THESIS

ANARCHISM AND ECOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGIES IN TRANSPACIFIC

SPECULATIVE FICTION

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ABSTRACT

ANARCHISM AND ECOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGIES IN TRANSPACIFIC

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This thesis examines works of transnational speculative fiction from across the Pacific for anarchist themes and the influence of ecologically-based epistemologies. Texts examined in this thesis include films by South Korean director Bong Joon Ho and works by writers and other creatives of color based primarily in North America.

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1. Introduction

In *Decolonizing Anarchism*, Maia Ramnath[i] distinguishes between two forms of

anarchism: a "big-A" Anarchism that finds its origins in leftist movements of the West, and a

"small a" anarchism that she describes as

> a recurrent tendency or orientation […] toward more dispersed and less concentrated
> power; less top-down hierarchy and more self-determination through bottom-up
> participation; liberty and equality seen as directly rather than inversely proportional; the
> nurturance of individuality and diversity within a matrix of interconnectivity, mutuality,
> and accountability; and an expansive recognition of the various forms that power
> relations can take, and correspondingly, the various dimensions of emancipation.[ii]

This loose definition of anarchism grounds my reading of several works of speculative

fiction by creatives of color, or what Ramón Saldívar[iii] might refer to as "postrace" fiction. For

Saldívar, postrace fictions are defined by a transnational imaginary containing a multitude of

perspectives and relationships between individuals and communities. I seek to extend Saldívar's

framework through the inclusion of post-anthropocentric logics and worlds in order to uncover

those "various forms that power relations can take" and the "matrix of interconnectivity,

mutuality, and accountability" that Ramnath describes.[iv] Doing so requires moving with and

through the state, the self, and the technologies that the former uses to control the latter – race,

species, and Cartesian subjectivity.

The thesis first situates the Asian American political subject within a comparative

framework informed by critiques of settler colonial race logics before moving into a series of

engagements with the more-than-human world in a postcolonial ecocritical context, and ends

with an examination of fluctuating modes of engagement with this world that oscillate between

subject/object boundaries. Tracing this path involves geographic shifts from the locally bounded

to the planetary, ontological shifts between subjectivity and objecthood, as well as

scalar/epistemic shifts between the individual, the swarm, and the larger (eco)system. These

movements trace the flows of energy that traverse between bodies (national and monadic) and reveal the Cartesian subject to be a cybernetic sub/object entangled within a larger networked environment. Thinking on this broader ecosystemic level also opens up space to the dimension of time, and these flows of energy can then be considered not only spatially, but also temporally in the form of encryption and decryption.

If ethnic studies tends to function as a humanist interdiscipline informed by the social, cultural, and historic; this thesis departs from Western boundaries of knowledge and arrows of time rooted in anthropocentric visions of an ever-perfectible, yet always exclusionary, democratic state form. Instead, it operates under a thermodynamic model that considers the human as an ephemeral construct within a larger, ever-evolving universe always tending towards entropy. Instead of reading this principle as an overdetermining death knell, the disorder of chaos is read as a liberatory mode of space/time interaction that can be used strategically to encipher and later open up new speculative futures. If subjectivity is a fictional technology of the self that limits the horizon of possibility to the political; in its stead is offered a cybernetic time-being who is entangled not only historically, socially, culturally, but also environmentally and temporally.

A. Race as Technology

I begin by thinking through and beyond race in order to understand the racializing assemblages that have historically constructed the contemporary racial subjects under examination. Following Viet Thanh Nguyen[v], I read the racialized subject position of 'Asian American' through an ambivalent lens that both acknowledges the 1960s as an important moment for the formation of a pan-ethnic Asian American identity in response to and solidarity with Black, Native, Chicanx, and other civil rights movements; while also emphasizing the

importance of prior moments where subjects framed their demands for recognition and self-determination against Black and indigenous communities. Cases such as Ozawa v. United States (1922), Thind v. United States (1923), and Lum v. Rice (1927) show the heterogenous logics of subjectivity and self-advocacy at work among various Asian immigrant populations during the early 20th century. The anti-Black and settler colonial logics set to work in these cases continue to define the contemporary Asian American subject as a non-white minority that is constructed, and constructs itself against indigeneity and Blackness in order to gain recognition and legitimacy from the American ethno-state. Retaining a critical lens on this subject position however can also provide the grounds for a historically entangled, state-agnostic ethical orientation. Rather than trading the conditional protection of one oppressive state for another, as in the case of Mimi Thi Nguyen's[vi] refugee patriot, such an orientation eschews state recognition either partially or entirely in favor of decentralized networks of affinity that supercede the obligations of the good racialized citizen whose conduct further consolidates state power by tautologically justifying its authority over its citizens.

A critical examination of Asian American Studies then recognizes its roots in a state-centered assimilative logic that seeks incorporation through translation into subjectivity – a becoming-visible of recognizable racialized subjects worthy of the state's biopolitical attention. It also forces a reconsideration of the politics of comparative racialization that have long been the bedrock of coalitional "people of color" politics. Per VT Nguyen, not every claim to racial identity by minority subjects should be read as resistant or amenable to coalitional politics. In the current moment it is also important to recognize where liberal and conservative movements have both appropriated identity politics, divorcing it from its Black feminist origins and thus creating discursive spheres where majority-interest groups can gain parity with historically oppressed

minorities – Balkanization leading to relativistic truth claims and political gridlock. VT Nguyen notes that it was only in the wake of the civil rights movement that Asian Americans began to cohere around the rubric of race in order to develop a political identity, while also noting the burgeoning presence of a developing neoconservative Asian American leadership class (13). Following Yen Le Espiritu's claim that "Pan-Asian ethnicity has come to signify the 'bourgeois' politics of the professionals, lobbyists, and politicians," VT Nguyen reads Asian American literary criticism as a form of bourgeois cultural production that operates, per Bourdieu, within the realm of symbolic capital[vii]. Susan Koshy[viii] also declares both Asian American literature and identity as fictions maintained through a practice of "strategic deferral" which "[points] to some existing or imminent stage of ethnogenesis."[ix] While any such amalgamative term as "Asian American" must then be regarded as politically suspect, Brent Edwards'[x] reading of diaspora as a practice of articulation, rather than a tautological sociological phenomenon creates a useful linkage to literature that interrogates the ethical and phenomenological, rather than the merely ontological aspects of race.

This effort to think beyond race also takes seriously Foucault's statement that 'visibility is a trap,' and later arguments by Gilroy,[xi] Melamed,[xii] Ferguson,[xiii] and others who have critiqued race, literary studies, and the interdisciplines as technologies of the self, or adaptive hegemonies with limited liberatory potential.[xiv] If the body has historically functioned as a site upon which power discourses act,[xv] the grammar of race has worked to shape and mold manageable multicultural subjects-as-racialized-bodies. The language of race is necessarily limited, always requiring the work of translation in order to incorporate subject/groups that exceed the contemporary grammar of race – where emergent racially indeterminate groups and

muddled amalgamations such as Asian American/Pacific Islander or Middle Eastern/North

African (or Middle Eastern/South Asian) abound.

At the same time, others have argued that race as a technology contains productive

potential for detournement. Beth Coleman[xvi] cautiously notes the phenomenological dimension

of race as a potentially lethal reality for members of marginalized groups while also arguing for

an understanding of it as a potentially disruptive and productive tool, once "[denatured] from its

historical roots."[xvii] Coleman describes race using two metaphors: first, as a levered mechanism

in order to draw attention to its functional and ethical rather than ontological aspects, thereby

allowing for "a rigorous conception of race [which] suggests that agency is possible within

repressive systems and that this agency often renegotiates the tools of mastery."[xviii] Second, as an

Enlightenment-age algorithm that can be reprogrammed "from inheritance (a form of destiny) to

insurrection," thus lending mobility to the "light subject" who rather than being overdetermined

by race, learns to manipulate the technology as a prosthesis.[xix] Of course, the subject's free

mobility might lead the reader to read their lightness in the vein of Derek Walcott's fortunate

traveler – an exceptional subject whose buoyancy requires a certain distance from, or active

disavowal of their origins. And when read in the context of race, lightness might also bring to

mind the increased social mobility made tenuously available to light-skinned individuals such as

Clare Kendry in Nella Larsen's *Passing*.[xx] Indeed, this latter valence of the term is crucial for

Coleman's reading of female terrorists in *The Battle of Algiers* as light subjects, but she

importantly argues that their efficacy lies in their ability to become unremarkable through a

performance of participation or "passing as passing" – "neither as French nor as Western, but as

something that works to get across the border," further emphasizing her point by asking "Does it

make a difference what they pass for? If the goal is to bomb a café, they just need to get through."[xxi]

In her introduction to the same issue of *Camera Obscura* in which Coleman's article appears, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun[xxii] argues that "understanding race and/as technology enables us to frame the discussion around ethics rather than around ontology, on modes of recognition and relation, rather than on being."[xxiii] Chun further argues that "although the idea and the experience of race has been used for racist ends, the best way to fight racism might not be to deny the existence of race but to *make race do different things.*"[xxiv] Yet like Coleman, Chun takes care to trace the material impact of differential racialization on various populations via biology in the form of eugenics, as well as spatially through redlining and housing segregation. What then might an articulation of race as ethically embodied practice look like?

VT Nguyen's assertion that Asian American literary critics tend to view race *as resistance* must be contextualized within the field of Asian American studies more broadly. Much early Asian American studies scholarship sought to examine the community and its place in American society through a pluralist framework, with Ronald Takaki's[xxv] *Strangers from a Different Shore* typifying such an approach. These works also made claims to national belonging by uncovering "hidden histories" of multigenerational habitation of the Americas long before the wave of immigration following the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Later scholars of Asian America have continued with this pluralistic framing of the community while also seeking out historical examples of cross-racial solidarity, perhaps as a corrective to the model minority myth and the weight of its powerful narrative force in defining the community in the broader American public imagination. Scholars such as Helen Zia,[xxvi] Steven Louie and Glenn Omatsu,[xxvii] as well as Daryl Maeda[xxviii] have worked to incorporate more radical 1960s-era

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community organizing into larger narratives of radical resistance to white supremacy and participatory democratic citizenship through advocacy for self and others.

Yet there will always be groups and individuals who exceed the grammar of racial or national community, and they often provide the most useful critiques of such progress narratives. Scholars in the Afropessimistic tradition theorize the social death of the Black body, departing from Orlando Patterson's[xxix] argument in *Slavery and Social Death* that the slave's alienation from any bonds of kinship produced the slave as a rightless subject, as well as Hortense Spillers'[xxx] work on the theft of the enslaved Black body. Using the oceanic as a metaphor for the slave's suspension in the transatlantic gap between nations and subsequent reduction to a quantity, Spillers argues that this "[atomization] of the captive body" resulted in the loss of "any hint or suggestion of a dimension of ethics […] between one human personality and another."[xxxi]

Others have built on Patterson's and Spillers' work by examining more closely the afterlife of slavery,[xxxii] or theorizing anti-Blackness as a fundamental antagonism that structures all social relations between the Black body and nonblack subjects, thereby foreclosing the possibility of any form of democratic dialogue that might restore to the former rights that are made available to any other non-Black subject.[xxxiii] Perhaps most importantly for this project, Jared Sexton highlights the limitations of a third world globalist framework employed by scholars such as Prashad.[xxxiv] Sexton[xxxv] critiques comparative approaches to race and ethnic studies for their "refusal to admit to significant differences of structural position born of discrepant histories between blacks and their political allies, actual or potential," and names this epistemological refusal as *people-of-color-blindness*, or "a form of colorblindness inherent to the concept of 'people of color' [that] misunderstands the specificity of antiblackness and presumes or insists upon the monolithic character of victimization under white supremacy."[xxxvi]

Equally important to this project is the recognition of aboriginal title and Native sovereignty. Patrick Wolfe's[xxxvii] argument that colonialism is an ongoing structure, rather than a historically bounded event has had a major impact on the fields of Native American and Indigenous Studies, and it is crucial that the figure of the Asian migrant is also critically examined through the lens of settler colonialism in order to check narratives that would only read them as either tragic or hardworking migrants in a land of meritocratic democracy. Scholars including Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura,[xxxviii] and Mari J Matsuda[xxxix] have made this argument in the context of Asian settler colonialism in Hawaiʻi. Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang[xl] also provide an important parallel to Afro-pessimist work by arguing that a "settler-native-slave triad structures settler colonialism."[xli] Tuck and Yang also emphasize accountability to Indigenous communities and sovereignty movements through their admonition that "decolonization is not a metaphor"[xlii] in an argument similar to Sexton's caution against reading black struggle as a synecdoche for the struggles of all nonwhite people more broadly. Ikyo Day[xliii] on the other hand approaches settler colonialism through a "Native-settler-alien" dynamic that seeks to account for the racialization of alien Asian laborers in North America in relation to Natives and White settlers.

Once contextualized in relation to Black and Native populations then, what does an ethical mode of relating across or through race look like from an Asian Americanist point of departure? Following Gayatri Spivak's call for strategic essentialism, might a coalescence around racial interest groups still be useful, and potentially provide a way out? In recent years with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and Indigenous nationalism in resistance to the Dakota Access and Keystone XL Pipelines, national Asian American and Pacific Islander organizations have coalesced around common racial identities in order to hold their larger

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communities accountable. For instance, Letters for Black Lives describes itself as "a set of crowdsourced, multilingual, and culturally-aware resources aimed at creating a space for open and honest conversations about racial justice, police violence, and anti-Blackness in our families and communities."[xliv] First published in English in 2016, each letter begins with a variation on the salutation "Mom, Dad, Uncle, Auntie, Grandfather, Grandmother: We need to talk" before providing social and historical context for anti-Black racism in America, and ultimately ending with an ethical appeal to support the Black Lives Matter movement. The strategy here then relies on individuals translating these issues into the private sphere of their personal lives and family structures in order to change hearts and minds using a shared language. While these letters are certainly important and potentially effective in effecting social change, in the next section I argue that in an age of increasing public-private partnerships, especially in the realms of social media and network surveillance, centralization in interest groups, no matter how principled or well-intentioned, creates as many liabilities as it does opportunities, if not more.

B. Language, Communication, Centralization

Much center-left discourse limits the realm of political possibility to either management and policy-making by a technocratic elite or local campaign-based organizing. In the case of the former, researchers and policymakers on the left find themselves competing with well-resourced right wing think tanks with strong track records of success such as the American Legislative Exchange Council or the CATO Institute. Even when they are successful in their efforts to pass policy and legislation, larger ethical questions remain. Frank Fischer[xlv] for example argues that expertise does not guarantee viable or ethical solutions to problems, and rather "often [serves] the ideological function of legitimating decisions made elsewhere by political rather than

scientific means," proffering the continued importance of citizen participation as a more democratic alternative.[xlvi]

In the case of community-based organizing, the role of social media as a communication medium must be taken into account. Technotriumphant narratives developed in the infancy of social media as an organizing tool (as in the case of the Arab Spring or Occupy Wall Street) are losing narrative power in the face of increasingly widespread recognition of the Orwellian surveillance and affective manipulation that state and corporate entities employ to manage risk and shape the contemporary consumer's digital experience. The Snowden leaks of 2013 were the first major public revelation, confirming that most consumer-grade computers and mobile devices had been categorically compromised by software backdoors developed by the NSA and other state intelligence agencies. The following year, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) released a report detailing law enforcements' use of Stingray cell phone surveillance devices, effectively rendering most mobile devices compromised. More recently in 2016, a group known as The Shadow Brokers leaked hacking tools developed by the National Security Agency, while in early 2017 Wikileaks released a trove of documents dubbed Vault 7 detailing the Central Intelligence Agency's electronic surveillance capabilities. While dragnet surveillance and software backdoors represent a clear and present threat to individual liberty that organizations such as the ACLU and Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) have challenged through legislative efforts, the bigger threat may be their potential chilling effect on organizing networks.

