutrality and apathy to life, I argue, is an "apathetic vitality." In contrast, I read local news feed coalitions between #blacklivesmatter activists and Flint and Detroit residents represent water

violence as a by-product of racial finance capital. This not only supports a critique of how colorblind representations of water access make possible highly racialized and gendered access; it also enables what I term "antiracist posthumanism," defined later in this Introduction and again in Chapters 1 – 4.

Chapter 3 marks a shift in the project from emphasizing critique of ongoing historical violence to the hope that can built out of, as Eve Sedgwick has termed it, "reparative reading practices." This method of reparative reading, I argue, works in coalition with the texts themselves being "haunted" by past, present, and future activist poetics. In this chapter, I read representations of water, sexuality, gender, and race in contemporary pop culture media alongside print poetry. In reading comparatively across niche and popular archives, I define reparative reading practices as enabling a coalitional praxis between scholars, poets, and popular media. To do this, I compare Beyoncé's audio-visual album *Lemonade*, Kendrick Lamar's music video and lyrics to "Alright," and Danez Smith's poetry in *[insert] boy* and *Don't Call Us Dead.* I argue that these millennial texts across print, audio, and visual mediums make evident the concrete "matter" of water in #blacklivesmatter movements to build out, what I term, "water formations." They recruit water to imagine new, livable worlds built out of antiracist and queer coalitions across their reader, viewer, and listener publics. These worldbuilding methods, I argue, come out of the preceding chapters' critical histories, enabling a mode of antiracist posthumanism I term "hyper vitalities" made possible through "water formations." In this way, I contrast the worldbuilding, affirmative strategies of hyper vitality and water formations to the apathetic vitalities and water neutrality in Chapter 2, reading for emergent, reparative worldbuilding strategies.

While Chapter 3 ends on diaspora and disability coalitions in an Americanist context, Chapter 4 more closely reads disability and diaspora coalitions beyond U.W. borders. I read two hybrid poetry and fiction books: *Schizophrene* by Bhanu Kapil and *Rolling the R's* by Zamora Linmark.

I argue that these texts use techniques from queer-crip disability studies to offer language-based, cross-border interventions. I read Kapil's South Asian diaspora and Linmark's Pacific and Oceania diaspora's as creating decolonial, "crip" (McRuer) languages that do not recycle highly racialized, violently enforced nation-state boundaries, or, the "grammars" that preclude equitable access to water. Instead, I read each text as taking up diaspora and disability to create modes of antiracist posthuman literatures wielding water for cross-border coalition work.

Finally, the conclusion examines multidisciplinary, multimedia writing and engagement beyond dominant, print-based publication, teaching, and distribution models in higher education literature studies. While Chapter 4 asks how language and writing itself is a form of praxis and worldbuilding, it also touches on the interdisciplinary arts-based research methods of performance, dance, and related studies. In coalition, then, with print-based scholarship practices, the conclusion summarizes a digital, open access project, The Poetry Vlog (TPV). In its nascent stages, TPV is a public-facing YouTube teaching channel and podcast dedicated to building social justice coalitions through higher education, poetry, arts, and related dialogues. The project features guests that range from undergraduate students, to local artists, to scholars, to well-published poets to stage conversations in audio, visual, and textual form on literary and cultural studies topics. The conclusion summarizes its first year of production, but also turns toward future directions of the project. The conclusion functions as an opportunity to reflect on research and publication methods across scholarly and poetry platforms, as well as suggest future directions for coalitional teaching and research.

**Foregrounding Terminology: Molecular Life Management, Antiracist Posthuman, and Otherwise Possibilities**

While writing these four chapters, issues around terminology and interdisciplinary knowledge formations emerged: first, I had to continuously confront terminology across different disciplines,

especially as I brought together at times disagreeing scholars. This coalesced most around how I use the terms "molecular" and "antiracist posthumanism." The second problem was creating a shared explanation of finance capital, in particular racial finance capital. The third was the inherent contradiction between my argument for build coalitions with concrete, lived forms in an oftentimes abstract, monographic text. First, in this Introduction, I respond to the problem of "why molecules?" with an overview of what molecular biology and emergent knowledges around the molecular structure of DNA's relationship to genetics. This makes it possible for Chapter 1 to focus concretizing finance capital itself as racial finance capital, and subsequently how these two life science and finance capital formations function together in the rise of environmentalist rhetorics during early antiracist, queer, and decolonial coalition movements. Second, also in this Introduction, I summarize how I am using the term antiracist posthumanism as a critical and affirmative strategy across the four chapters. I explain that while the different chapters examine different forms an antiracist posthumanism might take, the term remains consistent in its relationship to what Ashon Crawley terms, "otherwise possibilities" – a form of worldbuilding. Third, I examine strategies for building multimodal coalitional knowledges through a pedagogy, research, and arts public scholarship project, The Poetry Vlog, by summarizing its intervention in this Introduction and suggesting future directions it could take in the conclusion.

**1962, or, "What do molecules have to do with it?"**

*The 8th Day of Creation: Makers in the Revolution in Biology* is a best-selling popular science history book that contextualizes managing and regulating life increasingly on the molecular level. Published in 1996 by Horace Freeland Judson, it is comprised of interviews with the leading molecular life scientists and summaries of the scientific turns from the 1930's through the 1980's. Or rather, as the forward to the commemorative edition has it: "[Horace Freeland Judson's] splendid account of how, largely during the space of 20 years, the most essential features of the basis of molecular life came to

be understood" (i). As the "Preface to the Expanded Edition" elaborates, "There are three principle episodes in the drama that Judson reconstructs: finding the structure of DNA, recognizing that messenger RNA is an intermediate…and establishing the genetic code is a triplet code" (iii). In the first chapter, I will argue how this account entering the public discourse reveals a shift in life science attention co-constitutive of the same period's early environmentalist and finance capital arguments for how "life" and "the human" should be managed. To clarify here, though: this moment was not the "discovery" of DNA: Swiss physiological chemist Friedrich Meischer "discovered" DNA – terming it a nuclein, then nucleic acid, then deoxynucleic acid, or DNA – as a molecule in 1869. This sparked a fifty-year investigation into the "chemical" nature of DNA's molecular make-up: Russian biochemist, Phoebes Levine, for instance, is credited with first publishing on the three major (smaller than DNA) molecules that comprise DNA and RNA in 1919. This publication launched a renewed interest in the molecules comprising DNA in particular, with an increased interest in *how* the molecules came together to form DNA – or, as Bruce Braun's paper on the 1920's life science attention to molecular levels of living organisms argues, how DNA as a molecule is transferred between generations and transforms living organism's properties at the cellular level.

Bruce Braun calls this the moment in the 1920's "the molecularization of life": the realization that these processes happened in unknown ways at the unseen level, organized by molecules and their reactions to one another. In Chapter 2, I detail that larger to turn to molecular life through Bruce Braun's existing study on how the shift to global capital and molecular levels of life functioned in concert. Here, though, this moment marks where "molecularization of life" became the dominant approach to understanding life's organization and replication. In the various life sciences fields, a race was now on to understand how that level of life was ordered and how it could be managed: the study of molecular arrangements and reactions to replicate DNA.

In 1928, for instance, this took on explicit life management dimensions: microbiologist Frederick Griffith published what can coarsely be summarized as his realization that heat-treated bacteria cells could "transform" cells in infected mice into immunized cells. He embarked on finding the chemical "transformation property" responsible in hopes of the findings proving useful for managing immunity to diseases. This publication also, though, pushed medical researcher Oswald Avery, with his colleagues Colin McLead and Maclyn McCarty at Rockefeller University into the race for understanding how to organize and manage life at its replication level, which lead to Avery et. al.'s 1944 paper. This paper was the first to hypothesized DNA as the molecule responsible for the transformation. At the time, the study was not well-received: dominant studies still focused on proteins and the chemical reactions therein from the "heat application" to cells via Griffith and Meischer's studies. However, Austrian biochemist, Erwin Chargaff, published in 1950 a study inspired by Avery et. al.'s work: Chargaff launched a study on the chemistry of nucleic acids in hopes that it would clarify the relationship between genetic information and DNA molecules. One important piece that came from this study was "Chargaff's rule": in near equal numbers, adenine binds with guanine and cytosine with thymine, and this is true across living organisms. What this rule means will be better explained below; however, for this brief history, it leads to several important revelations in the molecular structure of DNA and its relationship to genetic properties.

Phage Geneticist, Alfred Hershey, and his research assistant, Martha Chase, published in 1952 on their "blender" experiment, which was largely acknowledged as proof that the DNA molecule, whose chemical nucleotide properties were clarified by Chargaff's experiments, carried genetic information. Phage Geneticists, such as Hershey and Chase, study "Bacteriophages," which are "viruses that infect bacteria." Phage genetics investigate basic viral biology; in the 1930's, Phage Geneticist Emory Ellis, for instance, studied it hoping to find out the role of viruses on cancer, while physicist-turned-geneticist Max Delbrück studied bacteriophages hoping it would establish the

physical nature of the gene. When Delbrück went on to form the Phage Group group with Hershey, Chase, et. al., they explicitly sought out "the molecular workings of inheritance and reproduction," and this work was to function in tandem with medical researchers in assisting with immune management, or life regulation and management through genetics. However, while the Phage Group pursued bacteriophages to understand the structure of DNA, so, too, did different disciplines, with the majority of investigations circling around the chemical reactions between the atoms comprising the molecules.

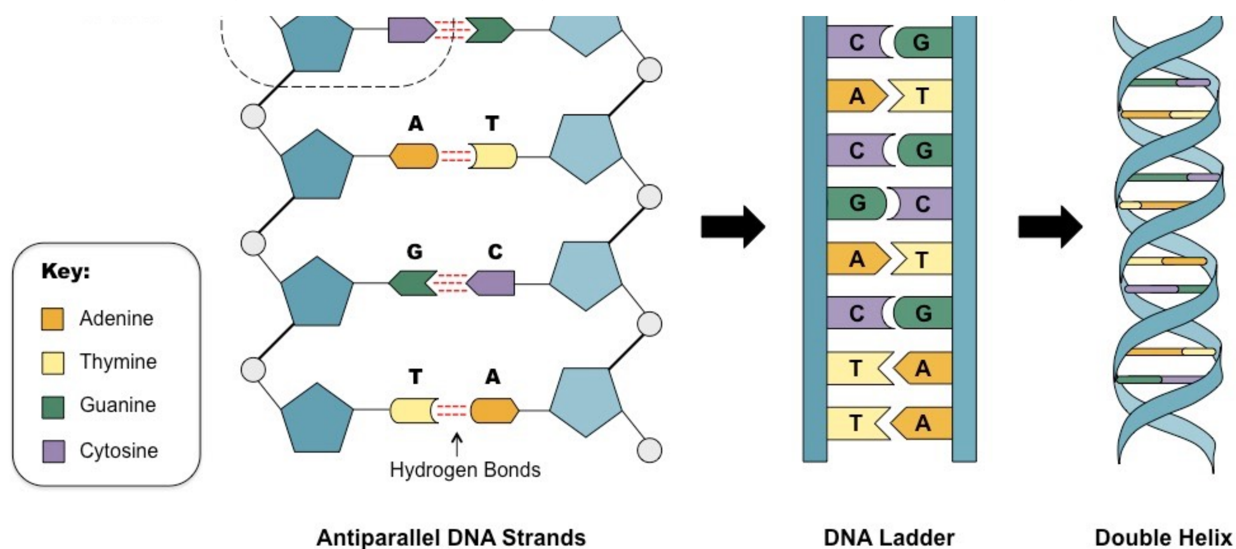
In 1953, James Watson – a molecular biologist, geneticist, and zoologist – and Francis Crick – a molecular biologist, biophysicist, and neuroscientist – picked up these studies of what molecules built the larger DNA molecule, as well as the understanding that this molecule organized genetic replication and mutation. They published the idea that DNA is structured as a double-helix, going on to win the Nobel Prize in 1962. In summary: prior to a the double helix molecular model, understanding that atoms formed the basis of all matter, living or non, as well as the realization that reactions could be created through their responses to one another in molecule form, mobilized studies into what that "code" for living and reproduction would be – and how its unlocking would create a way to manage and regulate DNA replication, or what life is produced, how, and when. The realization of the structure itself, in turn, mobilized investigation into the implications for genetic inheritance and mutability.

As summarized from above: the molecular building blocks to life came together and communicated DNA's replication, though, as well as its mutation, was largely debated without a model of DNA itself. It was studied and published by predominantly physiological chemists, then biochemists; then, microbiologists and medical researchers. When medical researchers began publishing more on the "code," they were explicitly working to unlock ways the knowledge could create immunization against disease, although again, by studying mostly chemical affects on and

among nucleic acids. I bookmark this here for my discussion of "immunitas" being critical to early environmentalisms in Chapter 1. Then, the search continued until phage geneticists and molecular biologists finally published what became its accepted structure, which changed the sciences' approach to genetic inheritance in ways difficult to apprehend now that the double helix is common knowledge.

Judson's book follows this drama of what lead to the accepted model for DNA's structure through its first third of interviews and narrative: the drama between chemistry and biology, between genetics and biochemistry, and the tension regarding which discipline holds the "key" to genetic coding and DNA's communications system. In the first chapter, what is relevant is not the invigorated attention to molecular levels of life's processes – that is more relevant in Chapter 2. Rather, for the first chapter and the majority of this dissertation's trajectory, what matters is the change in how those levels were studied when the *structure* of DNA as a double-helix comprised of four distinct molecules, and then in the 1970's of RNA's relationship to DNA replication, shifted dominant understandings around how life is self-organized. More shortly: the double helix marked an important shift in life science investigations around creating and managing life when Watson and

*Figure 1.1: The DNA "ladder" winds upward as a double helix. Nitrogenous bases are attracted based on their hydrogen's attractions to one another. The nucleotide is the molecule that brings together the smaller sugar, phosphate, nitrogenous molecules; the "code" for a living organism, their specific DNA structure, is determined by the order of these four molecules.*



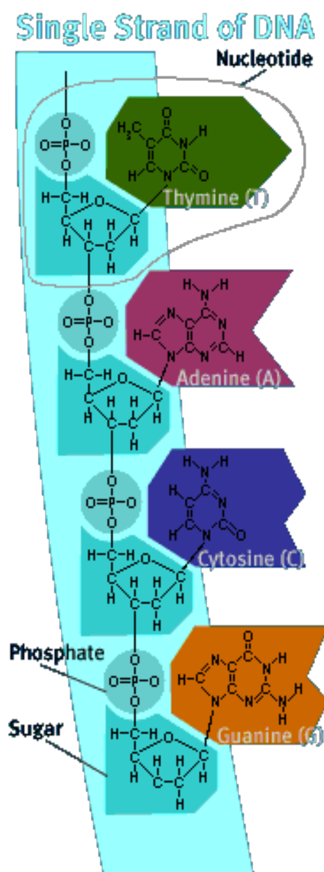



*Figure 1.2: The DNA "ladder" is comprised to two strands whose bases are attracted to each other in two set patterns. Those are determined by the atomic structure of the nitrogenous bases, and there are only a few atomic forms in the structure: carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and phosphorus. To the left: an image of the atomic structure of the molecules and where they attract to form larger molecules.*
*Image obtained from: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aso/tryit/dna/replication.html*

Crick published it as an arrangement of four molecules, each of which paired up based on only two chemical attractions to create long strands where their *order* – which could potentially be manipulated – determined the possibilities for what an organism can become.

As a short, introductory science recap: DNA is a double helix comprised of molecules. These molecules are four nucleotides; each nucleotide has is a sugar molecule, phosphate molecule, and a nitrogen molecule. Where they differ are the four nitrogenous molecules, and where those four are chemically attracted to each other: cytosine to guanine and adenine to thymine. To help visualize: in Figure 1.1, the two "sides of the ladder" to the double helix are the sugar and phosphate molecules, while the "steps" are the two nitrogen molecules. What the double helix structure reveals is that these molecules (sugar, phosphate, and nitrogenous molecules) form nucleotides – larger molecules – that can be detached and moved so long as the cytosine/guanine and adenine/thymine

attractions pair back up. The order in which they pair up is what forms the DNA "code" for that organism, and in 1962, the race shifted to unlocking how to maneuver and manage the molecules forming it. Importantly: realizing two chemical attractions occurred, and that it was not about changing the attractions, but rather manipulating where they were ordered, shifted scientific studies into how life – living organisms – could be produced, replicated, and managed. This shift was distinctly away from chemical, or atomic levels of *modification*, to *arrangement* of the molecules themselves (which retained their specific, atomic arrangement through stable, chemical attractions). In terms of the atomic structure, a PBS teaching station explains it in simple terms, while their image (see Figure 1.2) shows the relationship between atoms, chemical attractions, and molecules:

> DNA, which stands for deoxyribonucleic acid, resembles a long, spiraling ladder. It consists of just a few kinds of atoms: carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and phosphorus. Combinations of these atoms form the sugar-phosphate backbone of the DNA -- the sides of the ladder, in other words. Other combinations of the atoms form the four bases: thymine (T), adenine (A), cytosine (C), and guanine (G). These bases are the rungs of the DNA ladder. (It takes two bases to form a rung -- one for each side of the ladder.). (PBS)

Watson, Crick, and Rosalind Franklin theorized in 1953 that it was in fact these four molecules that would be the key to understanding what structured DNA. When Watson and Crick's publication won the Nobel Prize in 1962[1], though, life science research turned to replicating and organizing a living organism's gene expression through "unzipping" the double helix one molecule at a time and replacing it: each base's composition of specific atom sets (see Figure 1.1) with specific chemical reactions between those bases, attention shifted from modifying the chemical reactions or the atomic arrangement of molecules to *ordering* the bases and understanding their replication and transmission between cells. While from a humanities point of view, this might seem minor, the

[1] Of course, Franklin's erasure from this narrative is a well-documented, famous example of sexist knowledge theft, with Judson's book going so far as to narrate how she was sexualized, infantilized, lacked crucial collaborative colleagues for discussing her findings, and had her research directly stolen by Watson and Crick.

established structure as opposed to the theories leading up to that moment changed how life sciences would apprehend,
fund, and invest in "life" and its regulation.

Judson's interview with Jacques Monod, a biochemist seen as one of the founders of molecular biology, especially notes the intellectual and cultural shifts attendant to finding the structure of DNA encoded through molecular transmissions instead of chemical reactions between atomic particles. He notes how realizing DNA's molecular structure is protected from information going into and/or out of it to mutate genetic coding changed how heritable traits were observed, and with that modes or racialization: "the hereditary passing on of characteristics that an organism has picked up or had changed by the action of the environment—whether thought of as…the Jew's intellectualism, the winter-hardiness of wheat treated by Stalin's geneticist…had been declared dead before, but here at last received its definitive postmortem and was buried" (192). Judson summarizes this articulation, but Monod takes it further to describe how this fundamentally shifted geneticists' reading of Darwinism, with evolution now understand as a "'random physical basis of mutation that molecular biology has provided" with Man having to "understand that he is a mere accident"' (192, Judson quoting Monod). This shift to understanding the basis of life and its relationship species-formation was precisely at the core, I will argue, of Rachel Carson's call in *Silent Spring* for a more biopolitical mode of life management and regulation – a new attention to regulating, predicting, and managing molecular levels of genetic expression.

Again, in his interview, Judson quotes Monod as describing how molecular biology's shift from chemical reactions at the atomic-level changed the questions of determining categorical difference, including explicitly racial and ethnic difference, as well as methods for regulating itself. Instead of asking biochemists "how genes in higher organisms are switched on and off," it became questions of "elaborate systems that arise under conditions of natural selection," such as "how they

are grouped together, and what is called simultaneously, and who is sequentially ordered." The analogy for Monod with systems theory and computation also became evident: computational approaches to understanding life and species-being – counting, analyzing, and re-ordering nucleotides in a DNA sequence – were part of a project in the life sciences to now assess potential outcomes of that analysis and invest resources and knowledge according to a hoped for outcome: "we can't understand anything until we understand all the levels of computation that connect the change in the gene with the change in the development, the growth—or in the behavior" (195). In other words, as Melinda Cooper's history of finance capital and molecular biology co-emergence explains, the Post-Fordism of the post-atom bomb cold war era "relies much more immediately on economies of innovation, scope, and preemption—the ability to anticipate the next wave, to keep ahead of the curve—than the economies of scale associated with the mass reproduction of commodities" (24). These questions – scale, predictability, preemption, risk – are questions that late capitalism and molecular levels of DNA studies mirror in one another, where technological computation skills, global migration patterns and resource management into liquid, easily moved assets, and manipulating molecular models of genetic expression simultaneously and, in many ways, co-constitutively emerged. These shared rhetorical questions, which manifest in resource and population management, undergird environmental calls that I critique throughout this project, including the turn away from what Carson's *Silent Spring* names as the transition from the "brute force" of chemical pesticides to the "gentle" shaping of an already reproductive, replicative molecular dimensions of managing living organisms across species – a biopolitics.

These shared investments in a "free market" – both a genetic free market where "like begets like" in the nucleotide pairings and DNA replication to managing investments abroad in order to expand capitalism into global markets to population control – inflect early environmentalist rhetoric, which claims a sole investment in a non-human world's ability to keep "Man" – a universal human –

at its top. These rhetorics depend precisely upon the systems theory for coding both living organisms and human-made technology while formally disavowing a "hand" in the global market, or in determining who is legally and culturally recognized as rightfully "human." Or, to lay Judson's language onto early environmentalist arguments: "What counts here is the variable code source from which innumerable life forms can be generated, rather than the life form per se" (24). These interrogations into the "code source" itself, I argue, arises in the simultaneous early environmentalist rhetoric. As I read in Chapter 1, these early rhetorics, too, articulate chemicals – named at large in her book without consistent specificity – as having created a crisis in what is otherwise self-regulating, "immune" and reproductive life. Carson's calls in the early 1960's for pre-emptive regulation and care of "nature" and "Man's" place within it through "manipulation" of genetic coding to prevent future damage to "Man" (Carson 197) were co-constitutive of a shift in life science research around categorical difference, including race, ethnicity, sex, and gender (Judson 192).

In the chapters that follow, I argue that this backdrop of uncovering, studying, and regulating the building blocks for replicating life – "molecular life management" – organized legal protection from death under the name of a "natural" and "free" market. On its own, this argument is not unique; the relationship between molecular biopolitics and race, though, is. As Cooper explains, "the biological patent allows one to own the organism's principle of generation without having to own the actual organism" (24); however, her assessment of how property imbued molecular biology's research on genetics remain colorblind. In fact, as I will argue, her analysis of finance capital's investment in life sciences turning to dimensions invisible to the naked eye echoes eerily with *Silent Spring*'s call for "mankind as a whole" as "a possession infinitely more valuable than individual life," with mankind as a whole being "our genetic heritage, our link with past and future" (192). Carson's linguistic choice – mankind as possession, possession as being an originary genetic

heritage, and the genetic heritage preserving a linear historicism of past and future – illuminates her environmentalist concern as also a concern of late capitalism and life sciences research on preserving the inheritance of she terms "Man," or an original, "natural" category of the human evacuated of its historical constructions and exclusions. If, however, bringing together these rhetorics seems totalizing, what otherwise possibilities for living emerged?

**Antiracist Posthumanism: in Coalition with Ashon Crawley's "Otherwise Possibilities"**

Throughout this project, I borrow Ashon T. Crawley's use of "otherwise possibilities" as constituting possibilities inherent to plurality: as world-building that escapes more linear, historically bound methods:

> …what is, what exists, is but one of many. Otherwise possibilities exist alongside that which we can detect with our finite *sensual capacities*…. Otherwise is a word that *names plurality as its core operation, otherwise bespeaks the ongoingness of possibility, of things existing other than what is given, what is known, what is grasped.* Otherwise possibility is what I think Blackpentecostal aesthetics produce for thinking *blackness* and flesh, for thinking *blackness* and performance, as gathering and extending that which otherwise is discarded and discardable, those two modalities as modes of being and existence. Otherwise names the subjectivity in the commons, an asubjectivity that is not about the enclosed self but the *open, vulnerable, available, enfleshed organism*. (2, 24-25, emphasis added)

In kind, the hopeful responses and readings of worldbuilding possibility in this project look for what escapes enclosed, grasped meaning. The "otherwise" sees plurality as a core reading and writing practice that also extends how we see and name reading and writing. The possibilities read and written take up this otherwise space, the moment of excess theorized across queer and Black studies, as being not contingent on the modes of subjectivity critiqued. Water, in particular, offers across these texts a way to learn from and build out of the sensual knowledge of matter – what is literally sensed – and the different meanings that accrue around them. Water is not something that can be grasped, and through that becomes a point of reading and writing coalition with Blackness: if water would be grasped, privatized, and regulated in racializing, and, as I argue in Chapter 4, anti-Black

violences, then water's "slippery" capacity to accrue meaning and remain hyper-material also marks how it escapes closed meaning. Otherwise possibilities are one option of many, but while frameworks such as "deviance" from Lisa Cacho, or "alternative," oftentimes suggest that they exist only as derivative from the what is critiqued, otherwise affords a meaning-making completely apart.

I term antiracist posthumanism in this project as a similar strategy at the level of vocabulary, a way for naming antiracist posthumanism plural possibilities of livability. Posthumanism already, for instance, is heavily and rightfully critiqued for prematurely evacuating the historical category of the human. As Alexander Weheliye points out, those who never had access to the legal and protected category of the human in the first place are rightfully wary when the term is tossed out in exchange for a universal "posthumanism" without careful historical critique or awareness of how the human's racial history might be perpetuated in posthuman theories. With antiracist posthumanism, though, a concept I build out piece by piece in each chapter, antiracist, queer, feminist, decolonial, crip, and otherwise coalitional possibilities foreground posthumanism. This builds on Rose Braidotti's critical posthuman subject:

> I define the critical posthuman subject within an eco-philosophy of *multiple belongings*, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity, that is to say a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable. Posthuman subjectivity expresses an *embodied and embedded* and hence partial form of accountability, based on a strong sense of collectivity, relationality and hence community building. (49, emphasis added)

The above passage echoes with Ashon's definition of otherwise possibilities at the intersections of plural, or multiple, beings, as well as the refusal to close meaning or subjectivity, including at the level of enfleshment. Akin to Braidotti's critical posthuman subject, then, I take up antiracist posthumanism to explicitly foreground the coalitional work necessary for creating a critical posthuman subjectivity. I suggest that bringing together antiracism (which acknowledges first the historical racism that calls for an "otherwise" mode of living) with posthuman (which acknowledges the "possibilities" beyond historical exclusions of "the human") creates a strategy for livability in the

Anthropocene that does not "[sink] into the rhetoric of the crisis of Man" (Braidotti 37). In other words: the term responds to the "duplicitous" abstract/material conduits of finance capital's racial regimes with multiple linguistic tools that both critique and affirm, that look back in order to look forward. In the terms of Epeli Hau'ofa: "It is there, far into the past ahead, leading on to other memories, other realities, other homelands" (19) that the coalitional work has already begun.

Antiracist posthumanism as an otherwise possibility is, in this way, also a temporal suggestion: the present tense refuses the debt economy of finance capital, where, since it "can never be redeemed once and for all and must be perpetually renewed, it reduces the inhabitable present to a bare minimum, a point of bifurcation, strung out between a future that is about to be and a past that will have been" (Cooper 31). I argue that these following project's texts instead suggest the present's queer desires look into the past for a future memory that, by necessity, is here.

**Conclusion**

The expository scholarly form as one genre of posthumanist work among many suggests that coalitions might be built among the different genres. What this project hopes to explore is what happens when we take seriously the call to coalitional, material, and as Cherríe Moraga calls it, "prophetic" work that joins up with the scholarship happening today in poetry, music videos, fiction, and other media. A text-based, theoretical dissertation on an argument for effective coalition building across multiple modes contradicts itself, but more importantly, it silo's off knowledge formations based on forms and modes themselves. This limits what emerges at the nexus of differing modes, or at the nexus of articulating audio-visual with textual, poetry with scholarly, and so forth. More shortly, it ties the project what is possible in textual context alone, limiting "otherwise possibilities." This is a critical disciplinary issue that I critique in various forms across the chapters. In fact, it perhaps "haunts" each chapter.

In this way, the lack of foreclosure but willingness to test out and attempt to lineate and codify in the "doctoral" expository form is also a poem, and the poems produced throughout and aside to this project are also the expository work. My hope in this vein is that the following end as beginning in Moraga's introduction continues to haunt subsequent chapters, but also the creative and multimodal projects produced simultaneous to this work:

> Although I cannot pretend their wisdom, I see my task as that of the ancient Mesoamerican scribes: to speak to these cataclysmic times, to expose the 'dream world' of individualism, profit, and consumerism. Truth must be expressed in 'Flower and Song,' the sages professed. In metaphor. So these are not essays as much as they are poems and these are not poems as much as they are essays. Possibly the distinction no longer matters—between the poem and the essay, between my art and activism. As Audre Lorde wrote, 'Poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence.' This picture book I write is a drawing made of words—sometimes elegant, most times raw, always in earnest. The stories have a lot to do with Chicano culture and Indian people and homosexuals and half-breeds and women loving and hating women. They are a queer mixture of glyphs, these writings, but they shape the world I know at the turn of this century. These final letters are the last marks to be placed in this book and the first pages you will read. Like the ancient codices, *The Last Generation* begins at the end and moves forward.
>
> - December 31, 1992 (Moraga 4)

# Chapter 1: Risk, Race, and Speculation in an Economic Anthropocene

## Introduction

If you search "finance capital" across the popular culture and Oxford English Dictionaries and Encyclopedias, you will not find an entry. You will find it as interchangeable with "finance" on its own; you will find references to articles from the 1980's or earlier; you will also find "refugee finance," "water," and then eventually, if you narrow the search to strictly within the Oxford English Dictionary of Human Geography published in 2013, you will find an entry for "finance capital":

1. A synonym for finance.
2. A sector of any economy (national, regional, or global) whose institutions are in the business of lending and investing money. These institutions have a very uneven global geography, with the City of London and Wall Street the two largest financial centres globally (despite being at the heart of the 2007 financial crisis). However, because these institutions usually operate on a global scale, the money they invest or lend circulates through each artery of the world economy. Finance Capital is usually at the cutting edge of capitalist investment because new and often risky commercial ventures in new places require willing lenders or investors. In recent years the distinction between finance capital and productive capital (e.g. a manufacturing company) have become blurred because many companies now engage in producing commodities and in lending money to others (or investing money beyond the perimeters of the firm).

That the Oxford English Dictionary does not house a concrete definition but rather conflates it with money in its most abstract state – "finance" – is endemic to how the operations produce the illusion of abstraction precisely in order to exact a historical violence that, while taking on new, speculative, risk-assessment features post-WWII, importantly enable the contemporary modes of racial violence. In this chapter, I argue that the post-WWII shift to late capitalism necessitates the specificity of "finance capital," as the non-synonymous meanings with "finance" materialize the conditions that produce cultural emergences both supportive of and otherwise to racial property accumulation and exploitation.

Finance capital in this argument will be distilled to rapid transformation of capital into liquid assets that are easy to move when at risk of no longer accumulating wealth. As finance capital scholars have already historicized, this is part of managing investments and the expansion of capitalism in post-WWII globalism[2]. In an U.S. American continental context, this means positioning liquid assets in different global spaces as part of the attempt to make and create a global market managed by Western U.S. and European countries. This coincides with market shifts being simultaneously seen as inherently chaotic, "free," and unmanageable – much like molecular life scales[3]. To build on these existing histories, in this chapter I concretize how finance capital functions as a uniquely racial shift that critically informs the simultaneous rise of environmentalist rhetorics. I argue that seeing finance capital as producing modes of racialization in co-articulation with dominant environmental rhetorics functions through the two movements anxiety around invisible-to-the-eye yet deadly toxins and manipulation of risk management; in particular, the finance capital rhetoric of protection and immunity – a neoliberal method of individualizing risk and exposure to precarity through risk assessment and management[4] – dovetails with rhetorics of "epidemics, extradition requests, the pathologization of immigrants, and computer viruses (and now environmentalism)" (Esposito 1). I argue that the twinned processes worked were participatory in each other's formations as a new mode of racialization in the 1960's to protect a historically constituted, propertied "human" from its implosion.

To make this argument, I will outline three co-formations specific to the 1960's: the rise of finance capital, molecular life management rhetorics in dominant environmentalist movements, and the rise of antiracist and queer poetics. I organize these three histories around two central examples:

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[2] See Richard Godden's "Labor, Language, and Finance Capital."
[3] This has already been explained by Bruce Braun, who terms it "the molecularization of life." I explain this term and Braun's argument in more detail in Chapter 2.
[4] See Fredric Jameson's "Culture and Finance Capital" and Jean Comaroff's "Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism."

how the "human" is newly shaped in emergent eco-posthumanisms of the 1960's and how incongruities around water ownership, livability as it becomes scarce, and fear around uncontainable water-carried toxins help us see the stories of racial finance capital and molecular biology in early, popular environmentalisms. These stories, I argue, emerge already in the activist poetics of the period: it was not until 1973 that the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) was begun, but it was in the 1960's that Civil Rights movements, Black nationalism, Black Panthers, and early Audre Lorde, Langston Hughes, Gloria Anzaldúa and other literary activist forces emerged. This emphasis on the early, coalitional manifestations of queer of color poetry and political movements provides the historical context for looking at the more specific intersections of ecocritical movements in relation to historical materialist accounts of race and sex in literary and popular activist culture.

Doing so brings together arguments that race and gender are integral to and formed by humanist and posthumanist property rhetorics, making finance capital always already *racial* finance capital[5]. This backdrop – defining finance capital as an emergent 1960's racializing and gendering method co-formed with molecular life sciences in early environmentalisms – helps us to better apprehend contemporary environmental violence perpetuating racial and gendered violence. To write this history, I closely read Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in contrast to Audre Lorde and Cherríe Moraga's activist poetics. Across all three texts, I focus on the most obvious building block of life – literal and metaphorical water molecules – to examine literary representations. This chapter, then, serves as an explanatory nad historical backdrop. It suggests methods for historicizing the abstraction of capital as an exploitative, extracting process in concert with shifting life science and environmental terms. However, it also foregrounds and creates the capacity to haunt the otherwise

[5] This term, "racial finance capital," builds on Cedric Robinson's "racial capitalism" by suturing it with Grace Hong's analysis of finance capital as also racial. See *Death Beyond Disavowal* by Grace Kyungwon Hong for a history of racial finance capital.

possibilities of coalitional world building beyond humanist and posthumanist racial property frameworks.

I will argue through my readings across *Silent Spring,* Lorde, and Moraga that this demonstrates how biopolitical[6] life management is inherent to finance capital, so that the contested site of "the human" necessitates moving beyond the scope of "the humanities" proper. More methodologically, it requires antiracist research approaches – outlined as imperative by Barbara Christian in 1988 and expanded upon in Chapter 4 – that take seriously the scholarly production of queer and feminists of color doing intellectually and affectively[7] laborious work to name and contest conditions for their livability. This cross-field, cross-discourse, interdisciplinary, synthetic approach, responds immediately synthetic, cross-discourse, interdisciplinary forms of racialized and gendered colonial violence that re-constitute a racialized category of the human and posthuman alike[8]. Too, if "categorical distinction is a problem of modern thought" along with and in co-violence to "the invention of racialization [as] a fundamental, foundational aspect of the maintenance of that project" (Crawley 29), then antiracist posthuman work is perhaps most effective when at the nexus of refusing categorically distinguished disciplinary and field-based inquiries.

This is especially true insofar as those distinctions serve to obscure how their entanglement produces a violence that requires coalitional, cross-category resistance and otherwise plural

[6] I use biopolitical in, again, a racial biopolitical geneology. See Mel Chen's *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect.*
[7] While this project leans heavily on affect theory's contemporary relevance, it is not principally an affect theory body of work. When I use affect in this book, then, I am building on the popular scholarly term in collected editions around the field, such as *The Affect Theory Reader* edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth. Affect in its simplist terms for this project, and based on the anthology, looks at the sensations and experiences held, transmitted, or even expressed before they consolidated into a feeling that can be put into words. This is an oversimplification of a diverse, complex field, but here the term is useful to ensure that arguments do not stop at the nameable experience, but rather describe the felt and experienced transmission or moment. The political work of using the term this way surfaces most evidently in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, which looks at ableism and language in a diasporic framework.
[8] See Rose Braidotti's *The Posthuman*, page 43.

experiences. As theorists from Michel Foucault to Sylvia Wynter[9] have articulated, it is precisely disciplinary distinctions of taxonomizing and hierarchizing bodies through and with schools of thought and their institutionalized consolidation that dominant epistemological practices "bear down on us from the outside," presuming from their start "the possibility of the finding and continuance of pure difference[10]" (Crawley 30). In turning backward, the historical critique emergent in the understudied activist poetics as theoretical and world building texts during the 1960's creates a haunting of contemporary political literatures that at once refuses consolidated, hegemonic, categorical meaning-making, as well as binaristic approaches to abstract and material conditions for living. This method moves through, as I later argue, Audre Lorde's Black and queer feminist articulation of the possibilities and plurality of difference otherwise to and apart from the hegemonic modes of racializing and gendering difference in service of producing both labor and existential surplus[11]. The violence of pure difference to separate otherwise coalitional methods disavows otherwise possibilities that grow out of taking up blackness, Latinx community, decolonial futurity, and queer feminist livability precisely through radical difference. Such affirmative coalitions, I will argue, neither violently expunge particularity nor selectively create and exploit particularity in service reconstituting a pure "human" status.

Throughout this chapter's account of finance capital as a racialized, gendered, and colonial turn, I examine the shift to life apprehension and management at the unseen level. This includes speculated molecular structures of DNA for genetic heritage as they are mutually reinforced through finance capital's acceleration of risk management and foreclosure; these unseen levels and

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[9] For more on the rise of distinct disciplines as a racial project, see Sylvia Wynter's "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument." For more on the history of taxonomy and hierarchy in biopolitical thought, see Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*.
[10] For more from Crawley on "categorical distinction" and "pure difference" as opposed to Lorde and Moraga's work on necessary radical difference, see pages 29-30 of *Black Pentecostal Breath*.
[11] Grace Kyungwon Hong's term is "existential surplus" in response to increasing abstraction in racial finance capital. I will explain and demonstrate the term in Chapter 2. For more on her use, see *Death Beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference*.

corresponding disavowed management practices becomes hyper visible through water privatization, regulation, and anxiety. Water makes undeniably material, affective, and enfleshed both the disavowed violence at unseeable levels and the possible poetics of resistance. Antiracist posthuman work in coalitional poetries sees how water reveals an "openness and vulnerability" (Crawley 25) as an opportunity to critique the ongoingness[12] of financial accumulation and investment, the possibilities inherited to realizing molecular levels of life proliferate beyond the absolute regulation, and the plural possibilities offered by moving past immunized human status. Such work apprehends the violence disavowed in order to suggest otherwise interpretative, creative, scholarly, and lived practices for haunting[13] the past, present, and future possibilities – an account as non-linear as water's own chaotic movement.

For this reason, I have organized this chapter's story of finance capital, environmentalism, and posthumanism through readings of water: Rachel Carson's 1962 landmark, first popularized environmentalist text, *Silent Spring*, Audre Lorde's late 1960's poems "Bloodbirth" and "Song," and Cherrie Moraga's late 1960's poetry essay, "The Last Generation." Before opening with *Silent Spring,* I offer a quick summary of the shift to molecular levels of genetic expression management. My reading of Carson is critically informed by the summary in this dissertation's introduction of what transformations in molecular biology arose during 1962. With this context, I then critique the first popularized account of the climate change crisis as a "human" crisis imbued with racial biopolitical rhetoric. I read this book's racial biopolitics as infused with the language of finance capital, which informs a humanist mode of posthumanism in the same style as finance capital's abstractions enable its continued material extraction. In my last analysis of *Silent Spring*, I argue that Carson's affect is

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[12] See Frederic Jameson's "Culture and Finance Capital" and Jean Comaroff's "Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism," page 265, for an explanation of finance capital as an ongoing autopoetic method that sustains late capitalism through increasing abstraction and disavowals of its materiality.
[13] See David Eng and David Kazanjian's "Loss: The Politics of Mourning," page 1, on melancholy as historical materialist work building out of a Walter Benjamin tradition.

one of warning and grief that she and the dominant early environmentalist movements managed by critiquing human-enacted violence on the environment as an issue of autoimmune failure.

Her work and its dominant, surrounding movements responded to this diagnosis by suggesting resolution only available by consolidating, purifying, and protecting the visual "whole" of "Man." I interpret Carson's argument to protect the status of human from this crisis of its own unseen toxins as a racialized and queer "let die" rhetoric infused with finance capital anxieties around liquidating assets; in turn, I argue that her "make live" imperative depends upon risk assessment's evaluation of what might procure proper "immunity" from the unseen toxins breaking down the category of immune human that would otherwise thrive in "nature." Finally, I argue that this finance capital rhetoric within the environmental text is mobilized precisely because it emerges simultaneous to life science anxieties around the chaotic, proliferative dimension of molecular life[14].

My reading of Audre Lorde's poems pick up on this affect of fear and anxiety to examine poets contemporary to *Silent Spring.* Through my close reading of Lorde's poems, I argue that race "haunts" canonized environmental and life science literatures. Lorde and Moraga's poetics clarify whose lives are risked in financial and environmental speculation while offering otherwise formulations anticipating and creating livability. I argue that these poetics offer a more "[active] tension between the past and present" as also being a relationship "between the dead and the living" (Eng and Kazanjian 1). This tension produces more affirmative and livable possibilities than the biopolitical life/death binaries in finance capital and environmentalism's fear. Audre Lorde is perhaps the most canonical of the mid-1960's Black feminist and queer poets, beginning her publication and grassroots work in the 1960's before gaining notoriety and more circulated publication in the 1970's and 1980's. In her poem, "Bloodbirth," I argue that she offers an

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[14] See Horace Freeland Judson's *The Eight Day of Creation,* which describes how realizing the DNA structure created a shift in emphasizing chemical mutation to emphasizing the orders of DNA molecules – or, molecular biology.

alternative grammar to consolidated, immunized humanism in a de-regulated environment. She lays the groundwork for Hortense Spillers' Black feminist theory of sexualized and racialized enfleshment – expanded upon in Chapter 2 – by co-articulating race, language, environment, and death. In "Bloodbirth," Lorde's theory develops through her giving birth in a language that belies normative female reproductivity. She develops thie theory in a run-on stanza sentence, creating a "watery" metaphor and form. Then, I argue that in her poem, "Song," she creates the unheard "song" in *Silent Spring* by out the debt economy of environmentalist rhetorics accelerating global climate.

Following this reading, I end the section on Lorde's poetics on affect, again. This time, I turn to melancholic affect as co-constitutive of antiracist, queer, and feminist coalition building and haunting. That is, Lorde models a racialized melancholia that wields water-carried and other forms of toxicity to "haunt" the present. I argue that these affects, represented metaphorically at times through water, metaphorically re-tool the literal toxicity in water that mobilizes Carson's biopolitical discourse. This toxic, melancholic affect as a politically salient maneuver becomes a method for haunting present and future interventions with ongoing violence from the past, but also ongoing otherwise worlds that were and are still being built. Such melancholic, toxic affect, I argue, produces an otherwise possibility to Carson's foreshadowed silent spring, creating a way to access time: a haunting that is also a metaphysical form of knowledge production, returning to a different ethic of the "unseen" that, unlike molecular life sciences and finance capital, does not depend upon re-consolidating an immune human status, privatizing molecular building blocks to life, or liquidating and moving increasingly abstract assets.

Finally, I close with Moraga's "The Last Generation" as coalitional work with Lorde's toxic racial melancholia. I ask how Moraga's use of water imagery suggests queer kinship practices as

decolonial coalition building. My reading of Moraga as an ongoing haunting insists on a reparative[15] process that does not re-consolidate the immunized whole but rather seeks out seepage to create coalitional livability. I incorporate this reading with performance and border studies scholar Jade Power Sotomayor's warning in mind: "As studies about the US-Mexico border have exploded in recent decades, producing what Roberto Hernandez terms the 'borderlands academic complex,' local embodied experiences and daily encounters with violence of the border have been obscured" (27). To respond to this, I ask how Moraga's haunting presence, which sets up Chapter 2 as a response to that presence, might insist on the material, lived reality of loss at land-based and water-based borders. How, in bridging the disparate languages of abstract accumulation through concrete and affective response, does Moraga join black studies scholar Avery Gordon's attempt to "make the fictional, the theoretical, and the factual speak to one another" (Gordon 26)? What dialectic of metaphysics and matter haunt the undeniably experienced conditions for otherwise livability?

### *Silent Spring*: Immunizing Finance Capital at the End of the World

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, published in 1962 before her passing in 1964, launched a popularized discourse in favor of restoring a perceived natural order of living: this was the seed of environmentalist discourse, one that sought out the control and regulation of chemical manipulation within environments in favor of a naturalized make live and let die paradigm. I argue in this section that the text reveals how initial rhetorics within this environmental discourse were co-constitutive of capital moving increasingly into global risk assessment and mobility, which in turn shifted funding in the sciences to the managing molecular interactions within DNA replication instead of chemical mutations produced from either outside the DNA molecule (and its sub-molecular structures) or

[15] Eve Sedgwick is the most famous analysis of "reparative reading practices." Her argument suggests that academia as a neoliberal formation is invested in secularized "paranoid" reading that seeks out critique first, over-emphasizing critical capacity to negate or in complicity with neoliberal violence erase otherwise worlds being built. The phrase is problematic because it suggests an originary whole that should be repaired. However, the concept is crucial to my own method, so it is signaled throughout the work in discussing reparative relations.

from imploding the structure completely at its atomic levels. I argue that Carson's text highlights the life management protocol of Foucault's biopolitical state while racializing and gendering multicultural sites as "speeding up" the toxic invasion of the natural order. This argument builds on existing scholarship that excavates the queer necessity of critiquing Carson's biopolitical imperatives by Derek Woods and Lesley Green. Then, I turn to Melinda Cooper to synthesize how molecular biology and finance co-formed one another post-WWII. Finally, I ask how the property analytics inherent to finance capital, molecular biology, and Carson's environmentalism create biopolitical conditions for a make live/let die paradigm that Audre Lorde and Cherríe Moraga then pick up to critique.

According to Carson, the primary damage being done to the present and future of, as Carson terms it the human species, "Man", is the chemical warfare waged on insects and weeds to produce better crops. For instance: in the first section of her book, "The Obligation to Endure," she remarks that the "modern insect problem is one that must be viewed against a background of geologic and human history," an argument she extends in her analysis of water, "Rivers of Death":

> It was therefore more than clear that spraying at the rate of a pound of DDT to the acre posed a serious threat to the fishes in forest streams. Moreover, control of the budworm had not been achieved and many areas were scheduled for respraying. The Montana Fish and Game Department registered strong opposition to further spraying, saying it was 'not willing to compromise the sport fishery resource for programs of questionable necessity and doubtful success.' The Department declared, however, that it would continue to cooperate with the Forest Service 'in determining ways to minimize adverse effects.' But can such cooperation actually succeed in saving the fish…. (134)

In the above short and long quotes, Carson articulates the dying fish and crops as resulting from the chemicals sprayed to inhibit their rapid growth – an action that happened as a result calculating future, possible crop and fishing returns. Her language – "serious threat," "Rivers of Death," "The Obligation to Endure," "background of geologic and human history," "saving" – immediately warns that the specter of death is the risk to be thwarted at all costs. Against this specter, the first section

demands that there is an "obligation to endure," or to make live against the "spraying at the rate of a pound of DDT to the acre." The language of threat, violence, and saving impliciates chemical spraying as a form warfare that results in water poisoning. This obligation to endure, she argues, is to make sure that "Man" as the human "species" does not enact an autoimmune attack on itself in this attempt to kill off immediate threats to crops and fisheries; that "the methods employed must be such that they do not destroy us along with the insects" (26). This bears relay with the emergent molecular biology studies into genetic inheritance and immunity from the period: as DNA's structure being an internally regulated process manageable less through external chemical manipulation, molecular biology began seeking out ways to manage and DNA's internal replication process. More directly: managing and regulating life's production at molecular levels became less about creating an external force onto the process in order to regulate it, which could cause damage across different population mutations, than it became about managing the internal molecular structure's existing processes.

For context: Carson's imperative arrives as a necessary and urgent invective during a period where approaches to resource management included the widespread use of chemicals that did, in fact, disproportionately harm inter-human communities – notably, as Rob Nixon articulates in his case of "slow violence," disproportionately harming those who cannot economically labor in those rural and industrial spaces of chemical seepage. However, Carson describes this harm as not seen on an immediately visible scale and dangerously capable to seeping into spaces for which it was not intended, much like anxiety and fear around chemically induced genetic mutation through weapons such as the atom bomb and radiation. Similarly, Carson explains the chemicals function by altering the molecular structure of life irreversibly and invisibly, making its replication and distribution inherently unmanageable and potentially risking the same populations the chemical application sought to protect (26). Chapter 2 examines this contemporary exaction of "slow violence" through

the early 2010's lead poisonings in Flint, Michigan's water supplies, making Carson's imperative a clear foreboding of this in the 1960's. However, her call to action is here implicitly biopolitical: Carson's anxiety for universal Man being contaminated by chemicals in the water elides how investors in resource management speculate which populations might most suffer the offset of chemical dumping, pesticides, and other forms of crop and fishery management. Carson's concern for fish surviving, here, so that Man might reproduce itself properly in relation to a pure again environment creates an implicitly racialized, gendered, and classed category of the human, much less abstracted environmentalist posthuman irretrievably immersed in nature. This rhetorically marks as contaminants any beings that, as they migrate, speed up geological time, including racialized diasporic and non-white communities migrating across spaces after WWII – creating an racist "autoimmune" fallout from WWII modes of chemical and atomic warfare as much as crop and resource management.

While this is a slight leap without pausing to close read and contextualize the text, scholars have already published extensively on these biopolitical registers in Carson's work. For instance: biopolitical analysis of Carson's work surfaced in Spring 2014 and Summer 2017, wherein the concept of Roberto Esposito's racialized and gendered "immunitas" as environmental biopolitics helps to surface Carson's call to stop violence as a racialized, biopolitical call relying on exclusionary humanist urgencies. Lesley Green, for instance, in her 2013 essay, "Ecology, Race, and the Making of Environmental Publics: A Dialogue with *Silent Spring* in South Africa," argues that Carson's articulation of Spring being silenced as birds and insects die off implicates the co-terminous "political silence; a silence in the polis," to which she documents political systems across the Southern hemisphere creating rights for waterways and earth (1). She documents from her own Southern African perspective how the state-based imperatives to create protected nonhuman reserves and fisheries in fact reinstates the colonial "taking" from racialized subjectivities in those

areas (3); she critiques what it means to "do conservation science in the service of affirmative capital" when, in fact, affirmative capital is invested in the disenfranchisement of racialized populations (4). However, she sees Carson's text as an opportunity to create a less biopolitical capital venture in assessing risks and investing in resource regulation instead of as problematically part and parcel of this violence.

Green argues that Carson inaugurated a postmodern critique of modernism's fascination with the subject-object ontology, suggesting an early posthumanism that assumes the interconnected reality of nature and human, men and women, and with that, undoing the binaries through a more porous subjecthood:

> The power of *Silent Spring* is its link of creatures and toxins with households and bodies. In such an approach the environment is not an object, like the racialized body, to be controlled or fought over in budget debates. Nature is not the responsibility of the polis. Carson's Nature R Us is an oikos: an ecology of interconnections, an ecumene and an economy; a shared household (10).

In this passage, she argues that Carson inaugurated the first separation of public and private, of human and environment, by asking how the chemical technologies developed in modernity have seeped into and complicated public/private binaries, suggesting and eco-feminism. Yet, ecology is a racialized word that bears with it the immunitary paradigm that invites racialization in biopolitical warfare, a point next taken up in 2017 by Derek Woods. Too, Carson does not embrace this disruption to the subject object disruption completely, but rather sees it as an unnatural dissolution that heralds the end of both the human and its environments. In addition, her critique of and subsequent recruitment of Rachel Carson's text examines the geographic and differently nationalized spaces of South Africa. To state the obvious, this geographically, historically, and nationalistically different space bears a different history of racialization, slavery, and capitalism from that in the continental U.S. that, for the purposes of this chapter, mobilized much of the 1960's uprisings.

Woods' article, "Corporate Chemistry: A Biopolitics of Environment in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Richard Powers's *Gain,*" offers a second opportunity to examine Carson's biopolitical rhetoric in U.S. continental racial and queer frameworks. Woods argues that the documentary he analyzes through Carson's text illuminates how organic chemistry as a discipline – the study of carbon-containing molecules and their reactions with other molecules – was primarily funded with investors and public support across four biopolitical channels, thereby enacting a racial and heterosexist environmental rhetoric that upheld what it attacked: the make live/let die paradigm of the life science's research recruited in state-sanctioned life management practices (1). Woods' article traces theorists across Michel Foucault, Margaret Hunt Gram, Thomas Lemke, and Leerom Medovoi to support his analysis of "biopolitical warfare" through "chemical warfare," critiquing dominant environmentalisms as a biopolitically charged imperative to make live and let die racialized and gendered populations. To articulate these populations as racialized, classed, and gendered being integral to how they are "left to die," he close reads environmental anxieties around artificially-constructed chemical toxins through immunitary paradigms: "immunity is at the root of environmentalism's politically compromised focus on purity and indemnification" (82). Woods' argument recruits queer ecocritics, such as Roberto Esposito, Donna Haraway, and Priscilla Wald, adding into environmental biopolitics' rhetoric of risk management immune paradigms of purity that devalue non-hetero-reproductive, property owning life.

In doing so, he describes Carson's biopolitical imperative for achieving human and nature continuums as supporting social Darwinian survival speculations co-extensive with finance capital: "risk theory and biopolitics share an emphasis on the population, but the former manages the future through statistical calculation, while the latter adds a helpful lens on immunity and what Foucault calls the 'biological continuuum' within which power…[delimits] categories of bodies" (82). This suturing of biopolitics with economic risk assessment and management underscores what Woods

notes is a racialized biopolitics wherein whiteness is constructed as universal and nonwhiteness as contaminant. However, Woods' essay still maintains that race is a side note in this history of biopolitical environmentalism thought and risk theory, or finance capital's assessment of risks for turning investments into profit. He does not take race as integral to how the two co-extensively function in a make live/let die property-based paradigm. This capacity for a colorblind reading in Carson's biopolitical text leaves both essays ambivalent about biopolitics as a racial project. The two essays even at times see the immunitary property-based paradigm as useful insofar as it suggests top-down methods of asserting political and environmental power. Both part the biopolitical registers as at times violent, especially when suggesting that nature immunize itself against the polis, and both reckon with how this rhetorically positions geographic movement to "toxins" against culturally distinct ideas of "Man."

As an example in *Silent Spring*: when Carson looks at cell division and mutation as "altered so it is alien and destructive" in the aftermath of government and scientific funding for creating such mutations, or being produced by "untold sums of money," she also argues that the cell on its own would have "orderly multiplication." She articulates cellular life as inherently self-organizing before chemical intervention or political and economic interventions even as she seeks out a return to the originary replication process as inherently life-affirming reproduction. She contrasts this presumed, prior "orderly multiplication" with the chaos from chemical residues left by atomic and chemical warfare, which she describes as producing "the wild and uncontrolled proliferation of cancer" (210). This converges with the turn to post-Keynesian economics a decade later, which argue that a free market needs to be as de-regulated as possible in order to emerge as naturally reproductive and supportive of valuable life[16]. This has been critiqued extensively as an individualizing, neoliberal

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[16] This summary borrows heavily from Jodi Melamed's definition of neoliberalism in *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism.* Melamed historicizes how post-Keynesian welfare states turned to language of a free market and liberal concepts of deregulating capitalist production simultaneous to its official stance as an antiracist

response to diasporic and migratory shifts: it claims that de-regulating the market will ensure that individuals capable of succeeding and self-attaining survival will be "naturally" parsed out, with pre-Keynesian methods read as damaging interference producing dangerous proliferations of humans that can live alongside increased personhood opportunities beyond colonial white man[17]. At the core of many biopolitical and neoliberal arguments, a de-regulated market is seen as enabling a "make live" for populations that can attain economic capacity to access property ownership and "letting die" those who cannot, claiming it a social Darwinian natural order that coincides only coincidentally with race, class, and gender[18]. The biopolitical vein of Carson's immunitas, then, when also examined in a colorblind argument through Woods and Green, presupposes that de-funding chemical warfare's direct killing would enable a return to the "natural" order of "letting die"; however, as the introduction historicizes, the same funding sources had already shifted to a different method for regulating and managing life. This makes her call from external chemical manipulation to internal coaxing and rearranging complicit with the biopolitical registers in how molecular biology and genetics began working at new, biopolitical methods for privatizing and regulating life.