Even ignoring premier technology developed by the federal government, individuals' digital lives on social media have rendered traditional spatially-based organizing networks vulnerable, as demonstrated by a recent Intercept report on Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL)

protests.[xlvii] According to the report, military contractor TigerSwan coordinated with federal, state, and local government agencies and "closely monitored anti-Dakota Access protests in real time, scooped up information on the water protectors from social media, and shared intelligence." The widespread adoption of social media by community organizers then has resulted in the creation of a digital archive tracking linkages between individuals and allowing for easier surveillance of individuals through their digital avatars – perpetual agglomerations of personally identifiable data. While Patrick Jagoda[xlviii] seeks to revise "the common treatment of networks as control structures" by offering an aesthetic (rather than structural) reading that emphasizes their generative, unstable, and emergent properties, the potential dangers of social media are especially salient for certain populations that are often exposed to invasive policing and violence.

Organizations such as HACK*BLOSSOM or the Center for Media Justice have produced and disseminated guides to protect individuals against cyberstalking, doxxing, and online harassment. While anti-doxxing guides have long been in circulation amongst hacking circles, what distinguishes these organizations and their guides is their use of antiracist and feminist frameworks that recognize the heightened attacks on privacy that those dealing with race- and gender-based harassment experience. As a result, their guides explicitly name sexist and racist online harassment as motivators for their creation or are framed, for example, as a guide to "DIY Cybersecurity for Domestic Violence." Recent reports on undocumented immigrants who were granted temporary reprieve from deportation through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program provide another concrete example of the risks associated with network surveillance. Information that was willingly shared with the federal government under an administration more sympathetic to early childhood arrivals is now viewed as a liability by many

DACA recipients under the Trump administration following the repeal of DACA.[xlix] Yet none of this is new; Wendy Chun cites similar research on "the centrality of data processing to the execution of the Holocaust,"[l] and reports on the FBI's COINTELPRO have demonstrated that even populist models are liable to centralization and the hierarchization of both people and objectives. Organizing technologies and networks then have always been and continue to become increasingly compromised; they must always therefore be regarded as potential sites of vulnerability and subversion. Whether shared willingly or not with corporations or the government agencies that routinely subpoena them, data once assumed to exist only in the realm of the social, informal, and (somewhat) private now serve a more logistical purpose.

Affective manipulation of users across social media is another emergent phenomenon that has been gaining more attention recently. In 2014, *The New Scientist* broke news of a study conducted by Facebook data scientists in collaboration with a Stanford University researcher that manipulated users' affective moods through the selective distribution of content designed to trigger either positive or negative emotions.[li] In 2017, *The Australian* reported that Facebook was monitoring user's activity on the platform in order to target advertising to them in a predatory manner, exploiting the affective states of teenagers as young as 14 in order to accomplish their goals.[lii] And in late 2016/early 2017, post-election reports on data analytics firm Cambridge Analytica further emphasized that digital life was not only being surveilled, but also phenomenologically manipulated in order to create agnatologically distinct spheres of life. The firm designed innocuous-seeming personality tests based off of the "Big Five" personality model in order to predict, and possibly influence users' and likely voters' behavior.

Can consent exist in an era of affective surveillance and manipulation? Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky[liii] have of course questioned the possibility of consent and politics in an age

of mass communication, but does the valence of the question change with the rise of technology and studies of affect? In a recent essay, James Williams argues that "Digital technologies privilege our impulses over our intentions [and] are increasingly designed to exploit our psychological vulnerabilities in order to direct us toward goals that may or may not align with our own," eroding individuals' willpower and self-determination, and foreclosing "the possibility of *all* forms of self-determination at both individual and collective levels, including all forms of politics worth having." [liv] Similarly, Shoshana Zuboff[lv] argues that big data functions as "the foundational component in a deeply intentional and highly consequential new logic of accumulation" she terms *surveillance capitalism*.[lvi] She argues that "This new form of information capitalism aims to predict and modify human behavior as a means to produce revenue and market control."[lvii] Borrowing from the realm of behavioural economics, we might read this as an age where the rational actor is now being epistemically formed in an increasingly deterministic vacuum of carefully regulated variables. If the modern state and multinational corporations rely upon such asymmetries of information and preemptive patterns of engagement in order to "flush out" the enemy in the case of the former,[lviii] or to "nudge" the consumer in the case of the latter, resistance to state and corporate power requires methods to create more unknown unknowns. That is, ways to create obfuscation and uncertainty, to maintain a quantum superposition for individuals and collectives.

Of course, this indeterminacy is fundamentally at odds with political theories that privilege campaign-based organizing and the collective expression of demands aimed at garnering concessions from the state. While such forms of participatory democracy are a powerful form of praxis for privileged citizens whose demands are recognized as legitimate by the state, they depart from assumptions of rational actors participating on equal discursive

footing. In her recent Jefferson Lecture on "Powerlessness and the Politics of Blame," Martha C. Nussbaum reads the transformation of the Furies in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* hopefully, with language and affect being key to their successful transformation into humans worthy of citizenship.[lix] Before their transformation, "they do not speak, but simply make animal noises, moaning and whining. When they do begin to speak, their only words are 'get him get him get him get him,' as close to a predator's hunting cry as the genre allows […] If the Furies are later given poetic speech, as the genre demands, we are never to forget this initial characterization."

In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben[lx] likewise writes that "It is not by chance, then, that a passage of [Aristotle's] Politics situates the proper place of the polis in the transition from voice to language. The link between bare life and politics is the same link that the metaphysical definition of man as 'the living being who has language' seeks in the relation between phon$\bar{e}$ and logos."[lxi] Western political philosophy then assumes a pre-phenomenological Cartesian agent as its normative subject – a perfectly able, disembodied brain unburdened by the sticky weight of racial or gendered affects that when reflected and multiplied creates the populace. Political participation centered around this implicit subject proceeds as a meeting of minds engaged in mutually intelligible, rational debate to develop an aggregate ethics, but fails to address the phenomenological component of embodiment that diminishes the *ethos* of racial and gender minorities and disables their speech before they are extended an opportunity to join the conversation.

J.L. Austin[lxii] argues that utterances can be broken down into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary speech acts, with these terms roughly corresponding to the surface meaning, subtext, and effect of an utterance. Hegemonic discourse then might be said to have a violent perlocutionary effect in that it diminishes the agency of minoritized subjects even as it

interpellates them as subjects. In a colonial context, the consolidation of colonial race ideology required that a tautological linkage be created between the Westerner male colonizer and reason, thus producing what Homi K. Bhabha[lxiii] describes as the colonial structure of mimicry – a social imperative to assimilate doomed to failure, "almost the same but not quite."[lxiv] This colonial structure damages the perception of their character or moral competence, thereby weakening the perlocutionary efficacy of their utterances and burdening them with additional labor to acquire the same resources (or credibility) necessary to participate in the conversation. Miranda Fricker[lxv] names this as a credibility deficit, within a larger framework of testimonial injustice. Spivak's question of who can speak, or represent themselves in the public sphere seems pertinent here.

Yet for some, questions of representation and recognition are dead ends, and what is needed are more explosive or decentralized models of community and relation. Benedict Anderson[lxvi] provides useful context here in his examination of nationalism, describing the nation as "[a political community] imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" by a wide-ranging group of people united historically by a shared vernacular print language.[lxvii] Others have productively engaged with his notion of the nation-state by looking at figures that stand outside of it. In a recent lecture, Subha Xavier[lxviii] describes xenophobia as an encounter between nation and migrant that leads to the realization that the former can never incorporate the latter, leading to the dissolution of its central sustaining delusion – namely, "the love story looking to assimilate the migrant by taking away difference and integrating it into what is 'right.'" Glen Coulthard[lxix] also provides an important critique of this assimilationist politics, arguing against a politics of recognition by an illegitimate settler-colonial state.

While Xavier and Coulthard are concerned with migrant and Indigenous figures, Crystal Parikh[lxx] finds post-nationalist possibilities for racialized communities of color by reading betrayal as an ethical and productive force that allows for a shift in loyalty from the nation-state to other imagined communities that stand simultaneously within and outside of it. She roots her ethical account in the work of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, describing how the former "positions ethics as a pre-ontological and irrecusable obligation to the Other, to which we are subject;" describing this obligation as an "anachronistic and 'anarchic' responsibility [which] summons the subject from nowhere into a present time, bearing with it 'the system of an immemorial freedom that is even older than being, or decisions, or deeds.'"[lxxi] She describes how Derrida carries this argument further through his formulation of "every other as every other," which "designates the unsustainability of the ethical relation as a *dyadic* responsibility between the subject and Other (the One) by evoking 'the third.'"[lxxii] Chapter two explores this shift from dyadic to larger-scale accountability through the techno-orientalist figure of Awa Gee in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*.[lxxiii]

Parikh goes on to argue that "For Derrida, justice and democracy are "to come," in the sense that they are always deferred onto the Otherness of the future," and that "to seek out the Other, that which remains unintelligible and unintegrated to laws, norms, and representations, is to seek out the ethical possibility of justice to come and democracy to come."[lxxiv] If the Other to whom we owe this "anachronistic and 'anarchic' responsibility" then is always delayed, whether by time, language, or other signifiers; seeking out the Other might also imply alternative modes of communication or action that de-privilege rational dialogue between subjects assumed equal in theory but rarely meeting in practice as such. If the other and justice are always to come, deferred, delayed; then perhaps vocalization and language are unnecessary for ethical

coexistence. Perhaps also the scale of communicative action must extend beyond the contemporaneous social to an extended dialogic between an ever-evolving network of decaying subject-object nodes – a timescale that might disallow the psychological conceit of closure for the individual while also simultaneously opening up possibilities for secure asynchronous communications.

Chapter three explores nonverbal communication in its final section through the application of Josephine Donovan's[lxxv] *dialogic ethics of care* that requires careful attentiveness to nonverbal communication, and Layla AbdelRahim's[lxxvi] concepts of *wildness* and *mutuality* that are similarly rooted in presence and empathy. Chapter four explores the cryptographic transmission of memes as an asynchronous mode of communication that contains delayed perlocutionary potential. Ultimately, all the texts examined here are concerned with forms of entanglement that exceed boundaries and reveal the larger web of flows connecting all life.

Notes to Chapter 1

[i] Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle*, vol. 3 (AK Press, 2012), http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=2dJtAAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=%22of+oppressed+people s+against+the+modern%22+%22Intervention+series-a+collaborative%22+%22egalitarian+forms+of+self-%22+%22anarchist+thought+so+as+to+better+inform%22+% 22for+Anarchist%22+%22key+questions+and+issues,+as+one+manifestation+of%22+&ots=aNiZZM_6ZQ&sig=C ygjvYngQRs2NkeA3hOTqfOurL8.
[ii] Ramnath, 3:7.
[iii] Ramón Saldívar, "Imagining Cultures: The Transnational Imaginary in Postrace America," *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 4, no. 2 (2012), https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8hd6s1jq.pdf.
[iv] Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism*, 3:7.
[v] Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Race & Resistance: Literature & Politics in Asian America* (Oxford [England] ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[vi] Mimi Thi 1974- Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages*, YBP Print DDA (Duke University Press, 2012).
[vii] Espiritu, Yen Le. (1993) qtd. Nguyen, *Race & Resistance*, 15.
[viii] Susan Koshy, "The Fiction of Asian American Literature," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 9, no. 2 (October 1, 1996): 315–46, https://doi.org/10.1353/yale.1996.0017.
[ix] Koshy, 315.
[x] Brent Hayes Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora," *Social Text* 19, no. 1 (2001): 45–73.
[xi] Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Harvard University Press, 2000).
[xii] Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*, YBP Print DDA (University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

^{xiii} Roderick A. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2012).

^{xiv} Ferguson, 6.

^{xv} Aurelia Armstrong, "Michel Foucault: Feminism," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, n.d., http://www.iep.utm.edu/foucfem/.

^{xvi} B. Coleman, "Race as Technology," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 24, no. 1 70 (January 1, 2009): 177–207, https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-2008-018.

^{xvii} Coleman, 178.

^{xviii} Coleman, 194.

^{xix} Coleman, 184.

^{xx} Nella Larsen, *Passing* (New York; London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929).

^{xxi} Coleman, "Race as Technology," 197.

^{xxii} W. H. K. Chun, "Introduction: Race and/as Technology; or, How to Do Things to Race," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 24, no. 1 70 (January 1, 2009): 7–35, https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-2008-013.

^{xxiii} Chun, 9.

^{xxiv} Chun, 28. Emphasis added.

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2. Techno-Orientalism and Cyanarchist Ethics

Awa Gee might seem an odd choice of figures to begin with, given his fraught

representation by a non-Asian author and his rather peripheral status in Silko's *Almanac of the*

Dead. After a brief mention in "Cop Cakes or Nude Cop Pinups" towards the end of part three,

he is not introduced to the reader until part five in "Enemy Lightning" when Zeta visits him to

check on the status of a project. "A strange little yellowish man" bearing an incoherently Korean

name, Awa Gee is a haphazard mishmash of various Asian techno-geek stereotypes.[i] He

possesses inhuman, almost robotic cognitive abilities; able to scan code faster than anyone alive

and "seldom [needing] more than two hours of sleep."[ii] Sexually licentious and socially inept, he

eschews the company of others for his own private thoughts and the numbers he obsesses over in

his quest to crack a hundred-digit number into primes. He epitomizes Asian collectivism as a

self-effacing figure with an unreliable name and personal history that causes him to easily blend

back into a racial monolith. But read against other parts of his personality, these traits propel him

from an unfortunate stereotype to an embodiment of the best of early hacker culture, as well as

an accomplice to indigenous sovereignty struggles who effectively uses race as a technology

(infelicitously) in order to do other things with it.

Rather than trying to transgress racial stereotypes, Awa Gee exploits them to full effect in

order to become inconspicuous, thereby gaining more freedom of movement. Awa Gee owns a

pair of telephone lineman overalls embroidered with a fake Asian name that he uses to gain

access to telephone systems, and also "passes as passing" in his first experiment with a solar

energy weapon. He stands brazenly in plain view as he sets up his camera to record an attack on

a police cruiser, knowing that "people in Arizona were generally ignorant and assumed that all

Asians with video cameras were wealthy tourists" – exploiting what is later characterized as a

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historic pattern of "blindness" among westerners.[iii] A skilled identity thief, Awa Gee also forges government-issued IDs by seeking out the dead in cemeteries and newspapers and requesting new birth certificates under their names. In a move recalling the sudden appearance of thousands of 'paper sons' following the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906, his own identities were created during his time on the West Coast "where Asian births and deaths were plentiful."[iv] While his actions here are morally grey, they must be considered within the context of his larger commitment to an anti-imperialist anarchist practice.

In "Hacking the Holocaust," Ava Ex Machina[v] highlights scientists, bureaucrats, and others who engaged in subversive criminal activities during the Holocaust in order to save Jewish lives. Included in the list are duplicitous administrators, Aryan-passing Kashyriot couriers, computer scientists who sabotaged their own machines, and a French Resistance member who forged identity papers for Jews trapped in Nazi-occupied territories (though left out of this list are diplomats such as Abdol Hossein Sardari, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, or Chiune Sugihara). Awa Gee's actions are best viewed in this light – while his other activities have allowed him to amass enough wealth to gain financial independence for himself, he ultimately serves (at least for some time) Zeta and her compatriots' movement for indigenous sovereignty. Zeta seems to be the only other person for whom he has created passports, and while he views himself as a semi-diasporic subject who always has the option of returning to South Korea, his allegiance to the nation-state remains uncertain, at best. He despises Japan and the United States "for their racism and imperialism," but is also suspicious of the Korean state, being "always reminded of South Korea when he heard about mass arrests by police" – likely referencing the militaristic regimes of Park Chung-hee or Chun Doo-hwan between 1963 and 1988.[vi]

Awa Gee then is to at least some degree an anti-imperialist activist. He has "no interest in personal power [nor] delusions about building empires," nor "[plans] to create or build anything at all," believing "empire builders [to be] killers because to build they needed materials."[vii] His views follow from Heidegger's notion of enframing the world as standing-reserve,[viii] or what Adorno and Horkheimer refer to as the logic of instrumental reason.[ix] In both analyses, Enlightenment Man operates under a philosophy that reduces the world outside Himself into objects or raw material to be repurposed to His own ends. Read through such a framework, narratives of imperial progress begin to hew more closely to David Harvey's[x] notion of accumulation through dispossession. Harvey, generalizing Luxemburg's statement that "continuous imperial expansion is a necessary condition for the survival of capitalism,"[xi] argues that uneven geographical development is the result of a "perpetual search for natural resources of high quality that can be pillaged for surplus and surplus value production" that has historically been the primary driver of imperial and capitalist growth in the modern world.[xii]

But this anti-imperialist framework is insufficient to fully capture Awa Gee's chaotic nature and motivations. Rather than seeking personal power or any sort of discursive engagement with the state, he is interested "in the purity of destruction" and "the perfection of complete disorder and disintegration."[xiii] Yet this statement must be qualified – Awa Gee's ultimate wish is to turn out the lights so that he can replace them with "wonder machines so efficient they [operate] off batteries and sunlight," and to allow "earth that was bare and empty, earth that had been seized and torn open […] to heal and to rest in the darkness after the lights were turned out."[xiv] His concerns then are fundamentally ecocentric and anarcha-primitivist.

David Pepper[xv] identifies ecocentrism as a central tenant of green activism, defining it as a worldview that "views humankind as part of a global ecosystem, and subject to ecological

laws," rooted in a bioethics that maintains "a strong sense of respect for nature in its *own* right," and "prioritises non-human nature or at least places it on par with humanity" – a move that according to Pepper "distinguishes ecocentrism from the anthropocentrism of other political ideologies, including socialism and anarchism."[xvi] Here Pepper is working within a Western context where Colin Ward[xvii] argues that "the mainstream of anarchist propaganda for more than a century has been anarchist-communism."[xviii] In the United States in particular, anarchism has been linked to Marxist and labor movements of the mid- to late- 19th century with the memory of spectacular events like the Haymarket Massacre often overshadowing other anarchist struggles for feminism and free love, for example. While Pepper muddles various forms of anarchism into a monolith with this statement, he later re-engages green anarchism as a separate, more ecocentric strain in order to reconcile and infuse it with a "red" Marxist socialist analysis and create a "red-green" politics.

In his survey of green anarchist thinking in chapter four, Pepper gestures to works by Theodore Roszak and John Ely that emphasize a monistic or animistic paradigm and cautions against reactionary tendencies that tend to emerge from these. He argues that "the anarchist's basic concept of a natural order—a chain of being—into which humanity (and humans) naturally fit, is a potentially reactionary aspect of its monist perspective, particularly if the chain is held to be hierarchical."[xix] While Pepper acknowledges that "It does not have to be seen thus," he remains wedded to the metaphor of the chain and does not consider other *non-hierarchical* monist metaphors that might place humans on equal footing with other animals, rather than over them. He also gestures to but then quickly dismisses "deep ecology's call to 'the minority tradition'" as "a confusing conflation of native American cultures, Taoism and 'some Buddhist communities' with the 1930s' Spanish anarchists and the 1871 Paris commune (Devall and

Sessions 1985)."[xx] While his critique is warranted, I would like to consider the generative

potential of such a "confusing conflation" made through a different metaphor that recognizes

connections without flattening difference.

In Mahayana and Huayan schools of Buddhism, Indra's net is used to describe the fractal,

interdependent nature of being in a manner that David Loy[xxi] argues creates the possibility of a

universe that is both non-teleological and non-hierarchical. It is visualized as a net that "stretches

out infinitely in all directions, [containing] a single glittering jewel in each 'eye' of the net"

wherein each jewel reflects all the other jewels that comprise the net, ad infinitum.[xxii] A

spiderweb covered in dew droplets is often used as a real-world approximation. This visual

metaphor is especially useful when we consider that while specular reflection allows every

droplet to share aspects of the whole in common, each droplet maintains its unique position in

the web. As in standpoint epistemologies, the metaphor assumes an interdependent nature to

being, a Buddhist doctrine known as pratītyasamutpāda, translated as "dependent co-arising."[xxiii]

Loy argues that

> the relevance of Hua-yen claims about such 'cosmic ecology' seems greater than ever [in
> the face of] environmental catastrophes which […] reveal, more clearly than any
> postmodern arguments can, the bankruptcy of essentialist thinking, both individual (the
> Cartesian myth of autonomous self-consciousness) and species (the anthropocentric bias
> that privileges *Homo sapiens* over all other life-forms).[xxiv]

Others have also questioned this anthropocentric bias, and examined how it ties in to the

racialization and gendering of subjects that fall outside the realm of what Sylvia Wynter[xxv] refers

to as the "(Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it

were the human itself."[xxvi] Carol J. Adams[xxvii] argues that a connection exists between gender-

based violence against women and patriarchal foodways, with the consumption of meat

simultaneously serving to reinforce hierarchies between species and genders – with male humans

of course serving as the primary referent in this hierarchy. Aaron Bell[xxviii] likewise critiques

humanist anthropocentrism through Agamben's argument regarding the exclusion of bare life.

But in addition to the human/non-human animal divide, animality has long held racial valences

used to justify colonialism and deny human rights to subjects both within America and its

colonies. Historical examples can be seen in the exploitation of Sara Baartman in 19th century

Europe; or Ota Benga, Geronimo, and other non-white persons displayed in human zoos at the

1904 World Fair. Likewise, Mel Chen[xxix] notes that

> vivid links, whether live or long-standing, continue to be drawn between immigrants,
> people of color, laborers, and working-class subjects, colonial subjects, women, queer
> subjects, disabled people, and *animals*, meaning, not the class of creatures that includes
> humans but quite the converse, the class against which the (often rational) human with
> inviolate and full subjectivity is defined.[xxx]

Afropessimistic scholarship also critiques critical theory's inattention how race works to

exclude human/animals from citizenship. In addition to works by Jared Sexton and Frank B.

Wilderson III discussed previously, in "The Anarchism of Blackness," William C. Anderson and

Zoe Samudzi[xxxi] continue in this tradition, drawing from Hortense Spillers' work on the

"[inscription of] 'ethnicity' as a scene of negation"[xxxii] to argue that this "wounding [as] the

process of blackening" effects "Black exclusion from the liberal social contract." Anderson and

Samudzi's work complements others' work on the ties between citizenship and whiteness. Joel

Olson[xxxiii] draws from Pierre van den Berge's[xxxiv] concept of herrenvolk democracy and Judith

Shklar's[xxxv] work on citizenship as a mark of equality and distinction in order to call attention to

"the democratic problem of the white citizen." Olson argues that in antebellum America, "the

purpose of [anti-black] riots and other acts of racial oppression was to defend the color line

[which] was much more than a bar that excluded certain people from the democratic republic or

that undermined democratic ideals," but also "constructed democratic citizenship itself [while]

citizenship served to construct and defend the color line," thereby creating a tautological link between whiteness and citizenship.[xxxvi]

As a philosophical tradition often overidentified with the West, anarchism too has been critiqued for its potential to lapse into solipsism and (in Western nations) insufficient attention to struggles against racism and colonization. Maia Ramnath however makes an important distinction in her call to decolonize anarchism between the "big-A" Anarchism that traces its historical genealogy to leftist movements in the West and "small *a*" anarchism as "a recurrent tendency or orientation—with the stress on movement in a direction, not a perfected condition—toward more dispersed and less concentrated power."[xxxvii] This distinction is key to my articulation of Awa Gee's cyanarchist ethos: an ecocentric and decolonial strain that seeks to chart a middle way between a Western green anarchism that often relies on problematic tropes of the "noble savage" and a romanticized notion of "primitive" cultures, and a technologically accelerationist anarcho-transhumanism (typically signaled by a combination of anarchist black and the blue of transhumanism).

Key to this ethos is a neo-Luddite praxis. While Awa Gee participates in maker culture on a smaller scale by building solar war machines and parallel computing systems, his philosophical views on technology are ultimately neo-Luddite. While (neo-)Luddism is often associated with eco-terrorists such as Ted Kaczynski and extreme technophobia bordering on willful ignorance, it is important to remember as David Pepper helpfully reminds us that "the Luddites did not protest against technology of itself but against its ownership and control in the hands of an elite."[xxxviii] Similarly in "Notes toward a Neo-Luddite Manifesto," Chellis Glendinning[xxxix] asserts that Neo-Luddites are not categorically anti-technology. Instead, they take a Heideggerian view of technology that treats it not merely as teleological, or a means to an

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end; but more importantly as an epistemology or way of knowing rooted in *poiesis* and *aletheia*, or bringing-forth and revealing, respectively.

Heidegger writes that "[technology] reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us," with this revealing "[gathering] together *in advance* the aspect and the matter of [the thing to be built], with a view to the finished thing envisioned as completed, and *from this gathering determines the manner of its construction*" (emphasis mine).[xl] Similarly, Glendinning, following Lewis Mumford, argues that "a technology reflects a worldview. Which particular forms of technology — machines, techniques, and social organizations — are spawned by a particular worldview depend on its perception of life, death, human potential, and the relationship of humans to one another and to nature." Glendinning argues that techno-triumphant narratives too easily elide important ethical questions regarding what "*kinds* of technologies [are], at root, destructive of human lives and communities," and advocates for the creation of populist "[technologies] by and for the people" that "promise political freedom, economic justice, and ecological balance."

While Gee takes part in complex cryptography projects requiring specialized machinery and a high level of technical knowledge and expertise, he also takes a populist approach to the creation of his contraptions, including wind machines and catapults. He mounts his solar war machine on his bicycle "to show that it is "a weapon for the poor masses, who had little or nothing in the way of transportation," believing that "the simplicity of the solar lens was also an important feature [because] a one-day demonstration and briefing was all it would take" for a layperson to become familiarized with its use.[xli] He is also particularly interested in war machines that do not require "electricity or high technology," having identified "the [United States'] massive dependency on electrical power" as a crucial weakness.[xlii] Gee's methodology

then contains both situationist and primitivist elements. Here it is important to distinguish my use of the latter term from its use by anarchoprimitivists, who look to pre-agricultural hunter-gatherer societies or groups they read as contemporary cognates in order to ground their beliefs, using language that often veers into tropes of the 'noble savage' and other colonial archetypes.

John Zerzan[xliii] for example begins "Future Primitive" by tracing the history of *homo sapiens* and its extant ancestors before discussing the Mbuti, San, and a heterogeneous mix of other indigenous and aboriginal groups in essentializing language that conflates various indigenous epistemologies with one another and reduces them into a "primitive" monolith. He writes for example that "The Mbuti [believe] that 'by a correct fulfillment of the present, the past and the future will take care of themselves.' Primitive peoples do not live through memories, and generally have no interest in birthdays or measuring their ages (Cipriani 1966)."[xliv] He also reduces non-western epistemologies to biologically determined somatic ability, as when he argues that "there is a great deal of evidence not only for physical and emotional vigor among primitives but also concerning their *heightened sensory abilities*" before going on to list accounts by Western anthropologists detailing astronomical knowledge and wilderness survival skills – read as feats of survival or sensory perception – that others might read as the product of long epistemic histories.[xlv] In a representative paragraph, he describes Elizabeth Marshall Thomas's[xlvi] account of "how one Bushman walked unerringly to a spot in a vast plain, 'with no bush or tree to mark place,' and pointed out a blade of grass with an almost invisible filament of vine around it" that "he had encountered […] months before in the rainy season when it was green."[xlvii] While Zerzan contextualizes it as an extraordinary example of heightened sensory ability, the original passage occurs in the context of a chapter entitled "Veld Food" that details Thomas's account of accompanying a group of Gwi women who gather an abundance of food throughout the day

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using similar knowledge. A relatively mundane knowledge-based skill that Zerzan perceives to be spectacular is colored then by his own western gaze.

The reader witnesses a similar scene in *Almanac*, when Calabazas lectures Root on "blindness caused solely by stupidity," arguing that "there is no such thing [as identical]. Nowhere. At no time. All you have to do is stop and think. Stop and take a look," before marching them up and down an arroyo until Root finally begins to see the subtle differences between various rocks in the desert.[xlviii] The genealogy of Calabaza's knowledge appears in a later chapter where he recalls listening to elders recounting stories about "at least four Apache raiders who were called by the name Geronimo," due to the fact that "once the whites had a name for a thing, they seemed unable ever again to recognize the thing itself."[xlix] The elders describe how "Europeans suffered a sort of blindness to the world," viewing "a 'rock' [as] just a 'rock' wherever they found it, despite obvious differences in shape, density, color, or the position of the rock relative to all things around it," which allowed "strategists for both the Yaquis and the Apaches [to] make use of the Europeans' inability to perceive unique details in the landscape" in order to escape their soldiers.[l]

Further evidence for a cultural basis of perceptive ability comes from Nisbett and Miyamoto,[li] who describe the influence of culture on processes of holistic vs. analytic perception by Westerners and Asian(-American)s. They argue that "people in Western cultures focus on salient objects and use rules and categorization for purposes of organizing the environment [while] people in East Asian cultures focus more holistically on relationships and similarities among objects when organizing the environment," while also making the important note that contemporary research "[indicates] that participating in different social practices leads to both chronic as well as temporary shifts in perception," thereby "[establishing] a dynamic relationship

between the cultural context and perceptual processes.[lii] So rather than reading primitivism as extraordinary somatic ability or a temporally bound trait that might be discovered in certain cultures deemed anachronistic in relation to contemporary western civilization, I read it as a (relatively) crude mode or technique, akin to the Situationist détournement.

Awa Gee's philosophy also clearly diverges from Western anarchoprimitivist thought in his critique of Green Vengeance and their "back to the Pleistocene" motto. Gee reads their nostalgic "longing for the distant past [as] a symptom of what had become of the Europeans who had left their home continent to settle in strange lands," believing them, and not his immigrant self, to be aliens because "Awa Gee could always return to Korea, but they could not get back to the Pleistocene. Not unless something cataclysmic happened, and if something cataclysmic occurred, they would still not find the pristine planet their Pleistocene ancestors had enjoyed."[liii] Eschewing such postmodern nostalgia, he acts in line with Glendinning's call for technologies that "are of a scale and structure that make them understandable to the people who use them and are affected by them," in which "politics, morality, ecology, and technics are merged for the benefit of life on Earth," and a society that "[fosters] the creation of machines, techniques, and social organizations that respect both human dignity and nature's wholeness." This call aligns with what Amy Elias and Christian Moraru[liv] describe as *planetarity*, "a new structure of awareness" based in "relationality [and] an ethicization of the ecumenic process of coming together or 'worlding'" and "the world rise of the bioconnective."[lv]

This ecocentric, planetary worldview and his favored mode of action (hacking) are what ultimately save Awa Gee from operating under what Wendy Brown[lvi] describes as the Nietzschean *ressentiment* structuring contemporary identity politics. For Brown, *ressentiment* is a counterstance resulting from a wounded attachment to a historically overdetermined subject-

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position that "[reworks its] pain into a negative form of action" via revenge "achieved through the imposition of suffering 'on whatever does not feel wrath and displeasure as he does'."[lvii] Brown argues that "revenge as a 'reaction,' a substitute for the capacity to act, produces an identity as both bound to the history that produced it and as a reproach to the present which embodies that history."[lviii] It is important to note where Awa Gee holds such wounded attachments himself, as in his grudge against the University of Arizona, or his belief that "injustice allowed others with inferior brains, intellectual imbeciles, to receive all the millions in research grants, while he, Awa Gee, had to settle for what he could make from the junk he found in the dumpster behind the university's computer-science center."[lix]

But for Nietzsche,[lx] *ressentiment* and the slave morality that result from it are rooted in a "reversal of the evaluating glance, [an] essential orientation to the outside instead of back onto itself" that requires "an opposing, external world [and] external stimuli in order to act at all, – its action is basically a reaction."[lxi] Slave morality is juxtaposed against "the noble method of valuation [which] acts and grows spontaneously, seeking out its opposite only so that it can say 'yes' to itself even more thankfully and exultantly."[lxii] He continues, "When the noble method of valuation makes a mistake and sins against reality, this happens in relation to the sphere with which it is *not* sufficiently familiar, a true knowledge of which, indeed, it rigidly resists: in some circumstances, it misjudges the sphere it despises, that of the common man, the rabble."[lxiii] Keith Ansell-Pearson notes in his introduction to *Genealogy of Morals* that "As in liberalism, Nietzsche's conception of politics is an instrumental one, but he differs radically from the liberal view in his valuation of life […] for liberalism, politics is a means to the peaceful coexistence of individual agents; for Nietzsche, by contrast, it is a means to the production of human greatness."[lxiv] Nietzsche's noble morality then is rooted in an anthropocentric framework that

eschews justice in favor of greatness, and encourages epistemic ignorance through devaluation of the unfamiliar, external world.