To better appreciate this mode of biopolitical warfare as racialized requires a better understanding of the shift from funding predominantly organic chemistry to molecular biology. Carson's primary anxiety circles inorganic chemicals, which she calls "the sinister and little-recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world—the very nature of its life" through moments such as "nuclear explosions into the air" – or WWII and Cold War atomic bomb and testing anxiety – to "chemicals sprayed onto croplands or forests or gardens…entering into living organisms…in a chain of poisoning and death." This is, of course, a post-WWII Cold

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politics. Like Hong's work, she argues that this disavowal of producing racial and gendered difference through the management and regulation of resources is precisely what enables the continued, violent, biopolitical life management practices that racialize and gender populations for surplus value.

[17] ibid.

[18] See Hong, loc 371 for this history.

War anxiety; with the advent of the atom bomb being used to destroy life in highly visual (mushroom clouds and mutation) spectacles out of completely invisible to the naked eye reactions between atoms, so, too, were both organic and biochemistry being harnessed to manage and regulate life on a less immediately visible scale: chemical sprays on crops, for instance, to yield larger returns. For Carson, the transmission of these particular chemicals into water is even more eerie: less visible than fields at a time being sprayed was the "[mysterious]" passing by "underground streams" until their exposure creates an "alchemy of air and sunlight" that goes on to kill vegetation, farm animals, humans, and more, much less those drinking from the wells themselves (24). Her explicit fear comes out of the life science research focus around life at the atomic level being leveraged by the external application of chemical states regulate it: from post-atom bomb environments to chemically altered suburban rivers, "radiation is now the unnatural creation of man's tampering with the atom" (Carson 24-25). Shortly, these rhetorics lean heavily on an outside force mutating an otherwise internally self-organized process. While contemporary sciences and scientific researchers would be quick to point out that this spurred a fear of chemicals at large that hindered a more capacious understanding of how life and its sustenance functions, what matters for me in this chapter's argument is how this fear grew in a specific historical context.

This context is grounded in which sciences are funded, why, and how it is intertwined with shifts in finance capital. That is: it matters that Carson's biopolitics focuses on chemical warfare as human-made external brute force that undoes civilization's interior by interfering its ability to produce orderly cellular replication; her case for an interspersed, interspecies, feminist, non-binary public and private life management, one where nature and the human resume an immune relationship from one another that will self-organize into a reproductively healthy life, presumes that external, lab-curated chemicals for directly intervening on life, as well as their funding and dispersal, intervene on an otherwise pure, self-regulating, self-contained, reproductive life system. It also

politically and economically presumes that the life science research of the period was not already seeking ways to manage and regulate life's molecular building blocks from the inside – from the space of reorganizing existing attractions between the molecules that structure DNA and genetic inheritance as opposed to causing externally applied mutations. Carson's rhetoric places "insect hordes" as unnaturally migrating from "outside" an otherwise orderly interior, to penetrating where they do not belong because of the direct interference brought on by the atom bomb and chemical warfare of life management and regulation during the WWII era. She contrasts with this with "Man's rightful place" (266) in the natural order as immune from and impenetrable to these otherwise unnatural contagions and migrations.

Carson posits that the answer is to de-regulate biological processes to restore an hierarchical space – to "be biological, not chemical," and in doing so, "to guide natural processes as cautiously as possible in the desired direction rather than to use brute force…" (248, quoting Dr. Briejér). Carson goes on to call this a more "high-minded" approach to scientific knowledge, one that sees chemical warfare as "brute force" that is less impactful than a belief in nature's self-organizing potential (249). The biopolitical registers rise to the surface of her critique around chemical warfare, wherein she explicitly espouses a free market approach to nature, a way of returning Man as the otherwise rightful inheritor of reproductive life not through a make die, but a "make live" as the desired direction and a "let die" of what nature does not select. This is not to say that Carson did not know, at this time, that life science attention to regulating the future of species-being was turning from organic chemistry applied to DNA molecules to molecular biology re-ordering and regulating DNA molecules; she states that this shift was pre-mature, calling them the "would-be architects of our future" who design humans by altering germ plasm, but in so doing ignore the cost of gene mutations and futures already being created through chemicals such as bug spray (26). Yet, the concern Carson has ignores how chemicals and organic are not in opposition or in binary

relationship to one another, illuminating a disavowed relationship between her own argument and the form of life sciences she critiques. In fact, molecular levels of living organisms replicate precisely through chemical attractions between molecules, and the study of organic chemistry, biochemistry, and molecular biology are intertwined in forming the larger the project of genetics and genome sciences. Their intertwined history informs their shared concern with Carson's critique, which is how to better manage and manipulate DNA's molecular structure in order to protect species-being from undesired mutations. In other words, part of her own rhetorical anxiety around manipulated and developed chemicals disrupting the "natural" laws of chemical reactions at the levels of DNA's molecular replication coincided with shifting rhetorics in how cultural life and livability, not just molecular levels of genetic expression, would be managed. The danger in her argument, then, and its relationship to becoming a popularized mode of environmentalism, is precisely its disavowed intimacy with the forms of economic and life science regulation that it otherwise critiques.

Her argument, while well-grounded in the reality of pesticides wreaking havoc on networked possibilities for living, also suggests a cultural disruption of "natural" and "organic" species hierarchies – with species being particularly loaded as a humanist term on the heels of WWII. Carson does not see a response to this violence as an opportunity to re-think the categorical distinction of property-owning Man being a rights-bearing human, of inter- or extra-species hierarchies as a problematic project, or of an environmental posthuman's relationship to its environemnt heralding an opportunity to re-examine social Darwinistic hierarchies. Instead, she calls for a return to "Man" with a capital "M" as being necessary to return it to the top of that hierarchy before it enacts an autoimmune biopolitics through the "brute force" of chemical pesticides and interventions on genetic codes: "man-made agents [are] the menace of our time, 'the last and greatest danger to our civilization'" (192). This is a cultural interpretation of environmental catastrophe being a human-made and human-condemning catastrophe. Its rhetoric shapes not just

her critique of the 1920's – 1960's emphasis on regulating living organisms through chemical sprays, dumps, and warfare, but also, paradoxically, her suggestion for reparations: she argues that new understandings of life as self-organizing and self-regulating might be harnessed so that "the integrity of the race and of the species is preserved; in this way like begets like" (194), as if this racializing project around species-being was not endemic to the chemical sprays, dumps, and warfare in the first place. This makes yet clearer how the turns to molecular levels of life management became a turn toward owning, managing, and regulating life itself through speculation, or a maneuver to disavow how it maintains existing, dominant hierarchies determining livability under the rubric of "natural," "free market," "unregulated" management.

This is not a coincidental overlap in rhetoric: Cooper, for instance, historicizes already how these new scientific findings and the funding that supported them were co-constitutive with finding ways to accumulate capital: "…because life is negentropic[19]…economic growth is without end. And it is because life is self-organizing that we should reject all state regulation of markets. This is a vitalism that comes dangerously close to equating the evolution of life with that of capital" (Cooper 42). That mode of biopolitics as vitalism informs Chapter 3's analysis of hyper-vitality as an antiracist method for apprehending differently what this realization about life's proliferations might mean. Here, however, the historical shift reveals how this rhetoric came to undergird the "Man" Carson seeks to recuperate generates a racializing order through disavowed articulations between finance capital, molecular biology, and early environmental discourses. As Cooper notes, "In the age of postmechanical reproduction the point is no longer to reproduce the standardized Ford-T model in nature, but to generate and capture production itself, in all its emergent possibilities" (24), or the

[19] Negentropic is a term from information theory and statistics. It means a reduction in entropy toward order, or more specifically, the entropy a living system exports to keep its own entropy low (OED, "negentropy"), entropy being decline of predictability and order (OED, "entropy"). It was first posited in the popular science book published in 1944, *What is Life?* by Erwin Schrödinger.

"code" to which Monod in Judson's narrative of DNA coding alludes and the regulation of which Carson posits.

Rosi Braidotti explains this as a question endemic to the rise of posthumanism as a racial and gendered project, wherein "a whole under-class of genetically over-exposed and socially under-insured disposable bodies is engendered both within the Western world and the emerging global economies." This critical posthumanism, like Woods' analysis of biopolitics and immunitary paradigms, complicates Carson's appeal to genetically re-constituted "mankind": "this kind of population control goes beyond Foucault's analysis of the bio-political, as it does not function by techniques of discipline and control, but rather bio-genetic farming of data, and 'bio-piracy'" (Braidotti 117). I am arguing here that this bio-piracy, or the privatization and regulation of molecular building blocks to life itself and genetic heritage, is precisely an extension of biopolitics' population control, but through a posthuman epistemic and environmental mechanism. That is, molecular biology becoming central to biochemistry, organic chemistry, and genetics after the atom "bomb," both literally and figuratively of modernity, means "[arresting] the nonhuman, the inorganic, the inert – in short, the so-called 'natural worlds'" and the inter-species variation of mankind (Braidotti 117-118) that arises within the 1960's shifting finance capital network[20].

This understanding of how a turn away from Carson's chemically unaltered "Man" as the rightful "human" in its networked relationship to nature shapes an environmentalist posthumanism that might more critically appreciate how different vectors of life management – molecular biology and finance capital – functioned simultaneous with the rise of antiracist, queer, and feminist movements. Understanding these co-terminous formations, for instance, leads to Cooper's central

[20] See Braidotti, page 117 for further explanations of how this is part of what scientific studies into the origin, regulation, and management of molecular levels means for analyzing it as part of finance capital: I.e.: "the bio-genetic structure of advanced capitalism reduces bodies to carriers of vital information, which get invested with financial value and capitalized."

question on how this process functions through what Braun later terms "the molecularization of life": "What finally becomes of the critique of political economy in an era in which biological, economic, and ecological futures are so intimately entwined? And when the future itself is subject to all kinds of speculation?" (19-20). These questions across all of the above texts, however, continue to ignore the historical role of racial slavery and racial capital to maintaining property relations as the dominant life organizing order. Here, an antiracist posthumanism, one that apprehends the sutured relationship between techno-posthumanisms in coding, environmental posthumanisms in ecocritical studies, and postmodern scientific posthumanisms in molecular biology might take these shared rhetorics up and develop them further to lay the critical, historical groundwork for activist poetics.

Grace Kyungwon Hong's work on biopolitical formations within a racial finance capital offers just such an intervention, building implicitly on Cooper's work by articulating how race is integral to the relationship between the life sciences and finance capital. Hong argues that anxiety around the proliferation of racialized and gendered populations in the Anthropocene reveals how populations are read as genetically differentiated and made valuable precisely in, as Hong would put it, their valuelessness. To be clearer: this racialization is a shift away from believing the genetic code is permeable, creating genetically varied populations within the human species; rather, it builds on the discovery of shared molecular DNA structures across all living organisms, human and non, to apprehend the differences at an even smaller, internal miniscule scale – a single molecule or two in a different order between two different sets of DNA in a longer strand of otherwise identical molecules. In Chapter 2, again, I will go into this further as racial molecular biopolitics. For this rise in environmentalism, though, Hong's understanding of this as a distinct, racial mode of finance capital is imperative to laying out why this required a mutation in racializing processes.

Hong argues that surplus generated by racializing populations creates a "valuable for being valueless," so that Cooper's history of finance capital and molecular biology lacks the mobilizing

impetus: racializing specific populations no longer for material labor forces, but for exposure to the ecological "slow violence" that terrifies Carson, as well as to protect the naturalized as immune smaller populations; or, as a way of reading narratives around seeming uncontrollable environmental catastrophe by "accident" impacting poor, predominantly non-white communities (i.e., Katrina, field workers, Flint, etc.). This is markedly different from racialization functioning in capitalism for surplus labor value. More shortly: the relationship between surplus populations (Hong) and molecular levels of slow, environmental violence (Cooper) complicates microbiopolitics' apparent dismissal of racialization and reproductive value (Braun). Chapter 2 exmaines instances of Hong's term for existential surplus and the resistances that arise contemporaneously, but here, "Whiteness" structures that history through modes of preemptive risk assessment and environmentalism.

As Crawley puts it: "'Whiteness,' while being 'self-fashioned' at the scenes of subjecting blackness, cohered around this collective political-economic anxiety. And that anxiety was all about air, breath, breathing" (67). Carson demonstrates this precise anxiety under a rubric of explicitly colorblind concern for universal livability, wherein she describes the chemicals being dispersed into the air, water, and ground as part of this unseeable matter: "Today we are concerned with a different kind of hazard that lurks in our environment…. Their presence casts a shadow that is no less ominous because it is formless and obscure, no less frightening because it is impossible to predict the effects of lifetime exposure" (175). Her language echoes the fears of suburban white flight from protests in urban centers by centering on that question of breathable air, drinkable water, and edible food – all environmental offsets most directly taken up by antiracist, queer, and feminist environmentalisms. Realizing that these molecules – air and water especially – are being altered at unseen levels, while also understanding that genetic transferrance happens through molecular replication processes unseen to the naked eye are part of this environmental rhetoric undergirding how racial biopolitics could be understood and maneuvered.

This problem – the anxiety around drinkable water, breathable air, and available food – are again, in Chapters 2 – 4 explained as the groundwork enabling contemporary environmental violences: water in Flint for Chapter 2, "I Can't Breathe" #blacklivesmatter movements and urban air conditions in racialized spaces for Chapter 3, and access to water, food, and land across diasporic migration patterns for Chapter 4. In this chapter, this relationship beyond Carson's text becoming seminal requires adequate explanation, because this is not a contemporary emergence, but part and parcel to the earliest popularized and explicit environmental catastrophe and Anthropocene species-extinction discourses: more succinctly, the existential surplus noted by Hong's history of racial finance capital coalesces here in the merging of molecular biology and environmentalist discourse. Crawley points out, for instance, how the Jim Crow era was structured by the same immunitary logic, illuminating it as constituting whiteness being represented as a universal mankind: "within racialist mob and lynching violence… is the aspiration for picket fences and dreams of stability, a movement toward purity against the impurities of black breath" (68). Fear of unseeable contagions cannot be answered by better anticipating thwarting their risks within dominant political and economic rhetorics in order to preserve a pure, immune whole. These logics paradoxically naturalize and attempt to create a pure, immune "mankind[21]" through rhetorics of a genetic and environmental free market disavowing unequal access to livability.

Carson's anxiety, in short, is a "White anxiety" (Crawley 68) not because it is a white privilege to examine the environmental damage wrought by colonialism and imperialism, or a white privilege to fear global finance capital's selected investment for speculation and accumulation. Rather, it is a "White anxiety" because it remains structured by the specter of racism and colonialism, seeking to perpetuate their modes of unequal resource distribution through racialized

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[21] See Crawly pages 67-68 for more on both metaphorical and literal air in rhetorics of purity, breath, America, and Whiteness.

processes. *Silent Spring* on its own, and its author, is also not the precise item to diagnose in the moment so much as it is critical to attend to what popular cultures first received as a viable environmentalist account. This reception depends on futurity and risk[22] rhetorical strategies that do not need to be, as the next section elaborates, the foregone conclusions for reading a history of molecular biology and environmentalism. It circulated as a sutured economic and life science approach to environmentalism that sought out any potential future risk to that order, or risk to the human as a historically constituted subject; it attempted to thwart those risks while naming its management as a de-regulated return to natural, self-organizing life, to posthumanism[23]: "Throughout the 1980s a new understanding of risk turned up simultaneously in the language of insurance institutions, capital markets, and environmental politics. This was the concept of the 'catastrophe risk'….in the guise of the global environmental disaster" (Cooper 81) in concert with "the spectre of extinction and…the limitations of the project of western modernity" (Braidotti 121). Yet, Braidotti asks if this was necessarily how the apprehension of proliferative life being both destructive and creative – negentropic – was the only way to apprehend it: "Does the choice between sustainability and extinction frame the horizon of our shared future, or are there other options? The issue of the limits of both humanism and of its anti-humanist critics is therefore central to the debate on the posthuman predicament" (6-7). That is, what otherwise histories haunt this excavation of the past? What do they illustrate about how else the Anthropocene and its crisis to mankind as Man could arrive?

Carson's text is mostly celebrated as a victory for environmentalist achievement, wherein scarce critique – only a 2013 and 2017 article at the time of this writing – dare to take on its

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[22] See *Life as Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era*, page 82 for more on Cooper's historicization around life's perceived "conditions" in global finance capital.
[23] For more on the "re-naturalization of our bio-technologically mediated environment" as a posthuman concern, see Braidotti's *The Posthuman*, page 112.

biopolitical registers, and even then, paying only marginal attention to how the cultural moment of race and gender fed into her biopolitical rhetoric. Scholars would be hard-pressed to contest the need to celebrate the realization of how globalized colonialism and imperialism have wrought and continue to wreak environmental havoc. Further, subsequent theorists have been excavating how that havoc disproportionately risks non-white lives in the name of universally transcending class, race, and gender, or, in the case of Hong, explaining how it is a historically specific method of racializing who will be "risked" in global capital's flow. If the task of the temporal concerns around risk management, or to the speculative and unseen dimensions that surfaced in the 1960's, requires an analytic register that takes seriously the creative, networked meaning-making of the time, then what do the antiracist, queer, and decolonial poetics of coalition tell us about how to differently live within the ebbs and flows, and how are they already haunting the contemporary moment as much as this past?

In other words, the next two close readings take up these questions of unseen toxins, molecular mutation at levels more minute than the enclosed body, speculative world building, and horizons of death as also being questions about affective knowledge production that starts with antiracist, queer, feminist, and decolonial living at its core – not merely tangential to it. That is, these poetics arose at the time of a particular change in economic, life science studies, and environmentalism; how do these otherwise histories haunt the present and past by not taking hierarchical, violent, biopolitical racialization and sexualization as the foregone conclusion of that period even while reckoning with the real violence they inflicted? The following sections argue that poetry becomes an enfleshed method for otherwise relations, structuring the haunt of contemporary otherwise worlds being built precisely out of the proliferative possibility sparked at the end of the ecological and finance world(s).

**Lorde's Time: Black Lesbian Feminism and Antiracist Posthumanism**

In 2011, Richard Godden published the paper, "Labor, Language, and Finance Capital" in PMLA's March 2011 issue. Godden's paper illuminates for this reading of Lorde's poetry how the freedom promised by abstract economic and cultural theory is in fact part and parcel of the turn to finance capital rhetoric:

> LiPuma and Lee likewise claim that financial markets 'have *nothing to do with national production or the labor of any nation's citizen subjects*'; presumably, they would accord with Jameson's insistence that 'nothing is quite so abstract and deterritorialized as financial capital.' Yet financial capital, for Jameson 'a radically new form of abstraction' (260), remains *structurally duplicitous, at once abstract and concrete*. Witness how neoliberal regimes, the political face of fictitious capital, deregulate financial markets to ensure the deterritorialized flows of abstracted monies, while simultaneously regulating, with increasing violence, the underpaid, the underemployed, and the unemployable at national and international levels. *What might be called derivative capitalism (abstract) depends on a tightly controlled, tightly tortured labor force, again at levels both national and international (concrete).* (420)

This definition of finance capital is slippery perhaps precisely because it defines an operation that depends upon the illusion of abstraction. This abstraction is not present, not past, and not future, but speculative risk assessment temporally avoiding the present in order to absolve itself at any moment of its relationship material violence. Here, I look to the dominant voices that were already speaking out in the 1960's about the material ramifications of such abstractions. These poetries, one of which surfaces in Audre Lorde's work, haunt the dominant environmentalist rhetorics in *Silent Spring*. Importantly, as I will argue through Audre Lorde's poems, such poetry used the same terms of speculation, risk, and molecular biology as finance capital and dominant environmentalisms. In Lorde's poetics, they create otherwise possibilities through antiracist posthumanism, going on to haunt and shape contemporary analysis, activism, and poetics across genres and modes. More specifically: I argue that Lorde's poetry posits antiracist posthumanism forms that call out the ongoing, material histories sustaining racial, gendered, and sexualized ongoing violence. Her poetry marks this violence as co-constitutive of global environmental awareness. Her poetry in this way

critiques the crisis of "Man" and "environment" that Carson and molecular biology rhetorics sought to restore through universalized posthuman gestures.

Lorde instead demonstrates how these crises in subjecthood and environmental rhetorics also enabled a proliferation in otherwise possibilities. I first argue that Lorde's poems, "Spring People" and "Song" suggest affective knowledge, reading, and writing methods through Avery Gordon's concept of haunting as a methodology. This method, as I continue to argue through my close readings Lorde's poem, "Bloodbirth," functions through a toxic affect of racial melancholia. This builds on scholars David Eng and David Kazanjian definition of racial melancholia as a "process of 'revolt' in which socially disparaged others live on in the psychic realm," or an "affective [legacy] of loss [that is] mobilized for flashes of political hope" (16). It synthesizes the concept with how Mel Chen uses toxicity as a political affect in *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Like Chen's use of toxicity, I use the literal work of toxins as molecules feared for their invasion by dominant environmentalisms with the metaphorical work of toxic as a cultural imagining around contagious affect. Like Chen, Eng, and Kazanjian, toxic affects such as racial melancholia, in my close reading become a way to create coalitional worlds more proliferative and sustainable for otherwise risked and marginalized populations. Then, I turn to the final section of this chapter to construct a tentative bridge across the spatial and temporal activist poetics from the 1960's to subsequent chapters' millennial and contemporary work – a bridge that does not necessitate how "like begets like." Recycling Carson's phrase, here, I read instead how the realization of molecular levels of life might be re-tooled as an opportunity for affirmative relations through difference.

This is, again, a haunting. Avery Gordon's haunting methodology describes it as, "that special instance of the merging of the visible and the invisible, the dead and the living, the past and the present" to affirm the complex co-constitutive elements of the material and abstract. It is to " [make] of worldly relations…making of our accounts of the world" (Gordon 24). These poems

haunt in a similar fashion the merging of life making through seen and unseen, as well as nonlinear accounts, life's possibilities. This functions threefold: first, the following close readings reckon with how molecular building blocks for living matter are always already in relation to the immaterial matter of past, present, and future otherwise possibilities of what that living matter could become. Second, these readings haunt the millennial and contemporary activist poetry and multimodal poetic modes, suggesting varied strategies, starts, and stopping points for antiracist posthumanism and otherwise livability. Third, they haunt their own era, materially disavowed through silence in Carson's *Silent Spring*, through Watson and Crick's DNA model, and through global finance capital's rise, but persistently published, heard, and speaking as that history happened and after.

Audre Lorde's poem, "Song," suggests one such otherwise history. The poem is dedicated to her son, "for Jonno," Jonathan Frederick Ashley Rollins, who outlived her untimely death from breast cancer. This initial dedication before Lorde's death, before Jonathan's, acts a rhetorical haunting, wherein past her death in publication she speaks directly to her still-living son[24]. That is: to read this poem now is to be haunted by Lorde's voice imprinted to Jonno after her passing, but to readers beyond Jonno. This reading method, "following the ghosts [to make] a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located" (Gordon 22). The "song," now beyond oral tradition and printed, published, and anthologized on the page beyond Lorde's own life and relationship to her son, exists as a "countermemory," to use Avery Gordon's term (22) to her life as secured in the past, as well as her relationships around it, such as to her son. As a series of directions and descriptions, the poem acts as both warning and instruction:

> The wild trees have bought me
> and will sell you a wind
> in the forest of falsehoods
> where your search must not end
>
> for their roots are not wise.

[24] At the time of writing this dissertation, her son, born 1964, is still living.

> Strip our loving dream
> pay its secrets to thunder
> and ransom me home.
>
> Beware oaks and laughter
> know hemlock is lying
> when she sings of defiance
> the sand words she is saying
>
> will sift over and bury
> while the pale moons I hate
> seduce you in phases
> through oceans of light.
>
> And the wild trees shall sell me
> for safety from lightning
> to the sand that will flay me
> for their next evening's planting.
>
> They will fill my limp skin
> with wild dreams from their root
> and grow from my flesh
> new handfuls of hate
>
> till our ransom is wasted
> and the morning speaks out
> in a thin voice of wisdom
> that loves me too late. (32)

The poem opens immediately by de-naturalizing the relationship between property and nature, describing how the "wild trees" have "bought" her already. This reckons with how racial slavery lives on in her present moment through illusion of unregulated nature, with buying and selling adding in the metaphor of financial investment. She reaches forward, however, to warn her son about how the same trees will look to sell him breath, or wind; this holds out a warning about multicultural equity in the late 1960's that would "sell" inclusion within finance capital as belonging and safe access to resources. The alliterative "forest of falsehoods" creates in turn a wind-like lisp as it extends the wild trees metaphor, calling out the "duplicitous nature" of finance capital's abstraction to wind through buying and selling the matter of environmental livability, trees. This extended metaphor, which can be read as also a metaphor for the maneuver of late capitalism's into

liquid and air-like sales of inclusion, includes within the implication that what her son would be actually buying is Lorde's flesh itself. This sutures finance capital's climate investment and unseen dimensions of molecular levels of life regulation and management perpetuated through historical property logics. The sale of trees and in turn wind from the trees is, as Lorde points to here, dependent upon racializing flesh as "naturally" sell-able.

I am arguing through the reading of this initial stanza that Lorde articulates here the contradiction in racial capital producing racial difference for surplus labor exploitation along with its inability to fully and categorically contain and exploit (Hong loc 1268) what it has actually converted into affective surplus (Hong loc 1292). As Hong argues, with finance capital's increasing shift to seeming speculative and abstract capital, so, too, does it produce in speculative, abstract surplus. That is, the trees promise growth opportunity and material livability in an era of newly recognized environmental instability, and yet do so by holding forth a promise born on wind, which while not immaterial, is not contained, held, seen, and so forth. The stanza continues this metaphor through extended grammar, as well, refusing to close off the warning with a period. The last line implies that her son is already on a "search," and with the unpunctuated "end" of "must not end," she directs him to the critique that which necessitates his continuance: the second stanza opens with, "for their roots are not wise." The breath pauses here at the end-stopped line, doubly-signaled as a pause by the period.

Trees' material structure and roots, here, take on the immaterial, personified dimension of wisdom, indicating that material does not indicate knowledge, but neither does immaterial. That is, the premise of the forest and the wind that it sells is predicated upon the problem of it being property-based, which are rooted in racial capital. This is a crucial "call out" of what is otherwise seen as wind, or a natural, unregulated environmental component. This is a description of finance capital that calls out its racialization perpetuated precisely through an abstraction from labor

relations, answering already Cooper's query: "what finally becomes of the critique of political economy in an era in which biological, economic, and ecological futures are so intimately entwined? And when the future itself is subject to all kinds of speculation?" (19-20). Lorde's response is embedded within her warning about the naturalized buying and selling of non-regulatable parts, trees and wind. If finance capital and regulation of the how, in what direction, and when questions it poses to molecular components – water, oxygen, DNA – asks, "When capitalism confronts the geochemical limits of the earth, where does it move?" (Cooper 19), then Lorde responds that capitalism's roots are themselves immobile even if wind as a metaphor gives the illusion of otherwise.

The solution that Lorde posits in the subsequent three lines of the stanza suggest more harm than resolution, refusing an easy "either/or" hope. She commands her son to "strip our loving dream," but what the dream might be is less clear without any rhythmic signaling. The suggestion that affective love and speculative dreaming must be stripped for resolution becomes a non-answer, where she suggests that the only solution truly offered within this framework is to "pay" with their familial love – an affectively-based feeling and speculative hope – akin to material "thunder" and enmeshed in material, blood-based familial relations between mother and son. In this way, as Hong points out in her analysis of finance capital, affect itself and the ability to "dream" becomes the commodity upon which finance capital operates. That is, the hope and love, feelings based on connective affects that mobilize sutured relations, are what Lorde warns will be held as "ransom" for the ability even to live. These affective knowledges that would produce otherwise relations than buying and selling family are precisely what finance capital would take in exchange for anxiety and fear about the speculated future.

Just as, "In the absence of any tangible assets or actual profits, what the biotech start-up can offer is a proprietary claim over the future life forms it might give rise to, along with the profits that

accrue from them" (Cooper 17), Lorde suggests a "temporality of suspension rather than a resolution" (Hong loc 375). Whatever "escapes recognition," such as affective knowledges, "whatever escapes meaning and valuation," including affective knowledge, "threatens to unsettle, if not destroy, the common senses on which that reality relies for coherence as such" (Hong loc 375). In this poem, that incoherency is the love and hope held between her and her son, which she describes as being sold, or commodified when responding to the promise of inclusion within existing material and abstract circulation. In that way, affective knowledges and relations are re-purposed into a coherency that only serves to support the existing material conditions for living. Further, the poem's forecasted temporality – the warning about how affective relations and knowledge will be packaged, sold, and materialized as enfleshed violence – "the sand will flay me" – is predicated on a debtor economy. This makes Lorde's word choice on affective commodification specific to a circulation of materials that depend on debt and its resolution. The period at the end of this line brackets the stanza akin to the period in the first line, the only stanza closed off rhythmically and syntactically with end-stopped punctuation both at its beginning and its end. This creates an insistent present tense as opposed to the past tense of buying or a transition moment from the imperfect past of having "been bought." Instead, it is an insistent, punctuated present tense of suspending debt in anticipation of its repayment.

That this tense happens at the same time as the moment is called a debt, and debt a ransom, becomes the poem's central resistance to finance capital's temporally bound racial violence: "In the sense that the debt can never be redeemed once and for all and must be perpetually renewed" (Cooper 31). Finance capital, that is, depends on consistently evading a present tense wherein the debt of its bearings must be repaid, including the debt of racializing and gendering for the production and exploitation of surplus labor populations. Lorde calls out how finance capital's dependence upon moving debt around in wind-like, abstracted movements is a racialized

temporality meant to deflect how its consistent renewal is, too, the material, violent circulation of racialized enfleshment. Finance capital depends upon an abstract relationship to money and labor in order to liquidize assets and move them before repaying literal and cultural debts: it "reduces the inhabitable present to a bare minimum, a point of bifurcation, strung out between a future that is about to be and a past that will have been. It thus confronts the present as the ultimate limit, to be deflected at all costs" (Cooper 31). In turn, Lorde posits that this is a perpetuation of racial capital through the elements of livability itself. The perpetuation surfaces in environmental rhetorics of trees and wind, of non-human, "natural" motifs. This can be read as dressing up the naturalization of the free market through molecular biology and the "brute force" of chemical and atom-bomb warfare, to use Carson's rhetoric. The metaphor of trees and wind becomes a manipulation in the language of "natural" precisely in order to deflect how the present is predicated upon a constructed exploitation and making surplus, including surplus affective relations that hope and love would offer. This perpetuates racialization enabling some to live in Carson's hopefully-not-yet-silent-Spring and some left to die when like no longer appears to beget like. Or, more shortly, when proliferation of life is deemed unnatural or expendable.

Lorde's bifurcated moment, the double-enclosed stanza of present tense directive, serves here to suggest a warning about how this affect will be environmentally harnessed in the perpetuation of racial finance capital. Instead of romanticizing an unpropertied environmental rhetoric, Lorde personifies the oaks and hemlocks, telling her son to "beware" of how their joyful affect is an illusion. This illusion is predicated on the previous stanza demonstrating how their love and dreams have already been ransomed for that moment. What Lorde enacts is the affective theft of existential surplus, the commodification of resistance in the 1960's being a form of siren song that "sings defiance" when in fact it pulls him into an engulfment of that resistance – a commodification of resistance that recirculates in perpetuation of the existing finance capital framework. This pull is

likened to the lunar tides, where the seeming material gains of the sand are slicked into the liquidated assets through the "pale moons [she] hate[s]." The obvious metaphor here might be whiteness. Whether or not that is "the" metaphor, though, when the pale moon that she hates is coupled with the extended metaphors of capitalism and environmental metaphors through false promises of inclusion, whiteness becomes an organizing structure of property-based humanisms, as strong as the moon's "pull" of the tides and the sand that flays her.

The final two stanzas, then, fulfill the prophecy, the speculative future finance capital offers, as how freedom offered within property and inclusion frameworks, or under the pretense of returning to a natural, universal order, will in fact mean that her flesh is sold yet again. In other words, the ransom her son must offer of their dreams and love becomes commodified again when the forest and its trees metaphorically sell that, too, to protect against a speculated risk striking the present: lightning. The flaying in particular makes this an enfleshed transaction, calling on racial slavery, which is foundational to racial capitalism's need for surplus, expendable populations[25]. These sales of herself in "Song" are markedly different from an enlightenment, humanist, Walt Whitman's "song of myself[26]"; in this way, she critiques a colorblind posthumanism that forgets its exclusionary humanist moorings are always already a ruse. The poem names instead how "the next evening's plantings," or the move to yet another less risked future investment in environmentally sound geographies, is another way that her enfleshed being is sold yet again.

Lorde's violent history of networked livability promised by Carson-esque environmentalisms and posthumanisms demands an account of how it is predicated still on racialized othering, and how the abstract future speculations, the investment plantings for tomorrow, require extracting affects of

[25] See Hortense Spillers' "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book"; Her concept of enfleshment, property, and American gender/race frameworks is elaborated on and explained in Chapters 2 and 3.
[26] "Song of Myself" is widely canonized in enlightenment literatures. For one example of the poem's relationship to enlightenment humanisms, see Dan Edelstein's *The Enlightenment: A Geneology*.

hope and otherwise relational work, such as love, as much as literal matter itself from racialized being. Within a finance capital framework, such extraction and abstraction means assessing how the environmental breakdown heralded a humanist breakdown, or how new DNA structure realizations about similitude at the molecular level of living organisms complicated exclusions to universal reason or separation from nature: "In essence then, what [the stock market business…in conjunction with the evolution of patent law to institutionalize an essentially promissory market in life science innovation] have formalized is the prospective value of promise, turning life science speculation into a highly profitable—indeed rational—enterprise" (Cooper 17). More concretely and succinctly: finance capital's patent laws around the possibilities for life itself at the molecular building block level, combined with its premise on speculation and hope, converts it into a universal, or "rational" enterprise through life science rhetorics. This engenders a newly universalized, rational human precisely in the moment that universal humanisms are most in crisis, converting into a posthumanism in name in order to retain economic privatizing structures and disavow any relationship to generating disproportionate "risked." As Lorde's poem materializes through environmental metaphors of buying, selling, and illusive promises for livability, the use of these environmental and climate investment strategies are affectively mobilized – the prospective value of a promise being a hope.

In this way, the speculative futures suggested by abstracted capital depend upon, as Lorde puts it, the resuscitating of racialization's ongoing deaths: her "limp skin" built on finance capital's "wild dreams." This is part of her suspended refusal for resolution: it marks how neoliberalism's debtor economy[27] creates and then economizes the hate she feels for the "pale moons" and their seductive promise for inclusion – the "ecological and economic limits to growth [overcome] through

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[27] See Cooper's analysis of the relationship between neoliberalism and debtor economies with biotech industries, as well as Comaroff's. A key quote here from Cooper: "Neoliberalism and the biotech industry share a common ambition to overcome the ecological and economic limits to growth associated with the end of industrial production." (Cooper 11)

a speculative reinvention of the future" (Cooper 11). In this way, healing affective labor practices – love and its relational repair – are repeatedly stolen and commodified yet again because they grow out of the "root" of the tree's false wisdom. Lorde's warning to her son is that the "ransom" they pay in giving over their affective labor is a "waste," so that while the morning itself, the "Spring," does in fact speak in "a thin voice," it only arrives after the enfleshed commodification of love's healing. This warning, in other words, haunts already its future. It calls up the past to create future memories of the 1960's resistance moments, seeing and calling out their co-option by finance capital's roving investments. The metaphor through environmental logic critically contrasts dominant environmentalist discourses of the time, seeing not wisdom in what gets represented as natural, but rather how representations of the natural are loaded down, as in Carson's text, with economic and life science metaphors. What would be environmental in this poem is also history that repeats itself through the slippery sands, the ocean turning to pure light.

The poems' metaphor through wind, trees, and ocean, in this way, becomes a warning: any hope offered remains suspended. However, "Song" also suggests otherwise affective hope; in its function as an epistolary warning to the future, it assumes that the warning might in some way be heard, remembered, and put to task. It assumes its own function as a haunting. The haunting it initiates suggests hope precisely through its critique being a foreboding, a warning, and not a foregone conclusion. This activist poetry haunts "the reduction of individuals 'to a mere sequence of instantaneous experiences which leave no trace, or rather whose trace is hated as irrational, superfluous, and 'overtaken'" (Gordon 20, quoting Horkheimer and Adorno). Lorde insists instead on that trace as a haunting method for mobilizing affects not yet incorporated into finance capital's flow. I argue here that the unnamed and not-yet-subsumed affect of the poem is melancholy. This borrows from scholars Eng and Kazanjian, who theorize already the political import of racial melancholia: "the politics of mourning might be described as the creative process mediating a

hopeful or hopeless relationship between loss and history….for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained" (2). Eng and Kazanjian argue that racial melancholia, or mobilizing melancholic affect, is critical, creative work. It is a mode of theorizing historical materialism that does not place history as hopeless, or in the past (2). Lorde's melancholia in kind is able to name the structural and material violence, the "where" and "how" over the main timeline of historicism's "when" (Hau'ofa 58). She also posits not a "cold knowledge" but a "transformative recognition" (Gordon 8), which is again a haunting. For instance: in this poem, transformative knowledge is marked through material metaphor juxtaposed with affectively fractioned love/hate, and the punctuation between rhythmically enacts temporality as much as describing or grammatically signaling it.

Lorde's poem "Spring People," offers a space to more directly read her mobilized melancholia, suggesting explicit methods for such a historical materialism. While it was more than likely not written in direct response to Carson's *Silent Spring,* I read it here as an otherwise articulation of spring that responds to the sounds Carson's spring cannot hear precisely because of *Silent Spring*'s disavowed relationship to racial finance capital. "Song" and "Spring People" were published within the same late 1960's framework just after a popularized *Silent Spring*, and the poem, "Spring People," depends on the basic dependence for all life processes on the water molecule, which is a stark departure from the metaphorical use of water in the ocean turning to light. Like "Song," "Spring People" was published in 1968 and includes "for Jonno" as a dedication. As an additional similarity, the poem's primary metaphors depend on environmental tropes, but then instead of depicting a co-opted "hope" and "love," are mobilized politically and affectively through "anger" and "fear":

> What anger in my hard-won bones
> or heritage of water
> makes me reject the April
> and fear to walk upon the earth

in spring?

At springtime and evening
I know how we came
like new thunders beating the earth
leaving the taste of rain and sunset
all our hungers before us.
Away from the peace of half-truths
and springtime passing unsaid
we came in the touch of fire
came to the sun
lay with the wild earth
until spent and knowing
we brought forth our young.

Now the insolent Aprils bedevil
earthy conceits
to remind us that all else is forfeit
and only our blood-hungry children remember
what face we had
what startling eyes. (33)

Instead of four stanzas in rhyme or slight rhyme, like "Song," "Spring People" opens with a five-line stanza and closes with a six-line stanza, with its middle being a longer twelve-line stanza. There is no discernable rhyme, and each stanza works in concert as an argument: the first closes with a question, which the second stanza explores through close description of what led to the present uncertainty. The third stanza then shifts to describing the now, leaving the question unresolved and temporally suspended between past and present.

The question mobilizing "Spring People" asks how anger is converted into fear, or what heritage carried by water in her "hard-won bones" creates a fear to then "walk the earth" in April. For Lorde, anger is a political affect, a topic she explores famously in her expository essay, "The Uses of Anger." Here, though, I am interested in how its presence materializes through water across its varied registers – water as a literal molecule essential to catalyzing life, water as cohesive bodies traveling non-linearly across space, water privatized and regulated through city pipes and utility payments, and water as a metaphor – to produce a haunting political stance. When Lorde asks how

the anger lives in her "hard-won bones," she speaks to how living within her body has been historically challenged. She speaks to the resilience of blackness in the face of the trans-Atlantic slave trade across water, or a "heritage of water" that imbues the anger in her bones. These hard-won bones also, though, speak to her present-tense survival in the face of 1960's Civil Rights movements: to racial capital that is not secured in the past and continues to threaten her ability to live. In other words, she turns to her own body as both literal matter and figurative metaphor, looking to how water is historically fraught "ground[28]" to her ability to live – to feel anger and fear. This is a dramatic shift from the poem before, where water transforms into light, and where her affects of love and hope through "wild dreams" are stolen. As part of the suspension that "Spring People" suggests, she here turns toward affects typically associated with negative, non-reproductive, beyond the temporality of grieving – anger and fear. Eng and Kazanjian, for instance, explain how melancholy is pathologized for being the inability to grieve and move past a wound, securing its place in the past. Melancholy instead continues to grieve through excess affect. Lorde, I am arguing uses these affects before they can be subsumed by the affective economy of finance capital's liquid mobility.

Initially, her response seems to be a recounting of loss; however, the poem does not point to an originary whole that has been lost. Instead, it is a reckoning with what is made and remains in the face of the whole's historical dissolution. Lorde narrates knowledge in this way as environmental and affective – her history as akin to thunder "beating the earth." Residues and tastes of "rain" and "sunset" remain. Thunder in this sequence does not represent selling or exchanging material possibilities extracted from affective love and hope; they are not represented as propertied or exchangeable affects through material metaphors of environment. Instead, becoming the thunder

[28] This use is picked up again in Chapters 3 and 4 for articulating Sylvia Wynter's concept of "demonic ground" and "genres of the human" as water and aerial. For more on "demonic ground," see "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument."

suggests foreboding of rain, a speculative "knowing" that is multi-sensory and not just based in intellectual reason: this speculative knowing is olfactory, visual, and kinesthetically enacted through the break between arriving at earth and then "leaving" behind, which in turn becomes a hunger *as* the haunting that continues "before us."

What came before leads to "laying with the earth," a queer reproduction with environmental motifs markedly different from the immune, hetero-reproductive, and purity-oriented rhetoric in *Silent Spring*. In this way, Lorde suggests environmental relationships to nonhuman matter that do not presuppose possessive kinship lines or overlay them as organizing what is "natural." Anger and fear also mobilize this relationship, so that laying with the ground becomes a melancholic maneuver: it refuses to grieve the past as a wholistic, contained, lived experience, much less the past as securely still there. The past here lives on in the hard-won bones and heritage of water. As Crawley puts it, "to speak of 'loss' would presuppose an oppositional coherence at the core, an operational architecture that would have home, rights over bodily integrity and political status" (81). For instance: Lorde's point in the poem before, where "home" is only acquired through a ransoming and re-selling of flesh as land (Lorde 32) is not an originary core to which to return. Too, treating the anger and fear as grieving a loss, as grieving land and kinship lost securely in the past, make her subjectivity and affect only meaningful as opposition instead of as proliferative. What Lorde notes here instead is a mode of becoming with and through land instead of a propertied reproduction rooted in owning the molecular building blocks to life (water, DNA), much less the matter of land. Lorde does not re-tool her affect for a speculative investment predicated on perpetuating property exchange in a debtor economy.

Instead, Lorde's poem creates the bifurcated moment as unsettling its decolonial presumption, creating instead her affective knowledge through the haunting she materially carries in her bones, the heritage of water. That is, "to unsettle the coloniality of the conceptual ground and

frame by which we come to understand the very terms of order, the very things that Africans would have 'lost'" (Crawley 81), is to operate within the same finance capital framework of commodification and selective historicism. It is to commodify affect and promote it to "grieve [the very things lost] as in the past so we can invest in a better/same future" – a new life management process, by Carson's call, or an economic investment process, by finance capital. In this way, Lorde's melancholic affect as a mode of historical materialism takes as its fundamental premise recognition that knowledge is at once both the material building blocks of livability – water and bones, of thunder, rain, and sun – as it is the affective building blocks of anger, fear, love, and dreams.

This is a "Silent Spring" that speaks directly from affective and enfleshed experience, wherein poems' questions remain useful unresolved. It refuses an ahistorical Carson-esque spring's silence, or a romanticization of a prior, Edenic spring that does not reckon with what the trans-Atlantic slave trade heralding global finance capital. Instead, Lorde articulates how spring's people live on, haunting the past and future alike through an insistent presence: the "blood-hungry children" who "remember" the faces and eyes of what came before. The "blood-hungry children" reckon with how "haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening" (Gordon 8). In this case, that history is told through affects of anger and fear, challenging finance capital's absorption and commodification of love and hope. That is, the poem's anger and fear "draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience," and again, "not as cold knowledge, but as transformative recognition" (Gordon 8). This transformative recognition is where a generation remembers "what face" and "what startling eyes" those who preceded it had, or rather an experience an affective response as recognition and haunting. The transformative recognition differs from the "cold knowledge" that evolutions in molecular biology and genetics, or in naming environmental tragedy as the effects merely of chemical pesticides and man-made interference, would otherwise purport.

Or rather, in refusing to acknowledge how they are haunted by the ongoing violence of the racial capital, environmental and life science knowledge applications re-constituting the human and posthuman alike remain untransformed.

The naming of "blood-hungry" instead of "blood-thirsty" is critical for this double-translation of the poem. On the one hand, it calls out the same violence of Lorde warning her son to not "buy" into the promise of illusory assets and inclusion; to not sell and buy and exchange her and his familial blood for accumulation in an "insolent April" that will "bedevil" him through sands turned to oceanic light. In this vein, the poem's overt recycling of fable-esque stories – the wolf at the center of forest playing grandmother only to devour the child – once again warns Jonno of the false promises offered by finance capital's speculative futures. However, in the second reading, these same eyes are a transformative recognition, not "blood-thirsty," but "blood-hungry," born of the "hungers set before" – a hunger for otherwise possibilities. Meaning remains suspended: the wolf is both the possibility of otherwise kinship and the warning of false promises. This is the melancholic toxicity building relations not yet absorbed by racial finance capital into knowable, commodifiable affect. This double-reading avoids the "twin pitfalls of subjectivism and positivism," to mediate the never quite visible link "between an institution and an individual" (Gordon 19). The meanings inherent to metaphor, combined with the rhythmic argumentation and affective attachments to environment and racialized living, create a refusal to mourn either Spring or Spring's people as fully lost. Instead, the poem insistently "sees" the plural possibilities of both unknowable wolf and transformative recognition.

Lorde's poem "Bloodbirth" especially formulates the possible renderings of water in blood for otherwise environmental frameworks, calling upon "forms of surplus formed not through labor but through other forms of value-creation" (Hong loc 1314). Again published in 1968, I argue that "Bloodbirth" haunts finance capital's racialization as making a population seem "worthless enough

to live among nuclear waste" as the new method for commodifying livability. Hong has already suggested in her own readings that Lorde argues how circulating affects of terror/loathing prevents us from imagining otherwise possibilities for haunting and relations, or for otherwise modes of loving and being angry (loc 1420). In response to this, Hong posits that in "learning from the 60s we must 'put our finger down upon that loathing buried deep within each one of us and see who it encourages us to despise" in "a profit economy which needs outsiders as surplus people"' (loc 1443). In response to this critique of overly romanticizing affects like fear and loathing, I read Lorde's poem "Bloodbirth" as a melancholic affect structuring otherwise desire and difference as queer possibility for social reparation instead of repeated insider/outsider surplus production:

> That which is inside of me screaming
> beating about for exit or entry
> names the wind, wanting winds' voice
> wanting winds' power
> it is not my heart
> and I am trying to tell this without art or embellishment
> with bits of me flying out in all directions
> screams memories old pieces of flesh
> struck off like dry bark
> from a felled tree, bearing
> up or out
> holding or bring forth
> child or demon
> is this birth or exorcism or
> the beginning machinery of myself
> outlining recalling
> my father's business—what I must be
> about—my own business
> minding.
>
> Shall I split
> or be cut down
> by a word's complexion or the lack of it
> and from what direction
> will the opening be made
> to show the true face of me
> lying exposed and together
> my children your children their children
> bent on our conjugating business. (35)

This poem, the third in the anthology's triptych, once more recycles environmental motifs of wind and trees through flesh and blood. "Bloodbirth", however, emphasizes blood kinship as not being equated with property and patrilineal transfers while re-tooling the literal toxins feared by Carson's immunitas. This re-tooling of toxicity on literal and figurative levels builds out my argument that the racial melancholia is necessarily a toxic affect that enables living to exceed categorical containment. In using toxicity figuratively around close-reading a poem rife with liquid language, a different possibility for interpreting "liquidation" and "toxins" than finance capital and dominant environmentalism modes of life management become available. For Lorde, I argue that desire and racial melancholia as a dialectic pairing are the two animating toxicities that mobilize otherwise possibilities.

My use of toxicity pulls from Mel Chen's "toxic animacy" to argue that even as affects associated with positive attributes in the first two poems are commodified and circulated, then toxic animacies, such as melancholic affects, "contribute to ongoing discussions about the conceptual, cultural, and political economies of life and death." They do this in part by declaring that death is not a given, that the "givens of death are already racialized sexualized, and…animated in specific biopolitical formations" (Chen 6). Chen's work discusses this toxicity as a form of animacy that points toward "disordered proximities" that exist undeniably in the "context of present-day emergent illnesses" (Chen 16). A mask used to protect against toxins, for instance, depends upon an overt social coding of pure/contamination bounds that cannot be known, that make visible an awareness only of what is "invisible": "the skin of the mask ambivalently locates the threat on either side of it.... Is, then, the toxic body the disabled body? Or is the toxic body that collective body that biopolitically inoculates itself against a stronger toxin?" (Chen 201). In addition, rhetorics of toxicity ask, "which bodies can bear the fiction of independence and of uninterruptability" (Chen 199). I also use toxins here as a figurative tool inflected with immediately material meaning: toxins are typically

molecules that interact with existing molecules to transform matter[29]. This makes an immediately available otherwise possibility for life's proliferation than Carson's immunitas, which carries anxiety around the external penetration and mutation of an otherwise original, pure whole. Melancholia as a toxic affect, then, continues in this turn to both literal and metaphorical thinking on immunity to animats the present tense with those who are otherwise excluded through suspended participation in immediate life or death, as through slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration. This suspension depends upon traumas being narrated as mournable and in the past. Desire, in turn, suggests the hope for otherwise possibilities that might materialize in the present and future as the past's relationship to both comes into focus.

The alliterative repetition of want and wind, as well as the internal slant rhyme, create a propulsive back and forth movement, a desire that cannot be resolved. It names the "screaming" inside and its beatings as desiring not that which sold her in the first poem, the wind itself, but rather desiring the ability to name it and in doing so to call it forth and make use of its existing voice and power. However, she names her heart as otherwise to this structure of feeling that necessitates her scream and captivity. That same structure birthed the hunger in the prior poem and violated her ancestry across trans-Atlantic waters in the first poem. In this poem, Lorde harnesses her affect to refuse categorization, captivity, or re-commodification, "flying out in all directions" with "bits" that are in one line, "screams," "memories," and "old pieces of flesh." She does not find resolution by consolidating herself into a rationalizing body, nor by affirming a mind/body binary, nor by grieving that binary as a foregone, prior reality. Instead, the poem suggests an "affective [legacy] of loss [that is] mobilized for flashes of political hope" (Eng and Kazanjian 16): the "dry bark," or "felled tree" that nevertheless desires and "[bears]/up or out/holding or bringing forth." These descriptions are

[29] The anxiety around toxicity as an unseeable contagion, a fear repeatedly taken up Carson, is heavily theorized as also a problematically racialized and gendered social metaphor, as with Chen's book, *Toxic Animacies*.

not of losing an originary whole, but an affective bringing into being of contradictory parts that exceed categorical containment: the melancholia and desire dialectic.

Melancholia and desire in toxic affect form create alliances that seep across categorical containment in geographically and temporally bound worlds, much less individual bodies. As Chen puts, "And so queer and racially marked bodies are present (that is, in the present time) but strangely so, embracing anachronism and 'touching the past'" (Chen 219). The dialectic is rooted in an experience of always already queer reproduction that does not secure a linear relationship between past and present in its reproduction: "holding or bring forth/child or demon." This moment's melancholic affect pushes against neoliberal narratives of trauma and wounding as past acts to be presently mourned for a happier, more utopic future. Lorde at once holds and brings forth, naming as much a child as a demon. This moment is simultaneously a desired "birth" as much as it is a desired "exorcism" of the past into the present. In the poem, "the beginning machinery of myself," the speaker explains is both "outlining" and "recalling," together and alongside one another on the shared line[30]. Across the poem, Lorde makes subtle contortions to the linear sentence grammar, too, where the plural "bits" is met with a singular "screams"; the last stanza meets this through not just confused subject and verb agreements, but also a pronoun conflation, or shared subjectivity: "my children your children their children." This suggests a queerly material theory of de-centered subjectivity, a refusal of "like begets like." This is a mode of "conjugating" the tense of finance capital, suggesting not a continuation of her "father's business" but also not a mourning of it as in the past, as a prior conjugal relation.[31] The poem remains unclear grammatically on if the being

[30] Sarah Ahmed has theorized heavily how utopian narratives offer moments of productive dystopia, such as this poem's, by working precisely through what are deemed negative affects, such as melancholia and anger, typically excluded from the utopian narrative of a happy future. For more, see Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness*.
[31] This argument for melancholia as a political affect with insistent haunting also resonates in recent work around affect, most especially "The Cultural Politics of Emotion" by Sarah Ahmed and "Suffering Agency: Imagining Neoliberal Personhood in North America and Britain" by Jane Elliott. The concepts of "national shame" and intergenerational melancholic agency help frame narratives of bodies exposed to precarity. These affective registers also surface in José Munoz's arguments around queer utopia and Lee Edelman's around reproductive, heteronormative utopic futures,

inside her is screaming, if her flesh is screaming, or if she as a subject is screaming. Her enfleshment's literal grammar (a run-on) and social grammar (non-normative reproductivity) **connects to enfleshment as theorized by Hortense spillers, a necessary premise taken up in the next chapter of this dissertation. In this chapter, though, Lorde makes undeniable** the historical site of the black female slave body as a vestibule for normative logics of personhood, race, and sexuality.

These tensions culminate at the end of the second stanza: the "what I must be/about" interrupts describing her father's business and then ends on her "own" business, so that the "what I must be/about" can be read backward as referring to her father's or forward as referring to her own. She does not use the colloquial "minding my own business," but rather implies grammatically that the business is acting of its own accord and "minding." This changes who and what can be a subject or actor, refusing to reduce herself to a reproductive body exploited for abstracted property relations. This unresolved contradiction follows the language of racialization (word's complexion) while marking race as a product of phallogocentric property logics. The constant tension between the event being a birth or exorcism, as well as the fragmentation of enfleshment and heteropatriarchal blood and property transfer complicates the birth narrative, as well as life and death binaries. Lorde discursively orients herself in relation to human reproduction, cultural religion, and the ecological violence of "felled [trees]" without resolving the parts into a common or universalizable order, creating an alternative grammar of enfleshment. Just as in "toxic discourse" there is a "nostalgic [yearning] for pastoral purity" (Chen 189), this poem refuses any purity of containment. The desire to find "from what direction/will the opening be made/to show the true face of me" undermines the assumption that social and literal death have already occurred and can

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which in turn resonate with the visions of a disrupted dystopia/utopia dichotomy in Eva Cherniavsky's work on what posthumanism and narratives of nonhuman bodies have to offer for the post-nation state.

be "properly" mourned as past, as much as discrete subjectivity or reproduction will re-constitute an immunized subject[32]. Toxic affect takes up this affront, the unresolvable and simultaneous grieving and desire for otherwise possibilities as a "condition…to deemphasize the borders of the immune system and its concomitant attachments to 'life' and 'death'" (Chen 197). This condition, I argue in the last section of the chapter makes toxicity a method for building unexpected coalitions precisely by refusing immunized subjectivity.

Lorde's poetics reveal the melancholic affect in dialectical relationship with desire, suggesting one method for such a suspension. Hong further elaborates on the coalitional suggestions in Lorde's alternate theory of difference:

> [Lorde's] theorization of difference within Black communities leads to a theorization of coalition across boundaries of race, class, and nation; and for Lorde, this is particularly important in the 1980s. The aftermath of the revolutionary struggles in the 1960s means increased conservatism, retrenchment, and the incorporation of previously radical politics and actors into the structures of power in the 1980s. Coalitional practice, then, is 'the force we need to face the multidimensional threats to our survival in the 80s. There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.' (loc 120)

Here, Hong quotes and paraphrases Lorde to point out a method for responding to intertwined strands of violence – such as dominant environmentalist rhetorics and finance capital. Part of that method is to build in-kind coalitions, or to respond to multidimensional threats with coalitional force. Part of the disavowed entanglement functions by, as Lorde's poems demonstrated, co-opting difference through the commodification of positively received affects, such as hope and love. Sarah Dowling's 2018 book, *Translingual Poetics: Writing Under Settler Colonialism*, building on Ahmed's work theorizes this as a unique method of neoliberal violence, wherein the co-opting and selling of happiness in particular across differences functions to signal disregarding differences. This

[32] Robert Nixon writes on this, as well, arguing that to "[archive] voices of a doomed community serving to memorialize their sacrifice," or memorials serve to try and secure mourning as in the past instead of ongoing through slow violence (33)

mode of commodifying and selling affect commodify affective similarity as the basis for care, with similitude being that which upholds the dominant, capitalist structure of property. Lorde and Moraga's theories of difference illuminate the corresponding necessity to refuse similitude as the grounds for care, as well as commodified affective responses that attempt to undercut toxic affects by casting them as, in their difference, expendable.

**Cherríe Moraga and Decolonizing Affective Coalitions**

In this last section, I examine one site of coalitional building through shared affective and historical registers: Cherríe Moraga, a decolonial feminist, queer activist who published and worked with Audre Lorde. Toxic affects, such as racial melancholia, take on the additional register of toxins as infectious, animating coalitional responses across different spaces. The politicization is partially constituted by those whose proximal affects of anger, melancholia, and desire are perceived as a threat to the happy, multicultural state[33]. Moraga is an important interlocutor with Lorde, because their coalitional work explicitly called out a shared desire for non-propertied relations – one through land theft that corresponds to a Chicanx mode of racialization, with another through direct body theft onto the stolen land as racialization. In this way, proximity does not necessarily mean bodies in visible proximity to one another, but also in proximity through object relations, such as property analytics that undergird racializing and gendering those excluded universal human or posthuman status. Coalitional work through toxic affects, such as melancholia and desire, rejects "otherwise suffocating cultures of neoliberalism" and individualist reclamations to the human (Chen 221). I argue that in Moraga's poetry especially, there is a coalitional imperative to see the "vernacular poetry of human species collapse" as being "heroic…melancholic…[a] welcoming breakdown of the human" and its related, "perceived arc of human lives" (Nixon 37). This imperative in Moraga's poetry functions specifically through melancholia for the land and water theft in colonialism, which

[33] See again Melamed and Ahmed.

refuses to articulate it as prior to the onslaught of pesticides and postindustrial waste not still already captured in Western epistemic violence.

In the following close reading of Cherríe Moraga's poetry, I draw on her coalitional work with Audre Lorde. This depends heavily upon Grace Hong's close analysis of Lorde and Moraga's affective theories around difference. By turning toward one of Lorde's colleagues and contemporaries – one that lives on today – I aim to set up this dissertation's chapters 2 – 4. This reading becomes a dialogue with contemporary poetics, offering both a warning and a "flash of hope." As Lorde and Moraga's multi-generational, haunting, affective poetics demonstrate, the multi-modal and multi-genre literary work produced from queer of color, feminist, and decolonial coalitions suggests history as the ongoing now, and with that, a need to more impactfully "hear" the present theories Carson could not in her time. This might enable contemporary poetics' analysis to examine how these violences, but also their futures as they materialize in the present that finance capital's bifurcation attempts to evade. Hong, for instance, lays out how both Lorde and Moraga "theorize 'difference' as a practice that holds in suspension various, mutually exclusive structures of value, and in so doing, constitutes new political (im)possibilities" (loc 1206). In other words, Moraga's poetry read in coalition with Lorde's calls out how fundamental differences are elided or made into reasons for expendability under a free market and environmentalism's spontaneous, "natural selection." They respond by building coalitions through difference. If neoliberal multiculturalism in the 1970's, as already excavated by theorists from Jodi Melamad to Sarah Dowling, functions through Lorde's named commodification of difference and happy affect to be circulated only insofar as similarity is named and celebrated, then how do Lorde and Moraga's otherwise suggestions in the 1960's produce a politics of desire and difference that might help us to now leverage toxic affects, such as racial melancholia?

For Lorde and Moraga, suspending difference and irresolution happens in the moment of "various and proliferating meanings of death" so that otherwise "kinds of social (non)existence [describe 'death']" (Hong loc 375). Moraga's work takes up what McHale describes as postmodernism's "renewed attention to the perennial preoccupation with death," a function of universalizing posthuman modes such as Carson's suggested loss of Man now seen as irreparably subordinate to nature. Like McHale, Moraga makes evident this preoccupation's relationship to "global self-destructions" through "nuclear war (or, alternatively, some ecological disaster)" (McHale 262). Moraga, though, illuminates how this is a "'double' death" of the personal and global that racialized and sexualized populations have already experienced in singular moments tied to a historical, finance capitalist project of racialization. Disavowing dominant universalizing posthumanity and haunting becomes a mode of racialization that reproduces a signification of death with race even as racialized death is disavowed. In contrast, Moraga's poetics illuminate otherwise relationships to death's haunting figures and their material reality.

Moraga's work builds out of subjugated knowledges that already existed in resistance to finance capital's violence while also naming it as it happened, such as Lorde's poetics. Moraga edited *This Bridge Called My Back* with Gloria Anzaldúa, for instance, which was originally published in 1981 and had a fourth edition come out in 2015, demonstrating the ongoing relationship between millennial and 1965-1989 texts. Moraga's own book, *The Last Generation,* was published in 1993 as an explicit haunting from the past, including her coalitional work in the 1960's and before her own life, and the present, as a form a prophecy. In the introduction, she makes explicit the need to put into alternative grammars the "codices—dead leaves unwritten—smoldering in the ashes of disregard, censure, and erasure" (2). Her description of how she writes against the disappearing of her "tribe" and "against time…out of a sense of this disappearance in [her] own familia" illuminates the slow violence enacted through postindustrialization's global ecological impact during its "colonial

'experiment'" (2). Her poems in turn depict "the vibrant death this land is seeing" alongside being "a woman/who walks by the motherhouse/of the sisters of the precious blood" (35). These moments create a network for living that does not re-instate the "land" as property and that clarifies the connection between dominant environmentalist apocalypses of the earth and finance capitalism's racialization of populations via exposing them pre-maturely to precarity and death.

Moraga's concept of queer family as interrelated with colonialism and death, as non-propertied environmental resources and otherwise subjectivities, indicts U.S. imperialism as a dominant force in global finance capital and environmental change . This builds on Cooper's historicization of how "the unique position of the United States itself in relationship to world financial flows has meant that even the most speculative of its life science enterprises has attracted a constant, and incomparable, flow of funds." As Cooper points out, this is a stark departure from dominant post-nationalist perspectives on finance capital and imperialist power relations, and it stakes this claim in "American's engagement in the new life sciences," especially the "discovery" of molecular levels of life, "in the constitution of global debt" (Cooper 5). What Moraga's poetics add in naming the death of her related kin and the ongoing rupture of geographic place with environmental matter is how this engagement is an ongoing practice of the "colonial 'experiment.'" More shortly: in calling colonialism an "experiment," Moraga names colonialism as part of Western epistemic approaches to apprehending, managing, and regulating life through first discovery and then through privatization. Her ancestry haunts this enterprise to create a toxic melancholia that refuses to see the losses as permanent and in the past; instead, it sees these losses as ongoing presences through the disavowed regulation of life and environmental matter – the recourse to "free market" rhetorics precisely as global material resources are variously are transformed into assets that can be liquidated and quickly moved.

Moraga's poetics discursively live "against time" and against "the dead leaves unwritten" as a suspension that not only illuminates the dialectical violence of nationalism and globalism in colonialism[34], but affirmative radical difference as mobilizing otherwise livabilities. Queer kinship, here, suggests one method for reckoning with death a pathway to such living: "queer family means 'a relentlessly intimate acquaintance with death, a kind of death-in-life" (Hong loc 1718). Indeed, Moraga's dialectic, what she describes as "this vibrant land" alongside "the motherhouse" and "sisters of the precious blood" creates simultaneously haunting between non-patrilineal blood relations and networked land relations. This is a kinship not predicated on the transfer of heteroreproductive or land-based property relations; akin to Lorde's poetry, it also names how the solution cannot be through inclusion into the realm of finance capital's currents, "not because legal kinship is denied, but because legal kinship is the ongoing, repetitious denial of other modes of relationality" (Crawley 71). That is, the toxic affect of desire between and for sisters of the precious blood, as well as the "vibrant" land's witness to codices as melancholia produces "other modes of relationality" than legal kinship. In this way, difference is the shared but non-identical crux of Lorde's and Moraga's kinship relations, a posthumanism[35] that becomes two different genres[36] – one of Lorde to her son, one of Moraga to her sister-kin.

When Moraga describes "the desire to dissolve the parameters of flesh/and bone and blend with the mountain/the blade of grass/the boy" (36), she moves beyond holistic, enclosed embodiment. She makes undeniably material and historical the preoccupation with death, Carson's de-centered Man, and the literal death enacted against gendered and racialized populations through environmental violence. This functions in coalition with Lorde's bone and flesh of affective, political

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[34] See page 12 of Eng and Kazanjian *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, for more on the dialectical interdependence of nationalism and globalism in colonial markets.
[35] Braidotti's critical posthumanism adds to this, calling for "more pragmatic open-endedness and a diversification of possible strategies." For more on critical posthumanism through difference, see Braidotti 140.
[36] This is an intentional reference, again, to Sylvia Wynter. I expand on her concept of "genres of the human" and Alexander Weheliye's response in Chapters 3 and 4.

anger; however, it also differs by suggesting a decolonial desire for environmental networked subjectivity. This desire surfaces in her reference to the colonizing and taking of land and body, but also the being with the vibrant land as witness and naming the shared sisters' blood as precious. These relations between desire and loss are less a fragmentation of an abstract, fantasized, pre-existing, wholistic self and human, so much as an awareness of the interconnected status of subjectivities in the first. The horizontal blood kinship and critical posthuman intimacy with land also historicizes the literal fragmentation has been historically enacted through dispossession of bodies under racial capital. Moraga describes, for instance, how her "body suffers in [the mountain's] womb" because she does not "sing a song/of myself" (emphasis not added), which again, like Lorde's "Song," refuses Whitman's white colonialist subjectivity. Instead of recuperating fantasies for an enlightenment human subjectivity or an ahistorical posthuman future. At the same time, the poem bears crucial departure through the unique historical lesbian chicanx lens of land and subjectivity theft: she places death at the center of her work for "this vibrant land," creating an otherwise enfleshed network of queer relations, one haunted as it haunts the present.

Moraga and Lorde's melancholic, toxic affect as a horizontal seepage across borderland waters and into land masses takes up, in kind, the dialectical relationship between literal and figurative matter. Their use of haunting is also a form of prophecy, a way of situation genres of posthuman emergence as both material and, especially when prophecy is the terminology, metaphysical. Moraga writes in her introduction to *The Last Generation*:

> History is 'advancing' at an unprecedented speed. A writer-friend tells me, 'Everything we write nowadays is outdated before we've finished.' I have to agree. Still, history is always stumbling, always limping a few steps behind prophecy. And it is prophecy that drives this writing—not my personal prophecy, but the prophecy of a people.
>
> *The date is October 17, 1989. I am returning home from work, traveling across the bay bridge. The Union Oil 76 sign reads 4:43 pm. My eyes scan the city skyline, ever amazed at its growing enormity, and then I think,* in seconds, the whole thing could go…*I don't know why I think*

> *this, but eleven minutes later, pulling into my neighborhood, a seven-point earthquake shakes the Bay Area.*
>
> It's all just a sign of the times and every writer is a prophet if she only opens her heart and listens. The journey of this writing is as much a journey into the past as it is into the future, a resurrection of the ancient in order to construct the modern. It is the place where prophecy and past meet and speak to each other. (3, emphasis not added)

This is a long quote to put late into a dissertation chapter. However, each part of the triptych carries its own weight in how Moraga figures "prophecy," as well as to how both melancholy and desire as toxic affects mobilize contemporary resurgences through radical difference.

In the first selection, Moraga names the hyper-speed of codification: finance capital consistently and quickly moving debt to escape the present precisely close off the past. As a counter to this hyper-speed, this already non-linear temporality, Moraga suggests prophecy. This is not simply for the sake of an ungraspable, religious methodology. In fact, Moraga's subsequent passages do not move into any institutionalized, theological, or religion-specific method for prophesying. Rather, prophecy in this passage affirms possibility in dialectical material life imbued with the metaphysical reality, wherein melancholy and desire haunt from the past and into the future. This is a way into the present to get ahead of "history" as historicism, the flash of hope through coalitional practices of listening, watching, and writing for the haunting otherwise that does not coalesce around foreclosed meaning. This a "post-identitarian position" that "[adopts] a mode of thinking 'as if already gone', that is to say, to think with and not against death" (Braidotti 129): an antiracist posthumanism that does not read environmental, molecular levels of life replication, and/or finance capital as foregone conclusions.

In the second paragraph, for instance, Moraga shifts into a second voice, describing the cityscape as so material that its fragility becomes immediately apparent. Decolonial prophecy is always already haunted by this future, ephemeral because it operates from the grounds of material

displacement. She names, then, the earthquake as a moment of emergence as much as destruction. This starkly contrasts Carson's anxiety-driven quest to re-create a protected, pure material life, as well as finance capital's quest to abstract its material processes of production. In this moment, "the dissolution of the body into spirit, the disintegration of self" suggested by the horizon's temporary materials "is no longer a humiliation, and the dissipation of human will is no longer a travesty," suggesting a prophetic vision entirely otherwise to the period's dominant fear of the human in its environment's breakdown, but also with its subsequent replacement through secularized, again universal posthumanisms. Moraga's melancholic affect mobilizes prophecy here as a desire that does not erase or disavow the ongoing losses, suggesting instead "the 'impossible' possibilities that emerge out of the condition of being surplus" (Hong loc 1763), or that emerge out of reckoning with the otherwise spatial and temporal dimensions of a haunting methodology.

Black, feminist, and decolonial coalitional reproduction is queer always already because of its relationship to time,[37] property transfer, surplus (Hong loc 1984, 2046), and living, but also as posthumanist coalition where past and prophecy meet and "speak" about the relationship between land, kinship, waters, affect and human status being privatized, commodified, and circulated. What Walter Mignolo points out in his analysis of a "theoretical revolution" in the Zapatista revolution is in concert with Moraga's call for iterative prophecy: "the question is not to compete among different concepts of 'humanity,' but to point out how those constructs need to be redefined in the first place through tensions of other epistemic methods (242). Braidotti's posthumanist philosophy, also, implicitly builds on Lorde and Moraga's suggestions about difference, possibility, and plurality: "to say a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable" is a "critical posthuman subject" (Braidotti 49). This critical posthuman subject does

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[37] See, too, "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion"; Moraga's poetics and this argument adds, though, that these popularized theories of queer time are oftentimes problematically colorblind.

not presume a "shared humanity," nor "single issue self," to use Lorde's terms; rather, it operates precisely through fundamental differences that do not require a shared human or even shared posthuman status to do the prophetic work. This mode of posthuman work necessitates coalitional practices; more than "embodied," the work is enfleshed, boned, in the mountain's queer womb and the heritage of water.

**Conclusion: Prophecy the Present**

In my last reading, then, I turn to the passage immediately following the above, the end of the introduction to *The Last Generation* to demonstrate how the coalitional prophetic suggests otherwise possibilities pursued in the subsequent chapters. Moraga published an introduction in 1992 – decades after Lorde's earlier poems, a decade after *This Bridge Called My Back*, and at the end of the Reagan-era's response to what Lorde prophesied would become of commodified and re-circulated resistances. I read this Moraga's introduction as both hope and warning. She suggests otherwise livabilities that were already happening, that shaped and were shaping her in that moment, while also suggesting the "flash of hope" was a call to act, to write, to prophecy by bringing the past and future together into the contemporary historical moment – to do the methodological work against historicism and to learn from the activist poetics that, at that time, academia largely ignored. This is a methodological strategy in the first chapter of the work, which itself operates a linear argument in text-based monograph form with a closed argument: in the humanities, or the close-reading of literatures such as poetry, perpetuate their exclusionary, violent knowledge production methods even as we critique even as critique them, especially in order to gain disciplinary credibility?

Carson's anxiety, which went on to structure dominant environmentalist practices, is about "Whiteness," cohering "at the scenes of subjecting blackness….And that anxiety was all about air, breath, breathing" (Crawley 67). The institutionalization of knowledge, the "racial mob and lynching violence attempted" at "a theological-philosophical production of the human" that desired a return

to coherency "against indeterminacy" (Crawley 72-73)[38]. What this chapter has opened to are the material registers of metaphysical metaphor: how do different enfleshed lives breath when water and air are both ungraspable and privatized? These politics of breathing, of vitality, shift across the different registers of finance capital's intrinsically metaphorical function. That is, finance capital presumes a secular, objective stance derived from a natural and free market that imitates biological life at the molecular level. It creates a cruel dialectic of abstracted status out of violently physical, material asset liquidation and surplus population formation. However, otherwise rhythms for living use metaphor as explicitly also material, creating a dialectic for haunting. These otherwise kinship and world building models look differently at the necessity of air and water molecules to catalyze life itself as much as air and water metaphorically represented across different mediums and platforms, seeing the chaotic proliferation not as threat, but as possibility and desire.

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[38] Crawley has also written on breath being both metaphor and matter in economic histories and foundational to Whiteness. See Crawley, pages 67-68.

# Chapter 2: The Racial and Molecular 'Matter' of Posthumanism in Flint Water Poisonings and *Only Lovers Left Alive*

## Introduction

Chapter 1 foregrounded the contemporary racial, gendered, and colonial violence in the Anthropocene by tracing finance capital's rhetoric as co-formed with early 1960's environmental and life science rhetorics. Close reading Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* illuminated how racial biopolitics became part of an officially antiracist stance in the life science attention to DNA's molecular building blocks as well as globalized free market liquidation of assets precisely in order to perpetuate materially racialized livability and surplus. In close reading Audre Lorde's 1968, I demonstrated how activist poetics of the period were already positing coalitional strategies for naming the disavowed relationship between early environmentalist rhetoric, finance capital, and race. Her racial melancholia becomes a toxic affect wielded to create otherwise temporal and relational possibilities that extend past the intertwined modes of racial violence. These possibilities are, I argue, antiracist posthumanisms centered in radical difference. With this historical context, Cherríe Moraga's 1989 and 1991 publications reckon with the ongoing violence named and forecasted by Lorde in the 1960s, writing now in *The Last Generation* during a post-Reagan and officially post-Fordist moment. Through Moraga's analysis, a haunting method for creating coalitions out of metaphorical toxicity writes for a potential, new, dialectical relationship between past colonialism and its ongoing violence even as queer kinship and decolonial coalitions create and foretell of otherwise possibilities. Through Moraga I read these possibilities as necessarily haunting: after, before, and during death. Across all three of Chapter 1's close readings, I trace on the one hand posthuman "statuses" for regulating and managing life that claim unregulated, free, and equal access to building blocks of living matter, such as water and DNA. In particular, the 1960s saw an emergence of finance capital rhetoric recruiting languages around protection and immunity, a namely neoliberal method of

individualizing risk and exposure to precarity through risk assessment. These emergences began in tandem with environmental management rhetorics[39] that dovetail with biopolitical anxiety, such as "epidemics, extradition requests, the pathologization of immigrants, and computer viruses (and now environmentalism)" (Esposito 1). In contrast to these historical emergences, I trace haunting and toxic otherwise methods for livability in the Anthropocene.

When turning to Lorde and Moraga for this critical, historical, theoretical work, I argued that a haunting methodology might create a genealogy for future, otherwise methods of coalition building. Naming their work as simultaneous emergences to the violence perpetuated today offers more hopeful reading practices. It also enables new methods for examining water – ones that do not necessarily or inevitably recycle property based and racializing logic. In this chapter, I look at two contemporary modes of the perpetuated racial violence mentioned above: water in a neoliberal film and water in media coverage of postindustrial lead poisoning. By turning to two post-2010 examples of how water is wielded both metaphorically and literally, I build out the historical scope for what I term and define below, as a contemporary mutation in racial biopolitics: molecular biopolitics. As I argue in this chapter, molecular biopolitics names a difficult to apprehend scale of both the invisible, proliferative level of life management – molecular levels of patenting and manipulating living matter – and the hyper visible slow violence it enacts disproportionately on poor and predominantly non-white communities – scarred skin in photographic coverage of lead poisoning. As I look at water in these two contemporary emergences, the intertwined violences described throughout the Introduction and Chapter 1 surface in, as I will argue, uniquely post-2010 ways. By looking critically at how this historical violence is perpetuated through this chapter's period, though, I set up the subsequent two chapters – Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 – to engage with more rigorous hope and possibility. That is: this critical background necessitates a turn toward otherwise possibilities in order

[39] See Frederic Jameson in Chapter 1 on "finance capital."

to accrue hope and ensure that the ongoing work that builds on Lorde and Moraga does not, yet again, go disavowed. This is a methodological strategy to combat the sense of hopelessness that can emerge in the face of seemingly insurmountable and ongoing historical violence. It refuses the assumption of inevitability and "naturally" reproductive cycles around reading and circulating only methods and subjects that support racial capital. It sees the dialectical reality of, to be alive, being always in part complicit without foreclosing or disavowing the real, material, difficult work of building different worlds out of living matter. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, then, create the critical, historical framework for creating critical, impactful reading and living practices for antiracist posthumanisms and its coalitional methods.

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 alike explore the dialectics of abstraction and materiality – of inevitable complicity for livability and inevitable seepage beyond that historical violence's bounds. These dialectics portray a seemingly dire Anthropocene moment that inevitably reproduces the historical vestiges of racial capital. They do this by arguing the most literal matter for life is represented in increasingly abstract terms, making it ever more difficult in a globalized scheme to diagnose, much less impactfully combat, precisely how it is perpetuated even as awareness of its synthetic nature becomes popularly circulated knowledge. However, as the end of Chapter 2 will suggest, otherwise possibilities are being built that require creative and critical reading vocabularies to apprehend just as much as to critique. That is: just as the violence is at once both popularly named and ongoing, so, too, are activist arts methods building on the groundwork Lorde and Moraga have provided. Just as it is increasingly easy to name racial violence, but difficult to explain its perpetuation in officially antiracist spaces, it is increasingly easy to critique complicity, but difficult to read for otherwise antiracist and posthuman possibilities seeping beyond it. I argue, however, that the post-2010 accounts of this violence, precisely in their disavowal of otherwise options, are suggesting coalitional possibilities that are less easily co-opted by mass media and re-circulated. While the complicit

components across any artwork packaged and sold are easy to name and co-opt, the historical vocabulary of disavowed violence in Chapters 1 and 2 in this way indirectly name the disavowed and otherwise possibilities that surface at the end of Chapter 2, which I then build out in Chapters 3 and 4. In this chapter, then, I turn first to a popular neoliberal film that demonstrates the ongoing disavowal begun by *Silent Spring* into the post-2010 posthuman: Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive*, which follows to vampires through Detroit, MI in their search for a sustainable, globalized future. Then, I close read media coverage of the Flint, MI lead poisonings. I contrast a neoliberal perpetuation of the affects commodified and circulated in a fashion Lorde portends through photograph resistance projects. However, in the last photographic reading, I look to reading and media production practices that, while never wholly without complicity, to suggest more impactful methods for building out relations less pessimistic and inevitable in their risking of predominantly non-white lives.

**Stories of Water: Vampires and Lead Molecules the 2010's**

In June 2013, the Detroit Water and Sewage Department (DWSD) cut off Flint's water supply in response to the city's proposal to reportedly save money by switching to The Karegnondi Water Authority (KWA). In the interim, the city made a contract for water with a private engineering firm. The Houston-based firm, Lockwood, Andrews & Newman, also had offices in Flint and began using the Flint River water instead of Lake Huron and Detroit River water. Meanwhile, in nearby Detroit and in April 2013, the DWSD entered a "contract with Homrich, a demolition company, to carry out 70,000 shutoffs in 730 days…sponsored by Rodney Johnson of Grosse Pointe" (Bellant et al.). The DWSD reportedly initiated this to do damage control over the debt incurred from delinquent water bills. A year later, both Flint and Detroit began experiencing residential push back on the privatized water regulation and shut-off processes: in April 2014, residents in Flint began complaining about the water, reporting rashes, and bacteria concerns, while

nearby residents in Detroit began a protracted battle over 17,000 residents having their water shut-off. Flint issued a boil water advisory to kill E. coli and boost chlorine flushing but did not formally acknowledge the toxicity levels as a danger to residents. By August 2014, both cities' residents had begun protesting the inability to access clean and affordable water at home.

In 2013, *Only Lovers Left Alive,* directed by Jim Jarmusch came out in theaters, de-historicizing an urban landscape through metaphors to deep time and mythological vampires that narrate the city's ecological relation to the nearby Great Lakes. I argue in this chapter that the localized events around water shut-offs and poisoning correspond to contemporary film representations of variously urbanized and "wild" spaces via the history of water privatization and regulation. The film takes up postmodernist fascinations with the "pending ecological violence" through posthumanist themes of animality and mythical immortality that depend on humanist narratives of water to accrue meaning around subjectivity and racialized histories of violence. These narratives function in part by portraying landscapes as variously urban and wild. These various portrayals, as I will argue, bear a visible relay with material formations of resistance to the "real world" counterparts of water shut-offs and poisonings in the same landscapes, implicating the violence of neoliberal, humanist ideals in popular accounts of ecological violence and posthumanism.

In kind, both the Detroit and Flint events are useful for analyzing how racialization happens through regulation of and access to water. This is especially true as the vast majority of the population in each city self-identifies as Black or African American[40]. The colorblind rhetoric of ecological and urban violence portrayed in the posthumanist film narrative ironically illuminates the

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[40]: as of the 2010 census, 82.7% of the Detroit population identifies as Black or African American, 10.6% as White, and 6.8% as Hispanic or Latino. 56.6% of the Flint population identifies as Black or African American, 37.4% as White, and 3.9% as Hispanic or Latino. While the exact numbers may have changed, and hopefully future census data will more accurately reflect more significant differentiation within these categories, such as Latina/x, that information is not publicly available at the time of this chapter's first drafting (United States Census Bureau).

history of racialized and sexualized violence in these geographic spaces. By articulating together the violence of poisoning or withholding water within two cities near the Great Lakes in contrast to the film portrayals of water as an unending resource, as well as humanity as an abstracted status, a specific history of racialized violence and protest to that violence surfaces. This chapter explores this history to ask how water is wielded as both "matter" and "metaphor" in postmodern accounts of the pending, ecological apocalypse to implicitly say that some protected lives "matter" more than those exposed to precarity by privatizing and regulating "matter" itself. Turning to the language of literal and cultural meanings for matter creates a historical, material analysis of how water regulation violently racializes. This chapter will first argue as a contextualized backdrop to *Only Lovers Left Alive* that in both Detroit and Flint, water is wielded to make some residents seem to bear the significations of social death, risk itself, and contamination in finance capital's relation to ecological violence.

While chapters 1 and 3 more capaciously explore historical shifts to finance capital rhetoric, this chapter turns to rhetorics of the environmental life sciences' attention to molecular levels of living to re-materialize the stakes of speculation and risk rhetorics. This re-materializing work brings together critical race theorists such as Paul Gilroy and Black feminist scholars such as Hortense Spillers to more carefully historicize how the molecular, within environmental attention, is also racialized through rhetorics of "human." I argue that this racialization happens in part through neoliberal cultural, film production of posthumanist abstractions and dehistoricizations around the status of "the human" in the ecological apocalypse. These abstract and metaphorical representations contrast real-world water shut-offs and poisonings. In this way, racialization film representation and abstraction participates in committing material violence against racialized bodies' trans-corporeal relationship with the "matter" of life itself: water. In other words, life-forming matter in the literal sense – water – is the hyper-surveyed (debt collection and scientific evidence of pipe erosion) or

intentionally unsurveyed vector of potential risk (denial of inadequate billing practices and ignoring residential complaints of toxic water). Such a co-articulation demonstrates how risk and contamination rhetorics represent "infected" bodies as the abstracted manifestations of the future contamination threats themselves.

In both texts, from photographic protest to film media circulation, water acts as a critical conduit to the historical, racialized constitution of "the human," directly or indirectly gesturing toward the historical role of water politics, privatization, regulation, and traversal in enacting racial violence or creating alternatives to that violence. While Flint and its representations of the molecular provides a site for attending to white-washed postmodern theory, such as molecularization from Deleuze and Guattari, it also explicitly names historical, racialized property logic[41]. The critique becomes a necessary historicization of how we think through life and livability in water representations and racialization. Thus, a necessary critique of *Only Lovers Left Alive* (*OLLA)* representing a neoliberal narrative of gentrification in watery, urban landscapes becomes a re-materialized historicization of otherwise seemingly atemporal trajectories between water and livability. In this film, the construction of "the human" and "the posthuman" enable critiques of linear time and historical progression when misrepresenting the pending ecological apocalypse as rife with colorblind, posthumanist possibility. Despite itself, the film points to a need to in representations of water, posthumanism, and livability first reckon with the category of the "human's" violently historical construction. The film's abstract absences become all too material bodies and their relation to water, such as in Detroit and Flint. Its emphasis on posthuman abstraction, especially, occasions a productive critique of both the colorblind, dehistoricized dismissal of human as a category by more canonized postmodern eco-critique, as well as the

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[41] For this project, I will not dig into *A Thousand Plateaus*. To summarize: they offer a popularly canonized theory from the 1980s on molecular as opposed to molar to critique consolidated, boundaried notions of selfhood and nation.

wholesale embrace of it as a desirable status by some antiracist criticism, such as Gilroy's postracial humanism. I say productive, here, because it is a critique that produces otherwise possibilities that subvert its otherwise violent abstractions and representations of water, race, livability, and who gets to claim human and posthuman statuses.

In turning toward Gilroy and Spillers as two strands of posthumanist, antiracist, potentially molecular modes of historical critique, I surface water's deployment in both Flint and *OLLA* narratives for perpetuating or resisting the property logics that undergird racialization and human constructing apparatuses alike. As the chapter critiques both colorblindness and humanism, it asks how these differing narratives of urbanization and water work in tandem towards a more antiracist posthumanism that builds on, but more fully materializes and historicizes, postmodern ideals of the fragmented subjectivity. In particular, how do Black feminist contributions of enfleshment build on, but differ from, Gilroy's concept of a postracial humanism when contemporary water politics and posthumanism become additional vectors?[42] Additionally, how might contemporary sites and their particular moment of reckoning with water, posthumanism, and race, such as in Flint and *OLLA*, "demand liberation not from white supremacy alone…but from all racializing and raciological thought, from racialized seeing, racialized thinking, and racialized thinking about thinking" (Gilroy 40)? In these demands, how can we also require liberation from the thinking life only matters when it adds up to a universal category of "the human" abstracted from its dependence on livability, such as its dependence on water?

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[42] This risks oversimplifying Gilroy's argument. To be more precise and point to more nuance in Gilroy's argument: Gilroy does carefully put forward an "alternate version of humanism" without "any retreat into the lofty habits and amended assumptions of liberal thinking," even as he articulates the problematic constraint of humanism's seemingly necessary recourse to "a struggle over the boundaries of humanity…[that contributes] to a counterhistory that leads up to a rough-hewn doorway through which an alternative conception of the human *must* pass" (30, emphasis added). This chapter, though, looks to Gilroy's contributions to the historicization of ecology in eugenicist projects emerging simultaneously to what Bruce Braun terms "the molecularization of life." This builds on Gilroy's argument that "the consolidation of today's nano-science might also facilitate the development of an emphatically postracial humanism" (37).

***Only Lovers Left Alive*: Water Neutrality and Apathetic Vitalities**

In 2018, *Only Lovers Left Alive* hit theaters, billing itself as a Detroit revival film. Also, in April 2013, the Detroit Water and Sewage Department (DWSD) entered a "contract with Homrich, a demolition company, to carry out 70,000 shutoffs in 730 days [in Detroit, MI] …sponsored by Rodney Johnson of Grosse Pointe" (Bellant et al. 2014). The DWSD reported that the goal was to do damage control over the debt incurred by the DWSD by delinquent water bills. A year later in Detroit, residents began a protracted battle over water the shut-offs in their homes. 17,000 residents in Detroit had by now had their water shut-off (Ley 2014), and many of them attended a "Water Affordability Fair" to learn about payment options. Yet, those who attended claimed that the city billed them unfairly or had not received adequate billing and notifications of a potential shut-off. Throughout the protests, an undercurrent of the value of industrial and postindustrial buildings[43], businesses and manufactured objects compared to actual residents came to the forefront: in June 2014, the Detroit City Council approved an 8.7% rate increase even as those who called themselves the "Defenders" spotted thousands of delinquent bills (Bartkowiak), and private companies were hired to regulate water access.[44] By 2016, with the indie film now out on DVD and considered a cult classic on living Detroit's "wild," Detroit residents were remarking upon how commercial and municipal properties owed $41 million of the debt compared to $26 million from the homes, and while residents had their water shut-off when they disputed their bills, the businesses and

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[43] In July 2014, for instance, water was reported to be "gushing" from an abandoned building in Detroit, signaling poor use of water to many residents.

[44] This happened despite three United Nations representatives who visited Detroit and declared the shut-offs a violation of human rights (Abbey-Lambertz 2015). For context: in response to these rising tensions over who and what were still receiving clean water in Detroit, the State gave one million dollars to DWSD in what was called the Detroit Residential Assistance Program. In the program, residents could apply for up to $1,500 toward delinquent bills, but this was only a dent for some residents who were contesting balances as high as $5,700 (Winchester 2016), and it did not respond to how a third of the DWSD debt was due to "high dollar commercial and municipal accounts" (Bellant et al. 2014). Similarly, while Detroit proposed in August 2014 to restructure by selling $5.2 billion of the water debt, thereby avoiding having to declare bankruptcy and potentially lower water rates, more shut-offs to residential water had begun by August 25, 2014. These accounts were concurrent with Flint's poisonings, bearing an eerie relation to Flint's prioritization of GM's auto plants over actual residents in who could receive clean, affordable water.

government-owned properties did not (Kurth). In looking at the 2013 – 2016 narrative of Detroit's water shut-offs, *OLLA* becomes a cultural response to water, postindustrial urbanization, and the battle over what is considered a rights-bearing "human" – a battle also and contemporaneously taken up by the Black Lives Matter movement and photographic protests examined above. Detroit's water shut-offs, in tandem with Flint's poisonings, creates a current of cultural responses to the regulation of and access to literal water through representations of water and racialization that, I argue, the film's momentum builds upon even as it represents the city as rife with opportunity precisely because of its proximity to water.

The popular culture and protest responses wield the metaphorical and historical use of water and matter to comment on the production of the status of a rights-bearing "human," each variously critiquing or re-constituting the category as necessary to provide access to water as a life source. In *OLLA*'s simultaneous release and popularity, the film provides an occasion for examining more closely cultural representations of water, posthumanism, and apocalyptic landscapes in popular media to consider the antiracist posthumanist potential inherent to the Detroit and Black Lives Matter's co-articulation of the molecularization of life, finance capital, racialization, and water. I argue that the film renders the cultural disavowal between literal matter and figurative mattering evident through the grounds it lays for its own critique. In other words, the film enacts otherwise abstracted and de-historicized accounts of living, down to the hyper material, molecular level of water. In its capacity to move beyond "the body and its obvious functional components…upon which assessments of the unity and variation of the species are to be made" (Gilroy 48), it holds forth the promise of using critiques of water politics to examine posthumanist "human" options that would deploy the molecular turn's potentiality for antiracist, anti-heteropatriarchal property logics embedded in ecologies. And yet, through a strategy of engulfment, neoliberal narratives demonstrate

the danger of de-historicized abstractions around molecularized knowledge and posthumanisms for perpetuating the violence of racial slavery after both postmodern and millennial neoliberal turns.

While *OLLA* is a film that situates itself in various parts of Detroit, in my analysis, I focus on a scene where the two protagonists of the film, vampire lovers Adam and Eve, do a self-guided car tour of the city at night. This scene encapsulates the film's white liberal critique of the city's politics that attempt to empty the city's contemporary history and articulate it instead as prelapsarian Eden ripe for gentrification. Eve says to Adam, "So this is your wilderness. Detroit." Adam responds immediately with, "Everybody left." They here survey the seemingly empty landscape as uninhabited and wild, evacuating the city of its history and inhabitants to re-narrate it is nature. They go on to survey selective, historic sites: Adam describes the Packard Plant, a famously abandoned car factory in Detroit, as a space where "they once made the most beautiful cars." He calls it "finished," and the statement as a metaphor for the city becomes apparent when Eve responds with, "But this place will rise again." When he questions her on that probability, she responds, "Yea. There's water here. And when the cities in the south are burning, this place will bloom." This builds on the naturalization of the city's seeming emptiness by portraying it as ripe for a process of re-inhabiting due to nearby abundant, "natural" water sources. After pausing here for some silence and string music in the background to visuals of empty streets and a "touring" car view of graffitied buildings, he offers to take her to the Motown Museum. Since it is late at night, they would only view it from the outside; she declines the tour, calling herself "more of a Stax girl," referencing a Tennessee based record label for soul and blues music that is known for "uniting" people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Adam does not immediately respond, but then has the idea to instead drive by Jack White's house. As they pass, she exclaims, "Oh, I love Jack White!" which corresponds to the one concert they attend by an indie rock band aptly labeled, "The White Hills." They converse about Jack White being his mother's seventh son and then end their tour on the

Michigan Theater, which has also been abandoned. They reminisce about how beautiful the space must have been – "Can you imagine?" – for concerts and movies, articulating it as now "just a car park."

The opening of the scene's dialogue around wilderness frames water as a natural and neutral resource for gentrifying urban spaces, likening such a gentrification process to a naturalized (re)production, or "blooming." The scene attempts to cast actual Detroit residents as having already left, and this re-narration of white flight is crucial to the dialogue of wilderness naturalizing otherwise disproportionate access to resources such as water. In other words, as the Detroit water shut-offs and Flint water poisonings effectively make both, linked cities uninhabitable, even unlivable, for their inhabitants in the present, material manifestation of a longer atemporal project of racialization across watery topographies, the film culturally erases Detroit residents by saying they have left. Since Detroit protests around the water shut-offs and Flint poisonings happened contemporaneously to the film, this declaration submerges the Detroit's history of white flight and Flint's postindustrial, global outsourcing factory lay-offs, implying that those who exist do not matter enough to count. This dialogue of erasure alongside empty city visuals creates a mythic, idealized Detroit landscape that would use nearby water to "bloom" while evacuating the resource's history of being wielded in the water shut-offs. Water becomes a crucial conduit here for naturalizing a neoliberal racialization that assuages white colonial attempts to gentrify the city, naturalizing the process by likening it to the life-sustaining possibility of water and portraying that resource as uninhibited and neutrally available to whoever might "choose" it.

This rhetoric of choice belies material manifestations of water regulation and privatization in the city, where residents are in the choiceless predicament of being unable to pay the water bills even as the city attends to companies that, through lawyers, negotiate lower payment rates and loan forgiveness. It is also a stark optic contrast to photographic protests of water poisonings and shut-

offs, which I explore in the Detroit and Flint resistance section of this chapter. Adam and Eve thus critique the category of the human as apathetically alive vampires that siphon the residents' remaining resources, including access to life through water. However, the vampires become the "new" Adam and Eve as their capitulation of a posthuman subjectivity reinscribes the ideals of the white, neoliberal, heteroreproductive, property owning and resource distributing human. I explore this heteroreproductive component subsequently in Flint photographs, but it is useful to index here how the rhetoric of blooming corresponds to the potentially heteroreproductive Adam and Eve that now inhabit the city. This selective historicization of urban areas seems to initially hold forth atemporal logics' promise to undo the violence of neoliberal linear progress through time and location.

Yet, this very promise of the atemporal exists in tension with the city's actual water shut-offs, creating instead the problem of dehistoricizing that echoes a fall out of more abstracted postmodern ideals. Thus, the film's romanticization of neutral, natural resources and implicit rhetoric of choice for accessing those resources belies the neoliberal violence of rights-bearing humanity through accounts of choice-bearing agency. As a result, those who wield control over water are given the status of patriarchal subjecthood as ideal human deserving clean water: those who "left" and those who will return to make the city "bloom." In contrast, those subject to the water shut-offs or poisonings outside of the film's gaze are implicitly articulated as less than human, but also not permitted the status of vampiric or prelapsarian posthuman. Through *OLLA*'s rhetoric of naturalized neoliberalism, then, the racialized subject also bears the risk of water neutrality. Such subjectivity is valued precisely in its capacity to do so, akin to those living with poisoned water in Flint. This re-enacts Grace Kyungwon Hong's articulation of surplus as valuable for being seen perceived as existentially valueless (loc 629) – a concept developed in Chapter 1. This shifts the traditional symbol of capital as vampiric into a posthuman finance era that has engulfed the potential

of postmodern abstractions by abstracting their ramifications. The vampires' atemporal reference thus implies that if a Detroit or Flint resident still lives in a postindustrial city portrayed as vacated or wasted, then their complaints that water, or a life-source, has been shut down exhibits an unwillingness to do as the vampires do: leave and participate in a more productive global market or access the abundant, nearby water. Water as a clear, odorless fluid and naturally occurring resource becomes a metaphor in this scene for what is not just atemporal, but also a dehistoricized logic of neoliberalism that would submerge the city's racial, historical violence as it plays out in the present tense of Detroit water shut-offs.

The film attempts to eliminate the racialized lives of the city to justify the project of naturalized gentrification by harnessing abundant local water sources, but in that very process, inadvertently points toward real-world protests around water shut-offs, poisonings, and the historical, material reality of the urban space. The stark contrast between images such as Detroit Free Press documentation of Flint and Detroit protests for water and the empty city traversed by apathetically alive vampires heightens an optic reckoning with violence otherwise made invisible through environmental life sciences' turn to molecular dimensions of life and livability. Thus, the neoliberal account of atemporal history in Detroit through vampiric lifespans, which is akin to "what Fanon glimpsed as a 'real dialectic between the body and the world'" opens to a critique of neoliberal justifications for violent gentrification. The gentrification process promised as a "blooming" from vampires who no longer exist in anxiety around everyday death and precarity hinges upon a free market portrayal of water as a neutral life source, posthumanist apathetic relations to vitality, and a selective focus in framing the postindustrial urban landscape's historical materials. When Detroit and Flint residents protested water shut-offs in 2014, they insisted upon visibility, but not for fantasy narratives emptying and articulating the city as "wild" through nearby resources. Through this visibility, they implicitly demand that viewers recognize their organization

around ongoing violence enacted through exposure to seemingly invisible precarity (loss of a life-sustaining resource, water, that runs underground or, while mentioned in the film, remains unseen). The implication of precarity that brings Detroit's past vulnerability into a present, ongoing vulnerability pushes against the film's vampiric narrative of the ideal neoliberal human. This film ideal human (or posthuman) can transcend geography to be a rights-bearing (post)human in the global market apathetically apprehending necessary-to-vitality resources, such as water. Such representations reduce "the body [as] nothing more than an incidental transmission of code and information, by its openness to new imaging technologies, and by the loss of mortality as horizon against which life is to be lived" (Gilroy 36). The vampires' apathetic vitality becomes inextricably linked to becoming vampiric capital and not having to think about or fight for the basic components to life, inhabiting the abstract postmodern fascination with death as a lost marker for life's trajectory.

However, this abstraction inadvertently re-materializes connections between abstractions of molecular apprehensions for life's proliferative potential, the imaging technologies of cultural and scientific lenses, and the allocation of seemingly neutral and natural life-providing and life-sustaining resources, such as water. The film, in using apathetic dialogue around water as abundant and neutrally available inadvertently highlights its real-world counterpart: the vocalized and distinctively *imaged* protests to precarity that demand access to that same resource, highlighting water's history and necessity to vitality. The water being shut off happens in the present moment, but addressing the shut-off means addressing a longer history silenced by re-vitalizing processes that insist the city's trauma remains rooted in the past.[45] Meanwhile, neoliberal popular media, such as *OLLA*, portrays residents as absent, anticipating the water withholding's genocidal implications for a racialized

[45] This contradiction undergirds water as a financial investment, which reports Abbey-Lambertz explores in her Detroit Free Press Article: "Detroit has lost more than a million residents since 1950, but the city limits and water infrastructure have not similarly shrunk. That is part of why Detroiters pay some of the highest water rates in the country -- despite a poverty rate more than double the national average" (2014). In other words, Detroit residents pay in the present moment for the prior white flight from urban centers; even their corresponding poverty is used to blame them for not being able to pay their bills.

landscape even while representing the resource itself as neutral and "colorblind" to that history. This scene thus enacts whiteness as a property owner of water, which is owner of life itself so that the violent logic of utility bills – "earning" the right to "pay" for clean water and electricity – is naturalized as a matter of financial and livable choice.

In their selective framing of the city and its history, Adam and Eve enact da Silva's concept of neoliberal "engulfment" to articulate an idealized posthuman subject de-materialized from and evacuated of its all-too material, racialized relation to privatizing and regulating life-sustaining resources. Da Silva uses term the "engulfment" for the "watery" material and metaphorical modes of governance that create otherized subjects only to engulf their modes of resistance into a narrative of neoliberalism's promise, consistently putting the "other's" own world-making at bay in favor of neoliberal opportunity (Kindle Edition, Chap. 4). This includes the very material deaths that result from taking up otherized identities via their lands and resources – including water. The concept of engulfment requires an exteriorization of the subject's internal conflict onto an otherized body to make possible the conception of an essential "self" that can achieve "transcendental poiesis" (Da Silva chap. 4). Engulfment is a theorization, then, of the subject/other that is rooted in recognizing the other *as* other precisely to defend the premises of neoliberal transcendence. This tactic emerges as Adam and Eve drive through Detroit. They describe the city as a wilderness, selectively memorializing predominantly Black cultural movements – Motown – and replacing them with colorblind or predominantly white musical productions – Jack White and The White Hills. The scene relegates the historical presence of Motown to the past through a museum, then co-opts it through indie rock to supplement neoliberalism's promise of "arts" through gentrification.

Even this past becomes otherized in favor of neoliberal colorblind promises for alternative histories and futures, such as the reference to preferring the South's Stax and its explicit multi-ethnic, colorblind tradition of funk, soul, and the blues. The film promises a musical era's atemporal

possibility through a contemporary record company but simultaneously makes "other" and "past" a social, political, and racial movement local to Detroit. The film thus both engulfs and memorializes Motown through the Stax preference. The dialogue also demonstrates the slippery-slope colorblind approach to Gilroy's postracial ideals that in the contemporary moment have become engulfed by neoliberal popular media's residual humanist property logics in popular posthuman representations. To add on to the colorblind engulfment, the vampires then bring into the present Jack White's childhood home, which appears inhabited unlike the passing scenery of empty postindustrialism. This exteriorizes Adam and Eve's inner conflict over musical production – they are also musical artists – onto Motown as an "other" to produce a markedly "white" and colorblind transcendence of Detroit's musical history or the production and circulation of musical arts for profit. Water becomes the conduit for Adam and Eve to foreclose the "other's" potentially non-heteroreproductive modes of world-making, such as Motown and water shut-off/poisoning in favor of colorblind, neoliberal aesthetics that romanticize reproductive world-making in a free market's neutralized access to water and music.

The seeming promise of an atemporal narration of Jack White's childhood into the present engulfs the actual atemporal experience of Motown continuing from past into the present in Detroit, and this engulfment enacts violence in part through its dehistoricized relationships to cultural and ecological materials. The inclusion of historical matter with water otherizes racialized bodies and their musical production, so that "Blackness can now signify vital prestige rather than abjection in a global info-tainment telesector" (Gilroy 36) while also co-opting Black cultural prestige for neoliberal whiteness narratives. To add here to Gilroy's critique of Black cultural engulfment, the juxtaposition of *OLLA* and media representations of water-based precarity in Detroit and Flint represent two extremities of a life/death binary. That binary is what Blackness comes to symbolize in popular, neoliberal, racializing, humanist, and dehistoricized media, while a more critical,

historically grounded queer and feminist of color mode for antiracist world-building materializes the deconstruction of that biopolitical state in order to build otherwise possibilities. In *OLLA*, though, the signification of Blackness as "vital prestige…in a global info-tainment telesector," such as through Stax and the Motown Museum, enables "the living residues of slave societies and parochial traces of American racial conflict," such as in Detroit and Flint, to "yield to different imperatives deriving from the planetarization of profit and the cultivation of new markets far from the memory of bondage" (Gilroy 36). Such imperatives become evident in Adam and Eve's prelapsarian romance narrative of dehistoricized Detroit ready for gentrification's "blooming."

Eve's narration of how Detroit will "bloom again" because of the water surrounding it neglects Detroit water shut-offs, and Flint poisonings is not simply an engulfment Blackness cultural and material livability and production. This narrative of Detroit's future re-blooming through water is only possible because of water being both harnessed and regulated simultaneous to the cultural risk-assessment rhetoric of human enough for water access. This human enough for water access is determined by "choices" that gain ownership rights and, paradoxically, the ability to through access ownership to experiencing livability as opposed to striving for it: "[Racism] ensures that certain people will live an 'abstract existence' where 'living [is] something to be achieved and not experienced" (Cacho 7). That is, while Adam and Eve experience life because it is an achievement they can take for granted (vampiric, abstract immortality), this can only be achieved by apprehending its necessary resources and cruelly abstracting Detroit's actual racialized residents that fight for access water as not human enough to be called living or worthy of accessing water. This abstraction enables the protected human's construction as now transcended to the dehistoricized status posthuman through vampiric life's apathetic relation to vitality. The human as posthuman here depends upon the potential "bloom" of vitality promised by neoliberal personhood and capitalist business obtaining, or owning, resources such as water. This could be modified to say that

neoliberal, colorblind racism works to make it seem like the status of rights-bearing, legally protected human depends upon choices made to *buy* into or opt out of "human enough" to protect the flesh from suffering and transcend to apathetic vitality.

A posthumanism that apprehends the micro and macro simultaneously through inhuman apathetic vitalities that abstract postmodern and millennial play with death, technology, and the molecular elements of living re-capitulates violent racialization undergirding humanist and posthumanist risk-assessment and livability rhetorics alike. Humanist racial property logics live on through the management of life's ecologically and molecularly necessary resources, such as water, which are then paradoxically portrayed as readily available and neutrally accessible. The implication is that lack of clean, drinkable, affordable water is the fault of a subject not properly attaining human rights status or posthuman abstract life experience. The film "literally [establishes the] watery grounds that [make] land and its resources extremely valuable to developers precisely because the land [is now] worthless to everyone except the poor of color whose lives were not deemed worthy of rebuilding" (Cacho 13–14). In a cruel logic, then, the film holds forth the promise of moving beyond the foreclosures of humanness as they have linear accounts of past, present, and future construct it concerning "natural" resources that make life livable, such as water. Yet, the film simultaneously grounds its posthumanist critique in the racialized bodies' removal from the protected status of "posthuman" enough to wield rights over those same, life-giving resources, resurrecting a dehistoricized liberal humanist creation of species logic through a cultural lens. In other words, the film confronts how a humanist "the history of racism is a narrative in which the congruency of micro- and macrocosm has been disrupted at the points of their analogical intersection: the human body," (Gilroy 53), but manages to do so by apprehending that intersection as posthuman.

Part of the cruel posthumanist and atemporal irony stems from the film's merging of the cultural (Motown) and natural (water/wild), especially musical performance and urban space histories. In their "tour" of Detroit, Adam and Eve re-visit the sites of musical production. In addition to this, though, and central to the plot of the film, Adam is a musician himself, collecting various, famous guitars, producing records, and in the most "human" laden night scene, attending a concert for The White Hills. The humans in the scene are primarily young, white gentrifiers enjoying a show at a small music venue. This relates to where the vampires stop by on their drive, the Michigan Theater, which is an abandoned homage to prior concert halls and movies. They again harken the auto industry's formative role in creating and destroying the city, describing how the theater is built "ironically" where the first Ford model was produced, while now nothing but "an empty car lot." The real irony, though, is the factory that still exists in Flint gets clean water for its auto parts, and the businesses newly opened in Detroit have their water debt forgiven, while both cities' linked residents get laid off in globalized outsourcing and the opening of newer businesses and factories. As they are laid off and businesses abandon these older factories, the residents themselves are also refused access to clean, affordable water. Using cars to tour the city, indicting cars for the auto industry's role in creating and devastating the city, and bemoaning abandoned factories becoming parking lots instead of arts centers undergirds how the vampires themselves are idealized global neoliberal citizens who can enter or leave the city by car or plane. This idealized posthuman experience of living enables them to bear an apathetic relation to life that ignores the precarity to actual, contemporarily lived lives that the abandoned factory represents. This corresponds to the vampires' subject positions as individual creative musical geniuses who are present as a byproduct of the globalization that caused car factories to outsource labor, divesting Detroit inhabitants of employment to help pay water bills.

This stop at the theater also frames the abandonment of the city and its arts as a past tense, ripe for rock and hip, liberal aesthetics to gentrify it; yet, in Detroit, as residents know, there are still historic theaters that produce and attract many concerts, including Motown-inspired popular music, such as at The Fox Theater and The Fillmore. Even in other scenes of the film, the two lovers slow dance together to Denise LaSalle, known as the "Queen of the Blues" and a musician out of Tennessee. This again belies the active blues history local to where they dance as well as reaping the benefits of Black arts cultures without avowing the historical roots in racial capital's violent dependency upon racial slavery and its afterlives. The violent juxtaposition of "Blackness [as] vital prestige in [the] global info-tainment telesector" contrasts the visual protests to water scarcity and poisoning that I will now address. In turning to contemporary lived relations to Detroit and Flint water narratives, Eve's dialogue on the city's water and blooming become sutured to a neoliberal and colorblind cultural blooming, which is selective in which cultures it re-members and constitutes as worthy of posthuman living experiences. It is this site, the space of musical cultures and the materiality of water politics, that opens to an alternative film and activist poetic productions of resistance.

**Materializing the Molecular in Flint**

This section closely reads disavowed intimacies between the molecular "matter" and the cultural "what matters" in photographs of Flint protests to elucidate the paradoxes inherent to finance capital using water for surveillance and speculation risk assessment and disbursement. In turning toward coverage of resistance to this "mattering," the analysis might surface and attest to both the violence of the subtle logic in both cities' crises, as well as the promising deviances in visual and linguistic protests. The examined photographs also take up literal "matter" and lead poisoning as primary vectors for making explicit the cultural justifications that transform some bodies into appearing to be the risks themselves. In other words, sex, disability, race, and molecular biopolitics,

which Gilroy calls nanobiopolitics, are portrayed in linguistic and visual representative movements, but they have not been articulated together, yet, through the undeniably material and historical sites of specific, historical water crises. What happens when they are, and what does failing to do so, as *OLLA* does, simultaneously erase and disavow? In beginning to explore such questions, this opens with a timeline across water crises in both cities. These histories perpetuated into the contemporary moment contextualize existing relationships between capital's flow through businesses, racialized populations, and the rhetoric of contamination and risk management. The stories of both cities' water crises undergird what protests called attention to, which is the contrast between the treatment of residents and businesses in both the shut-offs and responses to reports of lead levels. Such a contrast between residents and businesses sets up the relationship between neoliberal capital and the management of life through its foundational matter, such as water, and the portrayal of events as "crises." Working against this violence, the media coverage of protests in Flint co-articulate Black feminism and molecular biopolitics to call out this historical violence. I argue that it responds with a usefully disruptive politics of deviance and resistance.

Throughout both Detroit and Flint's narratives, protesters' complaints brought to the forefront what was previously an undercurrent: the value proscribed to industrial and postindustrial buildings, businesses, and manufactured objects compared to actual residents.[46] In response to rising tensions over who and what might still receive water in Detroit, the State of Michigan gave one million dollars to DWSD in what was called the Detroit Residential Assistance Program. In the program, residents could apply for up to $1,500 toward delinquent bills, but this was only a dent for those who were contesting balances as high as $5,700 (Winchester). For many, the program was

[46] In June 2014, the Detroit City Council had approved an 8.7% rate increase even as those who called themselves the "Defenders" spotted thousands of delinquent bills (Bartkowiak). Three United Nations representatives visited Detroit to weigh in on the shut-offs and declared them a violation of human rights (Abbey-Lambertz). In July 2014, many residents experiencing water shut-offs heard water was "gushing" from a nearby abandoned building and expressed outraged at the potentially poor use of available water.

even more problematic since it did not respond to how "high dollar commercial and municipal accounts" (Bellant et al.), or more colloquially, city and business accounts, were responsible for a third of the DWSD debt. The shut-offs were against the advisement of water rights activists, who began publicly calling out the DWSD for prioritizing business and city accounts over Detroit residents themselves. Those activists proposed that the DWSD first hold business accounts responsible and even require a deposit for service from them. This proposal would generate revenue more quickly than shutting off water from already indebted residents. The proposal called attention to the conflict between the justification for shutting off the water – lack of funds – and actions that would most efficiently pull the DWSD out of debt.