Of course, for Frantz Fanon and other phenomenologists of race who have followed in his footsteps, an orientation to the outside world is a crucial (if sometimes overdetermining) facet of embodied life and action. While Awa Gee is situated within a specific racializing social location, he is not bound to its timeframe or logic. He is anachronistic, but in a manner that is not bound to the "it was" of history as the members of Green Vengeance are. Even where he remains oriented to an outside world, he is able to act in a manner that is not merely vengeful, but also generative and creative. His "Asian tourist" camouflage is a case in point. His engagement with the world is Situationist, practicing a "détournement of preexisting aesthetic elements […] into a superior construction of a milieu."[lxv]

This infidelitous, contextual mode of agency can also be seen in La paperson/K. Wayne Yang's[lxvi] concept of the scyborg, which he uses to refer to "the structural agency of persons who have picked up colonial technologies and reassembled them to decolonizing purposes."[lxvii](xiv). Yang's scyborg "moves at multiple scales [of personal and collective]," described as "a 'being' who is only analytically meaningful when we consider [hir] entanglements in the machinery of assemblages," whose "agential capacity extends beyond [hir] being, into the system's capacity." Yang also writes that the scyborg is "inherently a plurality," "only occasionally [becoming] singular when a condensation of machines produces intentionality."[lxviii]

This notion of condensation producing intentionality brings me to my next point exploring affective network dynamics in *Almanac*. As a result of his surveillance capacities, Awa Gee is uniquely attuned to the affective atmosphere on a scale difficult to imagine in the 1990s. There are two passages I would like to focus attention on here, which I will quote at length:

Awa Gee knows he is not the only one who hates the giant. He knows there are others like himself all over North America; small groups but with unusual members who would bring down the giants. It is not necessary to know more than this, Awa Gee tells himself; there are others of us and we will know when the time is at hand. No leaders or chains of command would be necessary. War machines and other weapons would appear spontaneously in the streets.[lxix]

At first Awa Gee had thought the messages might be one of those government decoys; but after he had monitored the messages for a few weeks, Awa Gee had detected no traps. […] Awa Gee had been elated! […] He had been right all along. Out there in the wide world there were indeed others, others like himself who were making preparations, secretly working until suddenly all the others realized the time had come. They would know the time had come by certain signs. The signals would be in the air — they would feel it! No organizations, no leaders and no laws were necessary; that was why success would be certain.[lxx]

Of course, Awa Gee maintains an exceptional advantage from his panopticon position so it is necessary to qualify how he could be right about his prediction regarding others' actions, given the complex nature of human social interaction and movements.

Recent social research has developed models for predicting sociological phenomena through models drawn from epidemiology. Dan Braha[lxxi] for instance in his research on global civil unrest argues that "civil unrest contagion occurs when social, economic, and political stress accumulate slowly, and is released *spontaneously* in the form of *social unrest on short time scales* to nearest and long range neighboring regions that are susceptible to social, economic, and political stress" (emphasis mine).[lxxii] He goes on to describe social unrest events which "span the full spectrum from civil wars, revolutions, and coups d'e´tat that have killed millions of people to relatively peaceful forms of intra-state conflicts, such as antigovernment demonstrations, riots, and general strikes."[lxxiii] Braha is primarily concerned with the effect of network structures on social unrest, arguing that "civil unrest may spread through media networks or through social networks where protestors contact their recruits in other cities, encouraging them to join a protest."[lxxiv] The members of Green Vengeance do exactly this in *Almanac*, garnering new

recruits and communicating with one another through a private electronic mailing list, ultimately using it to coordinate their spectacular act of ecoterrorism at the Glen Canyon Dam.

This pathogenic pattern of slow accumulation leading to spontaneous, viral outbursts can also be seen in a study by Sprague and House,[lxxv] who examine models of social contagion by observing the spread of memetic social behavior online and use it to accurately predict the spread of the Ice Bucket Challenge in real time. They differentiate their complex contagion model of social influence from biological models that require only one exposure for infection to occur, given that the former often requires multiple sources of infection. While providing a mathematical definition of their complex contagion model through a system of ordinary differential equations, they describe how their system "is similar to some 'excitable' models in mathematical biology which exhibit fast growth and shrinkage," which is the crucial factor that makes it preferable to simple contagion models.[lxxvi] This fast growth and shrinkage recalls the ephemeral nature of utopias such as Hakim Bey's temporary autonomous zone, or the constructed situation described by the Situationist International as "a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a game of events."[lxxvii]

As in the epidemiological models discussed above, the constructed situation is driven by the actions of the collective rather than an individual, and the affective environment plays an important role as a milieu or substrate through which action *passes*, rather than a backdrop against which action *occurs*. Even Awa Gee's grand achievement of successfully turning out the lights is contextual, requiring coordination with other sympathetic agents in the ecosystem who *feel* that the time is right: a biconditional if and only if (iff) statement that is contingent upon not only the actions but also the affective mood of others. A useful metaphor might be found in

quorum sensing, a form of "intracellular signaling [which] optimizes the metabolic and

behavioral activities of a community of bacteria for life in close quarters," "often integrated into

complex, multilayered signal transduction networks that control numerous multicellular

behaviors, including biofilm formation and other virulence traits."[lxxviii] Overlaid against a human

social network, the usenet groups function as a sort of biofilm, and the realization of their

constructed situation spreads virally among near and long-range neighboring regions as groups

begin convening on North America at the end of the novel.

Other researchers have delved deeper into the mechanisms by which quorum sensing

occurs. Kai Papenfort and Bonnie Bassler[lxxix] describe the process as involving

> The production, release and group-wide detection of extracellular signalling molecules
> [called] autoinducers [which] accumulate in the environment as bacterial population
> density increases. Bacteria monitor changes in the concentration of autoinducers to track
> changes in their cell numbers and to collectively alter global patterns of gene
> expression.[lxxx]

They further note that collective "processes that are controlled by quorum sensing […]

are unproductive and costly when undertaken by a single bacterial cell, but become effective

when undertaken by the group."[lxxxi] These autoinducers then serve to create a structure of

feeling that, at the correct density or concentration, might catalyze action within a population that

is attentive to the correct signals.

Stepping up in scale from the molecular to the molar, this emphasis on attention to

environmental interactions and the world external to the subject can be seen in Layla

AbdelRahim's[lxxxii] theorization of wilderness and wildness in children's books. She defines the

former as "the spatial dimension of existence that includes living and non-living elements

sharing that space and time without infringing upon each other's purpose […] a cumulative topos

of diversity, movement, and chaos," and the latter as a form of anarchic socio-environmental

relationship that "requires mutuality, which needs self-regulation, the ability for autonomous learning, reciprocity, and intelligent adaptability to chaos" – with the wild then referring to "untamed beings whose purpose for existence is not defined by a utilitarian value."[lxxxiii] While this admittedly pulls the argument back into close proximity with earlier anarchoprimitivist arguments, AbdelRahim's critique of civilization works to open the domain of wilderness back up to the human through a mode of empathetic listening that reflects Josephine Donovan's[lxxxiv] re-theorization of feminist (animal) care theory as one based not in care but in (non-verbal) dialogue. AbdelRahim argues that

> Life in wilderness demands multi-layered, complex intelligence that is rooted in empathy or the ability to understand what others experience. The wild have to know when to tune in and, therefore, must understand others - albeit different and existing for their own reasons - as connected to oneself. Intelligence acquired through presence and empathy allows the wild to develop both imagination (What is it like to be not me?) and knowledge rooted in the experience and reality of the world (What is life like for you, her, him, it, or them?).[lxxxv]

Similarly, Nancy Huang[lxxxvi] examines possibilities for transpacific relationality through *ecologies of entanglement*, or "networks of circulation that diffuse the boundaries of the human by foregrounding the relationships between us and the world with which we interact, including the environment."[lxxxvii] Huang and AbdelRahim's frameworks complement each other in that they both de-emphasize civilization – whether defined as the nation state, or more broadly – as the only space in which a mutual practice of freedom and belonging might be achieved. Though an imperfect vehicle for such practices grounded in ecofeminist thought, Awa Gee's successful intervention is achieved through crafting a careful habit of attention and care to the environment (including others) around him.

Lauren Berlant[lxxxviii] argues that "the present is […] not at first an object but a mediated affect […] sensed and under constant revision, a temporal genre whose conventions emerge from

the personal and public filtering of the situations and events that are happening in an extended now."[lxxxix] Through his tenuous, infidelitous attachments to multiple networks of agents, Awa Gee is able to monitor the flow of those affective autoinducers that allow him to coordinate between networks to locate that moment where the *situation* might become an *event*. Coordinating his individual action to virulently amplify the actions of other agents co-producing around him, he jumps between the scales and logics of the techno-geek's exceptional hacktivism and the destructive logic of the ecoterrorist group – a deterritorializing swarm that destroys and disintegrates. Through this wild cyanarchist praxis, he acts as an accomplice to Zeta, the twins, and their transhemispheric movement to deterritorialize a colonized earth.

Notes to Chapter 2

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3. The Girl and the More-than-Human World in Bong Joon Ho's Post-Human Trilogy

Next, I wish to look at South Korean director Bong Joon Ho, whose four most recent films include *The Host* (2006), *Mother* (2009), *Snowpiercer* (2013), and *Okja* (2017). I argue that *The Host*, *Snowpiercer*, and *Okja* form a postcolonial ecocritical trilogy where a growing (sympathetic) concern with colonial globalization's influence on humans, non-human animals, and the more-than-human world can be traced through the figure of the young girl and her interactions with other animals and the larger ecosystem around her. All three movies are about family and human-animal relationships under colonialism, and the latter two explore how these relationships can be reconfigured to produce conditions for freedom, particularly through the potential of vulgar wisdom and the ordinary. The girl's emergent centrality to this trilogy gradually shifts attention away from the man at the center of what Kyung Hyun Kim (2004) refers to as the "remasculinization of Korean cinema."[i] While Kim identifies this as a trend in Korean cinema of the 1980s and 1990s, this dynamic can be seen in *The Host* before it fades into the background of the latter movies. While men play important roles as action figures pushing the narrative forward in all three movies, in *Snowpiercer* and *Okja* the plots they drive along ultimately play a secondary, functional role to the more important plotline of the girl's advancement towards freedom through her engagement with the more-than-human world.

The progression of films in this trilogy deconstruct the Lacanian subject by first exposing him to a non-human animal that is both formed by, and comes to embody the trauma of the state.[ii] The subject engages this imaginary real in an ultimately unsatisfactory battle that ends with his exercise of a limited lateral agency/sovereignty in the form of lower-rung biopolitics which cannot be anything more than a moment of jouissance. Then in *Snowpiercer*, the subject destroys himself to free his children into an alternative futurity where they must exist outside the

40

reach of Man. Then, Situationist detournements of the capitalist world-system allow The Girl

and her pet to escape and return to life in the utopic temporary autonomous zone of childhood,

where the child can imagine egalitarian coexistence with animals.

A. *The Host*

      The Host (2006) begins this trilogy by introducing a non-human life form in a prominent

role as the film's primary antagonist. Prior analyses of the film have already noted that despite its

early and sustained presence throughout the movie, the monster functions more as an "absent

presence" or the symbolization of an unrepresentable real that draws the audience's attention to

deeper issues including "anxieties linked to the long history of US military presence and

bureaucratic mismanagement in South Korea."[iii] Chung and Diffrient argue that ultimately, "both

the amphibian monster (the invader) and the American empire (the official defender) turn out to

be Hitchcockian MacGuffins designed to draw the audience's attention from deeper collective

anxieties, doubts, and contradictions of a young civil democracy in the shadows of its not-so-

distant authoritarian past."[iv] Kyung Hyun Kim[v] takes this a step further, noting the

"environmental problem that lies at the heart of social crisis and uncontrollable disaster"

throughout the movie,[vi] and arguing that the monster "serves as an apocalyptic message about

Korea's downward spiral, in terms of both environmental disasters and the country's continuing

subordination by US military forces."[vii] It is at this juncture between the social, the ecological,

and the geopolitical that I begin my analysis.

      While Chung and Diffrient analyze the monster through Mary Douglas's[viii] metaphor of

dirt, applying this analysis elsewhere reveals that it is not the monster but rather the Parks as

metonymic nuclear Korean family that undergo the more significant transformation into an

"inchoate state of being, and thus a type of moral defilement" throughout the course of the

movie.[ix] This defilement is literalized in scenes of epidemiological management by government agents in sterile hospital rooms lit by fluorescent white, as well as later scenes where the family is forced underground into the sewers beneath Seoul. As they tramp around the sewers amidst the refuse of the city with orphans, rats, and other unwanted pests, dirt begins to cling to their bodies like the rumors of their contamination being broadcast throughout the city in a manner recalling Sarah Ahmed's argument that good and bad objects are produced through and in tandem with the "stickiness" of the affects associated with them.[x]

While their analysis helpfully contextualizes anti-American undertones and possible readings by a South Korean audience within the context of a long-standing neocolonial relationship between the U.S. military and the South Korean state, Chung and Diffrient primarily examine the family in terms of the individuals that compose it, with Kang Doo serving as the focal point to his daughter, siblings, and own father. After pointing out the family's dysfunction and noting that "Hyun Seo serves a narrative function as the measurement of Kang-du's success (or lack thereof) in overcoming his own failings as an inefficient, marginalized member of the working class," they depart from this line of analysis to focus their attention on questions of genre and post-historical themes in the film that situate Bong within a larger cadre of directors whose works decenter national narratives as an authoritative source of meaning.[xi] However, contextualizing this post-historical turn by tracing the family's descent from precarity into alterity as a result of U.S. military negligence reveals that despite a wave of rapid economic progress, a portion of the Korean population remains particularly vulnerable to the impositions of empire and its attendant waste.

In *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant develops aesthetic genres "for describing the activity of being reflexive about a contemporary historicity as one lives it" in relation to ever-expanding

precarity following the rise of neoliberal economic policies during the 1980s.[xii] She does this by drawing upon Badiou's *event* and distinguishing it from the *situation*. She explains that for Badiou, the *event* (a) "is a drama that shocks being into radically open situations," (b) "constitutes the potential for a scene of ethical sociality," and (c) "is that element in the situation that elaborates the potential good in a radical break."[xiii] The *situation* on the other hand, is "a genre of social time and practice in which a relation of persons and worlds is sensed to be changing but the rules for habitation and the genres of storytelling about it are unstable, in chaos."[xiv] While *Cruel Optimism* focuses on the spread of precarity from 1990 to the present day in Europe and America, her analysis of the precariat can also be applied to the Park family, only a generation removed from rural poverty and living in the aftermath of both the Chun Doo Hwan administration of the 1980s and economic restructuring of the late 1990s.