At the same time as this shift in Detroit, Flint's protests began calling similar attention to the different opportunities for clean water between residents and businesses. In October 2014, General Motors (GM) refused to use the city's approved water source when they spotted corrosion on their machine parts, and by December 2014, GM had switched to nearby Flint Township for cleaner water. Yet, it was not until January 2015 and a series of advisories against the water that the city formally acknowledged lead's toxic levels in the water. Even then, the admission came at the behest not of residents, but of University of Michigan students who had decided to test the water themselves. Although the DWSD responded to the University's findings of lead by offering to reconnect to Flint free of charge and at a lower rate, the city refused and continued to use the private company and local river as a water source. This move prioritized businesses and capital over residents themselves, even hyper-surveying the water source to protect machine parts while refusing to survey how that same source made residents sick. By the end of January 2015, media attention was turning toward Flint and away from Detroit, where the 2015 round of shut-offs resumed. Despite the increased money, aid, and media attention to Flint, much less GM's refusal to use the water, the city did not declare a public health emergency until October 2015.

The city of Flint did switch back to the DWSD and declare a crisis in October 2015, in December 2015 calling it a "state of emergency," but by then, the city had found that lead corrosion was in most of the residential pipes. The declaration illuminated some of the problems with articulating the event as a single crisis in yet another highly racialized, postindustrial urban landscape. In this case, it was also next to the largest source of fresh water in the world, the Great Lakes, as well as a high poverty, major postindustrial city, Detroit. Notably, as 2016 approached, Detroit residents began using protests to highlight that commercial and municipal properties owed $41 million of the debt to DWSD compared to $26 million of resident-incurred debt. Yet, businesses and government-owned properties did not have their water shut-off at the same rate as residents (Kurth). Similarly, in 2016, Flint shifted out of the media spotlight but continued to struggle through the "red tape" (All Things Considered) of funding for and proposed changes to corroded pipes, and at the time of this chapter, Flint water remains unsafe without adequate filters. The continuously roving lens of media attention marks how these "crises" are embedded within a larger cultural war over the biological necessity of water and how its privatization and regulation racializes a variety of landscapes in unique, violent ways that extend beyond a moment of crisis or temporary emergency.

Both Detroit and Flint's accounts of water exhibit a clear connection to one another through an all too historically material and concretely matter-forming violence against racialized bodies; however, more than this, molecular discourses of water and contamination interact with, or even co-constitute, the discourses of cultural resistance. This resistance puts pressure on media coverage of events *as* punctuated crises divorced from a history of racial violence. Cities' and businesses' justification of shut-offs or lack of clean water through a rhetoric of uncontainable contagion and/or unworthy debtors makes some lives culturally "matter" more than others by cutting off or making poisonous the literal matter necessary for those lives to continue. Such a denial regulates literal matter (shut-offs) or codes it as unpredictable (lead poisoning), which merges violence at the

biological level with a historically material process of producing and expanding capital in postindustrial, neoliberal landscapes. This process happens through policies that allow corporate businesses to remain in that landscape by eliding their own water debt while making it impossible for residents themselves to access life-sustaining water if they stay. Using water regulation to remove Detroit or Flint residents while providing water to businesses so that they stay and grow requires that residential populations become culturally signified as what Grace Kyungwon Hong terms "existential surplus." For Hong, this is a turn specific to finance capital. It signifies how surplus used to be valued as a form of cheap labor, but in the pending ecological apocalypse becomes valued precisely in its socio-cultural "valuelessness[47]," which enables a biopolitical "let die" side to dominant populations' imperatives to "make live." Hong re-materializes that abstraction of lives required culturally for the existential valuelessness to function, and Flint's water poisonings become one such site of re-materialization. More colloquially, existential surplus makes some residents not "matter" enough to be granted the literal "matter" of water, making them valuable to capital precisely because they cannot pay the water bill, and in having their water shut-off, will be forced to move or have their health imperiled. Residents thus become signified as the speculated collateral of postindustrial waste's risk, a logic that makes room for gentrification and business expansion. In this circumstance, racialization in the era of finance capital happens in part through the privatization of water and its ability to value different populations in capital precisely because they can be made valueless.

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[47]." This builds on Chapter 1, where I expand on Hong's point that, the contemporary moment is "organized around speculation as well as production" to create "populations [that] are divided into valued and devalued, those whose lives are protectable and those whose lives are not. To be 'surplus' in this moment is to be valueless, unprotectable, and vulnerable. This is not to say that they are unusable to capital; rather, their value to capital is exactly in their lack of value as labor. As Hong and Chapter 1 elaborate upon, this ensures that "under neoliberalism, certain populations (such as those whose most valuable function in the global economy is to be worthless enough to live among nuclear waste) are most valuable because they are worthless." (Hong loc 1366-1373)

Water becomes a crucial nexus, then, for thinking about how matter forms and informs accounts of agency and violence in this process of emptying a city for corporate and gentrification interests. Those who wield control over water, including corporations such as GM, are given the status of transparent, white, patriarchal subjecthood as a cultural construct of the ideal "Human" that carries on through posthuman representations such as in *OLLA*. This status presumes access to clean water, whereas those who are subject to poisoning or are not in a place to control water become articulated as less than this ideal of self-possessed, property-owning, and financially (re)productive "Human." That worthiness, or "mattering" enough to achieve human or posthuman experiential and representational status is tied to how the residents are historically portrayed as lacking self-ownership and regulation (cannot work enough independently to afford water bills and/or are subject to local factory outsourcing). In a similar logic of self and property, they are blamed for outdated property ownership (corroded residential pipes or foreclosures). As a result, the already racialized residents are made to bear the risk even as they become the representations of it. This paradox happens in part because of the cultural significations of water that forget its fundamental function at the molecular level for making and sustaining life.

Such a shift in attention is the molecular register of an otherwise modern biopolitical violence. One aspect of molecular biopolitical theory crucial to water's literal and figurative "mattering" is the history of the sciences and their turn toward the "molecularization of life," which needs to be surfaced in order to contextualize how the life sciences work in tandem with finance capital to racialize bodies. Bruce Braun explains the molecularization of life as a cultural and political turn to how, in the 1930s, "biology came to visualize life phenomena at the submicroscopic region" (13–14). This molecularization of life frames living matter as inherently unpredictable and visible

only through mechanical assistance.[48] According to Braun, with this shift in the life sciences, ideas of the human as a species that depend on "[understanding] the body in terms of genetic inheritance" (6) and its external visual appearance were thrown into crisis. The life sciences made a new question its focal point, which can be articulated with the social and political turn to finance capital and risk management: when "risk becomes individualized…and ethical practices 'increasingly take the body as a key site for work on the self'" (11), who is read as "[possessing] a body" that they can narrate as discrete and self-regulating? It is here that Hortense Spillers' critiques of the ontologically "whole" and "possessed" body bring forward the problems of racial capital into Braun and Gilroy.[49]

Articulating these theorists together opens more directly onto the sites of racialized violence in Detroit and Flint's water crises. According to Spillers, the violated flesh of the captive, Black female slave body becomes the site foundational to the property relations built into possessing a legible, discrete body of patrilineal kinship. Spillers marks in this site a hieroglyphics of the flesh. Such hieroglyphics bear the narrative and grammar of the otherwise disavowed violence and suffering integral to the make-up of a present tense's narrative and grammar for white, heteropatriarchal history, as well as its otherwise possibilities for living (75–76). When a hieroglyphics of the flesh exists within the context of the life sciences' post-racial slavery rhetoric of capitalist and biological risk management at the molecular unit of life, otherwise possibilities proliferate as resistance to that violence. In this section, otherwise possibilities build on Ashon Crawley's work surfaced in the Introduction to create more "deviant" grammars. The use of

[48] Braun expands outward from this transition in the life sciences to discuss the geopolitical implications for realizing unpredictable contagions can escape immediate visual surveillance. Part of this attention is the sudden recognition of how life at *both* the microbial and molecular levels is unlimited in its capacity for evolving and crossing bodily and geological boundaries (6).

[49] This question opens to how realizations and subsequent surveillance of the molecular life of bodily and geographic boundaries can challenge ideas of discretely boundaried bodies and nation-states – ideas that undergird heteropatriarchal property transfer in the life sciences.

"deviant," here, builds on Spillers' promise of what alternative grammar might be found in the hieroglyphics, and it refers to Lisa Cacho's take on the promising "politics of deviance":

> A politics of deviance makes sense of *deviations from the norm* differently rather than defensively. Such a politics would neither pathologize deviance nor focus most of its energies on trying to rationalize why people choose deviant practice over proper behavior. Rather than repudiating nonnormative behavior and ways of being, we would read nonnormative activities and attitudes as *forms of "definitional power" that have the potential to help us rethink how value is defined, parceled out, and withheld.* (Cacho 167, emphasis added)

By adding in the term "deviant life" to the molecularization of life, otherwise possibilities, and a hieroglyphics of the flesh, methods for protesting racial molecular biopolitics arise that insist on the mattering of lives at the level of the flesh's relationship *to* life and its molecular registers – including water. More shortly, "deviant life" becomes one option many within an attention to otherwise possibilities. This articulation adds a queer feminist analytic to Gilroy's critical theory of race in the age of molecularization, enabling a more capacious critique of property relations. Flint protests can thus take up the molecular against itself to use Cacho's concept of "deviant life" as a hieroglyphics of the flesh. These hieroglyphics refuse to recuperate normative values of the discretely boundaried, propertied, white, heteropatriarchal body. As a result, they provide deviations that also reveal the otherwise disavowed intimacies between finance capital's logic of risk management and life sciences' attention to the molecular level of life mattering.

The water crises in Flint and Detroit are sites where protests attest to such a deviant mattering in part by making the molecular level undeniably visible through photography. Both sites also mark a discourse of bodies understood less "in terms of their intrinsic genetic essence…and more in terms of a global economy of exchange and circulation, where the body is thrown into a

chaotic and unpredictable molecular world filled with emergent yet unspecified risks" (Braun 7). In other words, they mark sites of resistance to understanding the body through a cultural lens for race that disavows how molecular levels of life are wielded against those bodies in rhetorics of risk management and contagion. From this co-articulation of the molecular with neoliberalism (self-contained individuals who can own clean water through their labor value) and postindustrialism (that labor becoming unavailable through factory outsourcing while companies purchase their own water reserves), self-possessive individualism coincides with surveillance and security in the name of free trade for economic growth (GM's water purchase). The postindustrial, capitalistic, neoliberal framework marks the residents as undeserving of clean water, merging cultural and literal meanings of "matter" through a disavowal of governance's molecular levels. In accounts such as Flint and Detroit, the merging implicates the violent justifications used for who gets to have management over water or be exposed to ecological "slow violence" (Nixon 2-3) from postindustrialization.

In the literal sense, the companies exposed to lead or behind on water bills can obtain clean water for themselves by making residents bear the violence of corroded pipes or the shut-offs from delinquent bills. They justified this shift of responsibility from themselves to residents through the financial ability to pay for the element of life itself. Such a rhetorical move relegates the bearers of shut-off or toxic water to a proscribed role of simultaneously not mattering and not being able to petition to matter. Those without clean, affordable water are paradoxically made to first obtain the very condition itself for staking a claim *to* the right to water: cultural legibility as self-possessed individuals from the molecular level of water to that of water being a financial resource. Erasing the paradoxical conditions for obtaining water disavows the historical criminalization of communities of color in both Flint and Detroit, urban areas where communities of color are "believed to be subjected to their natural and man-made environments." The erasure also disavows how "people of color are represented as products of environments that are identified as the cause, rationale, and

evidence not only for a population's inability to access political and economic equality but also for its vulnerability to state-sanctioned violence" (Cacho 73). In the case of water, the process of criminalization and its after effects is reduced to the necessary biological substance of life itself. Turning to the unit of life itself creates the ruse of separating the violence against communities of color from its historical moorings. This ruse is predicated on merging a scientific understanding of molecular life management with a cultural material practice of racialized life management. As Gilroy notes, "Now that the microscopic has yielded so comprehensively to the molecular…. Screens rather than lenses now mediate the pursuit of bodily truths" (37). For Gilroy, this means that there is a shift from the scientific to the capitalist circulation of bodies through mass media production. Flint provides a site where the two forms of lens and screen – camera and medical, or cultural finance capital and life science – are joined to create a more insidious mode of racialization that incorporates the violence named by Gilroy, but by functioning as human-making in the paradoxical hyper-surveillance and a refusal to survey.

**Molecular Biopolitical Surveillance**

As a concrete example of the cruel, paradoxical conditions for obtaining clean water, General Motors' ability to quickly change water sources when its machine parts become corroded both underscores and contrasts the corrosion of Flint residents' literal flesh. Residents for whom new pipes and water sources are not procured exhibit a molecular biopolitical account of Spillers' description of enfleshment. Spillers' account of the flesh claims that racializing apparatuses of property and kinship are made possible by the "undecipherable markings on the captive body [that] render a kind of hieroglyphics of *the flesh,* whose severe disjuncture come to be *hidden to the cultural seeing by skin color*" (67, emphasis added)[50]. The moment that machine corrosion grants a company

[50] While chapter 3's analysis of pop culture resistance examines the patrilineal implications further in a queer and feminist of color critique, here, the reverberations of optic regimes and non-optic dimensions of enfleshment can be co-

access to clean water contrasts how flesh corrosion goes unseen due to a cultural process of justifying the conditions for the violence. This opens to the first site of analysis and deviation from the norms imposing those conditions: a Detroit News image of a lead-poisoned hand from a Flint resident in contrast to an array of portraits of children's faces looking "at" the viewer. As a closer analysis of the two photographs protesting the Flint crisis will argue, the self-portrait of the hand, in contrast to the photographic campaign of families, renders present and visible a molecular hieroglyphics of the flesh that is otherwise culturally unseen via racialization. As a result, the differences between the two types of photographs raise questions about historical racialization through the regulation of clean, affordable water. The differences between the photographs also elucidate a discourse of disability within molecular biopolitical racialization. The photographs throw into relief a historical process of valuing the bodies of the residents through normative standards of "ability" that are co-articulated with race and gender to construct normative categories of human.

Examining the protests from this lens requires accounting for the role of disability in perceiving bodies as normative enough for protection or not. The historical relationship between rhetorics of disability and race differentially values bodies according to how they are articulated as nonnormative. When a body is perceived as nonnormative, it is labeled "disabled," and "disability is the language of devaluation, contagion, and control" (Cacho 69). This language returns us to the site of water poison or regulation through hyper-surveillance and risk management, as well as the violence of its racialization. In looking toward sites of presenting enfleshment as an effective protest that contradicts normative body and reproductive life valuing, the photographs also surface how the right to clean water access is regulated by coding some populations as vestibules for contagion and risk. Such coding happens in part because of their exposure to the risky mater itself. How, then, is

articulated with Gilroy's metaphor for raciology as "a lingering effect of looking too casually into the damaging glare emanating from colonial conflicts at home and abroad" (37).

the self-positioned image of the infected flesh from lead poisoning an intentional affront to a gaze that would otherwise seek out a "[recuperation] of social value [which] requires rejecting the other Other" (Cacho 17)? The photograph implicates the disavowed conditions for mattering enough to request water in the first place, and it does this partly by foregrounding enfleshment and molecularized violence. Reading the photograph this way insists upon the historical violence as it is perpetuated in the present. Finally, then, how does the self-portrait refuse to be a vestibule for reassuring whiteness of its violent norms, and in the process, refuse to be fetishized to recuperate the very norms that create the conditions for such violence?

In the first image, a Flint resident, Carolyn Doshie, holds her palm to the camera lens so that the shot's focus is on the lesions growing from her repeated contact with lead (see Figure 2.1). Ironically, the article in which this image appears is entitled, "Flint Faces: she says lesion started after water switch." The title emphasizes an imperative to classically humanize through an insistence on recognizable face and capacity for legible speech. Carolyn, however, puts her hand in front of her face, closes her eyes, and then "speaks" of the affective and physical suffering in a quote: "I never had no skin issues…. It hurts. It's cracked open and everything." In both her body's position for the camera and her quotes for the interview, she insistently foregrounds the material reality of her enfleshment and its pain and suffering. She refuses recourse to humanistic reinstatements of holistic embodiment, facial recognizability, or appeals to innocence and reproductivity, reminding the viewer that the pain itself should matter. Carolyn presents the material hieroglyphics of her flesh and speaks to her lived experience in the pain of its rupture as what should matter enough. The image does not assuage an audience of complicity, nor does it reinstate a desire for white, propertied, patriarchal norms so much as for less pain. Such a request, as her hand insists, should not require recourse to the heteropatriarchal legibility of futurity, innocence, and reproduction as the idealized subject. This refusal is reinforced by the choice to blur the background so that the present suffering is

*Figure 2.1:*

The caption from the Detroit Free Press online news article, retrieved from http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/flint-water-crisis/2016/01/23/flint-faces-she-says-lesion-started-after-water-switch/79232516/ on 12 Mar 2016, says, "Carolyn Doshie, 46, shows off the sore on her right hand that she says started showing up in July after washing her hands in the tap water in her Flint home. She picked up bottled water at a Flint fire station on Sat., Jan. 23, 2016." (Photo: Eric Seals Detroit Free Press)

foregrounded – a present that also insistently signifies an otherwise disavowed historical process producing that moment's suffering.

The visual, material, and virtual elements of Doshie's quoted phrase, "and everything" after the "it hurts," differ notably from the portraits created by suburban Rochester, MI photographers, Andrew Krupp and Pamela Bratton-Wallace Krupp, entitled: "Voices Seen, Voice Heard - The Children of Flint." Krupp and Bratton-Wallace Krupp's photographs of Flint children's faces appeal to a culturally available similitude of innocence and normative family structures, as well as foreground reassuring happiness in place of suffering (see Figure 2.2). This reinstates a culturally

*Figure 2.2:*

The Detroit Free Press online news article, retrieved from http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/columnists/mike-thompson/2016/03/06/protesters-aim-keep-spotlight-flint-kids/81417392/, on 13 March 2016, says, "Demonstrators outside the Democratic debate in Flint hold photos of Flint children affected by the Flint water crisis." (Photo: Mike Thompson/Detroit Free Press)

dominant conception of the "human" face of the tragedy: the reproductive moral of children as the only innocent bearers of contamination. It also makes the material violence and its historical lineage invisible in favor of a reassuring portrait of visible race. In contrast, Carolyn's hand insists on the flesh itself as materially violated and violently transformed through suffering. The suffering hand attests to the material violence against racialized bodies. It also implicates the viewer by returning to the site of Spiller's work on the black female slave body as a vestibule for personhood and reproductive respectability. Carolyn's image refuses to recuperate the "fantasy sentiment, and desire in literature and popular culture [to] produce the contours of intimacy that mediate the individual's inhabiting of everyday life in social relations" (Lowe 21). That is, she refuses to replicate the media

portrayal of normative accounts of intimacy as the standard for being a protected life. She also refuses to make invisible or fetishize the physical suffering of those who are violently affected. In doing so, the photograph argues against a molecularization of "the human" as being discretely boundaried and reproducing normative values for happiness. Instead, it deconstructs the racist premises of such visuals as necessary for protection from violence. This also means that the photograph refuses the fantasy desire for normative accounts of intimacy. More normative accounts, such as the photographic campaign of smiling families, and, in this chapter's earlier analysis, popular films such as *OLLA*, would disavow the violence of less narrativized and legible intimacies, such as water contaminating homes and publics across territorialized (post)industrialization, as well as the porousness of residents and viewers of the event alike.

This is also in contrast to Krupp and Bratton-Wallace Krupp's "Voices Seen, Voices Heard," where the title calls on speech and faces to garner sympathy. This photographic and aural move depends upon the recognizability and legibility of the faces to do the performative, sonic work of translating the Flint emergency into one of human reproductive value. The dependence on visual and aural legibility in the photography campaign is in stark contrast to the refusal to participate in normative legibility and its counter-insistence of attesting to enfleshment itself. The legibility implied by the emphasis on hearing and seeing a coherent message depends upon its co-production of the potential, "proper" intimacy of the family units that the photographs recuperate. This campaign, in other words, brings together capitalist property logics in Gilroy's analysis of how "the body is being imaged in approaches to health and disease, which have a paramount importance in the workings of contemporary culture" (43). The photographs' reassuring happiness through smiling faces and their heteroreproductive futurity through patriarchal family units attempt to belie any of the "risk" that contamination would imply in part through racialization. This taking up of the molecular, as well as the scientific and media "lenses" for seeing by skin color, demonstrates how the molecular register

itself is not necessarily a proliferation of resistance to consolidated and holistic human subjectivity. Recognizing how life functions at the molecular level can be co-opted and even support capitalist biopolitical reproductive logics. It can be tooled for violent raciologies that, on the surface, circulate "happiness" as the central affect produced within heteroreproductive units – even as, and precisely to elide, how those units can create the grounds for ongoing violence. The intimacy of the portraits, in other words, sustains itself and the cultural structures that created the Flint water poisoning by erasing the potential violence of cross-material intimacies. It also elides how that violence disproportionately and materially impacts those not recuperated within a heteropatriarchal, propertied logic of deciding who "matters." Those same logics also code differing forms and modes of protest as "legible" or "illegible." This also recalls *OLLA* as one such simultaneous posthumanist legibility and erasure.

Disciplinary power in the Foucauldian sense produces the illegible. As Cacho frames it, "because…different disciplinary apparatuses connect and converge with one another but not completely…, disciplinary power will always produce 'something like a residue. … There is always something like 'the unclassifiable'" (68), which Cacho also calls the illegible. The apparatuses of kinship (the phallogocentric symbolic order of transferring property) and property relations (the right to privatize the water or regulate it because of that symbolic order) converge as a legible grammar, such as in the photography campaign. This legibility derives its meaning from what is coded as illegible, which in Spillers' analysis of the Black female slave's body is the hieroglyphics of the flesh. Enfleshment becomes both the condition for cultural legibility and a counter-site of illegibility or hieroglyphics. Hieroglyphics of the flesh, then, become the violently material pre-condition for postmodern abstractions that would romanticize the molecular sites' illegibility and refusal of meaning by de-historicizing its violent grounds. This analytic framework comes forward in how Carolyn attests to enfleshment and in her insistence that this should be enough to evoke an

ethical response. Carolyn's hieroglyphics are an effective protest of matter's violence when poisoned or privatized precisely because they are "indecipherable." They are the by-products of the molecular level of life being instrumentalized for or against populations that culturally "matter" or not. Yet, the lesions insist on the historical violence itself and who it targets. While they are coded partially as indecipherable under the life sciences' logics, which coincide with biopolitical cultural values, the lesions themselves are used to make hyper visible the historical "materials" being used to racialize and expose certain people to precarity.

The photography campaign, in contrast, makes that violence "hidden to cultural seeing by skin color" (Spillers 67) as it recuperates the phallogocentric symbolic order and its legibility. Recuperation in these photographs happens through a focus on lives being valuable if they represent normative property and kinship ideals, as well as keeping the molecular violence invisible through the smiling faces of participants. Disavowing the molecularization of life's impact on the process of racializing and exposing to violence is also a way of falsely separating the cultural idea of race from the scientific material violence of racializing. [51]Gilroy argues that the turn to the molecular and scientific creates a space for critiquing how "the time of 'race' may be coming to a close even while racisms appear to proliferate." This, according to Gilroy, creates an opportunity to seize on this de-racializing to do away with the violence of racial thinking: he de-historicizes the relationship between that thinking and universal humanisms when he posits a postracial humanism as the solution. In this way, he inadvertently recuperates a form of seeing by skin color that claims the mattering of the racialized bodies is dependent on recuperating the logic of "human" itself in both lenses of imaging,

[51]Gilroy also makes an argument around how molecularization has now shifted into a different form of medical imaging: "Both have extensive ontological implications. Bodies are now routinely opened up to new forms of scrutiny by multidimensional medical imaging that uses ultrasound and electromagnetic radiation as well as light, natural and artificial" (Gilroy 37).

and he perhaps does this in part by not historicizing universal humanisms' gendered relationship to property relations in addition to its race-making relationship.

Here, though, that disavowal implies that Flint's violence is racial in the "skin color" sense by appealing to their otherwise normatively comprised family, kinship, and happiness structures. In other words, the photographs imply that viewers should care only insofar as they perpetuate colorblind ethics willing to erase the historically foundational role of racial violence to creating and protecting the white, heteropatriarchal property and kinship norms that enacted the violence in the first place. At the same time, Carolyn attesting to the flesh itself presents a challenge to the narratives of normative progress in linear, historical time. Her image potentially (insert footnote on Brian's note) confronts the self-contained, self-improving narrative of the neoliberal individual deemed worthy of clean water and divorced from a history of racial violence. Her witnessing to the violence without recuperating or instrumentalizing her own body for exchangeable property or confirmation of that order's logic insists upon the history – racial slavery – that partially constructs this moment of violence. It is in opposition to the culturally iconographic bodies that reinstate exclusionary ideals of human and personhood to decide who "deserves" clean and affordable water. The attestment to this history also confronts the "crisis" narrative of Flint that would elide the historical violence being perpetuated through the event. Erasing this history is an attempt to narrate the event as punctuation within the line of a larger narrative of improvement, that improvement requiring a disavowal of present capital and racial molecular biopolitical foundations in racial slavery. In other words, Carolyn's attestment to the violence against her flesh is also an insistence on how racial violence has functioned to converge with a present "matter," privatized water and therefore regulation of life itself. It is important to note, here, that this is also not to return "Blackness" to a state of abjection or as a marker of violence or aberration, which the next chapter argues against. Before moving on to more effective antiracist posthumanist world-building, though, this reading

hopefully begins by accounting for and historicizing the violence that attempts to erase that world-building work to find more productive deviations.

Water traverses the "imperial notions of privacy and publicity" (Lowe 30) and attests to enfleshment when that traversal is for privileging racist and criminalizing goals. It also reveals the intimacies that regulate those spaces, as well as the violence that a capitalist regulation of water produces. These molecular sites also operate on a cultural level, akin to Lowe's analysis of how the category of the human becomes prematurely limited.[52] Water especially can belie the cultural construction of "racial differences and distinctions [that] designate the boundaries of the human and endure as remainders attesting to the violence of liberal universality" (Lowe 7). It can instead point to the possibilities of attesting to the violence of disavowed intimacies across materials and species, as well as the imminent, unknowable possibilities of deploying such intimacies. These deviant, otherwise possibilities are present in Carolyn's presentation of her hand and its hieroglyphics, and they signal genres of the human that historicize the categories of normative universalization instead of memorializing that history as the past. Mourning an action as secured in the past permits speculation of virtual, universalizable futures that the close-up, lesioned hand and closed-eyes face in the background refuse. In the United States, American-ness depends precisely upon the imagined contradiction of a population lacking access to clean drinking water and health care inter-territorially to sustain its production of existential surplus as one of that population's own choices (a narrative Carolyn's hand to camera refuses, whereas the privileging of childhood, innocent victims' faces reproduces).

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[52] Cacho especially develops this as a problem endemic to humanism in the philosophical genealogy as much as in both social and life scientific speciesist genealogies: "…as modern liberalism defined the 'human' and universalized its attributes to European man, it simultaneously differentiated populations in the colonies as less than human…in the very claim to define humanity, as a species or as a condition, its gestures of definition divide the human and the nonhuman, to classify the normative and pathologize deviance." (Cacho 6, emphasis added)

The question of management over space is one also about the water that seeps into the home or domestic space. Flint enfleshment hosts questions about who should have management over their bodies' molecular modification and the manifestations of sometimes illegible physical suffering. Privatized water operates discursively at the site of the individual who makes "choices" about their wellbeing and takes responsibility for it within the home. This site is co-constituted by seeming to be the opposite of a corporation as "someone" who can purchase that safety for their objects/machines or state-sanctioned public spaces. Both, though, depend on the same structures of property ownership and transferal to be granted life-sustaining matter. However, what is disavowed in the narrative of liberal humanist individualism is how such choices operate within a set of conditions, two of which Carolyn's hand, as opposed to the photography campaign, reveal. One is the traversal between public and private as formally upholding the boundaries for white, heteropatriarchal notions of human-making individualism. This individualism is secured by seeming to possess control over a discrete body and genetic inheritance that can anticipate future risk and "invest" in boundaries against the contamination of water and nonhuman-borne illness. The condition manifests in footage of Flint homes as outdated hosts of lead poisoning due to its inhabitants not being normatively productive enough to purchase updated homes. It also manifests in children's "pure" faces as the only "innocent" bearers of the violence and proper inheritors of the heteropatriarchal ideal and its protections.

The second condition is a disavowal of the historical violence against the flesh that renders it as contaminant itself when born on water (the middle passage) to be commodified as less than human. Such a disavowal of violence against material flesh also carries the genealogy of the "other" to undergird who does get to ascribe to self-possessed, humanist, holistically bodied individualism. These conditions both depend upon slavery and "kinship" as a "property relation" (Spillers 74), which intersects with cultural and literal notions of access to life-sustaining matter as opposed to

withholding, drowning in, or poisoning matter. Race and racism haunt these conditions, and a resistance refuses to see the ongoing social and literal death as an ending that will pave the way for gentrification and businesses. Instead, protests insist on how death can begin a "haunting" that resists that violence and negates neoliberal improvement narratives by conversing (Hong loc 629) with the present via the all too material inscriptions of flesh.

Gilroy begins materializing and historicizing work when he argues that the transition from dermo-politics, to biopolitics, to nanopolitics occurs where “the body becomes absolutely penetrable, and is refigured as the transient, epiphenomenon of coded invisible information.” He makes the case that “aesthetic, that gaze, and that regime of power are irrecoverably over…. The boundaries of ‘race’ have moved across the threshold of the skin” so that they are now “cellular and molecular, not dermal” (47). I argue that a hieroglyphics of the flesh, when articulated with the molecular, takes the dermal in contemporary and materialized relationships between water and race to bring to bear the molecular’s biopolitical accounts of transcorporeal relations between water and racialized human status anew. Flint and Detroit’s accounts attest to what would otherwise be read as invisible or as death itself, literal and social, which opens to the posthumanist critique available in *OLLA*. In addition to this molecular haunting, then, water and its poisoning produce the enfleshment of capital's risks themselves. The haunting critiques “aliveness” as well as “death” in relation to this molecularization of life and figurations of death in the ecological apocalypse of water poisonings and shortages. Carolyn’s presentation of enfleshment thus insists on revealing the cultural and material dimensions of normative contagion and poison narratives, or human and posthuman livability, of water access and composition, in the molecularizations of life.

**Racial Molecular Biopolitics and Genres of the Human in Postindustrial Landscapes**

As Carolyn’s hand demonstrates, deviations from the norms that enact racial violence cannot be to make a case for genres of the human that obtain recognizable human status under a logic that

reinscribes cultural ideals of what counts as human enough for legal protection and rights. While Gilroy's deployment of a postracial humanism does account for a critique of such liberal humanist limitations, it still uncritically embraces humanism as a universal ideal without historicizing its relationship to raciologies, which leaves his postracial analytic open to re-inscribing race as a violent, capitalistic marker of hierarchized life. Such a reinscription returns the analytic framework to one of property relations and by extension racial slavery. However, "the Human" as the privileged category, as well as its counterpart of "no humans," are not the only options for living matter that "matters." Alternatives do not necessarily need to draw recourse to legibility as personhood or wholesale rejection of personhood. Other options include Sylvia Wynter's concept of "genres of the human" that refuse to add up to and reinforce the violence that declares one category of human biologically protectable while disavowing its cultural formations and exposing other humans to pre-mature precarity. While the next chapter explores how genres of the human might activate de-colonial and Black feminist and queer praxes more effectively than postracial humanisms, here, the concept can be indexed for thinking about molecularized resistance. Local, self-fashioned news images, such as the close-up of Carolyn's hand, insist that particular lives "matter" through an attestment to living matter and porousness itself – even at units comprising the flesh. It insists that the attempt to dehumanize in fact only points to the never-ending multiplicity of humanity that does not always culturally re-inscribe the normative boundaries around the category nor signify the strict life/death binary. Carolyn's hand provides a theory that is undeniably grounded in the material as well as the historical. Her statement points out that a "mind over matter" approach to transcendental, property-derived human relations is another way of erasing how physical violence against the "matter" of many humans is indicative of how those humans' lives do not culturally "matter."

A universalizing mode of molecular biopolitics that focuses exclusively on either the molecular sciences or the geopolitical, financial implications for those sciences, such as Braun's, also

disavows the violence of the particular, historical conditions for qualifying as a worthwhile life. In contrast, the molecular site of a hieroglyphics of the flesh brings the past crashing into the present to insist upon those life-giving stakes. Racial molecular biopolitics, then, more effectively merges racial biopolitics with an analysis of how power functions at the units that most fascinate finance capital and the life sciences: the molecular levels of the life science's articulation of water and toxicity in relation to the capitalist, cultural justifications for unequally exposing populations to precarity. Even a historical materialist account of biopower that stops short at a cultural analysis of the individual and its co-extensive, whole body's enfleshment reinscribes a priority of the self-possessed individual or non-self-possessed individual, as well as discretely boundaried bodies. In biopolitics, self-contained, self-possessed bodies become the privileged mode of understanding and making epistemic a configuration of "the" human. Such a privileging negates the role of racial molecular biopolitical knowledge within both the life sciences and mass media, eliding justifications of slow violence and risk management that permit or even create crises. It also narrates those crises as episodic instead of participatory in a historical process. Ignoring the molecular level of violence recreates the cultural "non-seeing" of that violence and perpetuates the whole-bodied, dominant conception of "the Human" to be received as a naturalized entity.[53] This naturalization of "the Human" or even specific postracial humanisms partially creates the molecular levels of violence that racialize and gender via the flesh in the first place. In contrast, resistances to that violence and the

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[53] This argument depends especially on the rhetorics around property laid out in Chapter 1 and through Lisa Cacho's work. For more on this see Cacho's work on *Social Death*. A key point for this chapter is how, in "the legal protection of whiteness as a property interest worked to undermine hard-won civil rights" (Cacho 25), whiteness is partially created through property of water and molecular modes of life-making to determine what life is viable. This viability is based on racializing those who cannot "own" water itself as a necessary part of a livable life. This is whiteness as a property owner of water, which is owner of life itself at even the building blocks for catalyzing matter into life itself. In this way, utility bills – "earning" the right to "pay" for clean water and electricity – are naturalized as a matter of financial and livable choices. Here, articulating Braun and Cacho together reveals how it is the narrowing of health as a "matter of individual rather than state responsibility [wherein] citizens are asked to take responsibility for securing their own wellbeing, through…private health insurance…genetic counseling…the intersection of the molecularization of life with the individualization of risk" (Braun 11).

insistent attestments to its material, historically grounded realities offer alternative modes for valuing humanity.

A biopolitics that stops at the flesh of a body, then, also erases some of the material and historical violences that shape such a knowledge of what counts as a "proper" body. Biopolitical power co-articulated with gender, sex, race, and disability (Cacho 69, Kafer 2)[54] reveals the violence of such knowledge when it also accounts for "the molecularization of life" (Braun 6). Chapter 4 will examine in more detail this co-articulation of race and disability in millennial iterations of postmodern analytics. Here, though, thinking at the molecular level can challenge dominant theories of biopower and reveal how using the individual's body and even its flesh as the smallest scale privileges a particular, visual construct of bodies. More shortly: such individualization of risk and health management allows those at risk to be seen as the risk. The privatization of molecular building blocks to livability, even when not the molecules constructing DNA itself or its sequencing, are coded as natural property rights, or survival of the best self-possessed. This is especially true as the privatization disavows how race itself is still culturally coded as biological in the U.S. at the level of these basic units of life. It is an attempt through property relations to limit the possibilities, again, culturally coded as uncontrollably natural, of what life is produced spontaneously and continuously through the basic, always unharnessable components of life itself, including water

Gilroy argues, "Genomics may send out the signal to reify 'race' as code and information, but there is a sense in which it also points toward 'race's' overcoming," and, I would add, to

[54] Lisa Cacho is one of the few explicit Black studies scholars in the contemporary moment explicitly theorizing disability and race as co-formations. See her chapter in *Social Death* for her archival work in arguing how the two are entwined, which is a catalyzing argument in this dissertation for Chapter 4. A key example from Cacho's work: "Disease and disability figure centrally whenever there is the need to represent state-sanctioned violence as necessary for national survival. Disability is the language of devaluation, contagion, and control. Metaphors of disease and infection are scattered throughout the 1997 Senate Hearing….Gang membership registered as dangerously viral, remaking victims of poverty into pathogens targeted for eradication. Because they were evolutionary markers of disability or incapacity, race, culture, and world region were central to the scientific production of bodily difference as a signifier for legitimate discrimination." (Cacho 69)

humanistic thinking's overcoming, which is integral to the construct of race in capitalist kinship relations and property transfer. For, "as the smaller than microscopic scales that open up the body for scrutiny today, 'race' becomes less meaningful, compelling, or salient to the basic tasks of healing and protecting ourselves," in turn, the "anachronistic condition of the idea of 'race' as the basis upon which human beings are distinguished and marked" might instead create an antiracist posthumanism critical of the molecular's dehistoricized and humanist recruitments. Historicizing the molecular can challenge traditional sites of resistance while also attesting to disavowed and, to use Cacho's framework, deviant modes of valuing life. Carolyn's hand attests to the racial molecular biopolitics that can be used as a framework to account for the violence of water regulation and privatization in both Flint and Detroit. This can at once account for the neoliberal pseudo-scientific logic that justifies the violence while also getting closer to the productive deviations from those logics.

If molecularization is a mode of geneticizing inheritance through the biological sciences, then it is also a deployment of power to racialize bodies and make surplus populations through a rhetoric that biologizes and naturalizes race once more via property and kinship relations. This shift in how knowledge of the life sciences moves forward becomes simultaneously culturally constructed and justified through apparatuses such as hyper-surveillance and anticipation of possibilities at the molecular levels considered "invisible to the naked eye." This is not a new turn – Melinda Cooper points out in her work on biotechnology and capitalism in the neoliberal era that Foucault has already argued how "the development of the modern life sciences and classical political economy should be understood as parallel and mutually constitutive events" (Cooper 5). The shift to this knowledge is not epochal, nor in line with a linear account of history and biopolitics, nor even with the era of finance capital.

Foucault, again, has already provided an in-depth analysis of "strategies invented by the state…as a means of organizing the temporal processes of reproduction, disease, and mortality," and he argues that such strategies "are inseparable from the development of the mathematics of risk and statistical normalization" (Cooper 7). Gilroy adds onto this the eerily "anachronistic" (37) element of raciologies permeating the different epochs of biopower to construct them anew while retaining their residual markers. Attending to the material sites of this violence, such as Detroit and Flint, and more specifically, the residents themselves marks how the bodies are foreclosed as "mattering" by being transformed *into* the threat against the GM plant's auto parts corrosion and urban business expansion and gentrification. This fear of contagion, then, is also a way of justifying the deployment of toxins or contagions against those bodies and has been since at least the racial slavery in Spillers' hieroglyphics of the flesh. As the next section of this chapter will argue, the portrayal of water as a neutral resource in this violence, as well as apathetic representations of vitality through achronistic posthumanism in apocalypse narratives, are key cultural conduits that similarly suture the matter/matters. Such neoliberal projects participate in disavowals of the ecological apocalypse across postmodern and millennial texts as historically based on the cultural subjugation of antiracist posthumanisms.

Braun attends to how the molecularization of life is used to construct populations through anxiety around vector-born global contagions. Adding onto Braun, such anxiety reveals how populations are biologized and made valuable precisely in, as Hong would put it, their valuelessness. When articulated together through close readings of contemporary ecological violence, such as Flint, an antiracist posthumanism might emerge as a counter-history and form of millennial and contemporary world building to combat the racial molecular biopolitics that would say Black lives do not "matter" by determining what counts as living, protectable "matter" in humanistic terms. Hong's concept of valuelessness becomes mobilized through Flint's capacity to expose some

populations to the ecological "slow violence" of failing to provide clean, affordable ecological resources. Deconstructing this violence requires a reconsideration of how scientific knowledge apprehends the molecular level of life as inherently unpredictable and insistently cross-boundaried while simultaneously trying to culturally construct certain bodies and spaces as closed off from this transgression. It enacts this through anticipation of living forms' possible futures, or the risk of attempts to cross those boundaries. The consequences include, as Gilroy has noted, naturalization at the molecular level of normative geo, cultural, and body boundary perceptions, from the discrete individual up to territorial states. In turn, that naturalization depends upon the disavowal and violent erasure of material existences that do and should matter – and that already do in more deviant proliferations of lives and knowledge.

The molecularization of life is also a focus on living matter itself now formally understood as inherently unpredictable. Yet, it is predictable enough in the pending postindustrial ecological disasters for the risks to be foreclosed for certain entities, such as suburban, predominantly white households, much less large businesses. This makes for a re-materialization of postmodern eco-knowledges that would elide the relationship between ecological theory and management with raciologies, as already outlined by Gilroy's historicization of the eugenicist conception of "ecology." The molecular violence in Flint demonstrates this, portrayed as a geopolitically unpredictable contagion through Flint's refusal to test the water and acknowledge its toxicity levels, but also in Detroit's refusal to examine the sociocultural, historical causes of water bill delinquencies and the water debt. Attestments to this history and violence by residents also bring up the questions about what might be or always is being produced that disrupts normative values of bodies or disavowals of physical violence.

**Toward an Antiracist Posthumanism**

How to move, then, from an uncritical embrace or neglect of "the human" in Gilroy's "postracial humanism" or *OLLA* abstracted becoming-inhuman posthumanism? What does an antiracist posthumanism look like when it historicizes the relationship between human-making and race-making in the shift to finance capital alongside the molecularization of life, and what does it mean to re-materialize the resistance of postmodern ideas around the inherent fragmentations and proliferations attendant to resources such as water? In the next chapter, I will turn to contemporary activist poetic texts that contrast the heteroreproductive normativity of Adam and Eve in these scenes of birth out of water, as well as the neoliberal, rights-bearing human rhetoric that sets life and death up as a binary that brackets normative, linear progression. I argue that these antiracist modes of world-building take "back" water both figuratively and literally without recourse to humanist property rhetorics or dominant posthumanist capitulations of apathetic, colorblind, neutral relationships to life and its necessary resources. This stems in part from specific historical sites of race and water, such as Detroit and Flint with their water shut-offs and poisonings. In the texts that follow, the urban space is unspecified, another contrast to *OLLA*'s distinct naming of Detroit, creating an opportunity to examine the decolonial, globalist implications in assessing the relationship between postmodernism, the life sciences, and cultural representations of finance capital. When such histories become re-materialized, so, too, does the violence of an uncritical posthumanism in *OLLA* come to the fore, especially through its placement of Detroit within a vague, global narrative of capital with nebulous historical formations and promising, gentrifiable futures. The more ambiguous urban spaces in the next chapter provide an analysis of the Detroit water shut-offs and Flint water poisonings that would otherwise attempt to isolate water and environmental resource violence as exceptions to the general rule. It is instead, as the next chapter insists, water's history in various urban and rural settings that expands to a national and globalized history of racial slavery and

colonialism. Thus, while *OLLA* romanticizes postindustrial and urban landscapes as a colorblind opportunity for Edenic gentrification and posthumanist humanity, it de-historicizes and de-materializes the violation and theft of racialized bodies, a violence that produces the neoliberal vampiric vitality.

A more careful account, then, of how humanisms leave their pernicious mark on neoliberal racist and antiracist critiques returns us to where this chapter began: the materialization of "the molecular" in its scientific, superstitious, and cultural place in forming the "what matters" in human matters of the pending ecological apocalypse. Whereas *OLLA* engulfs a critique of the rights-bearing human in its re-constitution of the category through water neutrality and apathetic vitality, an antiracist world-building, as I will next argue, historicizes the violent, racialized exclusions inherent to the category of "rights-bearing human" through water formations and hyper vitalities. Both *OLLA* and more effectively resistant texts thus engage with atemporal responses to neoliberal, racialized violence in variously urbanized spaces. These representations harken the all-too material history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade moving across water to now systemically shutting off water to increasing numbers of urban, often racialized residents of Detroit or poisoning the similarly politicize and racialized postindustrial spaces, such as Flint. What Carolyn's hand, in contrast to *OLLA* and "Faces Seen, Voices Heard" calls for, however, is a more careful historicization and accounting for the violence of "the lazy essentialisms that postmodern sages inform us we cannot escape" (Gilroy 53) before moving on to any uncritical postracial or posthuman account of a postmodern and eventually millennial turn.

However, this analysis of capital and the molecular through different "lenses" produces accounts of posthumanist possibility through their opposite relations – water neutrality and water formations – to water's historical role in producing the conditions for those possibilities. That is, while Gilroy might assert that "the order of active differentiation that gets called 'race' may be

modernity's most pernicious signature," what surfaces in a critical appraisal of that violent signifying is the postmodern re-construction of "the human" as it "articulates reason and unreason," but names itself as posthuman. What happens, then, when you add property, gender, and human formations onto the "toward death" of Gilroy's nanopolitics? As I will argue, it is through such re-materializations that postmodernism's "lazy abstractions" become complicated. It is "the human" in co-constitutive, violent concert with race that, through the molecular and finance capital, "knits together science and superstition. Its species ontologies are anything but spontaneous and natural." What water offers in such narratives, as highlighted in the echoes of "matter" in Black Lives Matter and protests around the Detroit water shut-offs and Flint water poisonings, is an undeniably material conduit for re-materializing and historicizing these simultaneous emergences. It becomes a critical pathway to assessing how these emergences avoid granting "the human" any kind of "immunity from prosecution amid the reveries of reflexivity and the comfortable forms of inertia induced by capitulation" to those lazy essentialisms, including the essentialisms of posthumanism and ecology (Gilroy 53). And so, while for some scholars these signatures are assigned merely to racialization, from an antiracist feminist and queer scholarship perspective, as the next chapter surfaces, that signature depends on the assumptions of constructing an ideal or universal "human." This illuminates the co-imbrications of "human" and "race" through molecularization and formation of living matter to direct us instead to the proliferative, antiracist posthuman possibilities that take what Christina Sharpe terms "wake work" as their praxis for building insurgent ground out of water and other ecological "matter."

# Chapter 3: Pop Culture and Poetry Coalitions from Water Formations and Hyper Vitality to Demonic Ground

"Because there can be terrible surprises, however, there can also be good ones. Hope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters and creates. Because the reader has room to realize that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did."

– Eve Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You," pg 146

**Introduction**

Chapter 3 extends the historical, critical groundwork on contemporary racial and gendered violence that, in Chapters 1 and 2, I argue are perpetuated through twinned finance capital and life science frameworks. This critical groundwork – an intentional building on Sylvia Wynter's concept of "demonic grounds" – suggests that new, coalitional modes of otherwise livability have not only begun but are ongoing and necessary work. More simply: if Chapters 1 and 2 suggest a pessimistic view of queer and non-white, much less "crip" livability in the aftermath of molecular life science and property frameworks, then Chapters 3 and 4 suggest a hopeful turn in the work not only to come, but already becoming. In Chapters 3 and 4, I argue that this hope critically responds to the intertwined violences already foregrounded in Chapters 1 – 2. That is: if these two chapters seem overly optimistic and generous in their close readings, this generosity presumes a critical, historical backdrop that already implicates ongoing complicity. This method builds on Eve Sedgwick's late work around paranoid and reparative reading practices. It is beyond this chapter's goals to outline the psychoanalytic contributions Sedgwick makes in the essay; however, I see her method suggesting ways forward that remain open to the plural, at times contradictory "possibilities" that I describe in the Introduction: the openness possible in Crawley's "otherwise possibilities" in antiracist posthumanist work.

Sedgwick articulates paranoid reading as totalizing critique that aims to anticipate and ward off the negative affects (and effects) a text produces: “the first imperative of paranoia is *There must be no bad surprises*….[Paranoid reading] is at once anticipatory and retroactive” (130, 145). This echoes with late capitalism’s own affective economy: that is, the assumption of risk that produces an anticipatory reflex to abstract, move, and protect ever more the accumulation of capital from that risk, as outlined in the previous chapter. It also echoes the early environmentalist rhetorics critiqued in Chapter 1, where Carson’s call to protect a secure “Man” and its relationship to a protected “environment” depends on seeing and anticipating the pain and rupture to come. In a similar to maneuver to the use of finance capital risk management through resources such as water in Chapter 2, “Paranoid theory makes claim to knowledge so totalizing that other possibilities for creative exploration are elided” (G. Diaz 203). Robert G. Diaz, in “Melancholic Maladies: Paranoid Ethics, Reparative Envy, And Asian American Critique,” builds here on Sedgwick’s description of paranoid reading in queer theory by explicating its stakes in critical race and gender studies. Diaz points out that if “[paranoid reading] is anticipatory, reflexive, and mimetic in nature” dependent on a “constant faith on what exposure can do,” then, “Is it possible that this reading maintains the seemingly dominant ‘whiteness’ it seeks to question, by assuming that it is a stabilized concept, that it can only be mimicked and never augmented” (203-204)? With scholars such as Diaz, I read reparative reading as way to creatively respond to the shared rhetorics of pre-emptive risk across paranoid reading practices, late capitalism, and dominant environmentalist rhetorics.

I see Sedgwick offering reparative reading in coalition with Crawley’s “otherwise possibilities,” Braidotti’s “critical posthuman,” and other maneuvers in critical race, gender, sexuality, affect and related fields towards the pluralistic possibilities in open-ended, hopeful reading. For example: Sedgwick posits reparative reading as creating “otherwise” admixtures of cultural objects by reading and coalitional building the hoped for world. In her analysis, she reads camp as

one example with its "the prodigal production of alternative historiographies; the 'over' attachment to fragmentary, marginal, waste or leftover products; the rich highly interruptive affective variety…the disorienting juxtapositions of present with past" (150). Again, camp is not the focus of this chapter; however, Sedgwick's dialectic of paranoid and reparative reading practices in queer theory undergirds this project's larger structure, since Sedgwick also suggests that an initial, even paranoid critique is what, paradoxically, makes possible materially nuanced reparative reading strategies. My turn to reparative reading strategies in these two chapters, then, risks initially seeming like its own totalizing "paranoid bad" and "reparative good" argument in of itself; however, the dialectic of the two is what enables materially nuanced and historically critical worldbuilding practices.

For instance: Sedgwick also, as Queer Affect scholar Heather Love argues, outlines how the modes not only necessitate one another, but are "inseparable," even "bound together by the glue of shared affect. Paranoia is a mode of anxiety about what might happen to you; reparation is also grounded in anxiety" (238). In kind, Diaz elaborates further on the dialectical relationship between Sedgwick's paranoid and reparative reading strategies:

> That is, practicing other ways of seeing systemic marginalization does not require a rejection of the materialities of this process. On the contrary, to move out of this dominant or 'strong' way of knowing allows us to pursue other resources, inter-psychic and intra-psychic, that co-inhabit a mode that can be limited by its a priori expectations. The point of a non-paranoid way of reading, and arguably a nonparanoid way of being, is not to admit that there isn't always an unforeseen danger to forestall. The point of a non-paranoid practice is to believe that the "performative effect" of one's actions, for example, the actual working through of one's material and structural limitations—sometimes even disentangled from the ethical questions of how one does this working through—carries invaluable properties that should never be easily dismissed. (17)

In Diaz's own essay, which I take up in greater length throughout Chapter 4's analysis of South Asian and Pacific Islander texts, this "performative effect" is made possible precisely because it builds on seeing the "materialities" of "systemic marginalization." It builds on this, though, to seek

out mode that is not already "limited by it's a priori expectations" in accessing the hoped-for, otherwise possibilities. If paranoid reading, then, resembles the affective language of finance capital and environmentalism around anticipating and foregrounding the risk it, in turn, creates, then reparative reading affirms strategies of creative in(ter)vention that disrupt this foreclosed relationship between past, present, and future violence. In this way, I read for complicity with systemic violence in Chapters 1 and 2 with the assumption that similar complicities arise in the following texts; however, in close reading for hopeful, otherwise possibilities, I take "part-objects" to read "disorienting juxtapositions" that might support "alternative historiographies." This is a methodological strategy for being in coalition with these texts by also building out the hoped for, otherwise worlds implicitly needed out in the face of near totalizing critique.

I turn, first, to one of the most famous and celebrated millennial stars, Beyoncé Knowles-Carter. This analysis then shifts to her contemporary and collaborator, Kendrick Lamar. In connecting these two pop culture icons and their ongoing, lived work for building coalitional, otherwise worlds, I seek out their otherwise representations of matter for living – water and air. They do this work by materializing their relationship to both material and immaterial livability. I am not arguing that these texts are inherently "good" compared to the prior chapter's "bad" ethics, so much as examining the under-studied, easily critiqued for its capitalist underpinnings popular culture icons that explicitly support activist movements such as #blacklivesmatter. I examine how these variously feminist and queer Black artists working in an explicitly antiracist and coalitional tradition, while problematic in their easy consumption and circulation, might also bear unexpected sites for creating activist poetics movements precisely because of their broad circulation in context with the otherwise niche field of print poetry. These two chapters also mark a methodological shift: in my close readings, I seek out possible reading practices that, in their interpretative strategies, participate in building otherwise worlds. More shortly, otherwise close readings become a critical and creative

strategy for suggesting hope. The danger in this method of analysis lies in the possible rendering of the texts as pure, noncomplicit emblems to follow. However, these texts all circulate within popularized poetry and pop culture frameworks that commodify and monetize the arts to create anew and sustain the very racializing apparatuses that they critique.

This critique of popular culture artifacts is a long-established strain within cultural studies: Paul Gilroy, for instance, a theorist my research repeatedly turns to as a touch stone analytic, explains through several close readings how resistance is commodified and recirculated to make Blackness synonymous to desired arts. Popular arts scholars are also engaging in this necessary critique in poetry. Most recently, for instance, Divya Victor wrote an article for The Poetry Foundation on how grief, trauma, and identity comfortably reinforce dominant property and identity analytics by producing, commodifying, and circulating marginalized identities in order assuage predominantly white audiences of anxiety and guilt around their complicity. The result is the commodification of the struggle itself, so that resistance to the dominant property and selfhood narratives becomes coopted and consumed easily within a globalized resistance. Poets in particular are discussing the recent return to short form lyric poetry that can be recirculated on social media to tell the "story" of a pained subjectivity. This corresponds to poets acquiring agents to become public personas, from Rupi Kauer being sold at Urban Outfitters to more seemingly niche poets, such as Danez Smith in this chapter being reachable only through a publicist's evaluation of how their appearance will net a longer term "product" out of the poet. In addition, this co-option of resistance arts has become a nationalist project, including the recent installment of not just a National Poet Laureate, but also National Youth Poet Laureate and a Young Youth Poet Laureate programs, with spoken word on combatting racism being performed at the Library of Congress. In this way, while poets are still not close to the trillion-dollar industry in which Beyoncé is worshipped and Kendrick Lamar given a Pulitzer Prize, they are part of a contemporary shift toward incorporating resistance

to state sanctioned violence as an officially antiracist and multicultural stance. As a prime example, in fact, Warsan Shire is a Somali and British poet of niche popularity, now widely shared on social media platforms for decrying migration and refugee violence precisely because Beyoncé hired her to write the spoken word portions of *Lemonade*, the audiovisual album I examine below. This cooption, in fact, exists at the heart of contemporary definition of neoliberalism itself, as explained in the Introduction to this chapter through Jodi Melamed.

While I read these texts, then, as offering unique, otherwise possibilities, part of those possibilities exist in the reading strategy itself – the refusal to foreclose meaning within a given set of reproductive value. This is a reparative reading practice that insists on the generative, coalitional, meaning-making potential of close reading texts for suggesting lexicons beyond the dominant norms, and in cultural studies scholarship, that includes focusing analysis primarily on critique. I explain below in more detail what I mean by reparative reading, which is a term I borrow from Eve Sedgwick. Here, though, in colloquial terms, scholarly work as a critical act diagnoses as problem through critique, oftentimes seeking critique first in a practice Sedgwick calls "paranoid reading practices"; naming and adequately understanding the insufficiency of the existing meanings makes possible, though, a more critically engaged and effective coalition-building process. More popularly put: to not know precisely why we might seek an otherwise possibility is to err on the side of reproducing the very thing being critiqued. Critique is the groundwork for any hopeful praxis, then; however, it also suggests that a "something else" must be generated, and close reading strategies are one method for building out those "something else" registers.

If Chapters 1 – 2 engage in paranoid reading practices to seek out what mobilizes racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and related, ongoing wounds, Chapters 3 – 4 engage in reparative reading practices to creatively seek out the ongoing possibilities that would otherwise be overlooked

in favor of critique. Scholars[55] have already written on the problem of Sedgwick's language, of course: reparative, for instance, implies that there was an originary, wholistic, valuable relationship or subjectivity to restore. In addition, the paranoia and fear that drives critique is a proliferative affect; that is, critique is not lacking in creative or not itself generative. Rather, I build on Sedgwick's methodological framework in an effort to engage across the differently creative registers of critique and repair – repair not of an originary "good," so much as building on and out of the possibilities that can be read as generative and otherwise within texts precisely because of the critical awareness preceding it – a coalitional possibility.

This method also builds on Toni Morrison's suggested reading as coalitional method in *Playing in the Dark*, where she argues that analysis might "draw a map, so to speak, of a critical geography" in Americana literature. Morrison goes on to suggest that from this "critical geography," there should be a willingness to "use that map to open as much space for discovery, intellectual adventure, and close exploration as did the original charting of the New World–without the mandate for conquest" (3). I read this invective, as well as her critical analysis of how resistance and otherwise possibilities for being exist always already in the margins of problematic texts, as a challenge to see within the critical groundwork the otherwise disavowed, overlooked, or yet further marginalized possibilities in American literature's pop culture and multimodal expansion. This also takes up Sylvia Wynter's combined cultural and neuroscientific work on how the ability to make meaning out of narratives and their representations must be built precisely through a shared process of *making* that meaning itself. That is, if scholars refuse to lay the critical groundwork, but also neglect the intellectual and emotional labor of creating shared meanings suggestive of otherwise possibilities, the worlds being built that were marginalized in the 1960's risk yet again being submerged instead of brought into coalition.

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[55] See Hanson and Love.

These readings, then, are in many romantic and at times speculative. They are haunted by the possibilities not heard well enough when scholarship and poetry remain silo's into niche audiences. With each of these readings, then, I would add several caveats. The first is that these are texts selected precisely because of how they circulate, from the far niche at the end of Chapter 4 to the mass circulated of the beginning of Chapter 3. They are accordingly and variously complicit, even if for the simple fact that they circulate within the finance capital markets that enable their production. They make political resistance and multicultural difference consumable in a mass circulation, a problem already identified in the preceding chapters. However, I argue that they contain latent meanings that might be more generative than their popular readings for building otherwise coalitions. That is, even as *Lemonade* is popularly read as a celebration of Black feminism that accrues a money-making as the zenith of power, as well as the reconciliation of a heteroreproductive family as the dominant mode of redemption, it also, generates proliferative, subversive possibilities that complicate those same narratives. This analysis is not, then, a critique on if circulated niche and popular poetics are complicit or not, nor appraising and moralistic validating degrees of representation in the media corresponding to political possibility; rather, in these readings toward hope, I ask if the popularly circulated texts when articulated with niche activist modes might produce critical and effective otherwise worlds that would without the close attention go unsurfaced. I am asking here, as a teacher in addition to scholar and poet myself, if there are reading methods with popular arts texts that might support unexpected coalitions across silo's scholarly and poetry disciplines. Is there a way to, in reconciling with audiovisual and textual poetries circulated across diversely niche and popularized audiences, assist through close reading the generation of otherwise and unexpected meanings, despite marketability's best attempts to recirculate what is already dominantly understood? And, more critically than that, how does reading the text for the obvious problematics without generatively engaging with its possibilities in fact underscore the assumed

interpretive strategies formally endorsed by the marketing around these different texts? More specifically: if academic work and print poetry both struggle with reaching broader audiences or stepping outside of their silo'd traditions, then popularized multimodal literatures might offer coalitional points of contact, and it is with an eye for those points of contact that I read the following texts.

First, I argue that both Knowles-Carter and Lamar turn to religious and spiritual metaphysics as intertwined with access to necessary matter for living, creating frameworks that enable haunting *as* livability. They do not do this as an either/or – that is, as secular science or religious metaphysics, of of Western Christian religions or subaltern Yoruba religions. Instead, they offer a dialectical relationship between secularism and seemingly incongruent religious practices, repurposing an otherwise colonial Christian metanarrative to build their haunting livabilities. Finally, I connect Kendrick Lamar to the diasporic and crip turns of critically acclaimed Black, queer poet, Danez Smith. This connection draws out an unexpected coalition between the niche of print poetry and the activists building on Lorde and Moraga's legacy and possible reading strategies in popularly circulated texts, such as Lamar's music videos. I argue that Smith's poetics suggest a relationship to demonic ground that, by using similar metaphysical/material motifs as Lamar and Knowles-Carter, while critically and necessarily adding in diaspora and disability to re-think the human and posthuman, suggest cross-border as cross-"water" coalitions.

### ***Lemonade*: Making Water "Formations" on Demonic Ground**

In my first close reading, I explicitly contrast Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's *Lemonade* with the apathetic vitalities and water neutrality of *OLLA* in Chapter 2, arguing that *Lemonade* provides foils through hyper vitality and water formations. In 2016, with *Only Lovers Left Alive* (*OLLA*) now out on DVD and both the Detroit water shut offs and Flint water poisoning unresolved, *Lemonade* came out. *Lemonade,* directed by Beyoncé Knowles-Carter and Kahlil Joseph, is Beyoncé's first full-length

visual album. Whereas OLLA engulfs a critique of the rights-bearing human in its reconstitution of the category through water neutrality and apathetic vitality, Lemonade historicizes the violent, racialized exclusions inherent to the category of "rights-bearing human" through water formations and hyper vitalities. Both OLLA and Lemonade thus engage with atemporal responses to neoliberal, racialized violence in variously urbanized spaces, harkening to the all-too material reality and its history in the trans-Atlantic slave trade of water being systemically shut off to increasing numbers of urban, oftentimes racialized residents of Detroit or poisoning the similarly politicize and racialized postindustrial spaces, such as Flint. However, the two films produce different accounts of posthumanist possibility through their opposite relations – water neutrality and water formations – to water's historical role in producing the conditions for those possibilities.

In *Lemonade,* each music video is knit together by spoken word portions, written by poet Warsan Shire, and tells of a lover's betrayal while referencing the ongoing trauma of racism. In addition, there are multiple videos within a section, called chapters. The chapters describe each step of a learning and grieving process, so that the narrative of infidelity and building new relations becomes a metaphor for the wounding of racial slavery and its perpetuated violences into the present: "Intuition," "Denial," "Anger," "Apathy," "Emptiness," "Accountability," "Reformation," "Forgiveness," "Resurrection," "Hope," and "Redemption." Departing from accounts critiqued in Chapter 2, I argue that the visual album centralizes, rather than submerges, racialization's relationship to privatizing and regulating water and through that, livability. In particular, *Lemonade* illustrates the disavowed relationship between finance capital and the life sciences' water and humanist discourses while offering otherwise effective antiracist posthuman livabilities. I term these maps for livability "water formations," a nod the final world building in Beyoncé's call to get into formation for resistance, Michael Omi and Howard Winant's "racial formation" analytic framework, and water's molecular formation. Water formations are also a productive departure from the water

neutrality depicted in neoliberal and colorblind posthuman narratives of water, such as in *OLLA*. Water formations insistently historicize dominant representations of water as racialized, but also affirm and coalitionally build otherwise relations to water and race through both metaphorical and concrete uses of water.

Water formations as a framework indicts the violent histories of water as they have variously racialized populations; however, it also looks to how water is already being re-tooled in activist poetics as a conduit for antiracist and posthuman resistance to that violence. In this way, water formations also turn to Black feminist geographies of livability, such as Katherine McKittrick geographic and Black feminist Sylvia Wynter's historical "demonic ground." I argue that the demonic ground as a space of otherwise living must be necessarily watery, aerial, and ecological. While my readings of Lamar and Smith turn to the aerial and ground, my reading here of Lemonade attends to the watery, expanding in the analysis below on Wynter's concept of "demonic ground." Finally, Beyoncé's water formations critique neoliberal colorblindness while also engaging with what Habiba Ibrahim (2016) terms "oceanic lifespans" and what Christina Sharpe (2016) terms "the wake" of racial slavery and its afterlives. Formation also signals, then, the extensive, ongoing work of contemporary scholars historicizing human, posthuman, water, racial, gendered, and sexualized being.

Additionally, I argue that *Lemonade* attends to hope, redemption, and building otherwise livabilities through water, creating a necessary and useful mapping through "hyper vitality" as the foil to the "apathetic vitalities" critiqued in Chapter 2's reading of *OLLA*. While hyper vitality is not a term in binary opposition to apathetic vitality, it departs from it to describe affects and representations of vitality that contrast apathy by elucidating the necessary, urgent relationship between cultural and natural resources necessary for creating and sustaining life. Such a turn might also depart from the easier task of critique carried out in Chapter 2 to the more difficult work in

creating and engaging with hope. Hyper vitality in *Lemonade* is not a capitulation to rhetorics of vitalism and the biopolitical centering of life. Rather, it is here a Black feminist posthuman approach to vitality as text, and through that, to hyper vitality as a hypertext for creating modes of living and engaging with the afterlives that persist through death.

I signal hyper vitality instead of antivitalist as a rhetorical strategy of affirmation instead of negation, but also glean the additional meanings "hyper" suggests. "Hyper" implies an excess, an "over, beyond, above" as well as something that "[crosses]" or "[throws] over"; beyond that, it moves into the realm of "exceedingly beautiful" (OED). Turning to "hyper" instead of "anti-" refuses dominant representations of Blackness as negation while embracing queer excess – that is, the well-theorized[56] aesthetic practices beyond reproductive capacity and property circulation in queer spaces. "Hyper vitality" seeks out proliferations of hybridity, queer and fugitive crossings, and form's potential "beauty" in its poetic relay of language, rhythm, sound, and aesthetic. Such a livability functions by "[recognizing] that the making of the Americas was/is an (often dangerously genocidal and ecocidal) interhuman and environmental project through which '*new forms of life'* can be conceptualized" (McKittrick 135, emphasis added). My use of hyper also comes from the language of "coding" to relay a text that "makes" or "writes" into action. While not a necessary register in my readings of Beyoncé and Lamar, this articulation with the techno-posthuman as much as the environmental, queer, or antiracist posthuman surfaces in my last reading of Smith's poetics. The link to "hypertext" creates a queer and explicitly posthuman proliferation of meaning, so that one code does not imply "the" code for being and action. Hypertexts do not "form a single sequence" but instead may "be read in various orders" that are "usually in machine-readable form" (OED). Hypertexts thus create multiple, discontinuous actions and linguistic mappings that circumvent the exclusionary protocols of dominant white humanist legibility, upon which I expand later in this

[56] See Schmidt's work on queer excess and poetics.

paper through Hortense Spillers' famous "An American Grammar" argument. Hypertext's very 1965 inception, in fact, makes it an appropriate, historically situated reference in tune with the rise of antiracist activist poetics building multigenred and multimodal resistance as "codes" for living. This resonates, for instance, with the Introduction's summary of how the turn to genomic sciences in managing DNA's replication began to dovetail with computer programming code.

Hypertext in the millennial turn of *Lemonade*, Lamar, and Smith in this way creates a point of contact across all three texts without needing similarity; in fact, their differences go on to signify relations through multilinked viewing, sampling, listening, and connecting. As I will explain in my reading Smith, for instance, while hyper vitality is mostly theorized through environmental posthumanisms in Lamar and Beyoncé, it offers the articulation with techno-posthumanisms: HTTP. This resonance signals historical retrieval and possibility, wherein hypertext transfer protocol (colloquially HTTP) enables "retrieval of data on networks" (OED) that would otherwise be submerged in the slew of dominant network textual representations. Hyper vitality, then, becomes a term that takes to task twinned enfleshed and techno posthuman livabilities for a queer excess and aesthetic, coding the racialized and historical intertextuality of living to produced multimodal, multigenre actions for potential, alternate livabilities. First, then, I argue that *Lemonade*'s hyper vitalities are explicitly built out of water formations.

**Water Formations: Mapping an Antiracist Posthumanism**

While the more famous image from Beyoncé's album, which informs my use of the term "water formations," occurs in the film's final still, "Formation"—she slowly sinks into the water on top of a police car in an area supposed to symbolize Katrina's devastation in the Bayou—I turn here to the use of water, spoken word, and both liquidly and technologically mediated breathing and speaking to draw out some of *Lemonade*'s Black feminist critique of water and racial capital. Lemonade opens with a watery, indeterminate sound while the camera pans around Beyoncé leaning

against a car. Her yellow fur coat, yellow and brown braided hair, and the grey industrial backdrop of a car in a garage are the primary visual elements. This creates confusion between if this is a technological posthuman scene of desire through the car and an electronic recording or if it is an environmentally framed posthuman scene of being immersed in water, and before that uncertainty is resolved, the scene cuts to the sound of birds and wind with shots of abandoned houses and landscapes. This dramatic shift to nature's quietude is followed by wordless, harmonizing female vocals and the overlay of the chapter's title, "Intuition." A single electronic instrument joins the background before another dramatic cut to Beyoncé on her knees in front of a red, closed theater curtain. There is another cut to Beyoncé alone in a field, silence, and then the opening song's refrain "pray to catch you whispering/pray you catch me listening" begins. The explicit juxtaposition of technological cultural production and "nature" contrasts *OLLA's* attempts to portray the postindustrial urban spaces as simply natural and Edenic, and, as I will argue, that contrast is explicitly historicized even it centers otherwise temporalities.

This first song is interrupted by spoken word for the first section of the film, and on which I focus, "Intuition." In this spoken word section, Beyoncé speaks to her unfaithful lover, layering in antihumanist sentiments on the passage of time, living, and subjectivity. As the scenes cut between cameos of famous women of color in anachronistic clothing and make-up, Beyoncé describes the lover as like her "father, a magician" for being able to "exist in two places at once," and as she explains that this is part of a larger tradition of the "men in [her] blood," she also states how "the past and future emerge to meet us here." In the final scene of this spoken word portion, she is alone in a seemingly empty bathtub, and the line, initially romantic, turns to a sarcastic "What luck. What a fucking curse." The collapse of time and space, or the atemporal logic of the father and lover merging with past and present, as well as herself, implicates the historical violence against racialized populations inherent to the potential of atemporal narrations of historical time. This implication of

both the potential for relations to the father and lover in past, present, and herself and the violence of that fact derive their contradiction from the "past" of racial slavery continuing its violence into the present. This opening implies the "precarities of the afterlives of slavery ('skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment': Hartman 6)" as the "curse" of how past and present emerge together. Later in this analysis, I pick up this theme of paternity and atemporal historicizing as also antihumanist. I pause here, though, on these precarities perpetuated across and from the trans-Atlantic slave trade corresponding to water shut offs in racialized urban spaces.

The folding of linear time comes forward in setting and costume, as well, implicating how Beyoncé does not proceed linearly as a subject from past to present to future through the water in her bathtub. Scenes, for instance, juxtapose white, late 19th century attire reminiscent of *Daughters of the Dust* – a film set in 1901 that narrates a Gullah community preparing for northern mainland migration – with scenes of Beyoncé in a contemporary black sweatshirt that zips up the back and over the hood. As an additional reference point, *Daughters of the Dust* was written, directed, and produced by Julie Dash, becoming the first feature film by an African American woman to reach mainstream theaters. Referencing this film pays homage toe the rich, Black feminist cultural traditions that make the present and its futures possible as alternate mapping for livability. The attire mirrors the 1991 film, which tells the story of a Gullah family in 1902 named the Peazants. The cameos in costumes harken the costuming in *Daughters of the Dust*, including the Yoruban religious traditions, nonlinear narratives of kinship, and the first film directed by an African American woman to gain general theatrical release.

For context: *Daughters of the Dust* follows a family deciding to leave Gullah for the mainland or not. The film explores non-U.S. dominant modes of desire, gender, and sexualization as they exist in tension and mix with the Christianized and colonialized forms in the continental U.S. It portrays

the points of contact and mixtures between the two religions through the family, placing them less in contradiction than in a context of what Mignolo calls double translation, where the two mutually inform and modify one another to create a new framework for spirituality and community. Recalling this film recalls both the losses and continuations of localized cultures as global economies and migration spread during the form end of racial slavery in the continental U.S. The renarration of postreconstruction era Black women in formal, all white attire recapitulates the liberatory vestiges of African Gullah culture, reappropriated Christian traditions, and Yoruba religion while the lyrics acknowledge that past's racial violence perpetuated into the present: Beyoncé offers a sarcastic "what luck, what a fucking curse." The words combine with costume and scene about how the past and future create a wavering present that is at once both the curse of racial slavery's violence and the promise of building alternate livabilities in the present and future. Those alternate livabilities recruit the precolonial traditions that have remained, such as Yoruba religious systems and the Black feminist *Daughters of the Dust* living on in its 1991 postmillennial release, while also seeing its possibility for double translation, or informing a different way to make meaning in articulation with Western Christian traditions of baptism and rebirth, such as in the bathtub.

The cameos' somber affects while dressed in 1902 attire amplify this historical atemporality as Beyoncé narrates the ongoing wound of U.S. racism alongside and through the wound of a lover's and father's betrayal. This narration is what Sharpe articulates as the "wake [producing] Black death and trauma" by "meeting here" to simultaneously "insist on Black being into the wake" (11). That is, the cameos and Beyoncé's opening to the visual album's story insist on the literal and cultural Black life that continues despite, in, and from the larger historical project of racializing populations through premature exposure to precarity. The disruption of linear time also erases death as the ultimate horizon of possibility in postmodern environmental apocalypses: a "sociality" wherein "the wavering present forces a something that must be done that structures the domain of the present

and the prerogatives of the future" (Gordon 179). In this moment, the album is haunted by the genocidal deaths that must be remembered, but also slips into the present and future their resurrection, the promise of insistently being, and new cultural formations of a present living and future potential. The ability to exist, as Sharpe puts it, "in the wake" through these scenes articulates both the violence of and resistance to normative aging and linear, historical temporal progression as part of neoliberal life management and violent racialization. It also serves to repurpose the baptism narratives in the bathtub, taking the metaphor and complicating its Western European tradition by inflecting it with racial slavery's crossings across water and lives lost within it. In these opening scenes, Beyoncé thus harnesses the atemporal as accusation, elucidating historical violence through a haunting that contrasts Adam and Eve submerging it, but also as opening to its otherwise possibilities.

Beyoncé roots her possibility in posthumanist hyper vitalities that refuse apathetic, neutral relations to life management via water, thus implicating racial slavery's vestiges in the genocidal impact of water privatization and regulation, such as Detroit's water shut offs. This imagery contrasts colorblind, romanticized, abstract posthumanisms such as Jarmusch's vampires. The film instead insistently points out the historical racialization at play in monstrosizing and dehumanizing Black subjectivity through agelessness. Thus, while Jarmusch's vampires inhabit apathetic vitality to siphon the landscape's supposedly neutral and natural resources, *Lemonade* calls out the murky grounds that make this apathy possible through a historicized, gendered, and racialized atemporality. These scenes and the initial homage to *Daughters of the Dust* thus call attention to what Ibrahim historicizes, which is "the contemporary vampire narrative [as] an outcome of New World colonialism and enslavement" (316). Ibrahim's term, "oceanic lifespans," surfaces antiracist vampire narratives by offering alternatives to colorblind posthumanisms. As Ibrahim argues, normative narratives of time and aging depend upon monstrosizing the alternately aged or childlike Black

subject. This analysis builds on Spillers' analytic of gender and sexuality through heteroreproductive property logics by attending to how linear time is formulated by a process of normative aging. As my analysis of *OLLA* demonstrated, this critique surfaces in examples such as the colorblind posthumanist vampire narratives reconstructing their normative moorings by disavowing their relation to monstrosizing and ungendering the racialized "other" of racial slavery. This argument gains much of its traction from Spillers' analysis of kinship and gender through racial slavery, explored in Chapter 2 and expanded upon later in this analysis. Here, though, I am indexing how *Lemonade,* through these opening scenes of relations to the technological, environmental, historical, and propertied formations of time, space, and "human" attends to the literal "oceanic" element of such lifespans, building on Ibrahim's argued potential in Black feminist vampire narratives to create a water formation integral to its antiracist and posthuman hyper vitality map.

This introductory section's watery, posthuman hyper vitality is also produced through open collaborative and historicized cultural media, contrasting the isolated, individualized neoliberal representations of livability in dominant films such as *OLLA*. *Lemonade* has over 12 cameo appearances, ranging from model Winnie Harlow, tennis player Serena Williams, actresses Amanda Stenberg and Quvenzhané Wallis, ballerina Michaela DePrince, and family members and activists such as her daughter Blue Ivy, her mother Tina Knowles, and finally mothers who lost their sons to police brutality, including Sybrina Fulton, Gwen Carr, and Lesley McSpadden. These cameos are central to the album, reflecting the larger collaborative nature of *Lemonade*'s production through an homage to networked subjectivity and insurgent modes of kinship. Through repeated emphasis on collaboration, cultural production becomes the explicit, nonheteroreproductive coconstitution of artists. They are not defined by the conditions of historical violence but emerge from them to elucidate continued violence and Black cultural theft into the present, simultaneously resisting by "being" in this cultural moment, which is in, as Sharpe notes, the "wake" of racial slavery – as in a

the twofold funeral wake and the trans-Atlantic slave trade ships' wake, but also waking as living. This coconstitutive agency contrasts *OLLA*'s neoliberal project of a singular, boundaried body working individually or in heteroreproductive concert, such as Adam and Eve alone while creating music. At the end of my analysis of these scenes, I examine this kinship through Beyoncé's musings on paternity. Here, though, the cameos in atemporal attire create a relation to vitality and time that, instead of memorializing like *OLLA*, makes undeniably present the violence of either disrupting or submerging such networked relations. The album offers less a story of heteroreproductive, gentrification "blooming" in urban desolation than a repeated "[turning] away from the lead singer as the exclusive artist" (Weheliye 30). Instead, the cameos center multiple modes of insurgent life and cultural production that are proliferative and interconnected, horizontal opposed to reproductive and linearly passed down.

Coconstitutive subjectivity happens through "more producer-driven and collaborative musical productions" (Weheliye 30) than memorializing Motown's past and celebrating an individual musician. Beyoncé builds on Weheliye's analysis of R & B posthumanisms by also calling out the theft of Black bodes through their cooption of Black cultural production in white dominated musical genres. These genres include rock and country, with rock coopted in *OLLA* by predominantly white artists and vampires as the predominantly Black artists of Motown are mourned and memorialized. As Beyoncé's scenes and attire shift from urban, to rural, to mythical, so too do the musical genres shift. Participants tell the story in bath tubs, buses, underwater bedrooms, rivers, postindustrial urban streets, country fields, and so on with each genre change. Such images signal how Black cultural musical production gets coopted by other musical genres, while that cultural theft is merged with land, bodies, and elements for life, such as water. This builds on Weheliye's historicized posthumanism in R & B, examining musical production itself as elucidating the "curse" of historically violent formulations of "human" and "posthuman" in culture

while attending more historically to Black cultural production. Such an attention calls out *OLLA's* own posthuman as property owning to be rights bearing, with property owning dependent upon the material, geographic, and cultural theft of Black bodies and cultural production. Clarifying this theft includes indicting Adam and Eve for memorializing Motown in favor of colorblind Southern record labels or white male rock performers. The either engulfing or colorblind submersions of musical history builds into *OLLA*'s self-possessed posthuman and global subjectivities; *Lemonade*'s contrasting rematerialization of that musical history surfaces the racial violence and theft for creating such subjectivities. In other words, *OLLA* and neoliberal posthumanism's cultural theft belies the material theft of racialized bodies that undergirds human and posthuman subjectivities "possessing" any body that can, in turn, privatize and regulate water. This possessive logic happens through a colorblind neutrality that naturalizes cultural relations to resources. Thus, the networked subjectivity and production of *Lemonade* critiques whiteness as continuing to take subjectivities produced within Black arts traditions, such as country and rock coming out of soul, funk, and other genres that, in turn, came out of gospel and freedom songs (Young 303). In the geographic and cultural references being joined, this cultural theft is implicitly as a theft of resources, such as land and water. **These attestments to antiracist posthumanist options as well as the historical violence are enacted through the, as Sharpe terms it, "wake work" of what I articulate here as water formations.**

Water formations work by historicizing cultural production to denaturalize the property logic inherent to accessing water, surfacing colorblindness's nonneutral terms and mythology of an individual, self contained human or posthuman subjectivity. In other words, while in *OLLA* water is a neutral, invisible, natural resource readily accessed through a cultural production evacuated of violent, historical, racialized moorings, in *Lemonade* water is a formation made hyper visible and

hyper necessary in its relation to vitality[57]. I turn to hyper visibility as a way of laying bare cultural texts's relations to biocentric, invisible to the naked eye modes of racialized and historical violence. This hyper visibility participates in creating a hyper vitality that can act as discursively livable, insurgent possibilities. The hyper visible water itself, as well as its historicity and necessity for both living and cultural life in *Lemonade*, produces various hyper vitalities refusing apathy in apprehending water and, by proxy, vitality itself.

These scenes are both accusation and launching point for an insurgent hyper vitality that contrasts any rights bearing human or posthuman logic dependent upon possessing water. The opening scene ends, for instance, by returning to the song's refrain, "Pray you catch me." It then shifts wordless, harmonized vocals as Beyoncé, with outstretched arms, falls off an urban building's side. The expected death cuts instead to her plunging into water. Her voice describes a series of religious modes of cleansing and starting over, again invoking Yoruban alongside Christian religions, alternately merging with background electronic music to sound akin to speaking underwater. When Beyoncé falls into and is submerged underwater, she seems at first to have drowned; however, the scene cuts to her gazing underwater at her inanimate body on a canopy bed. In the next cut, her inanimate and submerged self wakes up; she proceeds to variously speed up or slow down as she moves throughout the underwater bedroom, corresponding to the technological "bubbles-like" rhythm that is the background to her spoken word excerpt. This coming back to life happens through paradoxically inhaling the water, an act that should drown her instead of waking her further, as she describes her attempt to feminize by dominant cultural standards. Yet, the spoken word concludes the impossibility of receiving love through such an engendering as she comes back to life,

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[57] By hyper visible, I do not mean what Avery Gordon refers to as the "kind of obscenity of accuracy that abolishes the distinctions between 'permission and prohibition, presence and absence.' No shadows, no ghosts." As Gordon rightfully distinguishes, "in a culture seemingly ruled by technologies of hypervisibility, we are led to believe not only that everything can be seen, but also that everything is available, accessible for our consumption" (16).

inverting the historical submersion and death of Black bodies via the trans-Atlantic slave trade and continued water violence, such as the shut off. While this most obviously uses the motif of baptism and water for re-birth, it harnesses this heavy reference to suggest that the re-birth needs to be an explicit, chosen ungendering as opposed to violently enforced ungendering designed to uphold dominant patrilineal norms: her "waking" resurrection in water instead of merely out of depends upon her resistance to binary gender norms. In other words, her inversion of the life/death binary, where death is the horizon of ultimately, environmentally and culturally mediated being, corresponds to her refusal of heteropatriarchal gendering and sexualizing binaries, so that the two formations of racial being and gendered/sexualized being become intertwined and subverted through watery matter and spoken feminism poetics. This retools the Western Christian tradition of rebirth and redemption by water through the Yoruban tradition, creating a mixture that suggests a third vector for bearing non-propertied relations to water and cultural living.

Submerged, Black feminist poetics illuminates how "demonic ground" – a term coined by Black feminist historian and neuroscientist Sylvia Wynter also recruited for geographic thinking by Black feminist geography Katherine McKittrick – becomes a space for insurgent living that is necessarily watery. Wynter's work capaciously historicizes how precolonial thought apprehended Western continents as submerged under water and Southern continents as arid and too hot, thereby making both spaces uninhabitable for humans – "demonic" in the dominant Christian theology of the time. Wynter goes on to explain how this dominant representation of livable spaces on land became violently retooled to justify the representation of nonwhite bodies as nonhuman. However, demonic ground is always insurgent as interhuman relations persist, and Katherine McKittrick recruits "demonic ground" in her analysis of Black feminist geographies:

> Demonic grounds can be detected through the biocentric categories of race and sexuality (black femininity), political locations (black/Caribbean feminism), and alongside social theories and ideologies, such as white European and Euro-American feminism, patriarchy, and black/Caribbean studies. (133)

For McKittrick, these indications are the hopeful praxis world building that claim demonic ground to create new spatial imaginaries that will culturally materialize, such as in Beyoncé "waking" underwater as a geographically inhabitable space[58]. Yet, as McKittrick explains, the apprehension of subaltern geographies as uninhabitable and its inhabitants as marginal or lesser "humans" haunts contemporary geographic endeavors and modes of racialization. In this way, racialization merged with the humanization in dominant colonial thought alongside geographical mapping; however, in this violence a posthuman alternate livability, the water formations of coding hyper vitalities, persists:

> By adding the variable of race-sexuality to existing grounds of human being, black femininity establishes a slightly different path through social demonic grounds theories and ideologies as well as material and conceptual geographies. This path does not have to be understood as entwined with erasures and absences but rather indicates the human, expressive, and geographic terms of disavowal and black women's geographies. (McKittrick 134)

As she goes on to articulate by way of Wynter, this history of racializing in order to construct humanness as the overrepresented white, heteropatriarchal colonialist who can take and transfer property became scientifically, religiously, and secularly justified through a new analytic of reason/unreason to create interspecies hierarchies: human, subhuman, and superhuman[59]. What she

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[58] McKittrick summarizes how Wynter's pre-Columbus understanding of Western continents as uninhabitable due to being imagined as terrestrially submerged. In this conception, anything inhabiting territorialized land (Europe) was deemed naturally human on what was believed to be the only spiritually sanctioned continent in evangelical European Christianity, which was also Europe. In turn, Southern continents such as Africa were seen as uninhabitable due to their hotter climates and bore the same implications for scientifically-religiously defining human status. When Western expansion learned of terrestrial ground inhabited by humans outside of the Christian-Judeo traditions, humanism shifted into racialized being on the grounds of rising "biological sciences, transatlantic slavery, and land exploitation… secularly/biologically" (McKittrick 132). Secular/scientific as formed by religious/scientific ideals of humanness and geographic livability were used to justify racial slave, but now through a selected/dysselected biological paradigm. For more on demonic ground, Black feminist geographies, and their related histories of humanisms, see McKittrick and Wynter citations.

[59] While Wynter focuses on this false dichotomy around what counts as reason, as well as the combined, historical secular and religious overrepresentations of humanness, I focus here with

posits, then, is that just as these geographies implicate a racialized and gendered humanism, so too do they suggest that the spaces deemed uninhabitable or for dehumanized subjectivity become spaces for proliferations of, as I argue, posthuman livability.

McKittrick identifies how Black feminist knowledges are built upon this conception of the uninhabitable and dispossessed as naturally damned, or, in environmental racism terms, the collateral damage of natural selection, and in racial finance capital terms, the collateral damage of speculated risk taking in the free market's natural selection. If "…the dispossessed black female body is often equated with the ungeographic, and black women's spatial knowledges are rendered either inadequate or impossible" (121), the representation of water as a space for waking and living subverts dominant white colonial apprehensions of demonic ground, creating instead a space for coding livability in relation to water. The ungeographic are the demonic grounds haunted by the trans-Atlantic slave trade's human making as race making, creating in and through their wake opportunities for insurgent livability. Creative geographies, such as in *Lemonade* traversing the stage, the empty bathtub, an underwater bedroom, a contemporary urban landscape, and so forth illuminate how hegemonic spatial geographies are both powerful and alterable precisely because of their overrepresentations for livability[60].

Casting such geographies as nonmarginal creates the spaces and relations therein to species being and resources such as water other than uninhabitability, subhumanity, property, and territoriality. In this way, refusing transparent human status means, also, refusing transparent geographies and their livability via territorialized land in binary opposition to uninhabitable water. *Lemonade* thus specifically returns to the geographic potential in Wynter's demonic ground while emphasizing the "oceanic" in Ibrahim's oceanic lifespans, creating a historical, antiracist

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McKittrick on how these early constructs of the human come to haunt contemporary representations of race and geography.

[60] I examine this further in Chapter 4 for diasporic coalition building.

posthumanism that insists on the particular formations of race, gender, sexuality, and livability. It becomes a water formation where the supposedly submerged and uninhabitable landscapes for human species being instead critiques the exclusions of that human status as well as the historical vestiges of the framework in colorblind or abstract posthumanisms. *OLLA,* for instance, would portray Detroit as at once uninhabitable and full of untapped water resources despite water shut offs in the city, even as media portrays Flint as uninhabitable and full of poisoned water access. By creating a different iteration of livability – seeming to drown only to be birthed again within the water – this scene indicts neutral representations of accessing water and geographic livability while creating a future out in the wake of the trans-Atlantic slave trade's haunting. The scene also creates a geographic reality that goes against an ecocritical vitalist anxiety that would see the Anthropocene's rising oceans and territorial submersion, or conversing, waterlessness and arid landscapes in geographies where temperatures arise, as akin to the horizon of death. Beyoncé waking under water insists on living in the wake as also within water, creating a "communicative act that is [respatialized]" as fantasy precisely because "down here in reality is not, in fact, a humanly workable place" (McKittrick 141). In other words, the posthuman subjectivity that emerges from water disrupts notions of livable geographies along subaltern, racializing lines. Its water formations insist on livable life as a hyper vitality beyond the horizon of environmental or postindustrial water submersion or scarcity, and it does this in part through the heavier religious references it mixes together of rebirth and gendering. Postmodern posthumanisms that forget how the human came to be fashioned through racializing and gendering analytics tied to transparent geographies of land, water, and propertied territory are forced to confront the ghost of discrete categories of the human and its genocides; at the same time, antiracist humanisms that would valorize a universal human "not as a genre or mode of human" cannot recuperate humanness as it is coconstructed with interspecies differentiation through race, gender, and property.

The geographic landscape also historically situates an antiracist posthuman subjectivity by using sound as constitutive of its new spatial temporalities. *Lemonade*'s submerged scene juxtaposes human matter's slowed response within water with a technological "fast forward" effect, attesting to both oceanic lifespans' violence and its proliferative possibilities for living. Such possibilities deploy an insurgent relationship to atemporal passages of neoliberalism's otherwise linear, normatively aging time. When Beyoncé breathes bubbles out and the air moves out slowed by resistance to water around it, for instance, they do not always float to the top; instead, they are reversed so that she breathes the bubbles back in through sped-up rewind effect: one that, paradoxically perhaps, moves her toward her emergence from the water. This relation to air and water, breathing and living, denaturalizes the body's boundaried, linear relationship to life via water and a slowed down or sped up forward or backward aging process. Beyoncé's subjectivity, in this scene, refuses to add up to the normatively female gendered whole, instead speeding up and slowing down, moving both forward and backward through the body's material shifting through water, even as the possibility for living—the breath—sonically and visually moves both forward and background technologically (rewind and sonic mediation) and literally (the body and its sound waves changing speeds within water). As McKittrick notes, "music and music-making as geographic acts—soundscapes that are implicit technologies of the poetics of landscape….are fundamentally about place because they alter the soundscape" (138). While Chapters 1 and 2 examine the violent potential of how these are re-circulated as property, this scene presents a redeployment of unseen to the naked eye processes for catalyzing matter into life, harnessing its proliferative possibility through a sonic, visual, and material geography in the subaltern, uninhabitable space of water.

This scene attends to the history of creating and violating Black subjectivity through the trans-Atlantic slave trade, access to pools, and water regulation in spaces such as Detroit even as it creates an alternate relationship to realizing water as bonded molecules necessary for catalyzing life.

Beyoncé's subject redeploys water's relationship to life sustenance without "mastering" it, regulating it, possessing it, distributing it, unlocking its "code" to manage its proliferation, circulating it through capitalistic means, and so on. The ongoing history's violence, but also its fugitive escapes, possibility, and insistent living treat the possibility as exactly that: possibility instead of risk assessment or foreclosed access to clean, safe, affordable, swimmable water. *Lemonade's* hieroglyphics of the flesh thus contradict *OLLA*'s transcendence of bodily necessity through apathetic vitality and water neutrality. These alternative grammars contrast "American Grammar" (Spillers) norms for living, kinship, and being, promising alternate spatial temporal trajectories for living. These trajectories manifest in representations of water's slowing and speeding up living and reliving, in cameos and transhistorical references to collaborate and horizontal kinship relations, and in the refusal of humanism's biopolitical and racialized water property logics. This shift from death as postmodernism's abstracted, ultimate horizon, is enacted through Beyoncé's death simultaneous to her site of water-submerged birth. Her coming to life becomes a coded hyper vitality where vocoders, fast forward and rewind effects, and the slowing matter of water itself merges the technological and the environmental. Her refusal of gendered and racialized disciplining hyperlinks to the history of racial slavery and enfleshment, while also merging text's enactment with an insistently enfleshed new living. This hyper vitality begins in the watery demonic grounds that extend past the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, offering an alternate relationship to water than the historical death ridden racialized experience. Joining this critique, I return here to Beyoncé's opening scene, where, in an empty bathtub, she reflects on the patrilineal line carried within her blood.

The spoken word portion of these introductory scenes builds on Spillers' analysis of the Black female slave body's violation as integral to building and maintaining normative "human" status and property rights. As Beyoncé speaks about her father and lover continuing the "tradition of men in [her] blood," as well as existing in two places and times at once, she theorizes alongside

Spillers how in U.S. racial slavery, the Black female body loses essentialized femininity and "'motherhood' as female "blood-rite/right." In this way, "the captive female body locates precisely a moment of converging political and social vectors that mark the flesh as a prime commodity of exchange" (Spillers 75). That is, gender, heteroreproduction, and property rights become inextricably linked through the violation of Black female bodies lacking legal recourse to claiming their children. As this "gendered female unravels" under property logics, the "customary lexis of sexuality, including 'reproduction,' 'motherhood,' 'pleasure,' and 'desire' are thrown into unrelieved crisis" (76). Spillers highlights how the female body's dispossession is linked to "father-lacking." Father-lacking becomes "property lacking" in racial slavery, denying patrilineal kinship to evade property transference. This marks nonheteronormative law as "monstrous," nonhuman, and not only unworthy of protection, but justified as violated in service of circulating capital. As *Lemonade* takes this up with Spillers in a millennial, post racial slavery context, her film examines the "prevailing social fiction of the Father's name, the Father's law" as one that grants humanness based on property logics. Rather than create a restorative grammar of gender and property, though, which like *OLLA* would engulf racialized subjectivity in in its own violence, Spillers and *Lemonade* turn to alternative grammars for livability and kinship through "insurgent ground" (Wynter 80), a ground I read here as necessarily, productively watery. In the bathtub, perhaps also a hyperlink to films such as *Beasts of the Southern Wild* that would extend beyond the scope of this chapter, Beyoncé speaks to the fathers in her and her lover's blood; while submerged, she speaks to purification and norming attempts she enacts on her body along female gendering standards, only to find livability happens in (watery) excess of those norms. She refuses the racializing "father-lacking" by calling upon the lineages carried on in her blood while also refusing normative gender and sexualizing reproductive kinship and labor practices as a redemptive re-birth.

Beyoncé's musings on male betrayal, for instance, instead of ungendering to demonize Black men, turn toward restoring the relationship to her lover and father without recuperating patrilineal or masculinist relations. This operates through cameos of mothers who have lost sons to indict the "American Grammar" perpetuated in the present, while images of in memorium insist on familial relations and those here insistently being and living. Present modes of living through water, from funeral processions to rebirth ceremonies, restore relationships between lovers so that audiences cannot easily use her narrative to simplistically demonize Black men. This is an important refusal, as what some would critique being the heteronormative underpinnings in restoring that relationship forget how the consistent jailing, profiling, and caricaturing of Black men as hyper sexual, undisciplined, and father-lacking or father-being has produced ongoing historical violence. This violence merges most famously in Jim Crow era lynchings and is now critiqued in the genocidal war on "drugs" that attempts to remove young Black men from social living (Cacho, Alexander). The narrative restoring the lover and familial relationship deftly avoids patrilineal relationships while, in the practice of water creating new relations, also insisting on the queer potential for livability beyond those bounds. Those bounds, after all, have been used to justify racialization and biopolitical genocide of Black populations gendered "male."

At the end of the spoken word section underwater, for instance, Beyoncé emerges out of a courthouse and begins a choreographed video for the song, "Hold Up." She emerges from the spoken word's watery submersion, releasing a deluge of water from the courthouse and walking out into city streets from its wake. As she navigates postindustrial city streets, she takes a baseball bat to police cars, panopticonesque surveillance cameras, and notably a fire hydrant, a moment that releases yet more water. In these scenes, she nods to, laughs alongside, and interacts with others on the set, who join in the celebratory release of anger, but also of released affective and material resources in a postindustrial landscape. This includes children dancing in the water that she releases

from the fire hydrant. The daylight scene of moving through and with a populated cultural center contrasts Adam and Eve's nighttime, driving tour through an evacuated and monotone Detroit: Adam and Eve in *OLLA*. The scene departs from apathetic nighttime voyeurs to the otherwise inherent vitality of Detroit and its inhabitants. The contrast in "Hold Up," too, between the angry lyrics in response to betrayal and the laughing, yellow, red, and bright visuals offer an affective entry point for historicizing anger toward policing of (court house, surveillance cameras, and cars) and regulation of life within (privatized and withheld water) urban spaces, contrasting *OLLA*'s scenes of death and evacuation.

Water in "Hold Up's" city street is not a neutral, invisible, readily available resource contained by postindustrial territorializing of streets and fire hydrants, but rather implicated and made hyper visible as it floods and bursts out of the fire hydrant and court house. Beyoncé's hyper vitality through environmental water and cultural city life comes from the watery death as an awakening (being woke, living in the wake) or birth, "[encountering] myriad silences and ruptures in time, space, history, ethics, research, and method" for those "who teach, write, and think about slavery and its afterlives" as that "wake work" (Sharpe 12). This world building and mode of livability happens in *Lemonade* partially by releasing water as a counterviolence to its privatization and regulation, marking its hyper vital materiality through a hyper visible display of water's relation to life's proliferative possibilities.

*Lemonade* contrasts the heteroreproductive normativity of Adam and Eve in these scenes of birth out of water, as well as the neoliberal, rights bearing human rhetoric that sets life and death up as a binary bracketing normative, linear progression. She takes "back" water both figuratively and literally without recourse to humanist property rhetorics or dominant posthumanist capitulations of apathetic, colorblind, neutral relationships to life and its necessary resources. This also opens to potential, contemporary sites of race and water, such as Detroit and its water shut offs and Flint and

its water poisonings. In *Lemonade*, the city is unspecified, another contrast to *OLLA*'s distinct naming of Detroit. In this way, while *OLLA* romanticizes postindustrial and urban landscapes as a colorblind opportunity for Edenic gentrification and posthumanist humanity, it also dehistoricizes and dematerializes the violation and theft of racialized bodies. This overly localizes a relation to water in southeast Michigan that disavows the global violence of water regulation and management.

*Lemonade*'s more ambiguous cityscape opens up localized and dehistoricized representations of water regulation and management to global and historically laden implications. This is both an indictment of ongoing systemic and material violence perpetuated across history and, as I will return to in Chapter 3, a diasporic potentiality for crossing borders and land based boundaries. Whereas *OLLA* engulfs a critique of the rights-bearing human in its reconstitution of the category through water neutrality and apathetic vitality, Lemonade historicizes the violent, racialized exclusions inherent to the category of "rights-bearing human" through water formations and hyper vitalities. Both *OLLA* and *Lemonade* thus engage with atemporal responses to neoliberal, racialized violence in variously urbanized spaces, harkening to the all-too material reality and its history in the trans-Atlantic slave trade of water being systemically shut off to increasing numbers of urban, oftentimes racialized residents of Detroit or poisoning the similarly politicize and racialized postindustrial spaces, such as Flint. However, the two films produce different accounts of posthumanist possibility through their opposite relations – water neutrality and water formations – to water's historical role in producing the conditions for those possibilities. What water offers in such narratives is a clear cultural relationship to Black Lives Matter and protests around the Detroit water shut offs, where water becomes an undeniably material conduit to rematerialize and historicize race, gender, sexuality, and water. Images of and movement through water illuminates co-imbrications while also directing viewers, listeners, and readers to proliferative, posthuman possibilities. Specifically, antiracist

posthumanisms that take wake work as their praxis for building an insurgent hyper vitality out of demonic waters.

**Kendrick Lamar: The Aerial Matter of Haunting and Being "Alright"**

Taking up the biological does not mean as opposed to speculative or virtual, but rather can be a space to coarticulate how they open to memory and haunting – to afterlives. These afterlives might resist racial (finance) capitalisms through hyper vitalities akin to those explored in my reading of *Lemonade* offering additional coded frameworks that explicate potentiality instead of singular mapping. Kendrick Lamar's #blacklivesmatter anthem, for instance, "We Gon Be Alright," alternatively called, "Alright," opens akin to *Lemonade*: the music initially opens for panned shots thematizing water, city life, fields, and open sky. These shots in "Alright" are more explicitly related to the city, though, slowly moving in black and white from water and a bridge across it to subway tunnel lights, telephone wires with shoes hanging, smoking city streets, fires, and finally a shot of a police officer cuffing and shooting a person of color. The background music combines electronic recording and wordless vocals—in this case, screaming—as the opening shot, followed by a spoken word portion on addiction and police brutality. While the music video does not open with as many cameos as *Lemonade*, the opening shots highlight water, sky, land, and groups of people existing only in relation to one another.

In this section, I turn to "Alright" to examine how aerial matter akin to, but also necessarily different from water creates another iteration of demonic grounds out of antiracist posthumanism attention to environmental and cultural biopolitical warfare. Turning to Lamar's air motifs and spoken word refrains create an occasion to bring the celestial and religion into articulation with race, gender, the life sciences, and finance capital. This returns us to overrepresentations of the human as a scientific being in an era that would claim the secular status of Western epistemic knowledges of species being. Examining this relationship also creates an occasion to think through an antiracist

posthumanism out of a superhumanity that remains critical of the life/death binary. Turning to Avery Gordon's use of haunting for temporalities, Uri McMillan's fugitive performances, and the relay between being "Alright" in posthuman aerial matter with the song's refrain echoing in Black Lives Matter protests creates a critique of how finance capital risks racialized lives. This risk is not only in the explicit water formations of *Lemonade*, but also through foreclosed options to breathable, inhabitable air. Just as "the modern, human sciences, particularly anthropology, geography, and philosophy, undertook elaborate work in order to make the idea of 'race' epistemologically correct" (Gilroy 58), so, too, did they attempt to make "the human" epistemologically correct, both in its biological and its cultural definitions. "Alright" undercuts an attempt consolidate posthumanism as a specifically secular objective. His metaphysical and religious refrains build on the metaphysics in *Lemonade* to complicate scientific claims to objective understandings of the human and its genetic constraints. As I will argue, Lamar's video suggests instead an imaginary, self-described "superhumanity" – outside of the linear subhuman to posthuman hierarchy or binary human and nonhuman categories. This superhumanity, in Lamar's video inhabits the "celestial" metaphysical spaces as much as the matter of air itself in a cityscape.

"Alright" begins its rap portion, as well as the turn to a world made apart from the daily ruling of police brutality, with Lamar in a car with his friends. They each move to the musical rhythm, and as the shot pans out, you see that the car is being held up by police. This visual inversion functions in part because the opening spoken word preceding it describes police militarization as state sanctioned racism. The preceding verse also describes addiction[61] as spiritual

[61] Fully explicating the historical relationship between ability, pathologization, addiction, sex, gender, and race is beyond the scope of this dissertation. My colleague Denise's dissertation focuses on this matrix in its entirety, while Cacho historicizes it thoroughly in a chapter of *Social Death*. While Denise's dissertation is not published at the time of this writing, I anticipate that if this project is published in the future, I will have adequate sources to site for readers interested in a more detailed analysis of that relationship.

warfare. In reading of "Alright," I start by attending to the spoken word and the shots of city and rural life during the opening scenes, which ends in a closeup police officer's gun as it shoots at a cuffed person of color. The opening section has Lamar performing one stanza of spoken word on addiction and religion, followed by that story becoming an overlay, metaphor, and experience coming out of the war on drugs as a cultural war on Black and Latinx communities:

> I remembered you was conflicted
> Misusing your influence, sometimes I did the same
> Abusing my power full of resentment
> Resentment that turned into a deep depression
> Found myself screaming in the hotel room
> Lucifer was all around
> So I kept running
> Until I found my safe haven
> I was trying to convince myself the stripes I got
> Making myself realize what my foundation was
> (In the room, and I run it)
>
> But while my loved ones were fighting the continuous war back in the city
> I was entering a new one
> A war that was based on apartheid and discrimination

Here, Lamar's war reference in the second stanza explicitly participates in finance capital and the life sciences gambling rhetorics. He likens himself to his perpetrator in how he accumulates his own power through branding and circulating his work. He speculates in this ambiguous space of being highly racialized and risked while also accumulating modes of power that produce that racialization and risk, excavating the relationship between past and present to "run" to a future. In the second stanza, this alternate future attends to the internal war of addiction and a spiritual "Lucifer" as akin to biopolitical processes of "apartheid and discrimination." That is, just as the "continuous war" back in the city was the ongoing racialized being, so, too, was his internalized war. This internal war is at once out of, akin to, and a metaphor for the "war back in the city" where his "loved ones" are still facing the daily resistance to the war on drugs as a war on racialized being.

The relationship between the two stanzas becomes clearer through audiovisual scenes of fighting enacted as resistance in the city to police brutality. The audiovisual accompaniment amplifies and complicates this war by building into the last sonic and visual moment: a police gunshot. More specifically and importantly for hyper vitality: the last shot as the beginning of the video. The life science pathologization of addiction and "life as a gamble" becomes entangled lyrically with the "speculative warfare" of finance capital (Cooper 79) from the video's onset. Lamar responds to the combined life science and finance speculative warfare over owning, creating, and regulating life itself by preempting what has been classified both as risk and bearer of risk. Instead of remaining in the abstract speculations of molecular life and investment management, which includes climate investment itself, Lamar calls the warfare out on its literal and present enactments and violence. The future he creates can only continue from this reckoning of the material and lived manifestations of finance era's relationship to global climate change, molecular levels life management, and capitalist investment practices as violent racialized vectors for making life and livability seem part of foreclosed conditions.

The gunshot opening the music video enables Lamar's postdeath response as it rises into song, a form of insisting on being "alright." I argue here that this insistence is a form of preemptive warfare itself. As he repeatedly dies throughout the music video, his "war is necessarily preemptive, as much an attempt to resist…as a creative reinvention of the conditions of human existence, beyond whatever limits we might have adapted to in the present" (Cooper 79). By imitating his own death repeatedly and calling it part of that war, as well as making it one that historicizes police brutality as foundational to capital and refusing its foreclosure of alternate livabilities, Lamar elucidates the already existing and preemptive logics of finance capital in the life sciences. This preemptive logic culturally constructs Blackness as a "threat that is merely felt or apprehended" (Cooper 79). This includes how eliminating Blackness becomes culturally sanctioned, as through the

gunshot, or celebrated as mere commodity that reasserts the dominant cultural logics, as in the lyrics of "abusing" his power and the false start of video: where the police officers serve as seeming slaves to those they shoot by carrying the car before the video starts yet again post-gun shot.

Beyond negation, Lamar harnesses the speculative realm to code a hyper vitality – a pre-emptive affirmation of survival. The music video becomes a series of potential hyperlinks and mappings for living in that speculative realm instead of being foreclosed to its risks. "Alright" takes the fateful war along the "color line" (Gilroy 254) and reminds viewers that it is not, in fact, along lines of color proper – it takes place at the supradermo, molecular biopolitical level, but, beyond that, in the disavowed relationship to spiritual beliefs and the unseen daily experienced as kinship and livability through haunting and afterlives. Gilroy's postracial humanism believes that in hip hop and rap, "these black bodies are no longer to be supervised by the souls that were once imagined to outlive them. There are no souls here; they have been banished by the fatal affirmation of carnal and corporeal vitality celebrated by Tupac, Biggie, and company" (255). However, Lamar's broad fantasy triumph over life itself as antiracist posthumanism and code for hyper vitality invokes spiritual warfare to remind viewers haunted temporalities in the present might also speculate future livability, where Blackness does not signify literal or social death. This more hopeful praxis creates present tense cultural shifts, such as the video and song becoming a rallying anthem for the Black Lives Matter protests that continue to accrue an internationally recognized political platform.

The opening scene after the first gunshot, then, of Lamar and his friends carried in the car by four policemen also opens to a deviant mode of vitality as an afterlife that makes the police officers the slaves of the Black men they were shooting: the police officers slowly move the car forward by holding it up by its wheels as if carrying the men through the streets, laboring and remaining pressed down by the weight. The subversive humor recalls the opening spoken word lines, where his power and influence is initially redeployed to simply invert the power relations. Yet,

this scene ends with the sound of a car crashing and a seeming second death. This complicates a linear rebirth narrative of the film while also critiquing simplistic, binary inversion of power. After this second start, wordless vocals begin again over a dark screen, which then opens to the third life: Lamar is driving a car, children are dancing on police cars and throwing money in the air that floats down, and he is alternately throwing money out the window or levitating through the streets. The inversion adds onto the lyrical "misusing" of influence in the first verse to structurally recreate racializing power dynamics. These dynamics do not condone, forgive, center, or excuse the overrepresentations of white humanisms legally enforced through police brutality. Instead, in Lamar's world, the artist himself becomes a Lazarus that explicates what being "alright" looks like as he sings the BLM anthem:

> Wouldn't you know
> We been hurt, been down before
> Nigga, when our pride was low
> Lookin' at the world like, 'Where do we go?'
> Nigga, and we hate po-po
> Wanna kill us dead in the street fo sho'
> Nigga, I'm at the preacher's door
> My knees g'tting' weak, and my gun might blow
> But we gon' be alright

As Lamar ends a world that would simply invert power relations, he also refuses to situate in the past the very real presence of police brutality. He also complicates secular framings of livability through spiritual and religious ontologies akin to *Lemonade* without recruiting them for a humanistic hierarchy of "saved" or "unsaved." That is being "at" the preacher's door is sufficient for being alright. Finally, he re-signifies the otherwise historically violent reading of dangling feet in hangings and lynchings, instead recasting them to create a Lazarus effect, a superhumanity as both city-bound and celestial as it moves through the air.

Lamar's air and lyrical refrains become demonic grounds that disrupt the rational/irrational and secular/religious binaries that undergird the overrepresentations of exclusionary human in

Western scientific epistemic terms. This builds on *Lemonade*'s watery demonic grounds, challenging an anthropocentric ecocriticism or a posthumanist ecocriticism uncritical of historical genres of humanness and geographic habitability. Lamar's Lazarus refuses transcendence or objectivity, from gravity to death as foreclosed cultural living; akin to *Lemonade*, it recruits religious imagery and narratives of redemption beyond linear livability without recourse to exclusionary salvation or transcendence beyond his own body. This is in part because of how the representation goes against the terrestrially grounded signatures of both human formations, wherein pre-Atlantic slave trade Western European humanisms articulate the skies as celestially beyond the human and the submerged as the damned and beneath human (Wynter). That is: by living through the celestial while remaining embodied and socially present, he creates a demonic ground in spaces deemed otherwise uninhabitable for the "human" proper, akin to Beyoncé's submersion. This celestial hyper vitality historicizes the aerial as a space culturally signified to be unmanageable and unregulated, which undermines how city air in densely populated, highly racialized areas becomes overly polluted with industrial and postindustrial waste and carbon emissions – such as Detroit's. Thus, Lamar levitating as Lazarus recalls this normalized perception of air, necessary to live, while calling out how both overly polluted racialized areas, outlined in the first chapter's close reading of Carson's biopolitics in *Silent Spring*, correspond to police brutality choking the air out of Black bodies taken into custody: the famous, "I can't breathe" chant at Black Lives Matter rallies.