While relatively happy with their place in life, the immediate family (consisting of Hyun Seo, Kang Doo, and his father) seem permanently tethered to their spot along the banks of the Han River that has historically served as a major artery for shipping and industry in South Korea, representing what Chung and Diffrient describe as "members of the underclass whose devalued social status and peripheral positioning in other mainstream features belie their centrality to South Korea's recent economic growth and industrial development (dubbed, not coincidentally, 'the miracle of the Han River')."[xv] The family is hardly wealthy; when Kang Doo's daughter Hyun Seo expresses embarrassment at having to carry around a cheap flip phone, he eagerly surprises her with a small stash of money that he has hidden away, which she quickly rebuffs with the complaint that "it's just a bunch of dimes!" Long-unemployed, Kang Doo's college-educated brother Nam Il also finds himself rendered irrelevant within the modern economy; even the value of his education is called into question when he fails to convince a police officer to

help their family following Hyun Seo's capture and his father asks him "you're a college graduate, can't you convince a cop?" But it is Kang Doo's sister Namjoo who serves as the primary referent for the family's fortunes overall. While she is an Olympic-tier athlete, her inability to continuously better herself and beat out the competition when it truly matters becomes a recurrent motif throughout the film. Constant references to her as a bronze medalist by both news reporters and family members seem to reflect the societal status of the family more generally – third place finishers in life who have remained relatively immobile as the "Miracle on the Han River" passes them by.

The family's recent escape from intergenerational poverty is also revealed when Hyun Seo's grandfather confesses to having been a deadbeat father when Kang Doo was a small child. He admits to having left Kang Doo to fend for himself through *seori* (raids on neighboring farms) and wonders if a lack of protein at a critical age has resulted in Kang Doo's narcolepsy and possible mental defects. While the scene is played for laughs, it establishes the impoverished background from which the family has risen to an only marginally better position in society. The family's proximity to rural poverty reflects Kelvin Santiago-Valles' (2003) argument that it is the "degraded forms of social embodiment and other substandard social conditions" including "lower earnings, second-rate education, inadequate food intake, poorer health conditions, inferior housing, and higher unemployment levels" that render a population colonized.[xvi] This scene can also be tied to Berlant's argument that "what has been called the French cinematic "New Realism" of the 1990s and after [is] a global style that amounts to a Cinema of Precarity," "[tracking] the attrition of what had been sustaining national, social, economic, and political bonds and the abandonment of a variety of populations to being cast as waste."[xvii] While Berlant focuses her analysis here on the affective imaginary of the planetary petit bourgeois coping with

precarity's creeping encroachment into their daily lives, in an earlier chapter she also traces the performance of an aspirational post-Fordist affect that contingently employed and working poor young adults are asked to reproduce, leaving them "stuck in what we might call survival time, the time of struggling, drowning, holding onto the ledge, treading water—the time of not-stopping."[xviii]

This survival time is an apt descriptor for the family's place in life discussed above, and the precarity of their situation is seen in the family's rapid disintegration from the very moment of contact with the monster. They are quickly re-cast by the government not as waste but as pathogenic vermin. Their supposed infection catalyzes the contagious spread of a panicked paranoia as news stations blare unsubstantiated reports of a disease induced by the monster and ordinary citizens begin viewing the sick amongst themselves with suspicion. The family themselves are captured in a scene that pulls Hyun Seo and other victims from the realm of grievable life into waste, casualties of a continuing colonial relationship between South Korea and the US. News reporters encircle the family as they grieve at a mass funeral for the monster's victims at a local gymnasium, turning their private grief into a public spectacle that is quickly interrupted by the appearance of government agents who spray down the victims' headshots and other funerary items before quarantining the families present. Kang Doo is captured while trying to escape and thrown into a human-sized biohazard container resembling a body bag before being loaded onto an ambulance and whisked away. Here, the camera cuts to shots of public television screens broadcasting news of a monster-induced virus to spellbound public audiences before cutting to an extreme close-up of Kang Doo's bewildered face within the hermetically sealed body bag, with the small window notably excluding his mouth. The camera cuts to a zoomed-out shot of the bag lying at the feet of government agents in hazmat suits as he protests

incoherently within, zooming out further to show an agent adjusting the tube circulating air into the bag before cutting to shots of military units disinfecting the Han River.

The scene soon cuts to Kang Doo and his family being held under quarantine at the hospital for medical examination. While the family soon escapes to search for Hyun Seo, Kang Doo is quickly recaptured and subjected to further medical testing. In a scene featuring a conversation between Kang Doo, an American military doctor, and a Korean interpreter, the hospital functions as a biopolitical zone of exception in which the subject, become "infected" host, has his rights suspended by the South Korean government under the thrall of the United States. Korean medical staff scatter at a warning to "look busy!" as the military doctor enters the room to examine Kang Doo. Adopting a friendly tone as he seats himself in front of Kang Doo, the doctor questions him while his aide provides interpretation. When Kang Doo confirms that his daughter is still alive, the doctor asks incredulously, "Jesus, why didn't you call the police or military? Or a TV station, or a human rights organization?" The camera cuts to a close-up of Kang Doo's face as he breaks into tears while the doctor's gloved hands come in from off-screen to caress his face. Kang Doo responds, "Because nobody fucking listens to me! Please don't cut me off, my words are words too. Why don't you listen to my words?" The screen then cuts to a closeup of the doctor tapping on Kang Doo's forehead as he declares that "The virus has definitely invaded his brain. It's in the frontal lobe. No previous history of mental disorder, yet shows strong symptoms of dementia. This man's brain's our last hope. It's in here. It has got to be in here."

Here the doctor enacts the clinical *glance*, which Foucault differentiates from the analytic gaze in that it bypasses holistic observation and instead "chooses a line that instantly distinguishes the essential; [going] beyond what it sees," without being "misled by the immediate

forms of the sensible."[xix] Foucault notes that this glance "is of the nonverbal order of contact,"

shifting from "the ear straining to catch a language [to] the index finger palpating the depths.

Hence that metaphor of 'touch' (le tact) by which doctors will ceaselessly define their glance."[xx]

Yet moments later as Kang Doo is put into restraints, the camera begins cutting between the

doctor and his translator as the former conspiratorially reveals that "there is no virus

whatsoever." Kang Doo picks up on this and begins to protest ineffectively as medical staff

restrain him and prepare him for surgery. While played comedically, the revelation that there is

no virus imbues the gratuitous lobotomy that follows with a more sinister, disciplinary overtone

that undermines the doctor's glance and compels the viewer to refocus their gaze on another

scale. The triptych that opened the movie progressed from a Korean subordinate pouring

chemicals down the drain at a U.S. Army camp, to a pair of fishermen on the Han River who

spot the creature in its immature stage, and then a businessman who sees the outline of the

creature in the water shortly before committing suicide. But in this tragicomic scene it is the

working-class everyman who is most directly affected by this monster of America's making,

stripped and restrained despite his repeated protestations that the viewer knows to be true. He

begs for mercy and understanding, crying out for forgiveness from his daughter, knowing that he

has failed her as the medical staff begin to forcibly operate on his brain.

Before the monster emerged, the family existed in a state described by Berlant as the

impasse – "a space of time lived without a narrative genre."[xxi] Berlant goes on to subdivide the

impasse into three forms, of which the second is most relevant here: the *impasse* as "what

happens when one finds oneself adrift amid normative intimate or material terms of reciprocity

without an event to have given the situation a name and procedures for managing it—coasting

through life, as it were."[xxii] But the public emergency that it creates reveals the degree to which

ordinary Koreans are impacted by the continuous military encroachment and pollution enabled

by the client state-relationship between the Republic of Korea and the United States.[xxiii] 1300

kilometers away in Okinawa, Wendy Matsumura notes that "[US military] base-related

enclosures were always accompanied by language and policies that emphasized the exceptional

and temporary nature of this arrangement."[xxiv] A similar framework undergirds the Status of

Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the Republic of Korea and the United States, which contains

such clauses as "At the request of either Government, the Governments of the United States and

the Republic of Korea shall review such agreements and may agree that such facilities and areas

or portions thereof shall be returned to the Republic of Korea or that additional facilities and

areas may be provided," and "The facilities and areas used by the United States shall be returned

to the Republic of Korea under such conditions as may be agreed through the Joint Committee

whenever they are no longer needed for the purposes of this Agreement and the United States

agrees to keep the needs for facilities and areas under continual observation with a view toward

such return."[xxv] Yet this ongoing "temporary" state of exception has enabled the suspension of

environmental regulations, with trickle-down effects on the local environment and life forms.

In addition to the McFarland case mentioned by Chung and Diffrient, Korean and US

news media have been issuing reports on the Yongsan Garrison in recent months as the US

military prepares to return the area to the South Korean government. In 2017, a *Korea Exposé*

article detailing environmental pollution on and around the base noted that a Freedom of

Information Act (FOIA) request had revealed 84 oil spillages or leaks that had gone unreported

to the South Korean Ministry of Environment.[xxvi] Another article published later that year in *The*

Hankyoreh detailed the results of a Ministry of Environment report requested by a National

Assembly National Policy Committee member which "showed a total of 110 environment

surveys on returned US bases between 2008 and 2017, with 66 of them confirming soil and/or

underground water contamination."[xxvii] And finally, a *Public Radio International* report detailing

"high levels of groundwater contamination in and around Yongsan Garrison" featured a pull

quote by Shin Soo-yeon of Green Korea United, who noted that "[*The Host*] made South

Koreans more aware of the pollution that's hidden inside the US base. *And this monster is still*

alive."[xxviii]

Shin's quote shows that for Korean audiences, the monster is not only a victim but also

an embodiment of the environmental racism that everyday people are subjected to not only

within the purview of the US military and its land holdings, but also those who live in close

proximity to military bases or even further "downriver." The monster's emergence at the

beginning of the movie then compresses the *impasse* of everyday life under neocolonial

management into an emergent situation that demands to be read as an *event*. While earlier scenes

show that colonial and mass media scripts usually provide the structure of meaning for ordinary

Koreans stuck in the impasse between the end of war and the ongoing present of modernization

under neoliberal economic policies, the movie's climax demonstrates the ethical sociality and

"potential good in a radical break" called for by Badiou in two ways.

In their final bid to rescue Hyun Seo after locating the monster's lair by triangulating her

location from her earlier call, the family rush to meet up at Wonhyo Bridge. Hyun Seo's uncle

attempts to recruit the help of a homeless man (Yun Je-mun), who violently rejects Nam Il's

offer of money for his empty soju bottles by smashing one over his head before quickly deciding

"Well I'm bored anyway; Wonhyo Bridge?" In this comedic scene, the unnamed homeless man

refuses the transactional economic interaction that Nam Il offers and instead initiates a temporary

social relationship on his own terms. An injured and angry Nam Il curses, but follows after him

as the scene cuts to a shot of the two sitting in a cab as the homeless man watches Nam Il as he makes Molotov cocktails. He vocalizes concern, asking "Who uses these at demos these days, you blockhead?," but helps him anyway, pouring gasoline onto the monster in a crucial moment in the final battle.

As they ride along the streets of Seoul towards the Wonhyo Bridge, protestors are seen running outside the taxicab's window to a demonstration at the site where the US military will soon be releasing Agent Yellow, described earlier by reporters as a "state-of-the-art chemical and deployment system recently developed by the US to fight virus outbreaks or biological terror." Here we see the culmination of the "intensifying citizens' group resistance" reported by news media shortly after the United States and World Health Organization announces a policy of direct intervention as justification for the chemical deployment system's use. News reports have described it an "extremely powerful and effective system [that] once activated, completely annihilates all biological agents within a radius of dozens of kilometers," and the protestor's two main demands are made clear by placards reading "No Agent Yellow Testing" and "Free Kang Doo." Juxtaposed against each other throughout the crowd, they finally validate Kang Doo, now a political prisoner rather than a threat in the public imagination.

While the demonstrator's signs seek to recuperate Kang Doo (and by extension his family) from their status as vermin back into democratic citizenship, the event unfolding around them also seeks to recuperate everyday Koreans into the realm of grievable life, where previously disqualified subjects are recuperated into the realm of care and relationality based on "an ethical commitment to compassionate emotion."[xxix] This is achieved through a disembodied robotic voice from the Agent Yellow deployment system that warns, "Agent Yellow can be fatal, especially to the elderly, children, pregnant women, and those with respiratory disorders." When

the protesters refuse to move, the chemical is finally dumped onto the monster in the form of a dusty yellow payload that radiates outward from its body as it collapses and writhes around in pain before going still. In a melodramatic Korean trope, protesters begin bleeding from their noses and ears as the air becomes choked with the chemical, and couples are seen trying to rescue each other as they pass out and stumble away. Here Kang Doo is finally able to recover his now-deceased daughter as he pulls her from the creature's maw, embracing an orphaned boy that she has been taking care of while trapped down in the sewers. Nam Il and Nam Joo take her from Kang Doo and the family then re-engage the monster and finally kill it.

In the aftermath of the battle as Nam Il and Nam Joo cradle Hyun Seo, Kang Doo walks over to the orphan (seen at the beginning of the movie attempting to steal candy from his kiosk) and gently shakes him, asking "Were you with Hyunseo? Do you know our Hyunseo? Who are you? Were you with our Hyunseo?" before the child suddenly wakes and the clouds above them clear. Kang Doo carries the child off as his siblings grieve over Hyun Seo's body and protesters help each other up as they clear the scene. Yet this ending is ultimately unsatisfactory even within the confines of the movie, bringing the viewer back to Shin's observation that "this monster is still alive." At the end of the movie Kang Doo is shown monitoring the riverbank with a shotgun next to his window as snow falls outside in the night. The once-narcoleptic clown now possesses an attentive hypermasculine demeanor, fear offset by a weapon he is unafraid to use as his hand jerks toward it in a false start before he relaxes and wakes his now adopted son for dinner. Yet even their peaceful dinner together is tainted by another news report playing in the background on their TV, and there remains the sense that this surveillance will remain a nightly routine for as long as the family remains on the banks of the river.

If, per Chung and Diffrient, the monster functioned as the imaginary virtualization of an ongoing environmental traumatic real, in order to counter the sticky pollution of sub-human status that clung to them, the family had to banish to death this monstrous embodiment of colonial environmental racism. Yet as this ending shows, even their dramatic victory was merely a peripheral micro-interaction in a larger system of biopolitical governmentality. The family exercised their limited sovereignty by putting to death another animal impacted by larger environmental factors, but this merely eliminated a system of the larger structural problem that continues to render the environment unsafe and in need of constant surveillance. *The Host* then encourages the viewer to take a broader view of Berlant's argument that there has been a "shift in precarity from limited structure to pervasive life environment."[xxx] In this case, the pervasive life environment includes not just human, but also non-human forms of life that are all affected by the downstream leakage of the continued effects of colonial government.

Returning to Okinawa for a moment, one strategy that local Okinawans have enacted to fight the expansion of US military bases has involved legal battles initiated on behalf of the local dugongs. In *Okinawa Dugong (Dugong Dugon) v. Rumsfeld*, plaintiffs including "three Japanese individuals and four environmental groups" called attention to the dugongs' critically endangered status as well as their historically significance in Okinawan culture. Arguments noted for example that dugong are "associated with traditional Okinawan creation mythology, sometimes being considered the progenitor of the local people."[xxxi] There is a slippage between subjectivity and objecthood for these animals; as Hon. Edward M. Chen notes, the dugong "is a protected 'natural monument' under [Japan's] 'Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.'"[xxxii] In *Cultural Properties for Future Generations*, the Cultural Properties Department of Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs notes that

Monuments include shell mounds, ancient tombs, sites of palaces, sites of forts or castles, monumental dwelling houses, and other sites which possess a high historical or scientific value. They also include gardens, bridges, gorges, seashores, mountains, and other places of scenic beauty which possess a high artistic or scenic value; and animals, plants, and geological and mineral formations, which possess a high scientific value.[xxxiii]

While here animals are lumped in with "plants, and geological and mineral formations, which possess a high scientific value," the plaintiffs reject a merely technological enframing of non-human animals and the environment and instead draw attention to the long-standing cultural entanglements between the Okinawan people and dugongs by referencing their creation mythology. While Hon. Edward M. Chen has repeatedly rejected the claims on the grounds that "The injunctive relief claims present nonjusticiable political questions, and Plaintiffs lack standing to pursue their remaining declaratory relief claims," this strategy calls attention to others around the world pursuing similar strategies."[xxxiv]

First introduced to the New Zealand Parliament on May 2, 2016 before becoming an Act of Parliament by Royal assent on March 20, 2017, the *Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Bill* declares that "Te Awa Tupua [the Whanganui River] is a legal person and has all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person."[xxxv] Furthermore, it declares that

The rights, powers, and duties of Te Awa Tupua must be exercised or performed, and responsibility for its liabilities must be taken, by Te Pou Tupua on behalf of, and in the name of, Te Awa Tupua, in the manner provided for in this Part and in Ruruku Whakatupua—Te Mana o Te Awa Tupua.[xxxvi]

Te Pou Tupua is elsewhere defined in the bill as "the human face of the river," consisting of two representatives – one nominated by the Crown and the other by "iwi with interests in the river." Iwi include "every individual who has exercised customary rights and responsibilities in respect to Whanganui River; and is descended from Ruatipua, Paerangi, or Haunui-ā-Pāpārangi."[xxxvii] While various models of rights and personhood for non-human animals have long been debated in Western countries by the likes of Tom Regan[xxxviii] and Peter Singer,[xxxix] this is the first

instance in which a river has been granted legal personhood, and the text of the bill demonstrates the important role that local knowledge and indigenous epistemologies played in winning this victory. But Bong Joon Ho frames his plea for non-human personhood not through epistemology but speculation, as will be seen in the section on *Okja* that closes out this chapter. Before turning to *Okja* however, it is important to first examine *Snowpiercer*.