I am tempted, here to make the reference a footnote; however, to do that undercuts the political import of the chant by reenacting the violence of his death and the dominant cultural acceptance of Black death as ongoing and mundane. It is ongoing, but it is not mundane, and Eric Garner's presence must here be acknowledged as part of the methodological haunting, the refusal to forget or to "make dead" and in the past. It "haunts" the aerial world of Lamar's video and the invocation of air in relation to Blackness. The chant invokes Eric Garner's last words, where eleven

times he said beneath the officer, "I can't breathe," and this has become an air based haunting akin to the "water is life" chants. Each time the chant is taken up, Eric Garner is removed from cultural proscription to ended death, or from the social demand to mourn a life as in the past, and his living on and the kinship invoked by otherwise livability wakens. Lamar's levitation through air, too, invokes this racialized relationship to air as not only environmental resource, but also as it is forced out of bodies. Yet, instead of allowing death to become an aerial, celestial, or scientific bracket to living, he rises into it and creates a new "reading" of air, living in the city, and state sanctioned violence that wields livable environmental matter. Putting Eric Garner's last words and the cultural resonance of "I can't breathe" in figuring air reenacts the violence of taking that air away; it reminds that living necessitates access to immediate air, but also clean air. It also suggests ways that kinship lives on through the worlds built across the demonic skies and waters. Lamar's video takes on the speculative and unseen, materializing its environmental dimension in the air while also its haunting in the super and interhuman cultural formations. This haunting also challenges the epistemological work of the social sciences as they intersect with the life sciences to construct humanness, taking on postmodernism's "crisis in representation, a fracture in the epistemological regime of modernity, a regime that rested on a faith in the reality effect of social science" (Gilroy 10). This crisis is taken on by Lamar becoming Lazarus even as the flesh and blood reality of police brutality stages a war where the human and its racial makings are no longer taken as the de facto ideal for livability.

The linguistic, audio, and visual interplay of representing the "fo sho'" of police brutality alongside the preemptive warfare Lazarus tactic is not simply an unachievable fantasy, but rather a method for preempting supposedly unpredictable risks of finance capital and global climate change. Refusing to be called dead or perceived as death, which the last section in this chapter further explores, means also refusing to naturalize the "free market" binary of selected/dysselected for living. It disentangles the relationship between the life science's speculation for making live and

letting die from neoliberal market representations as unmanaged and inherently chaotic, calling out how cultural laws are projected onto natural laws to rationalize the privatization and regulation of resources necessary for living, such as air and water. The inversion of police law alongside laws of gravity when Lamar floats through the streets, for instance, reveals how the so called "'underdeveloped'" subaltern temporalities, and spatial geographies must, in Western epistemic formations, "lawlikely be sacrificed as a function of our continuing to project our collective authorship of our contemporary order onto the imagined agency of Evolution and Natural Selection and, by extrapolation, onto the 'Invisible Hand' of the 'free Market' (both being cultural and class-specific constructs)" (Wynter 317). This manifests in the laws of nature with Carson inaugurates popular environmentalisms being seen as violated by city spaces in the postindustrial landscape, where the fallout disproportionately lands on population such as those racialized and gendered in Flint and Detroit. If the dominant rhetorical and sociogenic schema depicts "Investors" as the economically and naturally sanctioned inheritors of normative humanity (Wynter 323), then "Alright" creates an antithetical world where death is no longer the end game, but instead creates alternate future realities in the wavering present. These alternate worlds project a different future relationship to natural, economic, and cultural "laws." In other words, Lamar's refusal of the natural laws of gravity, life, and death, become, too, a refusal of the cultural laws used to regulate resources as if naturally selecting and, to use Wynter's term again, "dysselecting[62]" livability in global climate change. It is precisely by breaking both laws, and in particular through the celestial/aerial dimension, that the song and its video illuminate how the Western European Christian humanisms are perpetuated through their scientific and financial supposed secularity.

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[62] Dysselecting is an important distinction here: de-selecting presumes something was originally selected, and then "de-," or taken away from, being selected. Dysselected makes clear that there was a selection in the first place, but that the selection criteria necessitate those not selected. It also continues in the geneology of Fanon and Wynter, building on their extensive, existing work around historicizing human being.

Lamar's hyper vitality imagines a new formation trafficking in otherwise uninhabitable aerial spaces, making "real world" relays with pre-emptive livability. This project cannot hope to fully explicate the interdisciplinary reaches between philosophy, history, and neuroscience of Wynter's project, much less how symbolic self-identification in imagining group identification materially creates those worlds and ways of being.[63] However, the schema at large undercuts a pseudoscientific rationale of selected/dysselected human by laying bear how it is racialized being. It also undercuts the conjoined nature/state paradigm for thinking through life, death, and a linear trajectory between the two as a chaotic, undetermined, and fated way of being. Finally, it materializes the postmodern romanticization of creating individual realities out of perception alone by reckoning with the actual creation of perception and its relay to the material world through shared wave lengths in group symbolic representation and understanding create lived, interdependent realities. Wynter's insight into the relay between symbolic representation underpins how Lamar's symbolic world building creates a material present and future that refigures collectivity. This materialization happens through "Alright" and its freedom anthem, as well as his collaborative "Freedom" song with Beyoncé that ends *Lemonade*. The performances "[illustrate] how performance [is] crucial to enacting the spatial imaginaries inherent to freedom and subjectivity," including the "freedom to travel without surveillance" (McMillan 75) implicit to white subjectivity without revalorizing or consolidating human status *as* white subjectivity: Beyoncé knocking out surveillance cameras in "Hold Up," Lamar flying above surveyed streets and "running" akin to fugitivity, and Black Lives Matter instituting a cultural shift to turning surveillance mechanisms back upon the police state with smart phone cameras at scenes of violence. As a reminder, though, it is not that these texts are moralistically superior or even necessarily more adept at suggesting and building these imaginaries, as they are popularly circulated and creating the material realities they suggest. This work implies a possible

[63] See Wynter, page 28, for more on selection/dysselection as humanist thought.

coalition point between critical scholars, historians, and artists where the reading practice itself, in relay with the material that impactfully crosses large audiences, might create the otherwise livability. That is: in acknowledging that these popular reference comfortably circulate in global capitalist markets, a more rigorous reading attention suggests that they might be used inadvertently against this backdrop, creating both symbolic and real possibilities – such as how despite its circulation, the song goes on to mobilize coalitions across #blacklivesmatter groups.

At the end of the music video, for instance, a white police officer shoots Lamar, but with his finger visually representing the otherwise sonic shot of a gun. The symbolic and literal dimensions merge to enforce how media becomes a relay of building worlds already. Although Lamar falls to his death and the screen darkens, the screen lightens once more and shows him waking up, winking, and smiling at the camera as the final image. David Caplan's work in *Rhyme's Challenge: Hip Hop, Poetry, and Contemporary Rhyming Culture* becomes useful here for thinking through the rhetorical techne of rap and hip hop iconography, but especially for how the linguistic dimensions create a material, incantatory existence, demonstrating the literal and figurative dimensions of "mattering." As David Caplan's analysis of hip hop poetics asserts, "hip hop artists rhyme the most conspicuous conditions and symbols of contemporary life…to evoke the era's distinctive features" (5). The technique serves to perhaps, more complexly, animate the past's haunting and retool it through affective rhyming, speaking, printing, filming, and so forth. Like *Lemonade*'s cameos in ahistorical, multiply hyperlinked attire, rhyme can create "nearly endless effects [that] include the poignant, disconcerting, menacing, charming, attractive, and repellent," from Caplan's examples of "'heaven with '911'…'Halle Berry' with 'very,' 'Ferrari,' or honorary,'" and so on. Rhyming in hip hop becomes a vector of hyper vitality, where the linkage between historical past, present, and future references surface to create kinship and livability.

Rhyme's proliferative meanings show "how quickly a cultural moment rushes into the past" (Caplan 7), but also how it creates a momentary future. It is not this project's particular goal to do the rich genealogical work of tracing hip hop studies in relation to forms of print verse, so much as to think through how popular culture literatures, such as *Lemonade* and "Alright," because of their mass consumption and circulation, are read as low art while also retooling what in a different, more Western European and continental U.S. dominated period would consider "high art" practices. Reading against the schema of low/high art in its racialized and gendered dimensions, as outlined in the introduction and Chapter 1, means here looking to how the lyrical dimensions might divest from "the first generation of hip hop scholarship [and its] favored cultural histories and criticisms" not to undermine them, but to add on "detailed interest in poetic form and versification." Poetic form operates in hip hop as a strategy for creating discursive worlds that unexpectedly disrupt "an American grammar" and its normativities, per Spillers, with a hieroglyphics built out of rhyme and rhythm's embodied enactments. As Caplan notes after Adam Bradley, "rap is poetry…but its popularity relies in part on people not recognizing it as such" (13). In other words, Lamar's poetics read as such do not "elevate" it to a status of poetry, which reasserts a humanistic cultural binary that is racialized and gendered along class lines. Instead, as rhyme in hip-hop marks its ironic difference from the most prestigious print poetry, it inverts the visual-textual symbolic hierarchy in theorizing knowledge. This inversion exists akin to and through Lamar's inverted world. The audio, spoken rhyme and translated technological visual documentation is disseminated through popular media channels, enabling crowdsourced and hyperlinked analysis (Caplan 16). The formal play effectively ruptures singular meaning while coding alternate livabilities that suture language and kinesthetic knowledge production.

The lines quoted earlier, for instance, which lead into the main refrain of the song, "We gonna be alright," use end rhyme to play on how subaltern knowledges become submerged. The

rhyme creates a linguistic demonic ground in relation to the celestial uninhabitable and underwater uninhabitable through linguistic cultural dimensions. The first phrase within the first three lines rhyme and slant rhyme: "know/before/ low/go/ Popo/sho'". Then, the shift intervenes through the rhyme scheme with, "I'm at the preacher's door," which creates a transition to almost exclusively slant rhyme. Notably, "door" is also a combined slant rhyme for "before"; the more exact rhymes of the long o's merge into a rhythmic, but also rhyming shift. This merging into a shared slant rhyme in part relies upon a popular vernacular turn on sure that is often parodied into a long "o," (sho'), which requires a knowledge of the sonic patterns before the written. Then, the final line of the stanza leads into the refrain, where "My knees gettin' weak, and my gun might blow" before, "but we gon' be alright," which refuses to rhyme with the stanza that leads into it, subverting expectations of where the story ends.

This rhyme marks a trajectory from being made to feel "low" because of this ongoing warfare, which in turn creates the pent up violence behind "might blow." The slant rhyme of "preacher's door," meanwhile, creates a shift in the rhyming narrative that also rhythmically mirrors "we gon' be alright": "I'm at the preacher's door"/"we gon' be alright." The stressed syllabus fall on "I'm/We", "be/preach" and "door/right," while the unstressed fall on "at the/gon'" and "-er's/al-." The only break in the rhythmic mirror is dropping the "-na" for "gon'", which means also dropping the valley in the unstressed syllables so that it more quickly rises to a sharp "be" in line rhyme-wise with "preach." This rhythmic dropping of the unstressed syllable makes the hope and world building pick up the pace. The pacing functions through a vernacular "matter" of speech out of line with the laws of grammar – a linguistic demonic ground pulsing through the air of Lamar's fugitive flight. The subversion leading to being "alright" corresponds to the unexpected living on and different modes of living in the visual registers of the music video, from laws of state and nature

being refused to rules of narratives ending at death or salvation. Instead, it cuts off at "alright," with the stress marking a tonal rise that contrasts the tonal fall at "door."

The primary turning point mirrors what has become a chanted phrase for #blacklivesmatter protestors. The spiritual shift and the emphasis on the singular subjectivity gaining strength through a collective "we" enacts living (be) and preaching (preach) as the stressed doorways to being alright. The becoming as an ongoing transformation is animated in part through the fugitive reference of "where do we go" from the opening run, and it leads into the middle of the three repetitions: "go" rhymes and comes out of the violence of "know"/"low"/"Popo"/"blow," before finally resting a turn away from the rhyme scheme with "alright." As Caplan notes, this Black performance as fugitivity is enacted through rhyme's capacity both within and without Black communities to "cross races, travel distances" while "paradoxically, this mobility intensifies the technique's ability to summon racial allegiances" (63). This does not, though, necessarily lead to Gilroy's feared Black fascism, but rather, the ability to cultivate a counter cultural resistance that uses as its starting place "mattering" in the double-sided literal and rhetorical senses. In this way, the rhyme and rhythm of the stanza leading into the refrain disperses subjectivity through cultural representations that do not aggregate into dominant subject and selfhood humanistic wholes. Or, rather, to build on *Lemonade*, unlike the violence of the life science's turn to molecular levels in life management and regulation, which recasts a humanist project in secular posthuman terms.

The relationship between the audiovisual registers of hip hop's challenge to rhyme materialize an antiracist posthumanity waging its own warfare against the presumed, exclusionary humanistic laws of nature and state. The material dimensions of "we gon' be alright" in Lamar's work engenders a movement with its particular, local chapters that attain undeniably material status through, paradoxically, Lazarus's metaphysical superhumanity. In Lamar's music video, money rains from the sky as not an unregulated, but rather a deprivatized resource such as water. This can be

read twofold: a call out on how resources like air and water are privatized and regulated precisely through rhetorics of nature and de-regulation, but also a method for with this realization refusing to "buy in" to the logic of resource scarcity. Money becomes rain, becomes water and air, and breaks economic laws alongside natural laws to refigure racial, life science, and finance livability.

The material and metaphysical space Lamar creates is derived from how race "haunts" — literally and figuratively — accounts of finance speculation, disability, and water in order to preemptively triumph over the speculated, violent fall out of rhetorics around risk and contagion already surfaced in the Introduction and Chapter 1. Here, though, as Kevin Young notes in The Grey Album: On the Blackness of Blackness, "despite hip-hop being, as Chuck D declared, 'CNN for black people,' we also listen to hip-hop not just to hear the 'news' about, say, police brutality, but to enact broad fantasies of our triumph over it" (352). Lamar enacts this fantasy multiple times in the video, using networks of subjectivity and matter necessary for living while traversing the sky. Again, similar to Beyoncé releasing the water, Lamar goes against the logic of finance capital, which requires the privatization of each resource and funneling of money into financial investments. Instead, he bears a hyper vitality to the elements necessary for life—air and water—while also dispersing money without reserve. To not just echo above, this creates an additional register of hyper vitality: if finance capital functions by moving money and capital into abstract status for its quick retrieval and movement before a risk fall out, then money literally raining from the sky functions in an opposite framework. Here, there is no abstracting investment at the moment it's material manifestations are enacted, as with Flint's maneuvering of investment companies causing poisoned water.

At the same time, Lamar enacts a repeated haunting that "[expands] ongoing discussions of accessible futures or lost, imagined pasts" (Kafer). While this fantasy would seem to end through his last death in the music video, as he falls, he provides spoken word describing "the evils of Lucy"

before in the last shot waking up to wink at the camera[64]. Here, extraterrestrial does not mean a wholesale departure from the planet or a romanticized death. While in a framework that reinvigorates a singular human as the ideal, what Lamar points out is that it is, in fact, a posthuman opportunity be enmeshed with the planet and its terrestrial forces without recuperating the "gravity" of racial biopolitical and necropolitical economic, cultural, and natural laws. Instead of life's proliferative potential outside of the life/death continuum, or its romanticization through radical alterity as either god-like or death-like, the music video envisions a relation to environmental and racial workings that implicates the viewer's participation in the narrative. As where to "go" becomes an ongoing line of flight into "alright," Lamar refuses to be externally commodified as solely the end of a gun and its polarized life/death continuum, much less as an unknowning object for the viewer to consume.

This fugitive performance is one that also queers the environmental in line with queer ecocritic Sarah Ensor's analysis of apprehending the environmental dominantly in terms of preservation, vitalism, and reproduction. In other words, using Lamar's video to build on Chapter 2's poisoned hand, I add onto this queer ecocriticism a world built away from environmental racism's phobic figuring of racialized bodies as both contagions themselves and naturalized recipients of environmental contagion. Lamar living through death, as well as the temporalities of haunting in the music video, value those ways of living and creating that dominantly come to signify, as Lisa Cacho would note, "social death," but also environmentally, "literal death." I argue that instead, this multimodal activist poetics offers an otherwise ethics that "cultivate forms of communal and planetary investment [existing] outside of—and [persisting] beyond—the temporality

[64] This "[asserts the] radical alterity" that Gilroy points out in certain critiques of raciology and raciality, including how "the associated invocation of forces beyond this world have become integral to posttraditional critique[s]" (348). While for Gilroy, this leads problematically beyond the human, a once more dehumanizing move, I argue that Lamar's enactment in fact points out the usefulness in finally moving beyond humanness as the idealized benchmark for inclusivity.

of crisis in which the environmental movement so deeply invests" (Ensor 53). In other words, the posthumanism that environmentalist rhetorics would embrace in the name of preserving life itself creates a phobia of what has historically been excluded from the category of the human in the first place, illustrating planetary climate change as a contemporary crisis as much as the posthuman as a contemporary emergence. Both of these moves forget the lessons of humanisms, how posthuman has already brought to bear different relations to the planetary "laws" of nature and globalized capitalism. These relations elide the opportunity to participate in ethical relations beyond the environmental crisis that cannot, anyway, be averted.

Ensor asks, "What possibilities for relation exist amidst terminality, and what similarities may be between a place (or planet) persisting in or on 'borrowed time' and a human being (or human couple) doing the same?" (44). *Lemonade* and "Alright" emerge together to meet us here, looking to the borrowed time of racialized existence in a biopolitical and necropolitical police state built on plantation racial slavery and Jim Crow exploitation. They each persist in creating a different relationship to how life might be planetarily built across the lines of the scientific molecular, the economic free market, and the cultural coidentification that signifies "humanness" or postmodernity's posthuman. In this way, when Lamar enacts his death again and again while refusing to die, I argue that he asks, akin to Ensor: "What happens when harm has already been suffered? What happens when prevention is no longer the primary order of the day?" (Ensor 53). To no longer fear death and its social significations, but rather critique what produces it while valuing differently the lives that refigure its temporalities and material manifestations could be one line to follow among many for extraterrestrial ground that does not entirely leave the matter of air, water, and earth out of the line of sight. In other words, Lamar and Beyoncé's haunting of "Freedom" dispatches different modes of hyper vitality and water formations, insisting on the

worlds that emerge from queer futurelessness as precisely the entry point for hope at the end of the world.

### Weheliye and Smith's Atomized Vocoders and Organic Mattering

I turn in this final section to *[insert] boy* (2016) and *Don't Call Us Dead* (2017), both books of poetry by Danez Smith (they/their). Smith's textual medium takes up "haunting" in antiracist posthuman critiques akin to the examples above, but offers a techno-posthumanist critique. This builds an unexpected coalitional contact between the popularly circulated texts above and the more niche mode and genre of print-based poetry. To make this argument, I turn first to Smith's terrestrial and metaphysical references in *[insert] boy*, and then to their queer of color, HIV+ analytic for living in death in *Don't Call Us Dead.* In *[insert] boy*, the title refers to the sections of the book, each of which offers an alternative word that Smith "inserts" into the brackets. These words span the pejorative, neutral or seemingly arbitrary, and affirming, which multiplies how Black boyhood might be represented, experienced, lived, or referenced: *[black], [papa's lil], [ruined], [rent], [lover],* and *[again]*. The first poem explicitly elaborates this multiplication in meaning, and is titled "Black Boy Be." In "Black Boy Be," each line creates a simile for Black boyhood and the singular experiences therein, while also calling attention to the danger only "representing" Blackness, or converting it to metaphor instead of reckoning with individual, material experiences of Blackness. To contextualize the following close reading: like both "Alright" and *Lemonade*, this first poem opens with the image of water and a burning village.

These are part of a series of seeming paradoxes, though, as the ocean "hid behind a grain of sand" and the village, while ablaze is "dreaming of spit." Smith's poetic world becomes explicitly apocalyptic as it disintegrates into "blood all over everything" and the rhetorical question, "ain't that the world?" ends the poem. This organic matter of ocean and fire sutured to cultural matter, "a lost glory," and to metaphysical matter, "like a mouthless prayer" participates in an initial theme of seeming contradictions around matter and mattering. These contradictions, though, create a

subjectivity playing out linguistic fugitivity, or, as I will argue: this subjectivity on the page escapes any easy recourse to liberal humanisms or virtual alternatives.

This fugitivity insistently describes the world as it is while also building an otherwise possibility, doing so by eliding consolidated, universalized, and easily mass circulated meanings. This method is particularly useful, then, as a contrast to and coalitional meeting point with the prior two texts, which do traffic in more easily consolidated and circulated meaning-making registers. Later in the book, for instance, when describing this image of ocean and fire, Smith clarifies how the Black boys themselves are "risked" and through violence directed by finance capital attempting to ward off becoming collateral, or indebted: "Not the flame, not the oceans, but first the taxes raised" (95). I return to this moment later in this section of the chapter but would index here how the line encapsulates Smith's ability to indict disavowals of how environmental violence and the life sciences' apprehension of life and its management work in tandem with late capitalist logics. Those logics, as the above readings and Chapter 2 demonstrate, violently racialize through biopolitical and necropolitical methods. In this final section of the chapter, then, I read first their use of environmental planetary involvement through Alexander Weheliye's technological antiracist posthumanism to add onto the dominantly environmental posthumanisms preceding this section. Then, I turn again to Ensor's questions of temporality and vitality in Smith's *Don't Call Us Dead* to examine Smith's relationship to territorialization and the "matter" of ground, which leads into Chapter 4's analysis of diaspora and disability in anticolonial poetics.

Weheliye and his intervention on posthumanist studies suggests what the different histories, experiences, and futures of such an antiracist posthumanism entail, creating a useful starting point for examining how Smith's print poetics depart from the dominant, techno mode of Afrofuturity and posthumanism. I read Weheliye's version of posthumanism from his critique of Katherine Hayles' postmodern posthumanism in "'Feenin': Posthuman Voices in Contemporary Black Popular

Music." The antiracist posthumanist studies on which Weheliye's virtuality argument builds, however, oftentimes neglects embodiment, enfleshment, and environmental matter. Smith's poems offer a method for bringing together these disparate posthumanist studies when examined through Weheliye's R&B analysis, or through the argument that "the phonograph harbors an always-embodied virtuality, particularly in relation to black voices," by seeking out also as environmental conduits for Black voices. Paradoxically, Weheliye points out, the phonograph and other song technologies disembodies Black voices even as "black subjects are inscribed as the epitome of embodiment through a multitude of U.S. cultural discourses" (26). In turning to multimedia and musically oriented texts—Danez Smith is, after all, a popular performance poet as well as print poet, and is here paired with two such epitomes in popular U.S. cultural discoureses—the imaginary and virtuality in more terrestrial posthuman modes complicate Weheliye's notion of embodiment and critical posthumanisms.

Weheliye's work depends on a longer genealogy of Black feminist posthumanism, including Spillers' use of enfleshment and a hieroglyphics of the flesh, which has been explored in *Lemonade* and Chapter 2. Weheliye recruits Spillers' analytic of how the all too material grammar of the hieroglyphics also promises alternative grammars to the norms committing their racializing violences against the flesh. While I read Spillers in Chapter 2 and *Lemonade* to think through patrilineal relations in a Black feminist demonic ground, her analysis of how gender and race are co-formed also becomes a point here for adding onto Ensor's queer ecocriticism and Weheliye's analysis of posthuman desire as non-heteronormative or heteroreproductive. The uniquely queer opportunity of non-heteroreproductivity, as well as patrilineal property relation therein, surface from the hieroglyphics Smith's final poems. These poems offer queer of color e**co**critique through enfleshment that centers nonreproductive desire while nevertheless producing an activist poetics articulated with Weheliye's analysis of posthuman desire. In their final poem, "On Grace," they

worship the "wood & bark" of their lover, describing "this man in my bed at night" through a body that is both a metaphysically "gospel" and physically "mountains" (112). Smith's coarticulation of environmental and spiritual matter with desire and a singular experience of "man" complicates the relationship between matter typically ascribed as nonhuman, where humanity becomes defined by possessing matter through property relations.

It also implicates how the religious, scientific, and biological modes[65] of humanisms preceding this analysis might be entangled with one another, while offering a posthuman scene of desire that situates a less binary relationship between the spiritual and biological dimensions of the planet. This corresponds to how Weheliye argues that a posthumanism must necessarily, like Black humanism, "[disenchant] 'Man as Man,' bringing 'into being different modes of the *human*' because it deploys the very formulation of 'man' as catachresis." This is relayed in Smith's assertion that they are making love to what "biology calls a man" (112). With this phrase, Smith refuses to recuperate the normative category of cultural "man" in their desire, much less naturalize the "biology" of Man2's secular/biology matrix. They point out the linguistic world building of creating a sexualized reality of the "shared wave lengths" of symbolic representation in biological sciences. This undermines the de facto objective knowledge biology would claim on sexuality and sex identification. Instead, Smith marks the life sciences' discursive production of the category "Man as Man" as insufficient because of its dependence on naturalizing heteroreproductive desire and bodies.

Both Smith and Weheliye take this proliferation of modes of "human" through desire's ongoing relation to nonhuman matter; they both center desire on a focal point – or vocal point – in "the black voice…as a figure of value within African American culture…contrasted with the lack of value ascribed to blackness in American mainstream culture" (Weheliye 27). The mode of the

[65] See Wynter on Man1 and Man2 for the histories of humanism undergirding her theory of demonic ground.

"singing voice" instead of Hayles' "signing voice" enables a subjectivity different from the property logic of "having a body," centering instead "being a body" (Weheliye 28). This opens to "particular performances of the human—singularities, if you will, that always incorporate their own multiplicities—as opposed to mere uncritical echoes of the white liberal humanist subject" (Weheliye 30). However, as Cooper, Spillers, and Hong throughout these chapters have so far demonstrated, and as Weheliye has contested in his own work, the body itself is still a contested site of property relations. While one reading of Weheliye's essay can presume that Smith is referring, here, to the fragmented and dispersed modes of interrelated embodiment through technological mediation that negates a holistically owned body, attention to how the virtual manifestation of molecularizing as it coincides with the material opens Weheliye's and Hayles' cyber analysis of the body's virtual relations to consider material, molecular models.

These models might return to Spillers' site of enfleshment for hieroglyphics in order to more productively elucidate the relationship between a cyber atomization of sound and images with the life sciences' similar shift. Shifting antiracist posthumanist studies away from the strictly technological Afrofuturist world might better account for planetary climate change and vitalist frameworks that build on Weheliye's insights about how the virtual is always imbricated in the physical, better tracking the violence of racial molecular biopolitics' "codification" language in the life sciences, which also surfaces in rhetorics of risk, contagion, and pre-emptive warfare under finance capital. Weheliye argues that R&B is a unique, antiracist site for just such a posthumanism. He selects R&B for its use of technologically mediated voices and its history of being a collaboratively driven deployment of "hypersoul" in relation to Hayles' "hypertext." While I critique his genre exclusivity in my reading of *Lemonade* and use his and Hayles' conception of hypertext to think through hyper vitality, his use of hypersoul in R&B can be recruited for thinking through Smith's ongoing project of antiracist posthuman becoming. On the surface, Weheliye's hypersoul

corresponds to Smith's use of music when Smith's enfleshed hieroglyphics mix song with touch: "I hear music rise off your skin." The skin becomes an instrument, a "tiny viola" that then expands outward to "a wind full of bows and blows" that rhyme with the what Smith hears, the "brown//hum of your flesh" (109). However, contrasting Weheliye's vocoder, Smith brings organic "matter" into his articulation of posthuman, embodied knowledge so that the hypersoul and the living matter become entangled methods for environmentally persisting through life.

In this love poem, desire is situated through an enfleshed present tense that allows for the possibility of object and nature alike to articulate a posthuman politics of desire. As their earlier poem, "Song of the Wreckage," states: "Not the flame, not the oceans, but first the taxes raised" (95), which itself reflects the opening of the book, where a Black boy is "like an ocean hid behind a grain of sand/like a village ablaze & dreaming of spit" (15). In *[insert] boy*'s story of desire, Smith repeatedly implicates the relationship between finance capital and environmental violence. Smith's love poem refuses to naturalize, for instance, environmental violence as apart from finance capital.

The opening lines attest to how bodies have been racialized as property via their dehumanization and likening to nature; the latter line attests to finance capital's otherwise disavowed role in environmental violence. The two together historicize categories of "nature" and "man" as a racialization that enacts environmentally mediated violence by marking dehumanized "existential surplus" – culturally valued precisely in their capacity to be prematurely exposed to precarity in the biopolitical fall out of environmental climate change. When the final poem adds onto this formation the human as also "the birch-colored body" with its "wood & bark", it produces a queer, nonreproductive desire. This desire does not recuperate the property logics of man possessing nature, nor offspring, even as it creates an alternative to being violated through comparisons to nature or through patrilineal relations that undergird raciologies.

Smith's challenge to humanistic desire, in this way, complicates Weheliye and Hayles' posthumanism as privileging modern technology. Weheliye, for instance, notes how the sound machine, "molecularizes and atomizes, ionizes sound matter" in order to "[dodge] the naturalism associated with the human voice….[and] imagines interpersonal relations and informational technologies as mutually constitutive rather than antithetical foils" (38). Technologically mediated and juxtaposed voices and objects, according to Weheliye, in their extreme "[locate] desire for a love object in the realm of neurochemical reactions—or desire is yoked to nonhuman objects such as cars and designer clothes" (39). This, for Weheliye, is why R&B, with its dependence on technological mediation, offers a more critical conceptualization of posthumanity. According to Weheliye, such a posthumanism better accounts for how "black cultural practices do not have the illusion of disembodiment," and so they "stage *the body* of information and technology as opposed to the lack thereof" (39). However, Weheliye limits his antiracist posthumanism by focusing exclusively on R&B. Smith, for instance, asks in "On Grace," "How could we not be a song? I sing/this man in my bed all night, my mouth a loose choir/& his body a gospel & I don't mean like a song//I mean a gospel like a religion or like a testimony/etched in gold. How could we be only one song?" (111). The organic matter of life through mouth and body in its atomized elements of song making produces a posthumanism more capacious than one that requires the advent of digital technology or a seeming secularization of that body for a space where hypersoul and hypertext might meet.

As another example: in Smith's poem, "King the Color of Space, Tower of Molasses & Marrow," elemental matter—wind and earth—are not romanticized as divorced from their cultural and historical moorings: "You are too beautiful for bullets. You, long the poster child for metal//wrecked bodies, are too precious for the dirt's greedy teeth" (109). Here, the earth is personified by the dirt having teeth, and the cultural and literal death via the earlier poems' narration of bullets that penetrate Black and brown bodies as they bear an undeniable relationship to the

matter of life— the "dust to dust" saying becomes literal Smith as separates themselves from both environmental life science, finance capital economic, and popular culture co-identification strategies. In this material space, Smith creates an antiracist posthumanism that is "not an ocean hungry for blood/nor trying to trick you. I came from the same red clay//same ship as you." As Smith declares their subjectivity to both come out of and be apart from racial slavery's property relations, as well as the geographies of land, sea, and sky, they build on the watery and aerial demonic grounds in *Lemonade* and "Alright" to reexamine the terrestrial dimension of moving beyond the human and its exclusionary biopolitics.

Smith here also rebuffs the paradoxical romanticization of Black bodies that makes them an access point to normative human spirituality and transcendence of the body – even as they are violently excluded and killed: "I am sick of people always//calling us Gods. What God do you know that dies this easy?" (110). Smith's motifs of matter, culture, and the metaphysical, like Weheliye's posthumanism, do not allow the virtual, metaphysical, or environmental dimensions of the human to be uncritically recuperated to a posthumanist project. The poem refuses to absolve those categories of their historically violent humanizing and dehumanizing practices, making the death that follows from such universalized humanisms or posthumanisms alike undeniably literal. However, "the human" as the privileged category and its counterpart of "no humans" are not the only options for living matter that "matters" and creates in resistance to environmental and finance capital. Smith and Weheliye both offer alternative versions of posthumanism through singularities of enfleshment and virtuality. The demonic ground of Smith's poems, which entangle land and the body through physical and metaphysical registers rises to meet both *Lemonade*'s water and Lamar's extraterrestrial air through queer desire. Smith's posthumanism, in other words, "stages *the body* of information and technology" (Weheliye 39), which in its extreme, encapsulates both metaphysical cultural matter, technological music production, and organic matter, not simply nonhuman objects

such as Weheliye's vocoder scene of posthuman desire[66]. This posthumanism suggests a mobile, ongoing project that enables performative world building (McMillan), which might create demonic grounds where living happens apart from the horizon of death, terminality, and its related techno/eco binary thought.

## ***Don't Call Us Dead*: Diaspora Beyond Di*s*ability and Disposession**

In Smith's poetry, the above, ongoing posthuman project of world building materializes especially through queer temporality and a refusal to call "dead" or memorialize as discretely past. Their poems seek instead different futures continuously emerging from the present through a queer of color poetics and living with a chronic illness in the Anthropocene. I argue in this final section that attending to Smith's hyper vitality as one that refuses the biopolitical registers of environmental thought and its implicit vitalisms creates new forms of livability by "[recognizing] that the making of the Americas was/is an (often dangerously genocidal and ecocidal) interhuman and environmental project through which 'new forms of life' can be conceptualized" (McKittrick 135). How can a queer of color ecocriticism create antiracist posthuman worlds that take into account the violent terminality of Black living in the U.S. alongside global climate while also refusing to distill Blackness or the Anthropocene into either spectacular or death? In other words, how do racial finance capital and environmentalist speculations around the future suggest materialized methods for living at the end of the environmental, humanist, and posthumanist worlds beyond prevention or survival models? Finally, how do these frameworks, which are already diasporic and cross-bordered, open up to relationships between diagnosis, sexuality, race, and haunting?

[66] This mode of posthumanism is best summarized in Cary Wolfe's 2016 book, *What is Posthumanism*, where Wolfe attempts to suture the disparate technological, environmental, and philosophical frameworks. Wolfe's framework depends heavily on white Western European and cis male philosophical thought, which undercuts the book's historicization of how the human has been formed while creating a line of thought that would crucially benefit from Black feminist histories of humanism and posthumanism.

This section does not answer all of these questions but does begin the endeavor of seeking some potential responses, as well as methods for opening into Chapter 4, which will take up the final query on diagnosis, sexuality, race, and haunting by turning more explicitly to decolonial poetics and diaspora. This close reading, then, of *Don't Call Us Dead,* both adds onto the historicized posthumanisms theorized above by reckoning with the global nature of finance capital, colonialism, and diaspora, while creating a bridge to the last chapter's closer examination of diaspora, diagnosis, and dispossession. In 2017, *Don't Call Us Dead*, came out from Graywolf Press, going on to become shortlisted finalist for the 2017 National Book Award in poetry. The collection continues on Smith's previous book from YesYes Books, *[insert] boy*, by centering queer and Black living during the Black Lives Matter movement, Anthropocene, and after lives of racial slavery. However, *Don't Call Us Dead* is Smith's first book to directly grapple with how life and death as humanist binaries dovetail with conjoined racialization, sexualization, and disability rhetorics for those living with HIV and/or, eventually, AIDS. Smith takes up watery and ground matter again for poems of desire and remembrance, but also creates an explicitly new world for Black living that decenters the human's life and death binary, as well as environmental vitalisms, to imagine a different relationship to terminality, temporality, and environmental matter. While the book is thematically organized into four, untitled parts, with the first being the long, segmented poem, "summer, somewhere," I turn to recycled and recurring water, air, ground, and blood imagery and metaphors to seek out how this map for a world beyond the coarticulation of Blackness and death or Blackness and the metaphysical also becomes one for offering queer ecocriticism's potential ethics in an coalition with antiracist and HIV positive lenses.

Living with chronic illness, especially, complicates the temporalities of bracketed, curable disease and terminal illness, or making live into "ableness," which figures disability as the end of livability. More succinctly, queer ecocriticism creates a useful critique of finance capital and

dominant environmental or technological posthumanisms, but it also oftentimes lacks a critical race perspective that thinks, too, through disability and chronic illness. Here, Smith's poems might intervene, building a world that accounts for such modes of living. Chronic, incurable illness that does not necessarily produce premature death implicitly demands a reevaluation of life and death binaries and its corresponding able and disabled frameworks. My final reading within this chapter, then, uses Gilroy, Wynter, and McKittrick again, but through Ensor's antivitalist environmentalism[67]. In Smith's poetry, the ongoing project of posthuman world-building materializes especially in queer temporality and a refusal to call "dead," or to memorialize a discrete past seemingly severed from the present. Their poems seek instead alternate futures that emerge from a queer of color experience while living with chronic illness in the Anthropocene.

Importantly, that chronic illness also stems from a genocidal and sexualized history through the homophobic dominant response to AIDS in the 1980's. Smith's poetry thus constructs the twinned historical selfhood of genealogies across two perpetrated margins in dominant Western U.S. culture: the queer trauma of AIDs and racialized trauma of Black racial slavery. I argue in this first section that attending to Smith's hypervitality, which necessarily attends to this twinned history, refuses the biopolitical registers of environmental thought and its implicit vitalisms. Smith's poetics instead create alternate forms of livability at the end of the world: Smith's hypervitalities refuse to bracket life binaries of curable disease or terminal illness, abstracted and colorblind posthumanism or exclusionary white humanism. In twinned vestiges of racialized and sexualized being, Smith's poetics refuse to code livability as normative "ableness" or social vitalism, instead arriving at the end

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[67] Since writing this chapter, as well as its writing sample, or paper equivalent, a book entitled *Crip Times: Disability, Globalization, and Resistance,* by Robert McRuer, has come out (2018). I am writing a review of it for an academic journal. It stands at the crux of this last chapter's section, Chapter 4, and subsequent projects more intersectional with the relationship between diaspora and disability frameworks in finance capital regimes. *Crip Times* creates a historically critical and necessary explanation for turning to "crip" instead of "disability" in political coalitional vocabularies, while also articulating how illness and disability are central to property frameworks, including globalized dispossession. If I further develop this project into a book, or go on to publish this paper, that version will do more to build on that book's work.

of the ecological world to re-cast livability out of violently co-formed sexualized, gendered, racialized, and ableist histories. Smith's work thus responds to two questions: what happens when ecocidal and genocidal underpinnings are co-articulated as racialized, sexualized, and ableist projects? How can a queer of color ecocriticism create antiracist posthuman worlds that historicize the violent terminality of Black living in the U.S.'s speculative free market while also refusing to distill Blackness to either the spectacular or death? In other words, this merging of what is in fact racial free market finance capital and racial environmentalist speculations around the future and either human or posthuman livability builds itself out of the historical projects of racial slavery, sexuality, gender, ability. In turn, a historical elucidation of this violence also materializes ways of antiracist living at the end of the ecological world and presumed racial category of humanness. As I will demonstrate, Smith's poetics grapple with precisely these co-formations, introducing a necessary, enfleshed, and embodied hypervitality that takes antiracist and queer posthumanism into the Anthropocene.

While *Don't Call Us Dead* is thematically organized into four untitled parts, with the first being the long, segmented poem, "summer, somewhere," I turn to the text's consistent recycling of water, air, ground, and blood imagery and metaphors to seek out how the book maps hypervitality. Smith's lyrical style comes forward in longer sequence poems, with the first section being partitioned into 8 unrhymed couplets on each page, the middle section diving deeper in to questions of blood and kinship, and the third looking outward for diasporic community building. On the first page of "summer, somewhere," Smith sets the stage for this world as "not earth/not heaven," refusing terrestrial or extra-terrestrial departures from "earth." Identifying how blackness and death become equated, Smith asks, "please, don't call/us dead, call us alive someplace better" (3). Or rather, the "please" implies a request to not call at all, until the break turns to "us dead," clarifying the impulse of what to call to, instead. The lack of question mark, as well, undermines the "please" to make the creation of a different mode for living as an imperative, moving beyond true request. Here, the

merged natural and cultural "laws" that police racialization, life, and death, both in the literal and metaphorical sense, become fragmented. In turn, Smith turns to terrestrial geography to release it from propertied, ecological territorialization:

> do you know what it's like to live
> on land who loves you back?
>
> no need for geography
> now, we safe everywhere.
>
> point to whatever you please
> & call it church, home, or sweet love.
>
> paradise is a world where everything
> is sanctuary & nothing is a gun.
>
> here, if it grows it knows its place
> in history. yesterday, a poplar
>
> told me of old forest
> heavy with fruits I'd call uncle
>
> bursting red pulp & set afire
> harvest of dark wind chimes.
>
> after i fell from its limb
> it bandaged me in sap. (8)

The extended poem and its twenty sections are organized so that each page begins a new section, with each section arranged into eight, unrhymed couplets of all lower-case letters besides for the last section, which disperses across the page and ends on a single, final line that would otherwise start the seventh couplet. As Smith calls out in "summer, somewhere," the separation between natural and ecological laws written across racialization in the U.S. through de-historicizing moves of environmentalism might not continue in this antiracist, posthuman world. This difference functions in part through a queer mode of reproductivity: "here, if it grows it knows its place" does not mean in the articulation of privatized and regulated matter, but rather, "in history." In this way, "the poplar" and its historical relation to lynching grows into the deep time of "old forest" while

simultaneously emerging in the recent past. The famous metaphor for hanging fruit does not lose its violent specificity, but rather grows a mode of kinship that bears new fruit, sutured effectively by the poplar's own "sap" so that the ethical relation to environmental matter, such as trees and deforestation, repairs its relationship through an antiracist healing from historical trauma. The imagery also, though, bears sexual tension through the "bursting red pulp" and implied autopoietic seeding as the speaker falls (in)to the ground. That seeding transpires from uncle to Smith, and instead of recapitulating or overrepresenting hetero-reproductive, binary gendered idealized humanity for its future production, instead opens the poem again to desire between forms of ecological and cultural matter.

In this section, Smith builds on the violent historical imagery of lynching, as well as the dangerous equation of blackness with nature or blackness with the metaphysical through a refusal of dominant geographies and their property logics, which coincides with the attempt to memorialize lost bodies as deaths secured in the past. These refusals emerge through the poem's queer and environmental ethics. In the first couplet, the question initially seems to ask what it is like to live at all, reminding the reader of the ongoing narratives of death throughout the book. However, the line break refuses this simplified binary between living and dying, turning instead to ask more so what it is like to "live/on land who loves you back". The punctuation, a question mark, makes the question an earnest examination that can take the assumption of loving land itself seriously, but more than that, describes land beyond static object or property, capable of loving back. The is not an it, but a "who." That who is a network of relations between human and nonhuman matter with reciprocal investments in one another.

Smith's representation of the relationships between the poem's first-person speaker, its addressee, and the "land" that might love them "back" are reminiscent McKittrick and Wynter from the beforehand sections. Both theorists insist that any environmental representation of water, air,

and its terrestrial dimensions requires accounting for how property and human-making logic over-saturates representations of livable land. Again: land, water, and air as livable or not becomes geographically mapped, proscribing the status of lifeless matter to be acquired or territorialized. In relation to Smith, the refusal of both earth and heaven becomes also a refusal of humanist geographies, a posthumanist apprehension of the racial violence inherent to proscribing human status through normative geographic space. The water as the submerged space becomes the necessarily watery demonic ground for antiracist posthuman iterations of livability: "no need for geography/now, we safe everywhere." Here, Smith is not romanticizing a pre-modern Blackness or racist primitivity; rather, they are creating a new topography of borderless livability, where the conception of livable human status does not depend on racial humanist projects prescribed to either religious or secular discourses. This is not a recruitment of pre-modern humanness, but rather, the poem harnesses this space as "whatever you please/& call it church, home, or sweet love." The move is an antiracist posthumanism beyond the self-proclaimed secularity of "the human" in ecological life sciences. It moves instead to a relationality that spans the ecological and spiritual for a watery topography instead of nation-bound or mapped geography.

Smith thus intervenes upon queer Black theory and ecocritical theory. Their poetics add onto McKittrick's recuperation of demonic ground by using water to create a present that necessarily comes out of and can depart from the trans-Atlantic slave trade's haunting. As McKittrick notes: "If Man is an overrepresentation of humanness, Man's human geographies are an extension of this conception….The development and mapping of the uninhabitable and uneven archipelagos are two important ways Man's geographies are overrepresented….These areas were comprehensively non-navigable, uninhabitable, unlivable, and oceanic." (129, emphasis added). She identifies how Black feminist knowledges are built upon this conception of the uninhabitable and dispossessed as naturally damned, or, in environmental racism terms, the collateral damage of

natural selection, and in racial finance capital terms, the collateral damage of speculated risk-taking in the free market's natural selection. As Smith points out, dropping geographical mapping as a colonial expansion of livability is reminiscent of Wynter's "genres of the human" and posthumanism beyond dominant, capitalist conceptions. It also means moving into what is deemed unlivable, into the, as Ibrahim terms it above, "oceanic" waters of antiracist and posthuman world-building.

This means that in the world Smith builds, safety no longer corresponds to zoning and territorializing land as livable or not based on its terrestrial relation to dominant conceptions of humanness. In this way, the poem moves away from impending death as a crisis and instead into an ongoing method for living, "acknowledging the end as an extended temporality that we already inhabit, rather than that we are working to prevent," where "we might find our sense of agency, and the possibility for stewardship, expanded rather than delimited" (Ensor 2016, 51). The idea of specified zones for sanctuaries ("paradise is a world where everything/is sanctuary & nothing is a gun"), or life-propagating mediums that might extend planetary value, becomes delimited when placed within the antiracist context of transforming the biopolitical antithesis of nature sanctuaries. Spatial land organization's territories lose their grip in determining what counts as human enough to live, or conversely, planetary enough to be conserved for certain humans' livability. The double-meaning of sanctuary – metaphysical via religion or hyper physical via the nature sanctuary – takes on the converse actions of moving beyond human-forming geographical properties to create ghostly and material relations with the terminal.

These hauntings re-think living in relation to the land, but also to the metaphysical, complicating a separation of the two modes. In line with queer ecocriticism, in other words, the poem, "Rather than aiming to save" participates in an attempt "to train ourselves and each other how to steward within…terminal temporality" (Ensor 43) by stepping outside what Wynter defines as the selected/dysselected paradigm of vitality imbuing racial finance capital with its ruthless

racializing force and rationalized environmental, biopolitical violence: the converse of protecting the nature sanctuary through geographical mapping is the zoning of urban areas in part through the militarization of the police and cultural/natural laws used to justify the hyper exposure of racialized inter-human populations to precarity and pre-mature death – the "gun" of the poem. In Smith's sanctuary, there is no biopolitical urban foil of gun violence to the nature and spiritual sanctuaries. Smith here, akin to Ensor but with an added attention to the historical dimension of race in sexuality, creates a way to re-frame humanness and its "post" lives outside of the biopolitical imperative and its dependence on speciesist (and species-making) thought.

The next section of the poem, for instance, immediately launches into "loving a boy, once" (9), and six sections later Smith addresses the ongoing killings of black youth when he desires to kiss his lover, but instead grieves having to "kiss the ground" where the lover is buried in order to do so. The violent implications of being made to create a different relation to the matter of living surface, so that the poplar and its fruit are still not romanticized even as ecological matter bears a new relation to humanness and antiracist living. How ground comes to also symbolize encapsulating the dead, just as the ocean comes to also symbolize submerged lives lost across the trans-Atlantic slave trade, also materializes in the very real burying and drowning that happens as the ecological matter is recruited for privatizing and regulating, even as it contains the graves. More concretely it becomes a uniquely queer relationship to ecological relations: we fertilize the ground when are deemed dead and are buried, making it live. As Smith insists next, "do not call us/dead," the ways that death and livability are figured bring into the frame the racialized dimensions of ecological relationships to the ground and reproduction. The poem does not over-simplistically villainize territorialized matter, but rather de-territorializes it, raising the dead and insisting on the living that happens now in its wake and on its land.

It is in this later section that Smith warns how, even as there is possibility of traversing water, air, ground, and living matter outside of property logics, such as "[knowing] when the wind feels/as if it's made of hands", as well as "[feeling] like [they are] made of water" there is, too, the necessary critique of romanticizing death in antivitalism, as well as reducing racialized bodies to ecological embodiment: "i can't wed/wind. i'm not water" (14). This complicates any easy romanticization of ecocriticism's attachment to the organic matter while also refusing the easier binary of an Afro-futurism tied to the stars and technological alone. This poem instead re-thinks the horizon of death in posthumanist potential where death is no longer the only end point, or method for establishing linear time and heteroreproductive bodies, but rather a blueprint, or hypervitality, creates antiracist and posthuman methods for living in the Anthropocene.

As part of this world-building, antiracist posthumanism means reassessing the watery grounds from which diaspora can be built. This reassessment accesses land and water to look outward toward coalitions between singularly racialized, diasporic populations traversing the historical and scientific matter of water and diagnosis. This creates a bridge into what I explore in the fourth chapter: crip posthumanism and diaspora in the hybridization of ecological and racial finance capital. Here, though, the bridge is built on the concept that began this section: the oceanic and its methods for relating literal and cultural registers of "matter" for an antiracist posthumanism. One theme that distinguishes Smith's second book from their first is their exploration of living HIV positive and how this creates an occasion to think through blood and its historical use as a racializing and sexualizing vector. Instead of seeking containment and the anticipated warding off of its risk, blood here runs counter to bordered attempts to contain and manage both ecological and economic flows of contagions and financial risk. Instead, it becomes a useful space for creating autopoietic modes of being. It also opens up a relationship to water and global diaspora by creating a different relationship between kinship, race, and nationhood. Water spills across the borders between nations,

while blood flows across the boundaries between gender, sex, and race. Both blood and water escape epistemic containment, refusing to be fully regulated or managed by zoning of land and bodies. Both instead point to the insistent porousness of being, and in Smith's poetics, create pathways for diasporic coalitions beyond the nation-state as well as beyond singular, contained bodies.

The diasporic process is exemplified in the final poem, "dream where every black person is standing by the ocean":

> & we say to her
>
> *what have you done with our kin you swallowed?*
>
> & she says
> *that was ages ago, you've drunk them by now*
>
> & we don't understand
>
> & then one woman, skin dark as all of us
> walks to the water's lip, shouts *Emmett*, spits
>
> & surely, a boy begins
> crawling his way to shore

Here, Smith initially depicts the ocean as the personified enactor of racialized violence. It becomes the site that holds the bodies "swallowed" in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Like the ground in "summer, somewhere," it places those bodies and that violence in the past, as "ages ago." However, water here simultaneously evokes the water cycle, where the speaker and the subjects of the poem, as well as ocean itself as a speaker, enact a more intimate and specific water cycle that reminds readers of the fundamental fact: we are made mostly of water, depend on water, and need water to catalyze life down to the molecular level. The tense also notes how "swallow[ing]" the bodies was "ages ago," while the ocean suggests that the bodies have been and are present: "you've drunk them by now." The tense implicates how that the bodies have passed through and are with and in the ocean and the present living bodies alike. This is the excess and addition of hypervitality, a notice of

co-presence highlighted by bodies' dependence upon and constitution as water. This hypervitality has layered into it, too, its historical critique. Notably, the first query into those lost is not a true query, but what the collective "[says]" to her as a statement, recapitulating that past and its effects into the present. The ocean then puts this back onto black populations with "you've drunk them by now," which implies that in a postracial slavery and Jim Crow era, black populations have become integrated consumers of the capitalism that drives the racializing engine of territorialized, U.S. continental and European colonial and imperial geography. It also makes political the imminently obvious water cycle, how our mammalian bodies are comprised primarily of water and need it to be catalyzed as organic, living matter. Hypervitality here signals the ability water and its histories with racial violence and producing life inhabits the capacity to produce both the historical critique the material catalyzing of alternate livabilities.

These references to drinking water also reverberate with how water, in highly publicized acts of violence, such as Flint lead poisoning, Detroit water shut offs, and Hurricane Katrina, is a key vector for consumption. The poem turns away from these easier critiques, though, in its turning point – the stand alone, single-line stanza separating the three before it and three after it. Here, Smith states how the black population on the lip of an ocean "does not understand" this logic, insisting again that the statement is not one of empirical fact traversing past to present in a linear horizon from living to death. This refusal to cohere with the legibility of mourning is what enables the final two stanzas to refuse to bury the past as death, as well as apprehend matter and being able to "matter" as a matter of consumption. The poem then moves to reference Emmett Till, whose lynching in the 1950's became emblematic for subsequent civil rights movements in the 1960's through the millennial Black Lives Matter movements. Till as a cultural reference insists on how racialized violence is culturally and legally perpetuated into the present, and it linguistically enacts this recursive act by going "back" to the first poem's lynching reference in the poplar tree imagery.

This reference to Till, especially noting how he was drowned after his mutilation, marks water as historically wielded from the oceanic trans-Atlantic slave trade through the postracial slavery Jim Crow era to the Detroit and Flint water rights and Black Lives Matter responses. However, instead of stopping at terminality and preservation as the end, water here performs a different function. The "boy begins" so that the line break insists on a new form of living after the turning point's refusal to consolidate knowledge and meaning within the biopolitical and racial capitalist framework. At this turn, Till refuses to remain drowned, and not only does he begin as black boyhood traversing land and water, but actively moves "his way to shore." This happens "surely" and without question, so that "not understanding" the logic of linear life to death horizons becomes a form of knowing instead of a truth. This movement to demonic ground even as it is created in the present tense of ongoing beginnings builds a simultaneously historical and re-surfaced as well as new relation to vitality.

Refusing to be called dead or perceived as death means also refusing to naturalize the "free market" binary of selected/dysselected organically for living. It disentangles the relationship between the ecological life science's speculation for making live and letting die from neoliberal market representations as freely unmanaged and inherently chaotic. This representation through water calls out how cultural laws are projected on natural laws in order to rationalize the privatization and regulation of resources necessary for living, such as air and water. Thus, refusing transparent human status means, also, refusing transparent geographies and their livability via territorialized land in binary opposition to uninhabitable water. By creating a different iteration of livability in this scene indicts neutral representations of accessing water and land, all while creating a future in the wake of the trans-Atlantic slave trade's haunting. The scene creates a new geographic reality that goes against ecocritical vitalist anxiety seeing submersion or waterlessness as akin to the ecological horizon of death. The scene insists on living in the wake as also within water, creating a "communicative act

that is [respatialized]" as fantasy precisely because "down here in reality is not, in fact, a humanly workable place" (McKittrick 141). Down here is where the "kin [was] swallowed" by the ocean, as well as at the lip of it, the act of "crawling…to shore." In other words, the posthuman subjectivity that emerges from water disrupts notions of livable geographies along subaltern, racializing lines to insist on livable life beyond the horizon of ecological or postindustrial water submersion or scarcity.

A posthumanist subjectivity emerges from watery grounds, refusing to naturalize vitality and humanness through environmental racism as merely being dysselected from survival, as in Flint and Detroit's postindustrial water scarcity and poisonings echoing with Emmett Till's body "crawling" out of the water. Such events around water and racial violence, as the poem illuminates, echo with the lives genocidally lost in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade passage. Postmodern posthumanisms that forget how the human came to be fashioned through racializing and gendering analytics tied to transparent geographies of land, water, and propertied territory are here forced to confront the ghost of humanist-infused genocides; at the same time, antiracist humanisms that would valorize a universal human "not as a genre or mode of human" confront the possibilities instead of seizing the oceanic in lifespans for "an environmental project through which 'new forms of life' can be conceptualized" (McKittrick 135). The inversion of police law, for instance, alongside laws of livability when Till emerges from the water, reveals how "the 'underdeveloped'" as the subaltern and racialized bodies, temporalities, and spatial geographies must, in Western epistemic formations, "lawlikely be sacrificed as a function of our continuing to project our collective authorship of our contemporary order onto the imagined agency of Evolution and Natural Selection and, by extrapolation, onto the 'Invisible Hand' of the "free Market' (both being cultural and class-specific constructs)" (Wynter 317). This manifests in the laws of nature being seen as violated by urban spaces in the postindustrial landscape, where the fallout disproportionately occurs on population

such as those racialized and gendered in Flint and Detroit, even as state law enacts the necropolitical dimensions, such as through the earlier poems' gunshots.

If the dominant rhetorical and sociogenic schema depict "Investors" as the economically and naturally sanctioned inheritors of normative humanity (Wynter 323), then Smith's poems create an antithetical world where death is no longer the end game, but instead creates in the wavering present an alternate, future relationship to natural, economic, and cultural "laws." In other words, Smith's refusal of the so-called natural laws of life and death when submerged in water and confronting an HIV positive diagnosis, become, too, a refusal of the cultural laws used to regulate resources and contagion in global climate change, even as spiritual and literal natural laws are recruited to represent water as life-giving instead of life-submerging. It is precisely by breaking these dominantly silo'd laws and elucidating their connections that the poem creates a world where death is no longer the end game, but instead a new world in the wavering present. This world projects an antiracist posthumanism as a future relationship to natural, economic, and cultural "laws."

**Conclusion: 'Where' is After Diagnosis?**

The coalitions that Smith's work and public persona build depend upon the literal and metaphoric dimensions of HIV in part because of the above diasporic "ground" work – or rather, its water work. Smith, in this new moment for poetry, insists that we attend to diagnosis as we also seek out diaspora, creating queer of color worlds that depend upon crip and antiracist as anti-colonial coalitional work for their hypertexts blueprints. Here, living in the wake per Christina Sharpe's "wake work" (2016) means, too, standing on that "lip" of the ocean, looking to how embodiment and kinship might be crafted, and the diasporic implications for creating new methods of kinship and ethics that the gamble of global finance capital and global climate change narratives would foreclose: it is the act of "crawling" and refusing any humanistic ideal of livability and able-

bodiedness, and coming out of the water instead of from land into water, refusing nation-state and geographical borders, boundaries, and travel.

Smith's poem is akin to Black feminist scholar Sharpe's multiple-layered use of living in the wake, where she names, "Racism, the engine that drives the ship of state's national and imperial projects" as it "cuts through all of our lives and deaths inside and outside the nation, in the wake of its purposeful flow." As Sharpe notes multiple definitions of wake for also thinking through what wake work might mean, I am putting down here her first definition of the term as it corresponds to Smith's poetry: "Wake: the track left on the water's surface by a ship; the disturbance caused by a body swimming or moved, in water; it is the air currents behind a body in flight; a region of disturbed flow" (3). The resonances with kinship as created by the bodies lost in the trans-Atlantic slave trade through brutalized racialization in the present become evident, especially through the "wake" of Emmett "crawling his way to shore." Even the mobile act of crawling refuses to recuperate as triumphant ableist notions of walking, or neoliberal ideals of "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" marching forward. The victory march is here a crawl to land and an ongoing movement through water, a celestial and sky informed method for metaphysical and physical being. Here, Emmett afforded a different relation to the terrestrial, metaphysical, and matter of and necessary to living.

If we assume as Sharpe does, as well as the previous readings in this chapter demonstrate, that much demonic ground is constructed out of and away from "the ongoing state-sanctioned legal and extralegal murders of Black people…. antiblackness" as the U.S. "ground we walk on…on which we stand, the ground from which we attempt to speak," then one of the "possibilities for rupture might be opened up" in Smith's spit at the lip of the ocean, but also how it intersects with their HIV positive diagnosis. Here, the diasporic potential opens in its antibiopolitical relations to diagnosis. In their poem "1 in 2," after the statistic that "1 in 2 black men who have sex with men

will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime" (61), Smith considers how "plague & genocide meet on a line in [their] body" (63), relating racialization with pathologization, including its relationship to global finance capital. The poems' references to HIV, diagnosis, and diaspora thus inform Smith's world-building as a code for hypervitality, including life scientific attempts to apprehend and manage contagion in the advent of globalization and global climate change. The non-linear temporality of living terminally, of the chronic condition, emerges, here, where Smith states:

> if you trace the word *diagnosis* back enough
> you'll find *destiny*
>
> trace it forward, find *diaspora*
>
> is there a word for the feeling prey
> feel when the teeth finally sink
> after years of waiting?
>
> *plague & genocide* meet on a line in my body (62-63)

Contemplating how diagnosis functions to racialize while creating a world past the horizon of death, Smith uses HIV positive diagnoses and its bloodline to think both backward and forward into the metaphysical and physical registers of destiny and diaspora, where the long-term effects of illnesses beneath the skin and operating at the molecular level rack the bodies of those biopolitically exposed to pre-mature precarity in addition to pre-mature death itself. The world linguistically fashioned in this poem does not forget that its queer, what Hortense Spillers has termed "hieroglyphics of the flesh" happen out of the all too real and historical combined AIDS epidemic of the queer community with racial slavery and its afterlives in the black community. It is here, in the line of their body as also the poetic line on the page that makes the body that the rhetorics of plague and genocide meet.

The literal space on the page functions to move the reader forward and backward, to create "years of waiting" between knowing a historical condition of being plagued and becoming culturally signified as plague. Diagnosis becomes a tool that, when weaponized, pathologizes populations to apprehend them as death (Sharpe 9), risk, and contagion in the wake of racial slavery. But, so too, does it become a way of creating instead a different relation to the body and the global traversing across bodies of water and through water, as well as blood's relationship to matter itself through cultural mattering. The biopolitical and global finance capital imperative to apprehend the unseen chaotic vectors of life and infection via plague (Braun 2007) intersect here with the racial genocide of making populations into that infection and plague (Smith). What emerges in the wake is a Black being as becoming, one that cannot be reduced to the boundaried geographies of Man1 and Man2, or overly simplistic inter-human hierarchies and species-making through racialization. This posthuman orientation to living does not congeal through narratives of holistic able-bodiedness, nor heteroreproductive futurity, nor static meaning consolidation around racialized living. The future does not become the sanctuary of purity, but instead the ongoing present ethical relation to terminality as a pre-condition, inviting not the "toxins of male domination" and its attendant modes of racialization, nor "descent through the male line…privileged over dissent via the rhizomorphic principle." Instead, this "diaspora [conjures] up" both infra- and superhuman living (Gilroy 2000, 127). Such living persists as a "relation, investment, and even improvement…predicated on an acknowledgment of endings rather than existing in fear of or opposition to them" (Ensor 43).
In this invitation, the ending is not a romanticization of the pain and grieving of genocidal death, nor an accepting as ending and over, but rather, a refusal to secure it as a final pronouncement, or final, grounded horizon. Endings and death here open instead to the watery possibility at the lip of the oceanic, where the grounds shift toward alternate political futures than postmodern abstractions or hyper material violences. It is this future, more proliferatively gendered, less colorblind, and more

posthuman than Gilroy's postracial cosmopolitanism, that looks to the intersections of disability, contagion, race, and gender through a lens of diasporic movement. Here, the future is a hypervitality that takes to hear the hypertext and its enfleshed, lived dimensions; the "where" after diagnosis is a diasporic networked resurgence. It constitutes a moment where coalitions might be built for combatting the twinned violence of race and gender in defining who obtains protected, "human" status in the Anthropocene. As mass media becomes more aware and public about ecological change, and water scarcity in particular, disproportionately impacting non-white communities, so too do alternate hypervitalities link themselves through an activist poetics movement. If racialized water violence is exemplified by the Flint lead poisoning, Detroit water shut offs, and Hurricane Katrina, effective coalitions emerge from viral poetry performances and print books that build antiracist and queer posthuman worlds out of alternate, cross-border and cross-bodied watery grounds. The metaphor of a social media moment of resistance going viral bears new meaning when taken in the context of viral diagnosis, so that instead of recuperating normative embodiment and its violences, activist poetics create hypervitalities that give new meaning to "viral" and "contagion." Such work re-evaluates boundaried narratives of global finance capital and global climate change according the dominant, racializing, gendering, and biopolitical life sciences, creating instead out of chronic conditions an ongoing orientation toward the future as it is already crawling to the shore and excavating its pasts.

Chapter 4: Rolling the Diasporic "R" in Queer/Crip Diaspora and Trans-Oceanic Coalitions

## Introduction

In this Chapter, global coalitional work emerges from global finance capital's violent migration patterns, extending across the trans-Atlantic slave trade to South Asian and Pacific Island colonial migrations. These migration patterns enacted across, through, and out of water. While water in each case has been historically leveraged against livability for Black and Brown bodies, diasporic coalitions offer otherwise possibilities for worldbuilding as they reimagine relationships between migration, water, borders, and livability. Similar to Chapter 3, a reparative reading strategy creates one such coalitional maneuver itself, one that is unique to reading diasporic coalitions with disability. I see disability – or "crip" as this chapter will articulate – as articulating with diaspora "new vocabularies." This methodologically builds on Eve Sedgwick's work, again, but this time through a Robert Diaz's own theory of reparative modes offering grounds for creating languages themselves: "[reparative reading] moored to a belief that the creation of reparative vocabularies, in all their complexities, contradictions, and inherent difficulties is now due" (Diaz 17). Like Diaz, but with the specific valence of disability studies crip vocabularies, I will argue through two contemporary hybrid textual works – Bhanu Kapil's book of poems on South Asian diasporic migration and schizophrenia, *Schizophrene*, and Zamora Linmark's multi-genre'd novel on Filipino migration to Hawai'i and queer childhood, *Rolling the R's* – that such diasporic coalitions necessarily use water and legibility to reapprehend linguistic and geographic borders and boundaries. This is not to say that the following texts "erase" or "elide" the material effects of those borders and boundaries themselves[68].

[68] Dissertation note: This is taken up by trans-oceanic scholars at length, such as Hoskins and Nguyen's recent collection in 2014 on Transpacific Studies. As the final chapter, I am gesturing toward a new direction, and with time constraints, I see here the need to research this field in more depth before definitively trying to "publish" on it. Additional reading and research suggestions would be great for developing this work more in the future.

Instead, by looking to legibility and situating it within this project's antiracist posthuman framework, what is legible *as* human in a crip, queer, and cross-bordered space surfaces.

This Chapter's explicit turn to diasporic coalitions not only builds a connection to Chapter 3's African and trans-Atlantic diasporic possibilities, but also the coalitions surfacing in crip and disability activism spaces. Diaspora, unlike the form of cosmopolitanism critiqued through *Only Lovers Left Alive* in Chapter 2, concretizes historical violence, such as finance capital's exploitation of Southeast Asian populations for cheap labor and access to global travel at will instead of by force through water privatization[69]. This is a well-archived critique of neoliberal multiculturalisms: Jodi Byrd, for instance, points out in her seminal 2011 text, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, that coalitional critiques of such global currents create the necessary relationship between historical particularity and the coalitions between indigenous, migration, and Black feminist studies. This is exemplified in her citational use of Lisa Lowe: "…global intimacies out of which emerged not only modern humanism but a modern racialized division of labor. In fact, liberal humanism, according to Lowe, depends upon the 'economy of affirmation and forgetting' not just of particular streams of human history, but of the loss of their geographies, histories, and subjectivities" (Lisa Lowe, quoted by Jodi Byrd on page 5). In other words, selectively universalizing otherwise historical particularity serves a liberal humanist project that already took as its aim the commodification and dehumanization of colonized and enslaved subjectivities. Diasporic coalitions also offer an otherwise possibility that works in tandem with antiracist posthumanisms from Chapters 1, 2, and 3; however, they use of legibility and language modification creates an embodied relationship to another valence of dehumanization in colonial subjectivity: disability. This is posthumanist precisely because of the attention to language itself. In Sarah Dowling's analysis of *Humanimal: A Project for Future Children,*

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[69] Dissertation note: See Chapter 2 for references to the particularly neoliberal form of cosmopolitanism referenced here via Jodi Melamed and Sarah Dowling.

also by Bhanu Kapil, she articulates Kapil's work "[forming] a line of continuity across colonial and postcolonial time; it is the basis of Kapil's imagined future coalition of diminished, not-quite humans - children, immigrants, and the disabled" (736). From Dowling's critical poetics lens, this coalition of antihumanist subjectivity – which in this project is read through antiracist posthumanism terms – requires language-based enactment: "Kapil's manipulations of the gap between human and animal result in a poetic voice that swerves from the singular, humanistic voice of the lyric, crossing the species boundary to craft an embodied, multiple-voiced utterance" (736). This can be co-articulated with narratives of global, diasporic coalitions, wherein "a historical process of textual migration of cultural meanings, meanings that include linguistic traits, poetics, philosophical ideas, myths, and stories" (Huang 3) that can have "both problematic (i.e. colonial intervention) and productive consequences in terms of a text's content and form" (Wong 50 – 51). This chapter assumes the problematic colonialism as already critiqued by the texts' explicit response; that is, they build otherwise worlds on the condition that the existing ones are unlivable as they are. This means asking how coalitions between genres, modes, forms, temporalities, and geographies can take language-based negotiation at its core.

In addition, global migration and indigenous studies build coalitions across a history of place beyond a geographically Americanist project. This extends the analyses of prior chapters by demonstrating how those chapters are also global projects responsive to global finance capital, while centering livable possibilities beyond arbitrarily enforced border management. I note arbitrarily, here, because global finance capital functions precisely through its abstraction of capital to by-pass nationalist border limitations, as examined in the Introduction and Chapter 1. This foreground of capital's flows and business-government coalitional work it requires illuminates the possibilities for border-work that similarly argues the arbitrarily enforced border spaces as a linguistic mode of humanist violence. This global extension beyond borders builds on existing diaspora studies turns,

such as colonialism's anti-Blackness brought to bear on Latinx performance and anticolonial scholar Jade Power Sotomayor's recent scholarship. As Power Sotomayor argues, the rhetoric of who counts as "human" exists at the crux of racializing black and brown bodies on a globalized scale. Articulating how these uniquely emerge across different racialized and gendered histories is not a false, double-erasure or analogy between different modes of racialization, but supports reckoning with multiple, intertwined, particular histories of subjugation. The particular diasporic analytics in this chapter, then, must take seriously a critique of the human as it has been historically constructed across watery passages as much as through linguistic worldbuliding.

This also builds on the extended analysis in Chapter 3 built out of McKittrick and Wynter's work. It enters the watery and aerial demonic grounds of antiracist posthumanism suggested by Black studies in Chapter 3 to "connect Man's geographies to ongoing locations of subaltern struggle" as opposed to an ontological category of racialization and human-making. Or, as McKittrick elaborates:

> Demonic grounds are not, then, only reifying and politicizing marginality in itself (black women's identities = margin/position = difference in/and feminism, or, our present form of life). Rather they are also a projection of what the biocentric human (genres of black womanhood) means in relation to 'the normally inhabitable.' This troubles a formerly familiar landscape and reveals that the places of black womanhood—the garrets and auction blocks, the streets or Montreal, the political interventions—can be conceptualized as particular, contested moments, *which necessarily connect Man's geographies to ongoing locations of subaltern struggle.* (135, emphasis added)

I argue that this chapter's texts make these connections by challenging generic norms, legibility, and watery borders in ways already begun through disability studies articualtions of crip diaspora – a term I borrow from Crip Queer scholar Robert McRuer and explain below. Further, in a scholarly connection between McKittrick (Black Studies), McRuer (Crip Queer Studies), and Byrd (South Asian Indian Studies), Byrd notes that if "the colonial cacophony of competing struggles for hegemony" at times challenge "the state through loci of race, class, gender, and sexuality," and, as I

argue, ablebodiedness, they also risk eliding the global scale of how "settler colonialism that made the United States possible as oppressor in the first place" (4). In this way, identifying the coalitional work means recognizing how "racialization and colonization have worked…as concomitant global systems that secure white dominance through time, property, and notions of self" (Byrd 10), systems that function to support, as I have argued through this project, racial finance capital.

On the other hand, a monographic dissertation is bound by length, and there are far more particular locations and histories within an antiracist, queer, and anticolonial diaspora than can be tracked within this space. Selecting two texts becomes itself arbitrary with such an expansive, "global" archive — there will be different potential relations between race, water, disability, queerness, and so forth in each global and historical text precisely because global migration patterns across borders is at the crux of this project's analysis: global climate change and finance capital. Here, though, I am selecting texts whose poetics explicitly critique antiracism and anticolonialism through representations of environmental watery matter, linguistic intelligibility, and the modes of antiracist posthuman work surfaced in Chapter 3. The emphasis on this antiracist posthuman work especially connects these two texts to the preceding chapters. I am arguing that these two texts and their particular, intersecting histories are one starting point, but not ontologically *the* starting point for such reading practices.

In addition to building global, diasporic coalitions beyond the predominantly Americanist texts preceding this chapter, examining the "normally legible" creates a pathway to building coalitions with crip and disability queer studies. Disability studies on legibility and humanistic normative embodiment have been already co-articulated with diasporic queer illegibility per scholars such as Robert McRuer. However, queer crip theories have only just begun explicating the violent history of pathologizing and medicalizing Black and Brown bodies in order to exploit and dehumanize them. Scholars such as Alison Kafer and Lisa Cacho, for instance, historicize how

normative human status as white, heteropatriarchal, self-possessed and *legible* subjectivity for legal personhood creates the overrepresentation of a universal "human" that is anything but universal. However, neither critique sex, sexuality, and gender in their analytic, nor explicitly diasporic texts. This creates an occasion for the "haunting" work in Chapter 3 to build on Asian American archives of haunting and possibility: "haunting gains more complexity through transtemporal engagement – creating an experience of simultaneity in which the past, present, and future are fluid and often indistinguishable" (Wong 53 – 54). This temporal work in the subsequent texts is also geographic, or "transnational" (Wong 49). This suggests another coalitional mode: the method itself as finding the haunting temporalities, but also geographies.

Disability studies' recent scholarship on global crip coalitions produce such haunting, antihumanist narratives explicitly through diasporic work. In his recent, 2018 book, crip and queer scholar Robert McRuer, *Crip Times: Disability, Globalization, and Resistance*, both archives and argues for queer, crip, and diaspora as already building coalitional resistance to global finance capital,[70]; however, it does not examine ways that literary texts and specific legibility critiques situate unique possibilities for that resistance. Other anthologies, such as *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability,* focus explicitly on literary and visual artwork with some essays. Scholarship in disability studies has a rich relationship to poetry and performance art already, such as Petra Kuppers (Freedman et. al.) mixed media art and scholarship at The University of Michigan. In addition, disability studies' historicization and critical awareness of how pathologization has remained at the center of many life sciences' dominant discourses around constructing and protecting an ideal human – as taken up by Rachel Carson's anxiety around toxins changing species' DNA irreparably in Chapter 1 and the Introduction's analysis of managing and regulating DNA's replication through molecular biology. I

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[70] Dissertation note: I am reviewing McRuer's book for a journal and will integrate his argument more fully in any future, published sections of this chapter.

argue that this emergent work in Disability Studies around crip and queer coalitions in diasporic resistance offers methods for reparative reading and vocabulary building through difference itself, creating embodied layers of meaning-making to texts that otherwise appear word-based alone. These create lived theories, wherein crip praxis provides a rich layer of analysis in explicitly decolonial poetics. This last chapter, then, builds more fully on the disability studies briefly touched in Chapter 3, reading for new vocabularies of posthuman antiracism through the global, diasporic waters in Kapil and Linmark's hybrid texts.

**Sandoval's "Decolonial Performatic": Framing Genres of Language**

To do this work in Kapil and Linmark's text, I here want to contextualize why this last chapter turns to textual and verbal modes of language as also, potentially, refusing logocentric, humanistic meaning-making – and why that matters for this project. Black feminist Kara Keeling, in a 2014 essay entitled, "Critical Theory and Popular Education," historicizes the academic impulse to turn to fiction and theory for narrating neoliberal meaning-making orders, as well as to categorize knowledge and art alike as low or high, including their reformation in identifying the "rapid traffic" (McHale 235) between popular and canonized texts across modes. Keeling bases her argument on the 1987 seminal work by Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory," which identifies how not reading Black feminist poetry as lived theory, or as viable historical narratives enact violence against the bodies producing the texts. Texts recognized as theory in a scholarly context, according to Christian and Keeling, were "developing an abstract, monolithic language with little relevance to what is expressed in the literary output of black people and people of color" (Keeling 678). Christian and Keeling are not arguing for theory to "represent" different subjectivities, so much as that the theoretical language and forms were increasingly abstracting the texts from the bodies that produced them. This categorizing of theory and non-theory racialized the knowledges produced by Black feminist artists and scholars to re-create a high and low art and knowledge binary.

Christian posits as an alternative knowledge production "in which theory is inextricable from material relations, the matter (in)forming them" and the praxis enabled by those theories (681). Keeling builds on this to make a case for reading film and other media as theories that "[attend] to the sensual dimensions of media" and bodies' relationship to space and other objects. This attention to the body's relationship in the audio-visual stories "produces knowledge in a different way than written scholarship" (677). For Keeling, it offers a heightened, affectively registered response to the political ramifications of the theory relayed by that medium. This praxis of scholarship is, in fact, enacted through the texts I selected in comparative readings across Chapters 2 and 3 and has become the basis of much cultural studies work. However, Keeling takes up Christian's argument to argue that audio-visual texts offer methods to "[play] with its possibilities" (679). While the previous chapters examined some of those otherwise possibilities through visual and auditory modes, this chapter reads print-based texts as using linguistic play and illegibility to also mark affective, embodied possibilities, avoiding a potential "multi-media" vs. "text-based" binary of art and knowledge.

To do poetry and poetics with this background knowledge as the underlying philosophy requires a constant awareness of how a logocentrism, anthropologocentrism, carnophallogocentrism, and all of its excessive variants have been wielded in a colonial context for whiteness. Such logocentrisms disavow knowledges produced through inter-corporeal, kinetic/kinesthetic, musical, and other practices; however, it does not argue that logocentrism is intrinsically tied to word-based and text-based mediums. Rather, it means seeking out and reading both textual and non-textual, verbal and non-verbal word-based poetry and poetics alike. In terms of logocentrism, whiteness and metaphorical linguistic representation does not necessarily map onto words themselves, but rather, emerge out of conceptual fusions.

That is, mapping "whiteness" onto logocentrism recruits performance and Black studies scholar Naomi Bragin's use of whiteness in her analysis dance choreographic legibility: "Whiteness does not necessarily map onto white bodies but indexes a conceptual fusion: abstraction, development, structure, coherence, stability, maturity" (102). I take up this analytic throughout the chapter to ask how word-based and text-based poetry and poetics might suggest linguistic matter offers specific methods "[considering] the limitations of scholars' discursive resources and the ways Western intellectualism produces the conditions of possibility by which black social life remains largely incomprehensible and ignorable" (Bragin 102). This incomprehensibility and ignorability re-surface in those word-based texts, building a diasporic connection. In addition, they proffer experimental poetry and poetics precisely out of the prior chapter's attention to popularized multi-media, creating points of contact between niche and popular texts as an insurgent reading method, or insurgent meaning-making. It is insurgent it undercuts the popularized interpretations of the dominant texts while demonstrating reading as a coalitional praxis when placing niche and broad-based text in conversation with one another in service of a larger, antiracist posthuman project. This also undercuts moralizing around a text's mass popularity, or indexing its political insurgency based purely on its niche or broad-based appeal.

In particular, attending to the word-based textual and verbal dimensions that refuse normative grammar create the hieroglyphics of Spillers' as evidenced in prior chapters while also building on McKittrick and Wynter's analytic of how "real and discursive sociospatial processes evidence struggles – over soil, the body, *theory*, history, and *saying and expressing a sense of place*" (McKittrick 121, emphasis added). That sense of space as it is linguistically represented and inhabited becomes an entry point for Black feminist coalitions with texts on diasporic migration across the Atlantic and Pacific. These moments of producing language also produce imaginaries in part through the word-based refusal of "transparent space" on the page of words as much as on the map. As Jade Power

Sotomayor adds in a critique of logocentrism, and the care necessitated by turning to word-based mediums for genre and theory critique: "It was the word that produced the border" (28). In Power Sotomayor's analysis of the "Fandango Fronterizo," an annual trans-national event of performing Fandango at the border of the U.S. and Mexico as protest and refusal of its geographic, nationally and violently enforced borders, Power Sotomayor expands on how "dancing bodies threaten Western logocentric conceptualizations of the border, thus enacting a type of 'embodied sovereignty' in this geography," a sovereignty that Power Sotomayor borrows from Sandoval's term, "decolonial performatic" (17). This same type of dance and performance as enacted in texts that refuse the generic conventions of dominant literature and theory canons can also split open mapping whiteness and logocentrism onto text-based and word-based forms.

In "Not Your Mother's Diaspora: Voices of the Asian American Avant-Garde," for instance, Summi Kaipa and Prageeta Sharma argue that linguistic intervention is a way to escape the domestication of or humanistic consolidation into identity politics for future insurgency: "[The market for ethnic literature] becomes a significant political issue because it puts new writers, particularly writers of color, into a defensive role. They have to 'explain' their way into a legitimate place in American history and literature" (Kaipa and Sharma 28). In this way, both Kapil and Linmark's texts perform another coalitional function: they work through decolonial performatics as linguistic "[movements that produce] space and place" (Sotomayor 27) without attempting a dominantly legible stance to legitimize their presence in American literary canons.

The coalition builds here, then, the additional layer of dance and movement-based linguistic practices with decolonial word-based linguistic practices. This insight suggests how experiments in legibility are not abstract, ahistorical modes of poetry and poetics, but rather provide "insight to the materiality of colonial occupation when we understand it as a '*physical* writing on the land" (Sotomayor 28). This insight includes word-based linguistic physicalities that write decolonial

relations to land, water, and air alongside more popularly legible texts, such as the lyric and audio-visual works in Chapter 3. More directly: Bhanu Kapil is a poet famous in part through her somatic poetry rituals, physical inter-material poetry performances, and notes on her books as embodied interventions. In Jane Wong's analysis haunting and Kapil's poetics, for example, she describes how Kapil's poetry readings include installations and movement-based performance (64). Meanwhile, as I will argue in my close readings, her notes themselves dictate a somatic relationship between her actual writing method and how the readers might interact with the text.

Somatic poetry rituals, as defined in *Jacket2*'s Kapil analysis by Thomas Donovan, necessitate "the poem quivering off-page and on in this relation…which makes visible the body as a place where cultural, political, social, moral, and economic forces converge and convolute becoming visible in their play" (Donovan). While CA Conrad and contemporary writers publish and distribute rituals for creating poems out of the embodied experience (Rotterman), somatic poetry also implicates readers themselves in how they apprehend the texts "quivering." As Wong points out, for instance, "Kapil's own poetics is committed to the body and the pain of border crossing and hybridity" (Wong 65 – 66), but, so, too, does responding to the annotations and directions of Kapil – as I argue later in this chapter – ask the reader to examine how we might be implicated in logocentric interpretations or somatic based on our interpretive practices. This interpretation of somatic poetry is an increasingly popular approach to interpreting work by Kapil and her contemporaries, evidence in recent dissertations, such as Jane Wong's, but also work that otherwise does not focus on poetry for its archive, such as Balbir K Singh's. As Singh notes, "Kapil's text presents somatic, visceral poetic writing as a means in which to articulate all that cannot be captured, all that escapes, in expressing the dispossession of land and the displacement of people" (127). I build on these assertions a disability studies approach that assumes crip and queer somatic language for creating more directly antiracist posthuman poetics.

Finally, I want to mark here how this chapter's analytic does not conflate language, place, and subjectivity, but rather practices methods for thinking through their relationships to one another by turning toward disability studies. Historically, there has been a "colonial equation between climate and culture that parallels colonial assumptions about language and community" (Posmentier 13). This has fed into a violent misreading of the "intimate association between history and the natural landscape between [indigenous peoples] and our Earth that," as Hawai'ian indigenous scholar of Oceania, Epeli Hau`ofa articulates, "is the basis for the oft asserted and maligned notion that [subjugated populations] are spiritually and mystically related to the lands to which [they] belong" (74). "Indianness" for imperialism, but also exist transmotionally across European and non-European nation-states (Byrd 3-4). Instead, the subsequent readings center a "reciprocal use of nature" that is, as Byrd puts it, "not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty" (3 – 4).[71] This follows, too, in Wynter's and Posmentier's steps yet again:

> [Wynter's] essay ['Novel and History, Plot and Plantation'] helps us see how agricultural language shapes nationalist formulations and how engagement with the geographical history of the plantation has defined literary forms and literary genres. For Wynter, the West Indian writer must engage in a caretaking rather than a property-based relation to the earth in order to make an 'indigenous' claim to the land and has the capacity to do so because of his or her historical double relation as both laborer and commodity. (Posmentier 7)

Here, Posmentier builds on Wynter's work – elaborated upon in Chapter 3 – to articulate the racial capitalist implications in merging indigeneity with nature. While Posmentier then examines otherwise possibilities in film, I argue that creating a vocabulary for those otherwise possibilities can be enriched through integrating disability studies.

In this chapter, then, I look to disability studies approaches to language and worldbuilding through what is termed "dysfluency." In Chris Eagle's study on literature, speech disorders, and disability, for example, he makes a case for a field of "Dysfluency Studies" that could be a subfield

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of "Disability Studies," one where the basic binary of language and body, abstraction and materialization, or logocentrism inherent to focuses on the body's performative acts apart from word-based language would be refuted through a more careful integration of dysfluency as potential subversion of linguistic norms:

> It would seem, therefore, that a field of Dysfluency Studies, one that is compatible with Disability Studies, is not just possible but highly advisable. The potential reach of such a field, in my opinion, is quite far, for two reasons. First, the societal expectation to talk normal bears directly on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, in addition to those more clinical categories of disordered or abnormal speech already mentioned. Commonalities of the "first wave" variety can and should be found amongst all forms of stigmatized speech, whether they be non-standard ethnic dialects, or gay men's lisps, or neurophysiological impairments like dypshasias or tourettic speech. Second, every incarnation of identity politics has depended at one point in its history on a largely unexamined notion of fluency. The politicized catchphrase "Let your voice be heard!" is heard, is it not, all the time? Although advocates of every type of identity politics have adopted this vocal metaphor for political agency, the more fundamental issue of fluency, or access to normal speech, is hardly ever raised in discussions of political marginalization. (5)

On the surface, dysfluency studies seems like a field of disability studies irrelevant to the texts that follow. However, it marks *Schizophrene* and the embodied reality of living with schizophrenia as one of intelligibility, and through that, a uniquely diasporic and migratory experience of subjectivity. That is, schizophrenia is oftentimes diagnosed precisely on the basis of intelligibility: "Thought, language and communication dysfunction characterize all its symptoms, but manifest at their most extreme as positive thought disorder, with disorganized and sometimes unintelligible speech," and yet again, "higher-order language and semantic dysfunction in schizophrenia" (Kuperberg). I index this rhetoric here, though, less to recycle the dominant mode of disability critiquing hegemonic subjectivities of able/disabled heirarchies than to emphasize how the rhetoric suggests already its resistance. What if, for instance, "dysfunction" and "dysfluency" open to spaces of affirmative vocabularies for archiving not just pain, but otherwise healing?

That is, so long as Eagle's ideal takes as its core question set: "has there ever been a stuttering Virgil? A Stuttering Cervantes? A stuttering Moliere?" (Eagle 6), he misses an opportunity

to not just critique the hegemonic violence of dominant aural linguistic systems, but rather to see dysfluency as foundational terms for otherwise living beyond a nationbound inclusivity – as building vocabularies that at their core to do not assume popularized diagnostic processes as healing in the first place, but actively create new healing methods. Kapil, for instance, writes *Schizophrene* to document her own experience of the Partition's violence in conjunction with her mother's schizophrenia, using their shared histories to not just examine the co-articulation of disability, race, colonialism, gender, and sexuality, but to write, as I will argue, otherwise relations. More shortly: I argue that Kapil and Linmark's linguistic play moves away from a dis/dys framework towards this affirmative crip linguistic process. If "Western logocentrism has framed the terms of conversation between colonizer and colonized, disallowing Indigenous, African, and non-Western epistemologies that value the multidimensional apprehension of meanings (sound, gesture, relational affect)" (Power Sotomayor 30), then how might poetry and poetics linguistic play, as well as disability studies' attention to normative legibility, offer otherwise possibilities?

**Bhanu Kapil's *Schizophrene*: Globalism and the Diasporic "Break"**

*Schizophrene*, a book of poems by Bhanu Kapil, came out in December 2011 from Nightboat Books, a mid-sized indie poetry press. The book exemplifies Kapil's cross-genre aesthetic: written in fragmented notebook prose excerpts, it examines the relationship between mental illness and migration for women in the South Asian Indian diaspora post-Partition. In this re-materialization, *Schizophrene* illuminates how racialization and pathologization processes have co-functioned to abstract (as extracted) from livability the material, historical, lived experiences of violated nonwhite bodies. In Kapil's text especially, her use of the "break," borrowing Fred Moten's musical term, creates a moment of escape from dominant meaning-making grammars within global finance capital, colonization, and migration Atlantic water routes. In this section, then, I will argue that Kapil

centers a queer crip[72], or a queer feminist disability studies' lens, for thinking through racialization and colonization as a recursive, non-linear process. Wong, for instance, has already provided border-crossing interventions emergent in Kapil's multimedia and grammared work: "as a multimedia artist, Kapil traverses narratives that challenge borders including the physical, national, and historical. Her work is transnational in time and space – linking together the narratives she actively seeks out. The borders of time – the past, present, and future – collapse" (Wong 49). I build on this to argue that Kapil's text functions this way in part because it produces non-linear narratives and new methods for reclaiming the diaspora and disability coalitional possibilities without foregoing the violent conditions that mobilize diaspora and schizophrenic possibility in the first place.

Kapil begins her book in the middle of the notebook's "notes," and sets the tone for a nonlinear material relation between the text, the writer's material experience, and the environment: "I threw the book into the dark garden. The account begun mid-ocean, in a storm" (1). The two sentences, alone and a third of the way down on the page, contradict any possibility of writing from a linear, American English sentence normative temporality: the book's various stages of decomposition (pun intended), as well as its being repeatedly thrown into the garden recur throughout the text. There is not a clear subject, followed by an action upon an object. Notably, Kapil does not say the account "is" begun, which would make a complete sentence, nor that it "began," which would clarify the subject of the statement. The story itself becomes a potential speaking subject, so that neither the account itself nor the "I" of the speaker begins in isolation from the other. The implication of begun is that it now has begun, or it was begun – two different tenses, neither of which are resolved. The confusion of "where" –garden or ocean—is thus partly about "when," so that the story is immediately not in a "beginning" stance. It refuses a temporal and

[72] See McRuer on how crip and queer are joined in their analytic for otherwise socialities. In this analysis of Kapil, though, it is as simple as nonlinear kinship through property transferrance across patrilineal lines, as well as through excess beyond ordered meaning-making.

spatial original. In this way, the opening challenges poetic traditions' assumptions about the beginning, middle, and end remaining temporally and spatially secured within a larger narrative arc. The migratory experience, which is here portrayed as a material relationship between telling the experience and the experience itself, always already bears nonlinear ties to narrative trajectory and normatively/nationally bounded "home."

This recursive space is integral to Kapil's subjectivity existing, as Byrd puts it when examining indigenous narratives, "liminally" in the "ungrievable spaces" of suspicion via presumed unintelligibility (Byrd 2). One such space, as Gayatri Gopinath's seminal text on queer South Asian Indian Diaspora, *Impossible Desires*, demonstrates, is oftentimes the home of a queer female's migratory experience, which as Gopinath argues archives a critical history not bound by nationalist geographic limits (15). Here, the book lands in the garden of that home that does not necessarily begin as reproductive, or even propertied. This enacts Gopinath's critique of how South Asian diaspora has gendered womanhood as bearing the burden of home-making across the continents families travel or "home-make.[73]" As Gopinath explains, "…female sexuality under nationalism is a crucial site of surveillance, as it is through women's bodies that the borders and boundaries of communal identities are formed" (9). This language also recalls the passage in the prior section from Posmentier on how dominant portrayals of postcolonial indigeneity, articulated through Wynter's demonic grounds framework, conflate subjugated populations and lands with being both commodity and laborer-as-caretaker in racial capitalism (7). In contrast to these colonially imported grammars, Kapil's garden bears a critical relation to the global matter of a physical garden (not defined as "her" garden, but "the garden"), but also originates outside of a land-bound space for nationalistic surveillance: mid-ocean.

[73] ….A queer diasporic framework insists on the imbrications of nation and diaspora through the production of hetero- and homosexuality, particularly as they are mapped onto the bodies of women." (Gopinath 9-10)

In this way, the opening can be co-articulated with Chapter 3 Black feminist critique of patrilineal kinship relations and propertied "ground" being nation-making and securing as opposed to demonic. At the same time, the opening explicitly centers linguistic temporality building, wherein the beginning is an imperfect, ongoing past act embedded within the text decomposing across cultivated land (garden) and ocean (mid-ocean) by the speaker. This is more than feminist, though, by joining into "queer diasporic frameworks" (Gopinath 10). This undermines Kapil's female-gendered body as being a potential site for state surveillance by not making her the presumed "home-maker," property owner, or domesticator of the "garden." This resistance dovetails with the slippage between a linear, American grammar sentence as the beginning to create a twofold refusal: her spatial and temporal location elides easy nation-state mapping, while her subjectivity as not necessarily owner, but also as presumed author, elides surveillance of her home-making as a feminized diasporic subject.

As the book continues, this linguistic act becomes inseparable from the process of material schizophrenic subjectivity in relay with Western epistemological science and medical pathologies. Kapil states: "Because it is psychotic not know where you are in a national space" (41). This line marks the most popularized point of analysis around *Schizophrene* at the time of this writing. Most typically, it is read as marking the Partition producing madness or the madness of colonialism's violence against land and subjectivity (Balbir 127). However, I argue that Kapil does not here call herself psychotic in a self-pathologization, but rather calls out the problem of propertied space as also national, responding to how being migratory and cross-bordered is also a way of being non-rooted and subsequently pathologized in the disassociative experience of displacement from national belonging: being named psychotic. At the same time, she does not simply invert the power relations of pathologizing to re-mark "psychotic" as otherized wrong. In other words, more productively, Kapil here implicitly critiques how the nonlinear opening and its embeddedness within both garden

and mid-ocean connects inextricably with materially and historically constructed space, and through that subjectivity. Foucauldian through Fanon critiques of diagnosis and medicalized mental illnesses have been well-recycled since the 1960's. However, Kapil has not self-identified as bereft of the diagnostic manual's determined disability, and to subject her as an author to the scrutiny of external diagnosis, much less override her self-described experiences and demonstrations of dysfluency, is to ironically reenact the very formation she here critiques: the call to classify based on surveyed, documented, visibilized, and legally secured diagnosis.

This also undermines her mother's experience with schizophrenia and how Kapil lived with and experienced different interventions made on he mother. The demand, then, returns to an ontologizing understanding of binaristic ability/disability. Rather, what emerges here is Kapil's own dysfluencies, experimental poetics, and experiences as a trans-national and diasporic queer female subject, converging with an overrepresentation around what is named legible, why, to whom, and to what end. Further, it suggests that if it is "psychotic" to be out of space and time with a nation-bound project, then treatment and care options within a nation-bound, privatized system of health care are inextricably bound up with the diagnosis and pain itself. Kapil does not, for instance, extol schizophrenia or "psychosis" as a virtue or idealized state that should forego treatment. Rather, she explicitly addresses the need for ways to treat pain that are also rooted in the diasporic experience: In her notes, for instance:

> From cross-cultural psychiatry, I learned that light touch, regularly and impersonally repeated, in the exchange of devotional objects, was as healing, for non-white subjects (schizophrenics) as anti-psychotic medication. In making a book that barely said anything, I hoped to offer: this quality of touch. (71)

Kapil's poems write into this precise paradox, where the material experiences of disability coincide with the material experiences of diaspora and dispossession to suggest otherwise "reading" possibilities and through that, otherwise healing possibilities.

Kapil's poetics insist that one such otherwise historically and embodied diaspora begins and decomposes in the cross-bordered life of the ground, water, and other cross-matter environments. Within the section entitled, "India: Notebooks," for instance, Kapil's speaker describes the "freezing silver day" that "penetrates even the university" as she waits to interview "a doctor specializing in migration and mental illness" (19). Instead of interviewing the researcher, Kapil "[documents]" the university corridor, suturing the silver day as a cold environment implicated in the institutionalizing of dominant knowledges and the territorial building out of "migration and mental illness" together through racialization and pathologization. Kapil creates a linguistic break through these themes of de-lineated textuality and subjectivity, focusing in the first section on the experience of schizophrenia to complicate traditional, textual modes of poetics. Her poems are not just temporally and spatially de-lineated in content, but also in their use on the page: she does not use line breaks, but stanza and page breaks. This formal choice paired with her content challenges abstractions of textual schizophrenic subjectivity as simply illegible, or dysfluent, to instead more materially nuanced grammars of time and narration.

On the seventh page of *Schizophrene*, for instance, Kapil performs an otherwise grammar for neoliberal diagnostics of schizophrenic subjectivity. In the second stanza, she explains how the lights that emanate from the body create "structures that perform a rudimentary narrative." This leads into her third stanza, where she declares that, "to write this narrative is not to split it" in order to find a universalizable and "commercially produced" cure or singular metanarrative abstracted from the material experience of schizophrenia. She writes in this interaction between schizophrenia and doctors about how the "schizophrenic narrative cannot process dynamic elements of an image," whether pleasurable or "so bad it can't be tendered in the lexicon of poses available to it." At this she breaks the stanza and creates a fourth, final stanza for the page: "I need a new pen." These stanzas highlight the Foucauldian analytic of subjugation well-rehearsed in poststructuralist theory,

wherein the "confessional" relationship to the psychiatrist, which is re-articulated in multiple power relations, subjectifies a body as schizophrenic or doctor through power relations that are also global and colonial. However, instead of stopping at critique, Kapil performs a "rudimentary narrative" of how the language-making relationship between a  material and abstract, a consolidated meaning and meaninglessness, become illegible within a nationbound Western biomedical lexicon unless pathologized as psychosis. To return back to the introduction, this in many implicates the seeming ahistorical and apolitical work of molecular biology to reframe genetics through DNA interference and normative socialization for normative DNA mutation by naming the conditions of those knowledges as imbricated with global patterns of finance capital and migration: "a doctor specializing in migration and mental illness" is characterized through synesthesia's silver "feeling" cold. Kapil needs a literal new pen, a new way to write her experience of being South Asian Indian female outside of nationhood citizenship and its discrete, linear "migration and mental illness" narratives.

Kapil inhabits the book's multiple decomposition states to create this new pen – that is more than a new sentence, a way of writing experience that might build out material lexicons beyond discrete ordering, such as the synesthesia resisting easy sensory categorization. Kapil's work creates this lexicon in part from the poetic break on the page, which I argue functions in kind to Black cultural studies' use of the musical "break" for fugitivity in racial slavery. Here, I use Albert Murray's use of "the break" as expanded upon by performance studies scholar Naomi Bragin[74]:

> In Albert Murray's theory, 'Stomping on the Blues' (1976), Murray calls the break, 'a very special kind of ad-lib bridge passage or cadenza-like interlude between two musical phases that are separated by an interruption or interval in established cadence. Customarily there may be a sharp shot-like accent and the normal or

[74] More famously, Fred Moten is a poet-scholar in Black studies with an oeuvre of work on "the break" being both musical and poetically enacted on the page for Black fugitivity. I mark here, though, the original musical definition to suggest a coalition with music studies, Bragin's discussion of choreography, and African diaspora. Kapil's use functions akin to Moten's use, but in a method particular to her analytic of schizophrenia, dysfluency, and gendered South Asian diaspora that benefits from returning to the original definition of its musical term.

> established flow of the rhythm and melody stop, much the same as a sentence seems to halt, but only pauses at a colon. Then the gap, usually of not more than four bars, is filled in most often but always by a solo instrument, whose statement is usually impromptu or improvised even when it is a quotation or a variation from some well-known melody. Then when the regular rhythm is picked up again, it is as if you had been holding your breath. (Bragin 102, quoting Jackson and Murray)

Kapil creates such breaks linguistically by disrupting expected uses of the language on the page, much less grammar and sense-based knowledge. Her break on the page illuminates how colonialism uses logocentric abstractions map Whiteness onto certain uses of word-based languages, creating a "bridge" for diasporic crossing that is also a silence: blank space between longer prose blocks or single lines that literally refuse sentence-based meaning. Kapil creates a material dimension through the imperfect past action of "am begun" while the text decomposes on the page itself. For instance: her prose block halts, then after a half page gap resumes with a single line: "I need a new pen," followed by the time to turn the page, where prose blocks resume. If Fred Moten identifies in the musical break fugitivity and a toward freedom, Kapil's patterned grammars, breath, and physical turns are the diasporic escape from surveillance and containment.

As another example: the first line of the book stands alone on a page, not necessarily offering a sequential moment. It becomes fleeting through juxtaposed light, ground, and water untethered to possessive grammars for rootedness, home, and heteropropertied whiteness for intelligibility. When "it is psychotic not to know where you are in a national space," so, too, the poetic space on the page "breaks" into a turn away from lineated or grammatically linear meaning-making. It is in this break that diaspora problematizes cultural and historical mechanics of belonging (Gilroy 123). This creates a moment of coalition between the fugitive from racial finance capital's slave trade vestiges and the fugitive in global climate change racial colonialism's migratory afterlife, between the dysfluent (non)subject and the crip subjectivity doing border-crossing work.

Here, the poem becomes the caesura less as a formalist move than as a gesture of the break through embodied linguistic world building. This caesura resists the abstractions of logocentric

ideals around schizophrenic subjectivity, separated and nationally bordered land and water, and both racialized and pathologized subjectivity. The shift can be articulated with (not analogized or compared to) Posmentier again. This time, it works in articulation with Posmentier's analysis of New Orleans eco-poetic filmic coverage in the aftermath of Katrina. Posmentier explains how in her text,

> The poem itself is the caesura, a rhythmic pause characteristic of lyric poetry, providing a break between the film's focus on the local conditions of New Orleans in the first half and its attention to the diaspora – the loss of human bodies to the waters and the scattering of human lives – in the second. The film and the break in it remind us of the different forms diaspora takes: the movement of bodies, the movement of sound and text, and the movement of seeds and storms. These parallel and intersecting movements define the landscapes through which this book travels. (2)

Here, Posmentier notes how the caesura of the break, the space of fugitivity, functions in part by turning away from generic norms and toward the interruption of text's apprehended in the first place, at once analyzing the breaks within the poem and the break of the poem from dominant, visuals of text-based narratives. Too, Posmentier's analysis picks up on how the break's fugitivity and movement harkens diasporic movement even as it does global climate change's "seeds and storms," seeing the joined processes forming one another across watery and grounded landscapes. Kapil's own migratory diasporic narratives build onto this a coalition between antiracist Black feminism and a South Asian queer feminist diaspora. This moment, akin to "describing Bhabha's '*temporal caesura'* (340) as part of, according to Adorno, 'what we mean by lyric' (59), that is, as a form characterized by a break or rupture" (Posmentier 16) enacts a coalitional flight from South Asian Indian colonization. In Kapil's poem, Western scientific and literary theoretical knowledges are both partial narratives; however, Kapil makes the material ramifications of being unable to abstract a "lexicon" palpable through multi-sensory images. Synesthesia recurs throughout the book, for instance, such as where Kapil creates "rich vibrations" colorful aura visuals that simultaneously make distinctions between "sky, and what's beneath it" impossible to distinguish, much less the conversion into discrete borders. These moments, pejoratively diagnosed as "semantic dysfunction,"

here become embodied worldbuilding tactics, or the new pen that coimbricates narration, text, and atmospheric elements. It is tactical in a sense similar McRuer's theorizing on anti-neoliberal tactics in global disability studies: in part because it "conjures up…tactical maneuvering at a specific historical moment," refusing "fixed" states for a "constantly shifting" (37) position.

This tactical subjectivity not only resists colonial discourses of nationhood corresponding to inhabitable ground and legible maps of bordered boundaries, but builds out otherwise cartographies responsive to "the transit of empire" (Byrd 22). If the "sound of the accent" can be read as "the sound of another language dying in the mouth….a colonizing discourse hijacking any audible semblance of 'I'" (Kocher 4), Kapil's "break" from accent-based mediation to instead use different spatial and sensory tactics on the page: in the pause is also where the breath becomes a more explicit focal point.

The maneuver toward sensory-based break instead of disclosure or revelation continues in the book's own writing. In Section 8, "India: Fragments," Kapil's book is once more thrown "into the dark garden" and it is here that the simultaneity of life and death surface in the break, the long expanse of page before the bottom line: "The snow and stars make a weak connection, and the book's genetics split, opening wide then bursting on the chrome" (56). The simultaneity of the book and speakers' voices harness watery and aerial demonic grounds alike – building on Chapter 3 – through the snow and stars; in turn, building on Chapter 2, the book itself enacts a genetic splitting that, instead of being used for normalize genetic coding, creates an erotic, scattering break. This is critically not queer or crip as two silo'd methods: as McRuer points out, "the radical power of *queer* has been diluted by global commodification processes" – such as in *Only Lovers Left Alive* in Chapter 2, where queer kinship is recast as heteronormatively reproductive in cosmopolitan global circuits of resource distribution – "that have not (yet) domesticated *crip* or contained or commodified [it]" (24). This language transforms into an eco-poetics that will not reconstruct ahistorical apprehensions of

nature, culture, and the human, or abstracted as extracted posthuman status to get beyond "the human" and its limitations. Instead, the gesture enacts the kinesthetic effort communication required as it lingers and is pushed out of a body.

I am turning here to the desire of, for, and within the break as a partial fragment of the South Asian Indian diaspora intersecting with the politics and poetics of desire, erotics, and water that I read in Chapter 1 through Audre Lorde. Here, for instance, erotics are a method for living in "transit" as "[existing] relationally, multiply," as a "world of relationship movements and countermovements" (Byrd 3-4). The erotics of the book's genetic splitting become a performative desire, another way of opening into the break of non-composure where "language fails…[emphasizing] the lack in language and narrative" by instead creating a performative 'want'" (Kocher 7). This also builds on Ibrahim's work in coalition with Black feminisms. Ibrahim's work, more fully explicated in Chapter 3, which adds age and its time to Spillers' concept of enfleshment to argue how "race, gender, and age have been mutually constituted across the Atlantic Ocean" (315) through normative white humanist subjectivity monstrosizing or infantilizing Black bodies, wherein "language suitable to dementia" was ascribed to aged and racialized bodies in medical discourses. As Ibrahim argues, age "resides [in] the 'nowhere land' where usual pathways to the concepts of humanness or colonial agency—implicitly forged through gender difference—break down." In turn, Kapil's refusal of normative American English legibility dovetails with a biomedical assessment of schizophrenia, of "language suitable to dementia" or "language and semantic dysfunction" while the migratory experience of home takes up this "nowhere land" to critique "humanness or colonial agency." In other words, adding in disability studies, Black studies, and South Asian diaspora studies to the temporal and legible creates a moment of antiracist posthumanism through the refusal to be "read" as a proper human or ahistorical posthuman status. Disability intersects with race in this moment where biomedical accounts of speech disorders

infantilize, dispossess, and displace the subject who is read as illegible or whose language is apprehended as incoherent (Ibrahim 315), and Kapil responds with otherwise worldbuilding at the level of the sentence itself. As Kocher notes in also reading Kapil, these poetics are necessarily "liquid, like mercury…at once singular and not, plural and not," but certainly born out of the text's genetic splitting within the "historical environment" (Kocher 8). That historical environment is, necessarily, also gendered.

In this last reading from Kapil's book, then, I move into the sexualized gendering of the border, how the word that produced it materializes in the bodies violated to enact it. In part 7 of *Schizophrene*, "Partition," Kapil's speaker depicts her mother telling her a border crossing story during the Partition. She describes her mother covering Kapil's mouth and eyes just after women's bodies are tied to trees and gutted as a warning to others who might cross the border. Here, the fact of the "women's bodies" through which "borders and boundaries of communal identities are formed" (Gopinath 9-10) becomes an undeniably violent and violating image which Kapil terms a repeatedly told "bedtime story." The scene enacts how "gendered constructions of South Asian nationalism are reproduced…through the figure of the 'woman'" as the all-too-literal "boundary marker of ethnic/racial community in the 'host' nation" (Gopinath 18); this figuring is a literal, "violent [effacement] that [produces] the fictions of purity that lie at the heart of dominant nationalist and diasporic ideologies" (Gopinath 4). They undercut a global posthuman transnational subjectivity that arbitrarily overrides borders for finance capital investment and maneuvering strategies, or flight from environmental climate change's literal and metaphorical flows. In contrast, they materialize the violence of border signification – of who can traverse these borders and in service of what.

Kapil's speaker muses: "Sometimes I think it was not an image at all, but a way of conveying information" that, returning to Chapter 3 again, is a haunting from "the grave." It is this series of images that lead to the famous line from the book as quoted earlier: "because it is psychotic not to

know where you are in a national space." This information from the grave, the processes of racialization, gendering, colonization, and pathologization, emerges as the unintelligible moment conveyed only through image as language fails it, escaped only on the page break between believing this as conveying information and reconciling how that information indexes the violation of female and queer bodies. Those borders index where gender, diagnosis, race, and colonialism meet, but where, too, a coalitional moment arises.

### ***Rolling the R's*** **Through Oceania as Diasporic Drag**

While my reading of Kapil examined language as bearing the twofold status of performance poetics and materially suffered schizophrenia, my reading of Linmark turns more explicitly to examine accents as a refusal of nationally dominant and bound corporeal meaning-making (Eagle 5-6). The biomedical discourse has already tried to valorize the possibilities of schizophrenic subjectivity in relation to race and gender, and poststructuralism abstracts the experience to work through its social implications, such as in Deleuze and Guattari through David Harvey. However, in this last section I read iterations of legibility, colonialism, gender, sex, sexuality, and race through the pidgin poetics interpellated with popular mainland cultural icons. I argue that the explicit recurrence of pop culture drag, Creole Pidgin, and queer adolescence in *Rolling the R's* suggests trans-diasporic, trans-oceanic coalitions in the moment of refusing static legibility.

This reading depends on existing scholarship that brings together queer[75] kinship with diaspora. As Byrd puts it, and as I have added to the question of diagnosis: "If 'diaspora' needs 'queerness' in order to rescue it from its genealogical implications, 'queerness' also needs 'diaspora' in order to make it more supple in relation to questions of race, colonialism, migration, and

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[75] "Suturing 'queer' to 'diaspora' thus recuperates those desires, practices, and subjectivities that rendered impossible and unimaginable within conventional diasporic and nationalist imaginaries" (Byrd 11)

globalization" (11). Additionally, within this existing analytic, "queerness names a mode of reading, of rendering intelligible that which is unintelligible and indeed impossible within dominant and nationalist logic" (Byrd 187). As Gopinath puts it in relation to the South Asian Indian diaspora:

> In other words, while queer diasporic cultural forms are produced in and through the workings of transnational capitalism, they also provide the means by which to critique the logic of global capital itself. *The cartography of a queer diaspora tells a different story of how global capitalism impacts local sites by articulating other forms of subjectivity, culture, affect, kinship, and community that may not be visible or audible within standard mappings of nation, diaspora, or globalization.* What emerges within this *alternative cartography* are subjects, communities, and practices that bear little resemblance to the universalized 'gay' identity imagined within a Eurocentric gay imaginary. (12, emphasis added)

I argue here that turning from a trans-Atlantic to a trans-Pacific moment of one such cartography creates a watery demonic ground that can also critique global capital's logics without recruiting an easy East/West.I argue in this final section that by articulating a Pacific Islander queer coalition of Oceania with trans-Atlantic racial, crip, and gender narratives, otherwise livabilities emerge through the break of culture in drag as much as language. That is, akin to Robert Diaz's reparative reading strategy of *Rolling the R's*, my reading of language enacting drag is "moored to a belief that the creation of reparative vocabularies, in all their complexities, contradictions, and inherent difficulties is now due" (17). To make this argument, I read mixed genre selections in *Rolling the R's* to read moments of dance in relation to linguistic performance, such as lifted in school assignments.

Linmark's novella narrates a queer, second generation Filipino immigrant in Hawai'i, Edgar. It is a story of arriving into and out of childhood as an ageless temporality for racialized subjectivity, the unintelligibility of accent as necessary subversion, and pop culture drag as reckoning with globalism to create local diasporic coalitions. As Edgar and his friends explore trans, queer, and sexualized subjectivities, the young group borrows institutionalized colonial education American English grammar and re-work it through television and radio mainland references as much as their local and lived histories in Kahili. This at once reminds if how Hawai'i continues to be colonized

and co-opted in finance's global trade flows; however, Edgar and his friend's resistance, I argue, creates accented lexicons that potentially interact with a global subaltern practice of diasporic conversation and translation, such as Kapil's migration grammars. It is precisely within the illegibility to dominant grammars, or the muddling of otherwise seemingly static pop culture references, that the flight from dominant gender, race, ethnicity, and nationhood performance is enacted, similar to Kapil. At the same time, the particular historical formations of migration in Hawai'i build out their own capacious, global analytics for cross-border as well as cross-ocean coalitional and ecological world building[76]. Reading this through a poetics lens enables a hyper attention to the language performance itself, building on Diaz's work around object relations that destabilize whiteness. Diaz, for instance, reads how "the movie screen and the television are the most important transmitters and sources of the raced person's exposure to 'whiteness' [in Filipino American narratives]." However, as Diaz goes on to argue:

> …this desire is not at all uni-directional as one would expect. That is, it does not entail a simple: 'I want to be her/him' dynamic. Rather, the children in Linmark's imagination mess up these figures through their campiness, projecting a version of the celebrity that has already been reworked with a racialized part of themselves. (Diaz 213)

Building on Diaz's work, I argue that Linmark's novel builds on my analysis of logocentrism and whiteness in crip diaspora poetics from Kapil, offering through an explicitly queer, hybrid text methods for taking the mass circulated popular culture texts and "muddling" them as much through linguistic play as physically enacted play. Or, to again work through Diaz's existing framework: Rather than an object that the subject wishes to be rid of, her bad self actually becomes a way to muddle, problematize, and in a way spoil the desired good object of "whiteness.' (Diaz 211). This problematizing and re-working happens as much at the level of legibility and poetics as at the

[76] This also enables more direct attention to when language is read as illegible because of its trans-national, accented or modified context, which is a more direct critique of national, boundaried logocentrism and how it functions through ways of reading.

physically performed, creating coalitions between the niche print texts of this chapter with the dominant, more popularly circulated texts of Chapters 1 – 3.