B. *Snowpiercer*

In Bong Joon Ho's 2013 film *Snowpiercer*, humanity has been reduced to the population aboard a train circumnavigating the planet in the midst of a global ice age. The world has been reduced to a frozen wasteland following the release of CW-7 into the atmosphere – a manmade chemical designed to reduce global warming to manageable levels which quickly spiraled out of control with catastrophic consequences after being introduced to the environment. The environmentalist warning against the irreversible destruction that humans are wreaking upon the planet through creeping industrialization is clear, but the chemical comes to take on a decompositional life of its own once released into the wild, exceeding the boundaries of its teleological design and superseding the logic of the humans that created it. In accordance with Sampson's discussion of computer viruses in Leonard's "A Revolution in Code,"[xl] CW-7 should not be enframed within a limiting anthropocentric discourse of an existential threat to the "internally consistent and functional entity" of the train qua humanity. Rather, it should be read as an event resulting from "symbiotic interactions [which] produce anomalous emergent properties that in turn relate back to the component parts, producing new territories and topological capacities."[xli] These new topologies de-center humans and reframe them within a larger ecosystem, the logic of which can be observed by tracing the progression of three key character types throughout the film – the leader, the hacker, and the child.

Symbiosis here occurs not in the form of a mutualistic or parasitic relationship, but rather as an antibiotic amensalist interaction that destroys most of humanity and checks its rampant growth. Subsequently, new territories and topological capacities are produced as the human species is constrained to make meaning of life from within the confines of a train in perpetual motion along an isolated track while the vast portion of the earth beyond this space continues to develop absent of human interaction. CW-7 interacts with other chemicals in the atmosphere to produce snow and ice, which subsequently interact with other abiotic components of the environment; covering the ruins of machines and cities and at one point threatening the survival of humanity in the form of an ice wall that the train narrowly manages to blast through. While the environment organizes itself in ways that are chaotic, it is still hospitable by forms of biotic life that are able to adapt to the anomalous emergent properties of sudden worldwide subzero temperatures, as will be discussed later.

CW-7 is not the only decompositional agent in the film however, as both rebel leader Curtis and gate architect Minsoo can be read as parasites within the system, though of very different types. In the graphic novel, Proloff (rebellion leader Curtis in the film) functions as a viral vector as he advances through the train in an attempt to gain his freedom. He spreads disease to those he encounters and leaves a trail of death in his wake, but is ultimately unable to escape the bounds of the train as the final panels show him isolated and going mad inside the engine room. This is paralleled in the film when the charismatic Curtis leads a bloody rebellion to the engine room but abandons his plans following a conversation with Wilford that crushes his resolve, seemingly ready to succeed the engine master in his role as caretaker of the train until Yona pries up a floor panel to reveal the inner machinations of the engine and its reliance on child labor. While the parasitic invader becomes encysted and neutralized in both media, Bong

Joon Ho takes the viral theme one step further in the film and reimagines the ending as a successful rebellion by employing a bacteriophagic model.

Minsoo acts in the manner of a dormant parasite come back to life, lying encysted in the suspended animation of his jail cell until he is awoken by the rebels. After being revived, he moves through two nested systems in the mode of a viral bacteriophage manipulating its host's behavior to transport it to a more advantageous location before eventually lysing the host cell to set itself free.[xlii] Minsoo is a situationist hacker, operating under a different psychogeography than the rebels – he refuses to help enact an intelligible politics of insurgency against Wilbur because for him, the most important gate is the one that leads outside of the constructed environment, not to its control room. Sensing an opportunistic infection however, Minsoo capitalizes upon the staticky confusion of an overwhelmed immune system in order to achieve his goal of bringing about an *un*becoming of the corporate subject. He employs a situationist détournement (rerouting, hijacking) of the rebellion's insurrection, turning it into a constrained action-path linked to a larger series of movement that coalesces around a form of freedom that can only promise fragmentation of the self into infinitely more chaotic paths of relationality with the world.[xliii]

Minsoo then is a bacteriophage, a virus within a parasite that acts as a molecular mimic, confusing self and other by cannibalizing useful signifiers that allow it to move at will through the system relatively unmolested.[xliv] In addition to negotiating the signifiers of machine code and electric systems that allow him passage through the train's gates, Minsoo is able to continue carving out his desired *line of flight* by establishing a barter economy with the rebels where he takes on the reviled figure of the kronole addict, an apparently disadvantageous position.[xlv] For the rebels, kronole can only signify disability and base addiction to the machine itself, and self

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destruction in the form of wearing down one's ability to mentally resist the daily impositions of the system structuring their movements. This of course recalls Timothy Mitchell's critique of "everyday metaphors of power" that delineate a mind/body split between persuasion and coercion.[xlvi]

For Minsoo however, the passengers are already doubly enslaved as minds trapped within bodies trapped within the train, operating daily and even in their spontaneous rebellion within a Gramscian form of consent to the hegemony of material organized technologically by a human mind – a meme reproduced throughout the movie by employees of the ideological state apparatus including a propagandist who speaks repeatedly of "balance" or a pregnant school teacher reminding her children that "if the engine ever stops, we'll all freeze and die." Within the hegemony of the train then, subjectivity is immaterial and all that matters is the material aboard it. This is the key insight that allows Minsoo to reconsider the industrial waste of the engine and refigure it as an improvised explosive device. The movie ends with him igniting the kronole, derailing the train and exposing the manufactured nature of its anthropocentric mission and technological purpose as he reconfigures it into another planetary object, only existing in interpenetration with what Elias and Moraru (2015) describe as "the nonhuman, the organic, and the inorganic in all their richness."[xlvii] Though his final destructive act may lead the viewer to understand Minsoo as a misanthropic terrorist and Curtis as a tragic but ultimately human hero; we might find more useful models for conceptualizing them if we view their actions in the context of the film as a whole and read them against figures in other texts.

In "Acker's Terrorist Network," Leif Sorensen identifies several key figures in Kathy Acker's novels including those of the tourist (read as a detached, hyper-mobile subject), the terrorist, and the girl pirate. The anti-colonial terrorist is problematized as a figure who is forever

caught in the dualistic bind of resistance to an empire that continues to define them, even to the point of structuring the form that their freedom takes after the revolution. The girl pirate on the other hand, as a refugee-like impossible subject existing outside of national or postcolonial discourses, serves as a pivotal figure who allows for movement different from that of the tourist or terrorist. While the latter two figures "negotiate transnational space in the received terms of national identity," the pirates' movement "constitutes a space outside of these discourses," read as nomadic in a deleuzoguattarian fashion.[xlviii] Unlike the migrant who moves between defined points, Acker's pirates "do not seek a final destination; their movement across nationalized space is a symptom of the *pirate condition*, a condition to which national space is by definition hostile," and which seeks not profit, but only the opening of spaces where "the impossible identity, girl pirate, may exist.[xlix]

Reading the characters of Minsoo and Curtis against these figures, we find that it is Curtis whose motivations are closer to that of the terrorist as he seeks to affect the conduct of the state apparatus in ways beneficial, or less detrimental to the general population. Curtis continues to operate under a governmental logic of biopolitics and health guaranteed by the state, and the rebellion seeks to revalue the life of the exploited refugee children by reincorporating them into intelligible structures of the family or nation-state. Minsoo on the other hand acts as a pirate seeking to escape hostile national space by destroying the borders of the nation-state and the conceptual subject of the state itself, opening up unthinkable spaces where impossible identities can exist.

After Minsoo derails the train with an improvised explosive device at the end of the movie, his daughter Yona exits the train with the toddler Timmy, the only other survivor of his post-anthropocentric act of eco-terrorism. Minsoo's anarcho-primitivist vision for a new mode of

life outside the train is realized as Yona and Timmy exit the train clad in Inuit garb and find life outside in the form of a polar bear that has survived the long winter. While critical responses to the film are divided as to whether the polar bear represents life or death for these last vestiges of humanity, it is also important to note that children like Yona and Timmy have also come to stand in specifically for the stateless refugee throughout the movie.

The dramatic action of the movie is catalyzed in response to the abduction of Timmy and several other children from the caboose of the train as Curtis leads a rebellion of tail-end passengers in an attempt to recover the children and revolt against the system as it is organized. When Curtis finally reaches the engine room, it is revealed that the children regularly extracted from the tail are used to replace crucial parts of the engine that have "gone extinct." In order for the engine to maintain its eternal nature, passengers including young children must become objects to the engine's subject, a metaphor that hearkens back to the dehumanizing practices of the transatlantic slave trade and more contemporary forms of exploitative child labor in a global economy.

This moment of Yona and Timmy meeting the bear then represents the release of the limit-figure of the refugee to new lines of flight in a post-structuralist moment following the fall of humanity and the state, as well as the logics that organize them. Freed from the bonds of the nation-state (train cars) and family (all dead), they gaze up at this new species in an indeterminate moment where new topologies emerge as the bear is positioned both symbolically and literally as an apex predator. While the bear appears full-grown, its age is unclear and the sudden cut to black leaves open a realm of possibility for reterritorializing the relationship between human and non-human animals. Many civilizations have creation-myths that bind the human and non-human together; including the wolf that suckled Romulus and Remus (Rome),

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the bear that birthed Dangun (Korea), or Raven's creation of the world and man (Inuit). In the post-anthropocentric moment as it is experience by these two children, all possibilities remain open.

C. *Okja*

Rounding out this post-human trilogy is *Okja*, released 11 years after *The Host*. If *The Host* named the continued influence of military colonialism on the environment and *Snowpiercer* cautions against quick technological fixes to complex environmental issues such as global climate change, *Okja* speaks to human-animal relationships under global capitalism. A transnational film with a mixed Korean and American cast, the movie focuses primarily on the relationship between a young girl named Mija and her pet superpig Okja. The film opens at a shareholders' meeting set ten years prior in 2007, where Lucy Mirando is giving a presentation after recently having assumed leadership of the Mirando Corporation from her sister. She begins with a brief acknowledgement that her grandfather was "a terrible man," but states that "now, the rotten CEOs are gone," promising the audience that she will lead the corporation into a new era of corporate responsibility "with new core values [of] environment and life," along with a new business ethics.

She frames her problem statement by quantifying the world's population at seven billion and noting that "805 million human beings struggle with hunger every day, including 30 million right here in the United States. The world is running out of food, and we're not talking about it." The solution comes in the form of "a miracle [...] the super piglet." She describes the "love and care" with which the super piglets have been raised while words like "ECO-FRIENDLY," "NATURAL," and "NON-GMO" flash on the screen behind her on friendly, cartoonish banners.

She goes on to describe Mirando Corporation's animal husbandry program as cartoon piglets are airdropped to a number of host countries on the screen behind her:

> Last week, we sent the 26 super-piglets to the 26 countries where the Mirando offices are located. Each one was given to an esteemed local farmer. I have asked each farmer to raise their special guests, honoring traditional techniques unique to their respective cultures. My top scientists in the Mirando branch offices will be on hand to offer whatever support is required. These little piggies will be the ancestors of a whole new species. Mama Nature's gift; a revolution in the livestock industry!

She further promises that the superpigs "will not only be big and beautiful, they will also leave a minimal footprint on the environment, consume less feed, and produce less excretion. And most importantly, they need to taste fucking good."

This brief presentation ties together modern animal husbandry, indigenous epistemologies, and corporate vectoralism in a manner that requires the extension of Immanuel Wallerstein's[l] world systems analysis. Wallerstein describes the modern world-system as a capitalist world-economy defined by its lack of a unitary political structure and the division of labor into "core-like and peripheral products" within an interstate system.[li] He distinguishes between core and periphery based on "the degree of [monopoly, and thus] profitability of the production processes," noting that "since quasi-monopolies depend on the patronage of strong states [and] are largely located – juridically, physically, and in terms of ownership – within such states […] for shorthand purposes we can talk of core states and peripheral states" – along with a group of semiperipheral states that includes South Korea.[lii] Wallerstein also notes a process of monopoly exhaustion and "the downgrading of products first to semipheripheral countries, and then to peripheral ones," tracing the migration of textiles and other goods from core to peripheral states as examples.[liii] While Wallerstein's core-periphery model provides a useful lens through which to view the production and exchange of goods such as the pig's flesh, it becomes more useful when strengthened through McKenzie Wark's concept of the vectoralist class.

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Wark[liv] argues that "information, like land or capital, becomes a form of property monopolised by a class of vectoralists, so named because they control the vectors along which information is abstracted, just as capitalists control the material means with which goods are produced, and pastoralists the land with which food is produced."[lv] While Wark argues that "the leading [vectoralist] corporations divest themselves of their productive capacity" as privatized information comes to surpass productive capacity as a primary source of power, Mirando ostensibly operates here in the manner of its cognate Monsanto, utilizing bioprospecting-style techniques to garner information that will boost its productive capacity.[lvi] Cox and King[lvii] offer a rather restrictive definition of bioprospecting, noting that "the development of new or improved agricultural cultivars or livestock animals is typically not considered to be a bioprospecting activity," and further arguing that "implicit in a bioprospecting exercise is the goal of discovering a novel molecule, biological structure, or development of a unique genotype which can, in theory, be produced in the laboratory, rather than be gathered from nature."[lviii] While their definition privileges lab-reproducible molecular and genomic information, an earlier definition by Mateo et al.[lix] defines bioprospecting more broadly, as "the systematic search for genes, natural compounds, designs, *and whole organisms in wild life with a potential for product development* by biological observation and biophysical, biochemical, and genetic methods, without disruption to nature."[lx]

This broader definition is more useful to understanding the methodology Mirando purports to use in creating their superpig. The countries displayed on the screen during Lucy Mirando's presentation are a strange mix of developed and developing nations across six different continents including Australia, Vietnam, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Congo, Guyana, Peru, Argentina, Mexico, France, Georgia, Khazakstan, India, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, and

Japan. While Okja and her cloned sisters have already been pre-defined as organisms with potential for product development, there is a bioprospective element in the company's purported methodology. By shipping the piglets to various peripheral countries rather than procuring visas for farmers to come and work in the United States, Mirando effectively expose the livestock to various terroirs and animal husbandry techniques. The request that farmers "[honor] traditional techniques unique to their respective cultures" indicates that the corporation hopes to capitalize on knowledge indigenous to each of these 26 countries.

Of course, midway throughout the film it is revealed that Okja and her mother were both created in an underground laboratory in Paramus New Jersey, as the Animal Liberation Front leader Jay explains to Mija that she and the other local farmers around the world "are just promotional devices" used to disguise the laboratory experiments, genetic modification, and forced breeding that go into producing this new form of livestock. Yet this is key to understanding the new mode of extraction that the Mirando Corporation is engaging in. Mirando bypasses the monetary, labor, and productivity costs of a global animal husbandry research network by enacting a *virtual* extraction of traditions and cultures, or at least their representation, in order to create a narrative of "eco-friendly, safe, non-GMO" livestock. Slavoj Zizek describes the *imaginary virtual* as an image where "we erase and behave as if the whole strata of the other person, their embodiedness, is not there – the stinky, messy parts."[lxi] This is central to Lucy Mirando's entire strategy of "turning the most hated agrochemical company in the world into the most likeable miracle pig-rearing company." Her synthesis of nature and science allows the company to carefully craft a greenwashed narrative that utilizes signifiers of cosmopolitan cultural capital in order to create a virtual image of a socially responsible benefit corporation that is all cartoonish studium, uninterrupted by the punctum of the "stinky, messy" reality of the lab

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that might shock the consumer into considering their relation to a larger system of factory farming. Bong and the ALF members then make it the deconstruction of this hyperreal spectacle their primary goal throughout the film.

Layla AbdelRahim argues that language "provides the grammar for ritualized murder" and serves as a "technology of absence [which allows] the civilized to remain blind and deaf to the cries of the mothers losing their children in the slaughterhouse and to the terrible suffering these children experience as they are killed when yearning to live."[lxii] Mirando's superpig competition is aided by the use of such obfuscating language in Lucy Mirando's speech, which frames the super piglets as liminal subjects straddling the boundary between pets and food that quickly become objectified under an anthropocentric instrumental reason. First referred to in quasi-religious natalist language as "a miracle," they are then patronizingly called "special guests" of the farmers, then "piggies" in infantilizing language recalling children's tales, and finally as progenitors of a new species representing a gift for humanity from Mother Nature that simultaneously represents "a revolution in the livestock industry." This rhetoric also undergirds their "Harvest for the World" campaign, referenced on a "Local Farmer Certificate" hanging on the wall of the Joos' home signed by Lucy Mirando and bearing the tagline "Harvest for the World, Saving Humanity, Raise your Super Pig with love and care!" The anthropocentric messianism embedded in this message contributes to a process of social death by abstraction for the superpigs, splitting them into material flesh-become-food while also retaining a virtual trace of their caricatured bodies.

Yet "10 years later, far from New York," Mija has established a loving relationship with the superpig that challenges this instrumental reason. A quick comparison of the Korean-language titles for the movies bookending this trilogy already reveals a significant shift in the

role of the animal in these two films. While 2006's *The Host* is titled 괴물 (*goemul*) – Korean for "monster," 2017's 옥자 (Okja) is a proper noun representing a name. While Okja's name is never explained, pictures of Mija and Okja growing up together as infants implies that Mija may have been the one to name her pet. It is worth noting here that the name Okja gestures toward a familial relationship through a shared 돌임자 (*dorimja*) in both Mija and Okja's names. Korean naming conventions follow from the Chinese tradition of 班次 (*banci*), in which siblings are given a common *dorimja* based on a generation poem (항렬표). This shared *dorimja* (the *ja* shared between Ok*ja* and Mi*ja*) queers the family bloodline by introducing an animal sibling into it and establishes a different sort of relationship with humanity. The monster seen in *The Host* was a mutant freak with a prehensile tail on one end and a sarlacc mouth on the other with an indeterminate body crammed in between – a nameless aberration belonging nowhere on the taxonomic tree. Okja, by contrast, is anthropomorphized into a far more sympathetic creature with the body of an elephant-sized hippo and the mannerisms of an energetic dog.

Despite Mija's efforts to redefine her relationship with the livestock in a more compassionate manner, not all share this view. Her grandfather, representing an older rural logic, struggles to grok Mija's understanding of the pig as a member of their family. While reminiscing on the length of time that they've been living together, "just the two of us in the mountains," Mija interrupts him with "not two, three" – a correction he dismissively accepts. He also exchanges the pig for a golden representation of its value under capitalism – money ensuring futurity and the family's survival. In the initial exchange as he reveals to Mija that Okja has been sold to the company, he tells her "They wouldn't let me buy Okja so I bought you this gold pig instead," representing a dower which "In the old days, the elders would give […] to their

daughters as a wedding gift." He continues, "you're nearly a grown woman, I don't like you playing with that pig all day. You should go to town, meet a boy and…" In this exchange, the idol is imbued with the promise of heteronormative reproductivity, an opportunity for her to move past the stage of childhood into adulthood. When Mija violently rejects her grandfather's gift and goes to pursue Okja, he yells at her and draws a diagram in red crayon over a picture of Okja, explaining "shoulder, loin, belly, shank. Understand? When she leaves, this is Okja's destiny – her fate!"

But at the end of the movie, it is this object that allows Mija to rescue Okja when she hands over the golden pig to Lucy's sister Nancy (recently re-instated into the role of CEO) in exchange for Okja's life. After tracking Okja down to a farm slaughterhouse, Jay, K, and Mija are apprehended by Nancy Mirando and her entourage just as Okja is being prepared for slaughter. A brief dialogue follows in which Mija asks Nancy why she wants to kill Okja, and Nancy replies "We can only sell the dead ones." She requests to go home with Okja, and Nancy denies her with "No, it's my property." When Jay and K attempt to appeal to Nancy's sense of shame or financial security, they are met with an imperious "Fuck off!" as she explains, "We're extremely proud of our achievements, we're hardworking businesspeople. We do deals, and these are the deals we do." Nancy then begins to list off the various cuts of meat found on each pig, and here Mija draws the connection between her grandfather's rural survivalist instincts and Nancy's corporate greed. Just as Okja is about to be terminated, Mija pulls out the golden pig and offers it to Nancy, stating "I want to buy Okja – alive." With this action, she is negotiating with capitalism on its hegemonic terms, accepting the quantification of Okja's life as mere flesh or material under capitalism, while also simultaneously rejecting the heteronormative promise of reproductive happiness embedded within the golden pig. She refuses the demand to grow up, let

go of childish attachments to an animal, and become a woman. By understanding the common logic of use- and exchange- value structuring the adults' world, she is able to briefly adapt to their code and buy Okja's freedom from this compromised position of participation in a morally antagonistic system.

As they leave, a superpig couple push their infant into their path and the group escape with the piglet as the pigs destined for slaughter bay mournfully around them. The scene then cuts to Mija waking from a nap and joining her grandfather for a meal as Okja and her adopted piglet idle nearby. As the film ends, the family is once again freed to laze and dream on the periphery of the global world system – out of sight, out of mind. But before joining her grandfather, Mija approaches Okja and repeats a ritual seen earlier in the film where she whispered secrets into Okja's ear. Facing the screen with Okja's snout in her ear, Mija's face twitches with the hint of a smile as Okja gives a low murmur, and she turns to give Okja a look of understanding before joining her grandfather for supper. In this scene, Mija puts into practice Josephine Donovan's call for a revised feminist care tradition in interactions with animals that involves "listening to animals, paying emotional attention, taking seriously—*caring about*— what they are telling us."[lxiii] Donovan draws from feminist standpoint theory to propose "a dialogic ethic of care for the treatment of animals" that emphasizes cross-species literacy, attentiveness to nonverbal communication, and a critical awareness of the political economy structuring non-human animals' lives.[lxiv]

Of course, while the narrative wraps up neatly for Mija and her growing family, the film's ending may prove unsatisfactory for audiences viewing it through the critical political lens that Donovan favors. Yet the film interpellates the viewer at multiple points through a mixture of Aristotelean appeals to *pathos* as well as Brechtian moments that encourage audience

engagement with the larger social issues being raised by the film. Appeals to *pathos* occur

through the standard methods commonly employed by animal liberation groups like the ALF in

real life – the widescale diffusion of horrific images and videos that serve to evoke a punctum in

the viewer and thereby elicit sympathy to the atrocity of farm animal suffering. Upon her

recapture, Okja is subjected to forced mating inside the Paramus lab as ALF members watch in

horror via a hidden camera they have fitted onto Okja. Their reactions to the stream evoke

uncomfortable parallels between livestock breeding and sexual assault committed against

humans. Later on this video and clips of deformed mutant superpiglets dragging themselves

around their cramped cages are displayed to audiences at the Superpig Festival. The festival is

inaugurated by a parade replete with a giant cartoonish superpig float accompanied by smiling

employees dressed in pink pig suits and headbands tossing free samples of superpig jerky into

the crowd. After much fanfare, Mija and Okja are announced as winners of the decade-long

competition and it is at this point that the ALF intervenes by hijacking the bigscreen display

behind them with a streaming video of the atrocities witnessed earlier in the Paramus lab.

As the video begins to play, protestors disguised as regular attendees begin revealing

themselves to one another and donning balaclavas as another ALF member (Red) punctures the

floating pig with a nail-studded potato fired out of a homemade potato cannon constructed

entirely out of PVC pipe, duct tape, and other repurposed home and garden materials such as a

wine opener used as a gun sight. This contraption falls in line with what Jose Esteban Munoz

describes as an "aesthetics of amateurism" found in both punk and queer modes of performance

that "signal a refusal of mastery and an insistence on process and becoming."[lxv] This aesthetics is

also seen in an earlier subway chase scene where ALF members protect Okja from animal

control by using cheap umbrellas and other mass-produced items strewn around them in a

subway dollar store a la Jackie Chan. The group escape to the parking garage and load Okja onto the truck as one member uses a bystander's crutch to jam the door closed and thwart their pursuers.

These clever reappropriations emphasize the latent possibilities to be found within everyday objects found in the most mundane of settings. Yet for one latecomer to the group, it is his smartphone that allows him to gradually find his own form of engagement in animal liberation. The subway chase scene is immediately preceded by an overground chase along the streets of Seoul that begins with a disenchanted young worker who drives the truck bearing Okja through the streets of Seoul with a Mirando employee riding shotgun in the cab. After their truck is cut off by ALF members and forcibly cut off, the driver refuses an order from the corporate employee to give chase when they escape with Okja. The pair get into an argument regarding company loyalty that exposes major generational differences. The driver argues that "I do have a commercial license, but I don't have workman's comp." The furious supervisor jumps out of the truck as he yells "Insurance? You want insurance? Then show some loyalty to the company!" After he leaves to give chase, the driver is shown outside the truck researching the Animal Liberation Front on his phone, with a closeup of the google search result visible to the audience.

This same driver reappears in a cutscene following the credits. In this brief vignette, ALF members reconvene on a bus headed to another major demonstration. The former driver is introduced to members and excitedly begins describing his "mirandoisfucked.com" website to Red. As they arrive at their destination, other riders begin donning balaclavas and it is revealed that almost every rider on the bus is affiliated with the protestors, aside from a senior citizen who looks on in shock as they mask up. As she stares, K offers her a mask and she hesitantly reaches out for the mask as the scene cuts to black. As in *Snowpiercer*, the ending is left ambiguous, yet

this ending encourages the viewer to speculate about what the elderly woman's participation might look like. In this and the earlier scene at the festival, the animal rights protestors are shown to be a diverse group – at least racially, if not in age. By using the unconventional figure of an elderly woman, Bong makes a plea for the audience to consider animal liberation as an ethical obligation that any and every member of society can take up. Established members of the group utilize anonymizing code names such as K, Red, and Silver; an anarchist philosophy is also reflected in their constant infighting, their use of masks, and their decentralized form of coordination. The group provides participants with a meeting location, but then gives them the freedom to act and coordinate as they wish live and within the amorphous bounds of the rioting swarm, rather than the militarist hierarchy of a dignified march expressing demands for recognition and action by a recognized authority.

D. Coda

While The Girl started off as a peripheral and ultimately disposable figure in *The Host*, by the end of the trilogy she has come to take on a more important role. The Father attempts to rescue her in *The Host*, and releases her to freedom in *Snowpiercer*, yet *Okja* begins and ends in the same, ephemeral location of what Hakim Bey terms the temporary autonomous zone.[lxvi] The film then functions as an anti-Bildungsroman. There is no need for the girl to come of age and mature; from the beginning of the film she already has the wisdom that she needs in order to engage with nonhuman life around her in a manner that is far less destructive and fraught than the logic that dictates the actions of the far more worldly adults who comprise the capitalist world-system around her. As with AbdelRahim's mutuality-in-chaos, she employs a dialogic care ethics that emphasizes attention to the living world around her. Yet returning to Glendinning's epistemological definition of technology or Beth Coleman's definition of

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technology as "the study of technique" or reproducible skill, what else could such careful attention to the more-than-human world bring forth and reveal; what skills would this allow us to develop? For my final chapter, I look for examples that blur the boundaries between present subjectivity and past/present anachronistic objectification, forms of the biotechnological that are not defined by an anthropocentric teleology but instead entangled across space and time.

i Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

ii Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient, *Movie Migrations: Transnational Genre Flows and South Korean Cinema* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2015); Kyung Hyun Kim, *Virtual Hallyu Korean Cinema of the Global Era* (Duke University Press, 2011).

iii Chung and Diffrient, 149.

iv Chung and Diffrient, 168.

v Kim, *Virtual Hallyu Korean Cinema of the Global Era*.

vi Kim, 43.

vii Kim, 44.

viii Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo.* (Lond.: Routledge and K.P., 1966).

ix Chung and Diffrient, *Movie Migrations*, 169.

x Sara Ahmed, "Happy Objects," in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Duke University Press, 2010), 29–51.

xi Chung and Diffrient, *Movie Migrations*, 172.

xii Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 5.

xiii Berlant, 5.

xiv Berlant, 6.

xv Chung and Diffrient, *Movie Migrations*, 150.

xvi K Santiago-Valles, "Rethinking Racially Depreciated Labor: Puerto Ricans under Global Neoliberalism," in *Emerging Issues in the 21st Century World-System. Volume I: Crises and Resistance in the 21st Century World-System*, vol. 1 (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), 103–19.

xvii Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 201.

xviii Berlant, 169.

xix Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (Routledge, 2003), 121.

xx Foucault, 122.

xxi Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 199.

xxii Berlant, 200.

xxiii See Gavan McCormack, *Client State: Japan in the American Embrace* (London: Verso, 2007).

xxiv Wendy Matsumura, "The Normal and Exceptional Forms of Enclosure in Okinawa: Going Beyond the So-Called Base Problem," *Viewpoint Magazine*, February 1, 2018.

xxv United States of America and Republic of Korea, "Facilities and Areas and the Status of United States Armed Forces in Korea" (1966). Article II

xxvi Ben Jackson, "US Military Contaminates Central Seoul Neighborhood," *Korea Exposé*, June 24, 2017, https://www.koreaexpose.com/usfk-yongsan-contamination-toxic-record/.

xxvii Hyun-june Choi, "Former US Military Base Sites Heavy with Contamination," *The Hankyoreh*, October 13, 2017, sec. International, http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/814422.html.

xxviii Jason Strother, "The US Military's Yongsan Garrison Leaves a Mixed Legacy in Seoul," *PRI's The World* (Seoul: Public Radio International, December 26, 2017), https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-12-26/us-militarys-yongsan-garrison-leaves-mixed-legacy-seoul. Emphasis added.

xxix Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London; New York: Verso, 2009) qtd. in Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 182.

xxx Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 201.

[xxxi] Edward M. Chen, Okinawa Dugong (Dugong Dugon) et al v. Rumsfeld et al, No. 163 (California Northern District Court February 13, 2015).

[xxxii] Chen, at 3.

[xxxiii] Cultural Properties Department, "Cultural Properties for Future Generations: Outline of the Cultural Administration of Japan" (Japan: Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2010), 2, http://www.bunka.go.jp/english/report/publication/pdf/pamphlet_en_03_ver04.pdf.

[xxxiv] Chen, Okinawa Dugong (Dugong Dugon) et al v. Rumsfeld et al at 38.

[xxxv] Hon. Christopher Finlayson, "Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Bill 129-2 (2016), Government Bill Contents – New Zealand Legislation," Pub. L. No. 129–2, 1 (2016), 15, http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2016/0129/latest/DLM6830851.html?src=qs.