My close reading focuses on a chapter about two-thirds through the book: "The Sentencing of Lives, Or Why Edgar Almost Failed Mrs. Takemoto's Class," which is Edgar's response to a vocabulary test. It lists the vocabulary words offered on the test, which are then filled in with Edgar's definitions. Notably, those definitions (examples below) oftentimes re-tool the grammatical function or conjugation of the word itself so that a new vocabulary set is built out of the otherwise gate-keeping attempt to discipline normative grammar and meaning. This includes recursively critiquing how interpreted meanings shape allocations of language culturally deemed poetic, legislative, descriptive, performative, and so forth. I argue that this chapter connects the narrativized performances of prior and later chapters with creating a "new vocabulary," or Kapil's "new pen," bringing together linguistically enacted worldbuilding[77] with its practiced, daily materials. This critique functions in part through the chapter not just refusing or sidestepping dominant, normative grammars, but rather interpolating them with his own material and historical languages – muddling them through reparative reading. Edgar's both hyper-specific and local responses intermixed with mainland popular culture references throughout the test makes his coalitional strategy once "less insular without being submerged in the amorphousness of the global cultural morass" (Hau`ofa 87). In this way, "The Sentencing of Lives…" problematizes the assumed static category of and desire for a global literacy and legibility via borders and whiteness "written" on land and water by playing with the language for otherwise meanings.

[77] This chapter repeatedly runs into "performed" language and "performed" subjectivity, which immediately calls back to the more famous literary analysis of "performative language," or language that poststructuralists, such as Jacques Derrida, have already archived as exhibiting what language "does" or "creates" in the world in tandem with lived realities. While this chapter depends on that history of language analysis, it also assumes it in order to look more particularly at cultural studies analyses of performance, such as gender, race, and crip/disability performances of self.

The title, "The Sentencing of Lives, Or Why Edgar Almost Failed Mrs. Takemoto's Class," demonstrates how language enacts biopolitical and necropolitical racialization. The "sentencing of lives" is a play on words: the phrase doubly employs "sentences" to implicate the juridical verb of "sentencing" at the same time as the syntactical noun unit, a "sentence." The phrase functions through a verb and object, but not a subject, until re-worded in direct specificity: Edgar, the subject, nearly failing, the verb, Mrs. Takemoto's Class, the object. The comma in between the initial phrase and the "or" refuses a causal or even "definitive" relationship between the two phrases. There is no title and subtitle, but two equally weighted fragments. The juxtaposed "why" followed by a name subject acting upon the class sharply contrasts the broad sweep of "lives" being acted upon by an unnamed subject. While the prior phrase would make it seem like an abstract or inevitable position without a clear subject, making those "sentenced" into the pluralized object, "lives," the second part turns the class itself into the object while offering a singular, named subject. This small shift reasserts Edgar's agency in a scenario of seeming failure, while also making specific and localized the broader context of juridical exclusions from citizenship protection.

Moreover, this elaborate double structure re-tools 18$^{th}$ and 19$^{th}$ century literary conventions, parodying the practice by converting it into a scene of "low art," or rather, a small rural classroom that leans heavily on popular iconography. The title inserts queer play as a linguistically embodied experience within an otherwise linguistic labor of abstracting sentences' meanings from hegemonic grammar's material violence. The title insists on its particular form of living by enacting what is culturally apprehend as near material and social death through "almost failed" and "sentencing." Finally, the "almost" is important, because despite the genocidal work of dominant American grammars: "…past and future worlds that begin to bleed into the present through a rebuilding of kinship networks as interpretive strategy" (Byrd 15). Edgar continues to speak and embed himself materially within a set of conditions even as he develops alternate livabilities.

This linguistic worldbuilding and play continues in Edgar's test responses. There are 20 vocabulary words, and the italicized directions tell the student: "Please form a sentence with the following words. Watch your punctuation. NO PIDGIN-ENGLISH ALLOWED. You have 45 min" (capitalization not added). Edgar responds to each word through local community examples, his anticolonial histories of how people have arrived at the island, and pop culture references. These responses enable him to mark his subjectivity as embodying flight from colonial narratives of meaning-making blood kinship and global migration as solely the by-product of global finance capital. The flight functions agentially through Edgar's co-identification with the words and people in each response, as well as how he conjugates words outside of dominant American English verbs. Much like in the title, for example, he frequently will change a word from verb to noun or noun to verb. He uses this to create kinship across temporalities, such as how he defines the seventh word, alienation: "alienation, n. After defecting the Philippines of Mr. Marcos, Florante's family continues to write in this alienation" (122). "After defecting the Philippines" places the subject, Florante's family, into the present tense, while the Philippines themselves lose their power to make Mr. Marcos.

As a noun that Mr. Marcos himself defects, and as the family "continues to write," the future bleeds into the present's imperfected resolution, while their living enacts the "writing." The Florantes' family removes itself within this framework from a national space and singular national language as the only valid form of writing. It is in this temporality that "alienation" gets defined twofold – as being without nation-state and framed by diasporic narratives, but also as a play on nationhood as necessarily alien in a migration narrative – an alien nation. The migrated subject is no longer the alien, but rather the nationbound space to which the diaspora has moved. This shifts the agency again, moving away from colonial erasures of subaltern meaning-making. This is also not a blind romanticization of diaspora, however; the words bear the denotative loneliness of alienation,

of being forced into the necessary creation of kinship relationships from what was held in the previous geographic space. The twofold writing "in this alienation" enacts a "corporeal orature" (Bragin 102), another potential trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific coalition, when Edgar defines vocabulary word 12, "transition" through Exotica, who is transitioning from male to female in order to enter the Ms. Fusion-Pacifica pageant.

Transition here becomes an improvised dance and performance that sutures textual grammar to the "kinesthetic process [that] follows Thomas DeFrantz's definition of *corporal orature*, 'align[ing] movement with speech […] to incite action'" (Bragin 102). Here Blackness, South Asian Indian, and Pacific Island and Oceania coalitions become anticolonial diasporas that put national identity and globalism in the context of performed gender and sexuality. This at once calls attention to the homeland as effeminate and queer already, "Ms. Fusion-Pacifica," while refusing to disidentifying with cultural fusion that would naturalize admixture. That is: just as "Fusion-Pacifica" domesticates and feminizes cosmopolitan renderings of mixed cultural heritages, Exotica's transition to compete refuses to "[center] on the 'impossible ideal' of this subject's position within the social," but instead enables Edgar and Exotica to "[focus] on how the individual performs failed and actualized conceptualizations of citizenship" (Diaz 215). The vocabulary test becomes a momentary corporeal orature on and in transition, kinship, history, and pop culture, where gender performance and transitioning sexes create more historically critical cross-border/cross-boundary coalitions that take "back," or move through anew, the historical linguistic matter of Trans-Atlantic and Pacific globalization.

In Edgar's definitions, he "writes" alternative methods for being and making meaning without recuperating land, water, or those who cross both as property or nationally boundaried, but also refuses an ahistorical cosmopolitan romance of cross-cultural "fusion." His definitions remain syntactically and referentially antagonistic to "Western modes of thinking and being" (Bragin 102). I

argue that this is a mode of diasporic drag, both of the vocabulary words put into drag and the description of transition and alienation, that functions as intellectual labor with its own theoretical and lived systems – legible within themselves, illegible to dominant American and colonial grammars. I am not arguing that trans identification and transition is drag performance, which is a dangerously transphobic figuring of gender, sex, and sexual identification. Rather, I am arguing that the chapter as a whole functions as language in drag, or theoretical intervention, because of its relationship to the chapters before and after it, where the lived performances of pop culture in drag contextualize the linguistic arguments in Edgar's vocabulary test. Throughout the book, Edgar and his friend do not have the resources to secure the dominantly circulated pop music from the mainland United States, so instead they (re)create it by performing I themselves. In the process, they queer it for a trans-diasporic mobility. This is a "decolonizing performatic," as outlined earlier in this chapter around Sotomayor's argument for embodied sovereignty as "writing itself" (Sotomayor 3). Much like Sotomayor describes the Fonterizo dancers, Edgar, Exotica, and their friends performing instead of simply listening to or consuming the music "provides agency and protagonism to a great number of participants that move in and out of the musical space" (Sotomayor 7). That agency, in the context of found poems such as the vocabulary exam, is necessarily self-aware of its own conditions and the violent effacement being refused.

Earlier in the book, for instance, Edgar and his friends, Florante, Mai-Lan, Katrina, Samoan Loata, and Orlando Domingo, use role play of Charlie's Angels to experiment with and enjoy queer sexuality and gender play. While the different parts of the identities are taken up again beyond their use of Charlie's Angel drag while hanging out, they explore putting on and performing pop culture "celebrity" to experiment with "subversive sexual identity through the performance of cultural productions that were not intended to be used in such a way" (Nubla 210). Gladys Nubla especially attends to these scenes to argue that, similar to Diaz's point, "as a relationship of difference and

change rather than one of hierarchy and stability" (Nubla 215). Nubla looks more closely at Pidgin and Taglish as Creole languages that destabilize hegemonic, static categories of meaning, seeing in these scenes of role play with mainland pop culture identification a way to "[think] about the world that counters, although in a limited sense, the autocratic edicts of racialized and sexualized center-periphery world politics and capitalism" (215). Nubla's analysis of the drag performance scenes works in concert with Diaz's, looking to how Pidgin and Taglish are used in these physical performance scenes.

More concretely: Orlando identifies as and is part of the community of "queens" in these social spaces, and he uses his desire to both be and repurpose Farrah Fawcett and her hair style. He responds to the other queens asking him, "Farrah, Farrah, what's the secret to your hair?" with a coy "A Flip is a Flip is a Flip," or "Once a Farrah Flip Always a Farrah Flip" (Linmark 24). While this immediately recalls the long tradition of language play in poetry, such as Gertrude Stein's "A rose is a rose is a rose" commenting on identity and sexuality, I signal and Nubla's and Diaz's readings of this moment for a specific Filipino heritage and drag moment. The Flip, for instance, is a colloquial term for Filipino in the community, so that Orland and the other queens in these scenes take their own diasporic communities and not just envy, or incorporate, popularized mainland iconography, but also, "through [Orlando's] example, to envy something, to want something, also means to play around with it, to mess it up, to camp it out, and to add meaning to it" (Diaz 214). My reading in of vocabulary test, then, as drawing out relationships between young, queer friends in the classroom asks how the language in these physically played moments of drag enable a lived theory to develop from Edgar's vocabulary, or a relationship between Exotica's transitions for illuminating selective culture retrieval and circulation for Ms. Fusion-Pacifica and Edgar's linguistic play on the page for creating a new language.

These claims to gendered and sexualized otherwise worldbuilding through combined enactment, play, and language, depend on otherwise relationships to the land and waters of the area themselves. That is, I add onto Diaz and Nubla's arguments the idea that Edgar's vocabulary texts creates watery demonic grounds that bear a historical (not pre-historical) otherwise relation to language and space-making. As Hau`ofa explains, the diasporic space-making of Oceania in particular offers a method for rejecting the melting pot of Americanness through recourse to territorial land (31) and the treatment of the ocean as either a method of traversing to/from land or as propertied resource. In this final section, then, I turn to the chapter in Linmark's novella entitled "The Two Filipinos." I argue that this chapter elucidates how ethnic specificity in an oceanic/Oceania diaspora (Hau`ofa 35-36) moves beyond national borders to create coalitions precisely through subjectivity, language, water, and land.

**"Reading" Volcanic Language in the Classroom as Ballroom**

In "The Two Filipinos," Edgar's teacher, Mrs. Takemoto, once more creates both the conditions for subject legibility in a national space and unintentionally houses its subversion. She asks each student to name their ethnicity in an exercise of separating ethnicity from nationality. In the scene, each student names ethnic specificity – from Vietnamese, Okinawan, Japanese, and Samoan to when a student says Caucasian. Students become increasingly specific, such as, "one-fourth Filipino, one-fourth Spanish, one-fourth Chinese, one-eighth Hawai'ian, one-sixteenth Cherokee Indian, and one-sixteenth Portuguese-Brazilian," with the rest of the class identifying as Filipino until they get to Nelson Ariola, who responds simply, "American." At this, Edgar silently narrates, "though [Nelson] is as Filipino as any Filipino can be." When the teacher corrects Nelson by saying that was nationality, the class erupts into a debate over relationships between national belonging, migration, and land.

In this eruption, the students argue until Katrina calls Nelson a "haole," which becomes grounds for her detention and, as I will argue, an alternate articulation of belonging and time that subverts the subjectifying and racializing colonial labels for ethnic being. Nelson's claim to Americanness for being born in colonized Hawai'i, when questioned, becomes his desire not to be racialized under Filipino stereotyping of "dog eater" or "janitor," to which Edgar playfully combats that there is nothing wrong with those things, but rather with "reading" them as lesser-than. This transitions into another moment of drag reference, wherein Edgar "reads" Nelson: "You're so full of yourself, Nelson. Just cuz your father one lawyer and your mom one nurse. Wake up and smell the hot pandesal. Windex your mirror cuz your reflection goin' tell you you the best candidate for Mr. Pinoy—brown skin, yellow teeth, and no nose" (68). The class laughs, including "timid Jason Shimabukuro, who rarely lets out a sound," and the teacher asks everyone to quiet down. Yet, notably, she does not work to enforce it. The style of "reading," both literally how to read a racialization and the "reading" as ball culture performative redress slips under her nationalistic and institutionalized methods for grammatically constructing a "proper" reading of race and ethnicity – as his "brownness." While simply exchanging an insult in a classroom does not itself denote ball culture, again, the lived performances outside of the educational space, as well as Edgar's own narration, contextualize the language-based meaning making in this scene. In fact, within the first several pages of the book, he takes up the mode of "fighting" signature to drag and ball performance spaces:

> 'The pink-colored pills my mother stuffs in bananas cuz they supposed to make me grow big and strong. But when Christopher them start gettin' outta hand with the names, and their nudges start for turn to bruises, I roll up my sleeves and turn into the Queen of Mouth and Sizes' (5). Here [Edgar] refers to his practice of 'reading' or dishing out vicious insults as a way to turn the tables (Nubla 208)

As Nubla explains, Edgar uses rhetorical techniques from queer spaces as a parodic method for managing subjectification, akin to his "reading" of the vocabulary on the test in tandem with his

performances of Charlie's Angels. It creates a coalitional possibility with a ball culture on the mainland most famously filmed through *Paris is Burning*. His identification of Asian and Hawai'ian diaspora turns to linguistic and lived modes of performed subversion and commentary throughout the book, reinforcing this later moment in the classroom. This context from the larger novel makes it possible for him and his friends, who create drag performances outside of the classroom, to subvert the classroom space and create otherwise meanings within that are coalitional with African and urban queer diaspora.

In this way, the teacher's initial intention of domesticating and categorizing race and ethnicity in line with an Americanist language projects inadvertently reveals the disproportional cultural constructedness of race and ethnicity. For example: the students shift the debate from pride in ethnic specificity, to its determination in phenotype, to race, the one "white" student who called his ethnicity "caucasian," Stephen Bean, says, "'Nelson, if you're such an American, then what am I?' Nelson opens his mouth; no words escape." Katrina responds on Nelson's behalf, saying, "One haole, what else?" (69). Haole is the word in Hawai'i derogatorily used to describe white settler European migrants who feel superior as "foreigners," (Oxford English Dictionary), and when Katrina introduces this word, the redress of ethnicity erupts in the classroom[78].

The patrilineal dimension in Katrina's insult, as well as the ramifications for her within the institutionalized space, both directs to Edgar continuing his "read," now of both Nelson and Stephen being already violently and colonially coalitional a kind of "haole" through their racial and ethnic performance, but also warns them that it is precisely this multi-vectored form of colonial subjectivity out which alternate and insistently livable coalitions will eventually "erupt." When Katrina names the ultimate foreigner as the colonizer, the "haole," she inverts the classroom so that

[78] Dissertation note: could not find any additional academic commentaries on the specific use of "haole" in the book, so any suggestions on further directions would be helpful.

the ethnicities are foreign, but rather the colonial violence of desiring whiteness. This insult functions with similar ambiguity, however, of Orlando's use of the "Flip." Both words – using Flip to refer to Filipino and "haole" to foreigners have had shifting denotations of endearment or insult, with haole in particular enabling another vector of meaning-making: land-based identification. According to The Oxford English Dictionary, the term first appeared in writing in 1851 by a journalist, William Ellis, touring Hawai'i. He describes escaping danger precisely because he was "haole," or, as he translates it, "foreigners." The term then reappears James Jackson Jarves' journals on touring Hawai'i and Central America, to describe the food and good brought to the "haole," again translated as foreigners. Mark Twain picks up the term again in his 1866 "Letters from Hawai'i," published again in 1967 and translated as meaning not only foreigners, but "strangers," while a 1905 article in *The Daily Chronicle* describes an expedition wherein British colonizer Stevenson "fell in with the Polynesians" in Hawai'i and, in the words of *The Daily Chronicle*, was "consequently unjust to the *haoles,* or white people," marking the first explicit textual racialization of the term in print Western European texts. British historian and sociologist later, in the 1945 report circa 1938, "City development: studies in disintegration and renewal," then uses the term to describe its association with the "less primitive life" of haoles influencing the "ancient ways" of Hawai'ian peoples.

In contrast, or perhaps ironically not, a 1954 reference in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* describes within a book how the "haole – white – characters are fiction," while the indigenous populations, or as worded in the publication, "The Hawaiians are authentic." Here, the term indexes a moment of conflating nonwhite ethnicity with naturalness and nature, a critique already explicated earlier in this paper that reproduces a colonialist engulfment of eco-poetic relationships to resources different from the global flows of nature and people associated with it as property. The term reappears and has its last OED entry in 1970, wherein *Language: The Journal of the Linguistic Society of*

*America,* cites the "ever-increasing pressure for the use of English from 'haoles' (main-land whites) and others." While the "others" is left ambiguous enough, this pressure manifests in the classrooms throughout *Rolling the R's*, so that the weight of haole as an ambivalent term that began as insult when a "reading" from indigenous Hawai'ian people's but became re-appropriated as ambivalent instead of colonially malevolent "whiteness" tied to linguistic pressure to normalize national grammar. In other words, in the OED, its final entry becomes a mode of nationalist linguistic engulfment that attempts to colonize the word itself but, in the process, recreates its stigma of, as the more precise Dictionary of Regional English explains to emphasize its use as a "reading," "joking names for people who are, *or think they are*, the best society of a community" (emphasis added). The Oxford English Dictionary's emphasis on the Euro-American apprehension and textual documentation of the word from exclusively colonial white male perspectives fails to adequately encapsulate the word's subversive materiality, a subversion that is more closely approached in the regional dictionary.

Here, the specificity of the word begins to emerge. While the majority of entries repeat those of the OED, the 1967 use in *Oceanic Linguistics* marks how the word is used not just to describe a foreigner, but also the power relations of that foreigner as "A white person of the dominant social and economic group in Hawai'i," codifying the recent colonization and its shift in power through linguistic appropriation in the 1960's – markedly, also, the period of the "posts." The 1967 entry embodies this "post-colonial" fragmentation of the word's meanings: "A person with light-colored hair and skin"; "Names and nicknames for a citified person"; "Names…for people of foreign backgrounds"; "A woman who puts on a lot of airs" before the final "joking" names for those dominant in society as outlined above. This reproduces the ongoing attempt in the classroom to zero in on how to "read" ethnicity and whiteness in the colonized classroom as the students skip from phenotype, to gendering (Stephen calls Edgar a "faggot" for continuing to read him), to

historical locatedness and homeland, imitating and in feedback producing the American regionalism of the word as classroom and dictionary alike attempt to engulf its meanings and grammars. The last entries surface in 1969 to simply describe white people, followed by its reference in the 1980 novel, *Water of Kane* by Bushnell Oswald, where the protagonist queries what will happen to his crop if it is taken to a "Haole man's mill to be made into sugar" (Dictionary of American Regional English). The final, dominant dictionary definition in the Oxford Dictionaries is simply: "(In Hawaii) a person who is not native Hawaiian, especially a white person." These final Americanization's of the word touch the surface of the problem that Edgar and Katrina subversively re-tool as they historicize the term through an experiment of linguistic meaning-making.

Stephen's retort to Katrina is to say, "At least I have a father." He names her non-patrilineal kinship relation – her father-lacking articulate alongside Spillers – as also being one that does not align with the nationalist incorporation of only heteroreproductive and propertied kinship subjectivity. Katrina threatens to "bust" his face, but Stephen blames her for the argument, saying she began it by insulting his lineage in the subversive slam of "haole": "I'm not haole, I'm Caucasian." Here, Stephen makes a bid for whiteness as the stable, desired object, and to "haole" as the derivative from it. However, Katrina retorts, "You in Hawai'i and a Caucasian is a haole is a haole is a Caucasian. If you no can handle the tropical heat, go back to Antartica." This moment marks the turn in the class debate, wherein the inherent hypocrisy to naming black and brown bodies as "foreigners" to indigenous lands, or the co-option of potential coalitions against the twinned anti-Black and colonizing linguistic processes, is called out. It also echoes the earlier comments of Orlando, "a Flip is a Flip is a Flip" to mark how the status of whiteness is not abstract, ahistorical, statically fixed, or desirable, but rather constructed and performed through repetition as much as any other identification.

In the style of the drag ballroom reading, Katrina tells him to go "back" if he cannot handle the colonial, racial, and patrilineal history of the words Caucasian and haole now part of the land he inhabits, and if he cannot accept the linguistic and meaning-making complexity of his subjectivity in their space. The power of the classroom, a white space of logocentric meaning-making, is temporarily upturned, and the capitalized "C" of the whitened proper noun Caucasian is contrasted with, even as it is compared to, the nonwhite reading of whiteness as anything but abstract, mobile, and ahistorical or Euro-American colonially "proper" historical; haole becomes historicized in a way that refuses the neat linear temporality of OED textual meaning-making, and the classroom debate embodies the re-tooling of meaning out of historical matter apparent in Edgar's vocabulary text. If the OED would see the term as beginning via its Euro-American documentation in the 1850's and ending with postmodernism by 1980, this millennial recuperation and materialization of its history insists on language and history's tie to land and non-national kinship. This decolonial performatic as embodied and linguistic meaning and history crosses nationally specific coalitions by offering alternate readings and iterations of legibility and lexicons. Through a corporeal orature in the classroom, for a wavering moment based on the subjects' broader context in the novel transformed into a drag ballroom, the historically situated experience of national identity materializes.

Part of this historical situatedness also arises from the word's environmental and land-oriented implications on water-bound islands, as well as to humanist modes of racialization. As noted earlier in the chapter, Nelson resists being racialized associatively with Filipino ethnicity, because in an American English cultural production, Filipino is derided for associating with "dog eating." This construct of lesser-than hinges on an assumed "proper" human interspecies relationship upholding an ideal human, and the racializing insult bears with it the assumption that being outside of a humanist species being is a lesser-than stance. That is, through the social taboo in Euro-American cultures against eating "dogs," who are instead prized as companion commodities,

the insult is intended to mark a less than human status, and thereby unworthy of protection from or unable to transcend out of pre-mature exposure to precarity. With dogs seen as companion or working animals within the circulation of their bodies as emotional and literal service goods – emotional support animals, show dogs, the industry of domesticized dogs for companionship, working dogs in the police force, and so on – to transgress and consume them as just another animal is marked as also a conceding to biological needs for food. More shortly, it is a way of marking as embodied and unable to supersede to colonialism's civilized, transcendent human. An inter-species relationship that shifts the domestic animal industrial complex marks as lesser-than by dehumanizing, which, when corresponding the racialization of an ethnic specificity, is a way of rationalizing cultural colonization and maintaining an inter-human hierarchy. The insult assumes at its core that whiteness as ideal human is the desirable and "better" identity, that not being marked as properly "human" in relation to other species is defacto to be lesser-than.

Because of the insult's assumption, when Edgar asks what the "big deal" is if "Filipinos eat dogs," he uses the linguistic repertoire of the scene to refuse this humanist colonial and Euro-American hierarchy of being: dog-eating as Filipino, as brown, as less than human, as colonizable. He does not draw recourse to humanistic inclusion, but rather, asks that the logic underpinning it be revealed for what it is: a cultural construction put in place to make inter-human inequity seem like a natural by-product of humanistic value. There is an extensive field of posthumanist studies that examines animal studies in the Anthropocene, such as Donna Haraway's work on dogs in particular through *Companion Species*. Here, though, the implicit coalition with posthumanist thought offers a material site for exposing colonial humanism's in language-based insults, such as "dog-eater" and "haole," which presume the insult to be too close to "nature." This builds out an even more explicit coalition with Kapil, for instance, whose work repeatedly returns to "American scientists' conflation

of animality, coloniality, and disability" (Dowling 1). Edgar and his friends, in contrast, take up and take on this positions to reconcile a different way of relating to their environment.

The word "haole," for instance, is listed secondly in the Dictionary of American Regional English as "haole koa," or "lead tree," or "the Hawaiian names of several introduced plants," and in this counter-dictionary moment of the classroom argument, the "plantation" dimensions of that word surface to create what Hau`ofa refers to as "ecologically based oral narratives" (64). The metaphor of Katrina's "tropical heat" as opposed to the hyperbolic "Antarctica" stakes its claims in the environment itself more so than just the land, participating in, from earlier chapters, reworking of demonic grounds. While this is not an environmentalist claim, it is a way of thinking through antiracist posthumanisms – reclaiming of otherwise relations between human identification, other species, and the environment – through "reading" as redress. That is, language meant to dehumanize through association to non-human species and plantlife – "dog-eater" and "haole" – are reclaimed and worked through in relation to the broader environment itself – "tropical heat." In the context of preceding chapters and the coalitions with antiracist posthumanisms, this scene creates a vocabulary for site-specific antiracist posthumanism with diasporic implications beyond that site.

This language also signals a historical approach to working through the students' relationship to their environment: "haole," "dog-eater," and the potential unlivability or demonic grounds of "tropical heat" carry with them the history of colonization's industrial flow into Hawai'i through the sugar plantations, outlined through one student's claim to Filipino history in Hawai'i through cheap sugar plantation labor (Linmark 68) to the actual plants and changes in the geographic landscape introduced by global trade. The word's oral history told through the ballroom-classroom reading creating a where and how of the word over the "when," and through that, positing a relationship to environments and their global changes quite different from the anxiety of Carson that opened this project. Claiming this words into a new vocabulary and to write a narrative out of a particular past

but re-worked into a present and future iteration of the terminology embodies what is, in Hawaiian, referred to as past that is "*K wa mamua,* 'the time in front or before'" (Hau`ofa quoting Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa, 66). This mode of keeping time is necessarily articulated with a future that is, if "thought of at all, *ka wa mahope*, or 'the time which comes after or behind'" (Hau`ofa quoting Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa, 66). In Hau`ofa's explanation of what he terms ecologically and what in this project I term environmentally based oral narratives, the mainline history's mapping of time onto linear dates is "of no importance" to those histories; instead of "when," the narratives examine the *where*, *how*, and in what *sequences* they occurred" (Hau`ofa 68) so that "it is there, far into the past ahead, on to other memories, other realities, other homelands" that history happens (Hau`ofa 19). When Katrina and Edgar reclaim a past vocabulary and transform the classroom into their ballroom space, they enact a corporeal orature that also lays claim to the environment around it, refusing to produce the classrooms humanist hierarchies, but also producing new modes of relating.

This approach directly contrasts Euro-American Dictionary attempts to outline meaning. Instead, the enacted lineage spans the 1850's through the contemporary moment; it pre-dates a history catalogued by Stephen's Whiteness while signaling a past, present, and future tropical "heat" that becomes the opportunity for refusing colonial plantation. In this way, "a new temporal dimension of history" refuses to divide the past into "the coming of Europeans," but also the conflation of peoples with land through the violence of "archaeologists, *linguists*, *botanists, zoologists*, and the like for the reconstruction of [those] remote pasts" (Hau`ofa 64, emphasis added). Just as the students elide cultural norms and grammatical humanist subjectivity, so, too, do they posit a being in relation to their environments that is not recognizable within popularized environmental rhetorics of preservation, purity, and reclamation.

This returns us to the vocabulary test: in defining vocabulary word seventeen, "heatwave," for example, Edgar writes: "heatwave, n. Exotica's and Daniels' love theme songs are 'Dim All the

Lights' by Donna Summer and 'Always & Forever' by Heatwave." There is the immediate coalitional moment between Exotica and Daniel with a mainland disco gay nightlife and Black musical iconography: Donna Summer and Heatwave. This moment builds on the queering of popular culture already taken up in "campy" gay night life cultures,[79] suggesting an intervention akin to earlier scenes of drag performance methods. I would add, though, that these popular iconography songs are here brought to bear on a queer relationship between trans and queer lovers. This moves the signification beyond drag and into subjectivity while at the same time looking toward the surrounding environment as always already interpreted through these cultural lenses of queer love and gay night life histories as diasporic, coalitional spaces. Edgar and his friend's insist on reading the environment's heatwaves, or tropical heat, as enmeshed with both globally circulated cultural iconography and reparatively reworked tropes diasporic, queer, anticolonial kinship and love trysts. Again, while it imports this project into the text to call this an explicitly environmental*ist* maneuver, these moments offer rich sites for lived theories of being in environments, of bringing together how we see our environments with reparative strategies for building global coalitions.

These methods subvert global capital's pop cultural flows through linguistic mobility across waters and refusing nation-state borders and grammars (Hau`ofa 34, 53). Or rather, Edgar, Exotica, and Daniel intercept the circulation of cultural capital in finance capital and colonialism's flows between the islands and the mainland; their corporeal and linguistic drag performances, as well as their transitions and narratives of coming out as queer, emerge through the break popular and grammatical cultural performance. This cultural, embodied, linguistic drag is also indirectly

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[79] While camp and disco as part of gay night life histories and socialities is well-studied in queer theory, Robert Diaz's essay also intervenes here to read *Rolling the R's* as a queer camp intervention that builds on that history. See Diaz's full essay, "Melancholic Maladies: Paranoid Ethics, Reparative Envy, And Asian American Critique," for more on this intervention in the book.

environmental, interpretable as a cartographic method bound less to possessed land or water and more to queering a localized environment.

In the final moments of the class debate, the teacher threatens Katrina for calling Stephen Bean a "haole" and threatening retaliatory violence. The moment Katrina is threatened with detention, Edgar stands up in coalition with her and "faces Stephen," while verbally calling out the teacher. He asks why the subversion of racial and ethnic hegemony is enforced instead of the racial and ethnic hegemonic perpetuation itself. When the teacher tells him to sit down, he responds, "'Why only tell me to sit down?' Edgar says. 'Why no tell the haole to sit down, too?'" (70). It is in this moment that the queer and feminized dimensions of Stephen's insult of lacking-father surface, where Stephen spits out, "Shut up, faggot," but remains unreprimanded by the teacher. Edgar points out, "Mrs. Takemoto, you open one case but you no can close 'em, so I goin' close 'em once and for all." Here, Edgar illuminates how the classroom's unbearable conditions for subversion are inadvertently creating the necessary eruption of otherwise possibilities. Using the language of both legal cases and exemplary cases, he critiques how the creation of ethnic and racial specificity only in upholding the seeming static category of whiteness also indirectly demonstrates the possibility for cross-ethnic and cross-racial coalitions. He goes on to tell Nelson he is "Mr. Haole Wanna-be" akin to Stephen as "Mr. Haolewood," so that the desire for homeland as whiteness and the implanting of colonizing migration is called out as implicitly already a coalitional maneuver that requires coalitions of resistance. Or, in articulation with Audre Lorde in Chapter 1: coalitional violence that creates and disproportionately punishes difference necessitates a coalitional alternative and resistance that works precisely with that difference.

This is not just resistance, defined by what it is against, but an agential and alternate "reading" as performative being and in relation to the water and land of his place. His final insult depends upon the unharnessable excess of global climate change in the wake of global finance and

resource flows: "'You guys think you hot-shit, but you know what? The ground you standing on is not the freakin' meltin' pot but one volcano. And one day, the thing goin' erupt and you guys goin' be the first ones for burn'" (70). Edgar's metaphorical and literal volcano eruption through "haole" becomes the moment of fugitivity, the "break" in language and before the next chapter where meaning suspends momentarily and the escape toward freedom is enacted "far into the past ahead" to a new, diasporic "other memories, other realities, other homelands" (Hau`ofa 19). The volcano eruption at once harkens back to Hawaiian Islands' formation out of water and their still being partially submerged, creating a watery demonic ground that also reacts and responds to an always already in-flux environment. This is not to pre-maturely expose certain populations to its violence, here. The eruption instead is part of the "tropical heat," a relationship to the environment that sees it as a destructive force not necessarily reproducing inter-human hierarchies of livability a la the free market ideal – a problem already examined in Chapter 1 as part of dominant environmentalist rhetorics. Instead of taking on the foregone conclusion that subaltern populations without access to global travel will bear the brunt of changing environments, Edgar creates a coalition with the already volatile land of the island that suggest whiteness is not a protection against the environment's turns to unlivable spaces. The history, neither strictly in human or posthuman ecological or cultural terms, nor in pre or post-historical language, erupts as the environmental oral based narrative both told and foretold here by Edgar. The classroom here is, itself, one such eruption into ball culture: a narrative that crosses discrete nation-based borders between students in the classroom's histories of colonization and migration, but also past that classroom into the global diasporic and queer worldbuilding already ongoing.

# Conclusion

Epeli Hau`ofa's text is named, *We are the Ocean*; the ocean here becomes an analytic for thinking through a different relationship to material living, one where sensing the haole as whiteness is also sensing the material dimensions – both ecologically and culturally material – of language as opposed to logocentric conceptions of meaning-making. As touched on in Chapter 3, this is a statement of the obvious, overly elided fact that we are, in fact, both comprised mostly of water and carry indebted relations to it. However, it is also here a way of suturing together the metaphysical and physical, the terrestrial and the submerged, not to blindly analogize them, but to create spaces that do not perceive and respond only to colonially and financially enforced borders for nation-states. The migratory experience and its languages of subversion, the fragmentation's material decolonial performatic apprehends language as kinesthetic, not the false promise of abstract whiteness. Language – from trans-Atlantic colonial and racial slavery passageways justified by anti-Blackness and colonial trade, to trans-Pacific colonial and plantation passageways that forced migration through global resource flows – the migratory diasporic experience refuses an ontological homeland tied to heteroreproductive circulation of cultural and ecological goods. When it insists on the particular histories of uniquely diasporic subjectivities, it also refuses a global future that would steal the cultural capital of colonized and enslaved people and biopolitical ensure their devastation in global climate change's wake; instead, these diasporic coalitions utilize particularity and difference to critique any desire for inclusion into the haole, the human, logocentric posthumanism, and all of their offspring. Instead, they seize the possibility of sense, of "reading" as redress; an aliveness that calls attention to livability's conditions in the wake of global climate change and finance capital.

The texts across this project return repeatedly to how the word creates borders, writes cartographies, and attempts to abstract as extract cultural meaning and goods from Black and brown bodies of knowledge, land, and water – both their metaphysical and physical dimensions. Yet, the

texts create moments where they can build coalitions that take the ocean *as* us, as the additional condition for a volcanic eruption that creates new livabilities, as breaks in nationalist grammars. As Bragin quotes Jackson, this sensing is a "valorization of emotion as a path toward intelligent knowing," and intelligent knowing is the "new pen," the lava that builds into and out of the water, the "understanding of one's relationship to forces in the environment around the body (like gravity and the weighted pull of the ground)," but also the "unknowable, mystical forces" that refuse consolidation into life science and finance capital's grammars for legibility and knowability. As Hau`ofa puts it:

> The regional identity proposed here [of Oceania] has been built on a base of concrete reality. that the sea is as real as you and I, that it shapes the character of this planet, that it is a major source of our sustenance, that it is something we all share in common wherever we are in Oceania—all are statements of fact. But above that level of everyday experience, the sea is our pathway to each other and to everyone else, the sea is our endless saga, the sea is our most powerful metaphor, the ocean is in us. (58)

What I am further proposing here is that these different methods can find across their passageways methods for building out unexpected coalitions. They do not necessarily silo off a relationship to their environments as environmentalist or not, but rather see that relationship as already implicated in the cultural circulation of texts. Those coalitions might be premised on asking the question behind the question, which is not how water can be more equitably distributed, but rather, what antiracist posthumanisms in coalition with queer, crip, subaltern, and anticolonial subjectivities – are doing the worldbuilding labor globally? Across and out of watery, demonic grounds?

**Building Pedagogy Coalitions Across Academic, Creative Arts, and Activist Publics**

I began researching this project during the academic and election quarter wherein Donald Trump was elected as President of the United States. This project's research was initially built out of and intended for academic spaces, but the election made visible new and ongoing challenges around

how different communities negotiate relationships to race, gender, sexuality, and the arts. Of course, in this conclusion, I do not have the time, resources, or research to theorize fully what the election means for humanities research. Rather, I am marking an affective transition moment in my own research and teaching that resulted in a multimodal, public-facing dimension to this project.

I grew up in suburban Michigan just outside of Detroit. Our household strove for "middle class" status, and while it celebrated how I was first in my family to pursue a PhD, it also viewed my move to a largely "liberal city" with suspicion. Navigating my own queer and disabled life in contrast to my family background, and continually traveling between spaces that at times seem antithetical, has continued to impact my approach to teaching in a "Trump" time. In some ways, it made the research I was doing feel silo'd off from impactful outreach in spaces like my hometown; in other ways, it offered relief from "hopeless" feelings that can surface as a queer crip poet and scholar regularly visiting "Trump country." In particular, the privileges of examining these topics in a space largely supportive of queer and antiracist work, as well as a city comparatively safe for being an "out" queer femme to rural and suburban Michigan, became a keenly felt contrast to my communities and families facing the daily dangers of living in explicit "Trump country." I saw this reflected in my classrooms, where students from divergent spaces – rural Washington clashing, for instance, with urban Seattle – struggled to find successful outreach strategies that would enable daily, practical coalitions across arts and intellectual spaces, but also across geographic spaces. My own upbringing outside of Seattle has in many ways made it easier to critique the coded layers of structural and individual racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism in a city like Seattle, WA. It structures implicitly my critique in Chapter 2, for instance, of *Only Lovers Left Alive.* However, this background insight also makes it easier for me to "teach" and reach out to those still living and learning outside of the city's protection.

At first, this election moment made my research feel pointless – or, to return to the dominant affect, hopeless: why would I research and write in a language so exclusive to those who are likely to already agree with me? For instance: how many critical race and gender studies scholars would disagree that Flint lead poisonings are a form of racial warfare, or that waters should be used for border-crossing resistance? That is, why continue to *only* write to and within spaces that are already seeking out better methods for queer and antiracist work? What was my goal in this research, and is this work in many ways ignoring the capacity I do have to teach, discuss, and build hopeful, otherwise worlds out of the "least likely" spaces, like my hometown? This is not to celebrate scholarship reaching beyond academic publics as morally, ethically, or politically better; rather, it is acknowledging that my own position, both its privileges and its challenging histories, make me uniquely situated to take on these questions of scholarship across disparate geographies and demographics. And, in many ways, my own research on coalition-building requires facing these questions. While this materializes in writing and teaching traditional forms – publishing poems as well as scholarly articles, or structuring syllabi and class spaces to support critical inquiry into how we read – I wanted to find a publication medium and practice more immediately useful across both geographic and demographic disparities, and in the process, turned to an unlikely source, YouTube. A year into writing this, then, as I turned toward the reparative readings of this project, I also started The Poetry Vlog. It is an imperfect, pilot project that tests out these questions and trajectories for bringing together academic and "non-academic" forms and mediums, as well as audiences and interlocutors.

The Poetry Vlog is a YouTube teaching channel and podcast dedicated to building social justice coalitions through arts, higher education, and pop culture dialogue. Most recently supported with an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant for Reaching New Publics and production training fellowship through the Jack Straw Cultural Center, the project builds out of this project's theoretical

framework a tentative practice in creating multimodal, public-facing archives. The intellectual backbone of The Poetry Vlog more concretely asks how the Digital Humanities and Public Scholarship might impactfully intervene upon antiracist pedagogies and coalitional scholarship and arts methods across disciplines. It is not argument for replacing established academic forms, nor for supplementing them, but for building out additional layers of potential meaning and outreach. For instance: in the beginning of this project, I discuss Barbara Christian's 1980's work, "The Race for Theory." Writing into the upsurge of cultural studies within scholarly texts, Christian critiques monolithic academic forms as erasing the lived experiences and bodies of additional arts-based forms knowledge production. Christian's critique, but also call for non-traditional scholarly modes demonstrates the precarity for Black and queer artists of her time writing scholarship in forms termed "artistic," or "object of analysis." She argues that treating otherwise "modes" of knowledge as objects of analysis instead of critical inquiry themselves corresponds to the treatment of marginalized bodies and their knowledges.

This history opens the project's analysis of Audre Lorde and Cherríe Moraga's hauntings through contemporary arts, but here also marks another shift that happened 15 years later: The Ruth Lilly Foundation gave a surprise gift to The Poetry Foundation, specifically $100 million to *POETRY Magazine*. The gift came from Eli Lilly & Company, a corporation with a long-standing history of backing and supporting conservative Republican politicians. Just after George W. Bush was elected, coincidentally or not, in post-9/11 Homeland Security revisions, the company became exempt from lawsuits related to the manufacture of thimesoral (a preservative added to vaccines). This helped the business that was otherwise faltering after losing its bid to extend its patent on Prozac, but also became part of a scandal since the gift to *Poetry* was timed with its own value starkly declining. At the same time, Ed Hirsch and Dana Gioia were placed in charge of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, respectively. This matters

because both were explicitly invested in "deregulating poetry" in who were "Invested in Poetic Currency" (Evans 60). In the rhetoric of making poetry less elitist, more universal, and for the "ordinary" people, the funding intended to sway poetry audiences away from otherwise insurgences happening at the same moment, such as antiwar protest poetry (Evans 61). In 2004, The Poetry Foundation as well became part of this shift toward "businessmen poets" when it named as its new president investment banker John Barr. Simultaneously, if not together, these different leaders began citing popularized poetry of the period as "academicized" poetry that is classist and too elitist, "relished the explosive growth and democratization of the art in the sixties, a decade that rekindled the former alliance between poetry and social progress" (Evans 62). Instead, it would be replaced by a "deregulated" mode of poetry production and distribution that would, as Barr puts it, "'go from A to B to C' and continue 'a tradition that has existed for hundreds of years' that he calls 'the poetry of the rational or the didactic'" (Evans 63). This history on finance capital in poetry was written in 2006; since then, The Poetry Foundation has transitioned presidents, most recently in 2015, instating Dr. Henry S. Bienen.

Needless to say, changing leadership to an award-winning scholar also marked a shift in the antiacademic, and in the case of Dr. Bienen, anti-Cultural Studies rhetoric. However, as both a poet and scholar, but also in this project's underpinnings, I repeatedly return to poetry's relationship to finance capital and modes of poetry, poetics, and scholarship. The changed relationship between poetry and buyers suggests that the past four year's, from 2015 to 2019 at the time of this writing (Lichtenstein), near doubling in poetry readership builds in part on commodifying, making accessible, and selling antiracist and queer voices in poetry, such as Danez Smith being co-host with Frannie Choi of the foundation's podcast, *VS Podcast.* This history invites critiques of popular contemporary poetry akin to critiques of commodified racial being, such as Paul Gilroy's referenced in Chapter 2 on Beyoncé, as well as attention to which voices are celebrated because of their

accessibility to a broad sellers base, unlike Kapil's more experimental poetics, for instance. The contemporary moment marks a shift in both discourses: despite 1980's cultural studies interventions – that non-scholarly texts are enacted and rich modes of knowledge production – widely in university programs and poetry foundation funding alike, research and print poetry discussion methods until the last decade or so have upheld the peer-reviewed, textual monograph publication as success above other forms and modes.

Responding to this contradiction, institutions increasingly fund public scholarship, and departments are beginning to hybridize with creative writing, such as PhD's in creative writing at universities, such as University of Denver, Colorado, or supporting creative writing and multi-media dissertation forms, such as the hybrid creative writing and academic PhD offered at University of California, Santa Cruz. Too, poetry's recent success is in part because of its support for increasingly performance-based voices that leverage poetry's affective modes for social change, such as The Dark Noise Collective and Cave Canem; much of Danez Smith's success, noted in Chapter 3, for instance, can be traced to their relationship between performance poetry on YouTube, critical voice in podcasts, and significant fellowship and funding opportunities, such as The Ruth Lilly Fellowship, from The Poetry Foundation. Poetry and academic spaces have also taken up the accessible forms of podcasting and YouTube videos, from "Commonplace Podcast" with poet Rachel Zucker to Button Poetry's viral slam poetry videos on YouTube. How can scholarship similarly find ways to build out of the seepage, or the excessive, of otherwise accessibly commodified coalitions? That is, building on the paranoid reading that reckons with the commodification of resistance in poetry, and adding on a reparative hope for creative, otherwise possibilities, what methods and modes create less immediately recognizable forms of worldbuilding that are nevertheless effective?

I see in the conclusion of this project how these small shifts mark a hopeful historical moment interrupted by the hopeless affects attendant with Trump's election: multimodal texts are

seeping outside of institutionalized and print publication walls into the more open access social platforms available online, wherein coalitions meaningfully emerge. These are not free market emergences as an outgrowth of deregulated poetry, but rather, explicit interventions on poetry, pop culture, and multimodal publication opportunities in the face of unrelenting hopelessness and violence. Free social media platforms, such as Twitter "essays," Instagram photo essays, YouTube social commentary, and more offer open access public-facing tools that inspire comment threads and reciprocal engagement. They refuse singular lecturer or poetic output, creating accountable reciprocity that pushes knowledge production into unexpected relational -- at times coalitional for social change, such as #metoo and #blacklivesmatter, -- methods. Public scholarship has always been produced, but as the "viral" methods of multi-media and interactive tools emerge, so too does a hopeful moment for coalitions across disciplines and community stakeholders, including artists and scholars, for new knowledge, poetry, and scholarly practices. The platforms and modes are, of course, corporatized methods for ccreating and tapping into consumer bases; however, they are also the literatures students especially "read" day in and day out, and as with any commodified form, the excess of possibilities seep out to build unexpected, otherwise worlds. Inspired by these different leaks across audiences and platforms, I created a pilot project, The Poetry Vlog.

**The Poetry Vlog: Project History and Impact**

"The Poetry Vlog" is a weekly YouTube video series and daily podcast distribution in its second season of production. It is dedicated to discussing contemporary poetry as it intersects with gender, race, and sexuality studies. These open access audio-visual mediums extend the print publication practices of poets and poetry scholars to create reciprocal, engaged community dialogues beyond the college classroom and in conversation with popular culture. The Poetry Vlog began in Summer 2018 as supplementary, multimodal materials to scholarly and poetry classroom; the second season through Winter and Spring 2019 incorporated poets, scholars, and related guests that were

integrated with course texts in ENGL 182, ENGL 382, BISIA 207, and BISIA 310 classrooms. With The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funds, higher grade equipment was purchased and has been used to film around 25 episodes for "Season 3." This season, filmed and produced using new technology and SEO algorithms, will function as a pilot season for what might be possible with a coalitional team producing the project as opposed a singular host, producer, and distributor. The season will feature guests whose texts are taught in the academic year's courses, concepts that are crucial to the course outcomes, or who offer student-to-student insights on course topics.

In its current form, TPV hosts three streams of content: "Guest Interlocutor Episodes," "Flash Briefing Poetry Readings," and "Patrick with Pop Culture." Guest interlocutors participate in tri-weekly episodes distributed across YouTube and Podcast forms. These episodes feature guests that range from students at the UW Seattle and Bothell to community stakeholders such as arts organizations, to scholars and poets. These episodes are under 30 minutes and incorporate supplemental audio-visual cues and built-in reference links. The second stream of content, "Flash Briefing Poetry Readings," is a podcast-only weekday reading of one poem illustrating political hope and/or historical critique. The third stream is a tri-monthly segment, "Patrick and Pop Culture," which emerged from a collaboration with Patrick Milian at The Digital Humanities Summer Institute. It brings his modernist sound studies background and my cultural studies research together through pop music analysis, creating content for both of our literature and composition classrooms as recorded, undergrad-accessible lectures.

All three segments—Patrick and Pop Culture, daily Flash Briefing Poetry Readings, and Guest Interlocutors—are also available in podcast form, while Instagram (@thepoetryvlog), Facebook (@thepoetryvlog), a host site (thepoetryvlog.com), and Twitter (@thepoetryvlog) offer audio-visual platforms for accessing content and to create digital community outreach. Upcoming and past guests thus far have included Seattle's Civic Poet, Anastacia-Renee Tolbert; Western

Washington University Professor, scholar, and poet, Jane Wong; The University of Toronto scholar and poet Sarah Dowling; and *The Seattle Review* editor and visual poetry comics publisher, Gabrielle Bates, among 13 other published scholars, poets, artists, graduate students, and undergraduate students. In addition to published names, for instance, collaborators have included UW students and community stakeholders such as Portland visual artist, Andrea Crawford, and CHID major, poet, and performer, Ananya Garg. There have also been youth partnerships, such as an extended collaboration with The National Youth Poet Laureate Program.

As an existing digital, open access, interdisciplinary project, The Poetry Vlog in all three streams builds coalitions across multiple, at times disparate publics through the power of poetry. The YouTube channel and podcast extends print publication practices of poets and poetry scholars to create reciprocal, engaged community dialogues beyond the college classroom and in conversation with popular culture. While The Poetry Vlog has existed as a side project not yet integrated into classrooms, its second season opened with the podcast already having received over 23,300 "listens" and the YouTube channel exceeding 6,500 "views." While I test-taught some of the content in Spring 2019, AY 2020-2019's "third season" will be designed explicitly for syllabus and community learning integration, as well as more technologically and visually advanced materials. My longer-term goal is for TPV to become a nationally recognized and institutionally accredited public, open access archive as well as ongoing research method in the social media era.

As mentioned above, valuable podcasts dedicated to poetry and social conversations exist, such as "Commonplace" and "VS Podcast," but students comment that 45 minute or more lengths, combined with "insider" language, feel akin to reading a discipline-specific scholarly essay. These podcasts also explicitly lack engagement with scholars in humanities fields that are not necessarily producing art themselves. In turn, cultural studies lectures and discussions hosted in video form online are not adapted for YouTube and Podcast genres, which have unique audio-visual

conventions for maintaining listener and viewer attention, much less with non-academic audiences. The Poetry Vlog thus extends the reach of academic knowledge and widens scholarly publication opportunities and modalities, bringing scholars and poets onto platforms where cultural studies scholarship and poetry commentary have rarely, if ever, been adequately adapted to unique social media conventions. In this way, The Poetry Vlog responds to a moment in which political unrest generates media-rooted #metoo, #blacklivesmatter, and #banthewall movements, as well as the sudden resurgence in poetry readership, which has more than doubled in the past four years (Lichtenstein). For publicly-engaged literary and cultural studies scholars, then, it is tactical, even critical to employ digital platforms from YouTube to Instagram to podcasts when staging discussions about race, gender, sexuality—already extant on these platforms—but further, to utilize these platforms to meet and increase public interest in the arts.

On the one hand, The Poetry Vlog is a multimodal, open access pedagogical tool that might complement and facilitate the teaching of multi-modal literature and composition, especially empowering students who, both in and outside the classroom, are most historically marginalized. For instance: scholars appear on episodes to explain terms otherwise experienced jargon, such as "neoliberal multiculturalism." They enact this pedagogy through short-form pop culture analysis, such as close-reading a Super Bowl Coca-Cola Ad, that instructors can pair with the scholars' niche textbooks. The added mode of podcast and YouTube episode thus transforms specialized academic knowledge into accessible content in and beyond undergraduate courses, further highlighting Cultural Studies and Arts knowledge as socio-politically relevant through popularly recognizable cultural references and critiques. In turn, poets and artists appear on episodes to explain how relatable, popular culture references, such as "BoJack Horseman," inform otherwise niche print-based work, such as feminist poetry comics. Community stakeholders invested in cultural critique and production who find print-based, institutionalized poetry and academic knowledges

impenetrable thus acquire unique insight into literary analyses' and production's culture relevance. In turn, artists in niche mediums are placed in direct conversation with scholars in niche theoretical fields, creating unexpected sites for social and knowledge circulation and collaboration that coalesce around a public-facing and student-based interface. In this way, The Poetry Vlog works with poets and non-poets alike to build on poetry's newly doubled readership base, which has been partially mobilized digital social justice movements. On the other hand, The Poetry Vlog joins cultural analysis to multimodal, hopeful praxis: hope is not just a feeling, but a call to action, and as The Poetry Vlog's dialogues demonstrate poetry, as always, is already here to meet it. In other words: episodes continuously center the cultural and scholarly production existent already in equitable arts and humanities communities.

In making the research method a colloquially engaged, sustained practice of relations, the project also distributes print materials and a monthly Newsletter to audiences beyond the classroom. Print products are namely custom postcards with The Poetry Vlog imaging on the front and a pre-stamped and addressed space for those who pick them up from coffee shops and bookstores. The postcards reference the project's hope as an outgrowth of critique to prompt readers to mail in comments about the project as well as what they are reading, listening to, and watching that gives them hope. Engaged audience members will also receive custom stickers targeted to undergraduate students and magnets for upper classman and faculty. In turn, the newsletters not only summarize the month's content, but also offers a monthly column on "good news" from viewers, participants, and related members of the community. This affective positioning of "hope" in The Poetry Vlog slogan becomes a colloquial method for building on Sedgwick's method, which opened Chapter 2: it assumes that as episodes critique ongoing injustice, they also create and support reparative, creative worldbuilding practices.

This responds to the larger questions across this project by positing future coalitional possibilities already emerging in the present. That is: if the increasing globalization of racial finance capital across popular culture, poetry, and news media outlets feels as totalizing and hopelessly predetermined as the Anthropocene itself, that feeling presupposes prevention as the only hopeful response. What if, instead, otherwise worldbuilding as persistence and adjacent work provides insight into a less predetermined, foreclosed future? In terms of posthumanist coalitions, "What otherwise worlds are already moving across and through the literal and digital waters of cultural production? Insistently reading for and tracing those lines of hope and the creative, critical worldbuilding already being done might not "prevent" the pending and ongoing apocalypses, but it might make the present and its various, potential futures more livable.

To return to this conclusion's introduction: I grew up in "Trump country" as a closeted queer kid. This included the Pentecostal Church as my family's second home for the first decade of my life, followed by the Baptist Church for the second decade. I would argue now that the idea that I was a subversion of human through my queer and crip body in many ways grounded my desire to read for plurality, otherwise hope, and possibility. To build one vector of coalitional work, then, I am ending on a quote from Crawley's *Blackpentecostal Breath*, whose framework for otherwise possibilities also opened this chapter. I am hopeful that such critical framework will become a way into more hopeful readings and possibilities in the face of an increasingly totalizing political schema, in part through being in coalitional *difference* supportive of hopeful worldbuilding with artists and scholars across my academic, arts-based, pedagogical, and activist work:

> Blackpentecostalism is the performance of plural possibilities for otherwise, is the enactment of irreducible openness, the experience of displacement as common, the performance of displacement as a critique of the violent modernity that produced violent possession, colonialism, enslavement. Blackpentecostalism is the ongoing emergence of otherwise than "spatial and temporal coherence,"13 is *not about human possibility but the possibilities that exist in plurality for those that have been rejected from the zone of the human.* (Crawley 37, emphasis added)

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