[xxxvi] Hon. Christopher Finlayson, 15.

[xxxvii] "Commentary." Hon. Christopher Finlayson, Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Bill 129-2 (2016), Government Bill Contents – New Zealand Legislation.

[xxxviii] Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Updated with a new preface, [2004 ed.]. (University of California Press, 2004).

[xxxix] Peter 1946- Singer, *Animal Liberation the Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement*, Updated ed., 1st Ecco pbk. ed., 1st Harper Perennial ed. (Ecco Book/Harper Perennial, 2009).

[xl] Philip Leonard, "'A Revolution in Code'? Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* and the Cultural Politics of Hacking," *Textual Practice* 28, no. 2 (February 23, 2014): 267–87, https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2013.824501.

[xli] Leonard, 278.

[xlii] Cf. *ophiocordyceps unilateralis* and *toxoplasma gondii*

[xliii] Dahou, Gallizio, and Wyckaert, "Internationale Situationniste 1."

[xliv] Cf. Robert V. Levine, "Parasites Are Us: How Biological Invaders Challenge Our Idea of Self and Other.," *Nautilus*, accessed May 12, 2016, http://nautil.us/issue/35/boundaries/parasites-are-us. ¶20

[xlv] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 9.

[xlvi] Timothy Mitchell, "Everyday Metaphors of Power," *Theory and Society* 19, no. 5 (1990): 545.

[xlvii] Elias and Moraru, *The Planetary Turn*. xxiii

[xlviii] Leif Sorensen, "Kathy Acker's Terrorist Network," in *Kathy Acker and Transnationalism*, ed. Polina Mackay and Kathryn Nicol (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 189, https://www.academia.edu/6121844/Kathy_Ackers_Terrorist_Network.

[xlix] Sorensen, 190, 193.

[l] Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

[li] Wallerstein, 28.

[lii] Wallerstein, 28.

[liii] Wallerstein, 29.

[liv] McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), http://site.ebrary.com/id/10312824.

[lv] Wark, ¶ 14.

[lvi] Wark, ¶ 15.

[lvii] Paul Alan Cox and Steven King, "Bioprospecting," in *Encyclopedia of Biodiversity* (Elsevier, 2013), 588–99, https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-384719-5.00350-6.

[lviii] Cox and King, 588.

[lix] Nicolás Mateo, Werner Nader, and Giselle Tamayo, "Bioprospecting," *Encyclopedia of Biodiversity* 1 (2001): 471–488.

[lx] Mateo, Nader, and Tamayo, 471. Emphasis mine.

[lxi] Ben Wright, *The Reality of the Virtual*, Film, Documentary, 2006.

[lxii] AbdelRahim, *Children's Literature, Domestication, and Social Foundation*, 15–16.

[lxiii] Donovan, "Feminism and the Treatment of Animals," 305.

[lxiv] Donovan, 320.

[lxv] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (NYU Press, 2009), 106.

[lxvi] Hakim Bey, *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, Subsequent edition (New York: Autonomedia, 2003).

4. Time Batteries and Cryptography

In this final chapter, I extend the bacterial and cybernetic metaphors found in parts of chapters two and three in order to explore questions of en/decryption, silence, and transtemporal communication. The impetus for this is the hygienic metaphor that drives the biopolitical purification processes that Foucault (2003) describes as a *race war* between the *superrace* and the *subrace* it manufactures as its "obverse and the underside."[i] This *subrace* is described as infectious and anachronistic: "permanently, ceaselessly infiltrating the social body," and as "the reappearance, within a single race, of the past of that race."[ii] However, when read within an epidemiological context, these infectious, stubborn qualities become signs of resilience and raise the question of how these processes of obfuscation and reemergence occur. Tracing these processes through the books examined herein first requires a deeper examination of the ecological and the cybernetic, and their subsequent blurring of boundaries between the subjects and objects contained within an environment.

Norbert Wiener defines cybernetics as the field of "control and communication theory, whether in the machine or in the animal," in which feedback processes play a central role – with the interplay between a steersman and his ship engine forming the etymological basis for the term.[iii] While Wiener declines to examine the soci(ologic)al aspects of cybernetics that his colleagues take great interest in, he does however note "the importance of information and communication as mechanisms of organization [proceeding] beyond the individual into the community,[iv] and that "the social system is an organization like the individual, [bound] together by a system of communication, and [containing] a dynamics in which circular processes of a feedback nature play an important part."[v] What is important here is less the agency of the individual reacting to their environment, but rather the flow of information and input/output that

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allows the smaller subsystem (the human) to react (perhaps skillfully, per Dreyfus (2002)) to the

larger system that encloses it.

Hoel and Carusi[vi] describe this flow between the individual and the environment in their

examination of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work on circuits, inspired by Jakob von Uexkull's

work on the *Umwelt*,

> [Which stresses] the dynamic interactions between the organism and its environment
> (Umwelt) [and] brings out the reciprocal relation between nature that has created the
> organism, and the organism that creates nature (its Umwelt). The organism is in a circuit
> with the environment with which and within which it interacts. In their ongoing
> interaction and intertwinement, both organism and milieu are mutually constituted.[vii]

Thus framed, they argue that despite his critique of science as hegemonic ideology,

Merleau-Ponty's work on circuits can be read in a manner that lends itself to

postphenomenological discussions of cybernetics.[viii]

While cybernetics generally emphasizes timely responsiveness to such environmental

feedback, C.S. Holling[ix] proposes an ecological model that instead focuses on the "persistence

[of] relationships" in a manner that requires a broader view of relationships across time.

Holling's primary concern lies with the relationship between resilience and stability within

ecological systems, with special attention paid to "the probability of extinction of their elements

[and] the conditions for persistence."[x] According to Holling, stability "emphasizes the

equilibrium, the maintenance of a predictable world, and the harvesting of nature's excess

production with as little fluctuation as possible" while resilience emphasizes "the need for

persistence," with stability and resilience holding an inverse relationship to one another. [xi]

Indeed, he speculates that "instability, in the sense of large fluctuations, may introduce a

resilience and a capacity to persist,"[xii] while "the very approach […] that assures a stable

maximum sustained yield of a renewable resource might so change these deterministic

conditions that the resilience is lost or reduced so that a chance and rare event that previously could be absorbed can trigger a sudden dramatic change and loss of structural integrity of the system."[xiii] Holling's shift in emphasis from the stable to the persistent then compels us to consider forms of relationality and persistence that extend beyond human networks to the objects they interact with.

Wendy Chun[xiv] argues that memory is "an active process, not static" (164) and "a *time-based medium*" (166) requiring degeneration and "constant [refreshing] so that [the machine's] ephemerality endures" (167). Chun builds her argument by critiquing John Von Neumann's concept of memory as storage, which "blurs the boundary between machine and human," especially in the case of "'dead storage': the input or the output or, as von Neumann later put it in *The Computer and the Brain*, 'the outside world'" (163). Yet this concept of the world external to the machine and its outputs, which for von Neumann includes "printed paper" (36), is crucial to understanding the shifts between subjectivity and objecthood that occur in the texts examined herein. Such objects are imbued with information, memes, code, before being distributed through social networks in a manner that recalls Tretiakov's *biography of the object*. Tretiakov (2006) eschews the novel's focus on the heroic individual and offers in its stead the metaphor of "a conveyer belt along which a unit of raw material is moved and transformed into a useful product through human effort" (61). Put another way, the *biography of the object* is described as "not the individual person moving through a system of objects, but the object proceeding through the system of people" (62). Yet as will be demonstrated later in this chapter, this movement is often far from passive, and involves intentional inter-action between the receiving subject and the travelling object (or the information encoded within) as it transverses boundaries of body, space, and time in dormant and viral forms.

In a brief 140 page memoir published in 2015, Ruth Ozeki spends three hours sitting in front of a mirror studying her face hoping to answer the koan "what did your face look like before your parents were born?" As inspiration for the seemingly narcissistic exercise, she references a lecture by Jennifer L. Roberts on the value of immersive attention that employs David Joselit's concept of paintings as time batteries, "'exorbitant' stockpiles of temporal experience and information that can only be tapped and unpacked using the skills of slow processing and strategic patience" (Ozeki 2015). While the term "exorbitant" is used positively here, Ozeki's subsequent deconstruction of the racialized visual logics embedded within her face call for a consideration of the additional meanings that such a stockpile might take on when placed into the context of racial capitalism (Melamed 2015) – differentially valued and either incorporated as a happy object or deemed excessive, caught within infrastructures of waste that "produce nonrelation as well as connectivity" (Ty 2015). Exorbitant finds its roots in Late Middle English, originally referring to a "legal case that is outside the scope of law" in a manner reminiscent of Giorgio Agamben's state of exception (2005). Its etymology also suggests something that deviates from the wheel tracks – not easily incorporated into the narrative of forward movement and teleological progress implied by the path, its body or its trace becoming divergent, stubborn, eventually anachronistic (Harper 2017). But the subtitle of Ozeki's memoir, "A Time Code," invites us to reconsider the cryptographic potential of a time battery, and what forms of revitalizing energy might be stored within it.

In his introduction to *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1987) wrote of the "cultural bomb" as the greatest weapon wielded daily by imperialism, with the power to "annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves" (3). Yet as

David Harvey (2006) argues in building off of Luxemberg's argument of the relationship between capitalism and imperial expansion, "accumulation [of surplus] through dispossession [is] a necessary condition for capitalism's survival" in an era of uneven geographical development (91); of course, any land, knowledge, or natural resources that cannot be enframed as standing-reserve then become trash. But as Ty asks, "What might it mean to claim as property what has been thrown away? What kind of value can be extracted from something that has been deemed worthless?" (621). Following Ty's analysis of the wastepicker as a figure belonging to a larger community of subsistence who sort through the waste of modernization for their livelihood, we might begin to find value in such an object as a cipher – simultaneously a non-entity, a code, and a key to that code; with its origins coming from the Arabic *sifr* (for zero; *Oxford English Dictionary*). In the texts analyzed here, writers of color lay the foundation for an anarcha-primitivist cipherpunk ethos that finds latent utopic potential compressed and encrypted within low-tech time batteries containing obscured languages, histories, and epistemologies sitting amidst the flurry of empire's intrasubjective activity and waiting for a reader.

As Ozeki examines her face, she discovers the visage of ancestors as she reflects that "even though [my parents] are both dead, they will be with me for the rest of my life—in my aging eyes, my aging nose, my aging mouth, my aging cheekbones, just below the surface of my aging skin. They will be with me when I die, too, and I find this reassuring" (121). While reassuring for Ozeki, the spectre of a racialized Other inscribed therein haunts those who interact with her. In a section of her memoir titled "Optical Orientation," Ozeki explores the visual logic of her face, recounting playground rhymes and childhood games that relied on racialized caricatures of the Asian face as a visual shorthand in order to call attention to what is written on the surface and how it is read by others, calling to mind Sara Ahmed's (2010) work on the sticky

linkages between affect and un/happy racialized objects or Emily S. Lee's work on the

phenomenology of race as an embodied, lived experience in the world (2014). She also describes

the sexual dimensions of this, writing that

> When I was young, my half-Japanese face signified a self that was at odds with who I felt myself to be. My face was a surface onto which people, especially men, projected their ideas of race and sexuality, Asian-ness and femininity, ideas that had little or nothing to do with me. I grew up wearing a mask on my face that I didn't know was there, but over the years, of course, the mask shaped me. (69)

Yet an older Ozeki seems more at peace with her face and all that it signifies, self-

consciously adjusting this mask an hour into the meditation as she instructs herself to "practice

mindfulness of the face. Be inscrutable. Mask-like and Oriental. Cultivate an enigmatic smile"

(68). Of course, this inscrutability has historically been a source of anxiety for the westerner as

well as the Asian subject: The racialized face carries the threat of duplicity and treachery for one,

finding its strongest expression in wartime propaganda and executive orders calling for the

incarceration of Japanese Americans but also expressed throughout American history in

cinematic representations of the yellow peril or in legislation barring Asiatic immigration. For

the other, insufficient expressiveness might take a techno-Orientalist turn into stiff roboticness or

recall classic Orientalist tropes of the inscrutable monolith as embodied by Jack London's (1909)

Chinago – both instances a failure to achieve fully intelligible subjectivity.

But in this passage, an oscillation between subjectivity and objecthood emerges as her

earlier attempts to disavow the surface mask give way to a familiar acceptance of it, an ability to

play with its signifiers. This performance simultaneously creates a surface projected out on to the

world as well as an interior space; something expressed, and something withheld. In "The

Trouble with Publicness: Toward a Theory of Black Quiet," Kevin Quashie (2009) addresses

how this trope of the mask shows up in African American studies as he explores the limits of

existing scholarship around public expressiveness and silence in relation to the Black body. He notes that for Black subjects, silence is often read as a public performance of withholding, with double consciousness and masking serving as the primary metaphors for such action. While acknowledging the importance of publicness to historical civil rights movements, Quashie remains troubled by the privileging of the (counter) public and offers quiet as a form of expression that gestures to the interiority of a human being in its stead.

He describes this interiority as the "expansive, voluptuous, creative, impulsive, dangerous, and [chaotic]" space that serves as inner reservoir and, following from Spillers, a locus for self-interrogation (334). He finds evidence of this quiet within a pivotal scene in Zora Neale Hurston's (1937) Their Eyes Were Watching God where a long-suffering female character dresses down her verbally abusive husband in public. Noting that others have given much attention to the public dimension of the signifying in this scene, Quashie instead reads it less as a performance for others and more as "an expression of her long-brewing thoughts about herself, her dreams, and her freedom" – a move to rethink signification which "gives attention to what is lost in only reading expressiveness through a discourse of publicness (336). Patti Duncan (2003) takes up similar themes in her work on Asian American literature by tracing feminist genealogies of silence in queer literature and works by women of color. She argues that for these groups, silence functions not only in an oppressive manner, but also as a protective withdrawal from a hostile world, or a means by which to signify resistance, or (as with Quashie) as a form of expression in itself.

Of course, for Duncan and others working in a feminist genealogy (del Valle Schorske 2016, Solnit 2017), Audre Lorde's (1977) speech on "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" is a major counterpoint. Following the diagnosis of a tumor that forced

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her to reconsider her own mortality, in this speech Lorde entangles silence with fear, suffering, and death, "the final silence." Asking "W*hat are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence?*" Lorde calls for the living to overcome their fear and break these silences. But is death necessarily the final silence? What can breaking the silence look like after death, in situations where there exists a dissonance between speaker and listener, or in situations where a revelation by a living subject would be ineffective or dangerous?

Ken Liu's (2011) short story "The Paper Menagerie" is a work of magical realism that deals with such themes, its title coming from the zhézhǐ animals that the mixed race protagonist's nameless mother magically brings to life for him as a child. Their relationship becomes increasingly strained as Jack grows up and experiences racial discrimination aimed at him and his mother, soon internalizing these messages and viewing her with contempt for having sold herself into marriage through a catalog. At a crucial moment in the story, his friend Mark calls his paper animals trash and compares them to cheap Chinese garbage after Jack breaks his action figure, stating that "it probably cost more than what your Dad paid for your Mom!" (68) Soon thereafter, Jack begins to refuse Chinese language and culture completely, demanding that his mother speak to him in English only.

She protests, insisting that "If I say 'love,' I feel here," as she points to her lips; but "if I say 'ai,' I feel here," as she puts her hand over her heart (69). Jack's father reprimands her with a reminder that she is now in America, and she quietly relents. Through their collusion, Jack and his father reduce her to the voiceless two-dimensional embodiment of the picture bride that she once was, a flat surface that can only ever reflect what others project upon it or read it as. But

with her motions, she reminds the reader that there exists within her an interior world that cannot be fully expressed in translation.

Over time, Jack and his mother stop communicating save for the occasional zhézhǐ animal that she folds for him as a reconciliatory gesture, each eventually caught and stored away in a box in the attic. On her deathbed, Jack's mother implores him to keep the box and take it out each year at Qingming, the Chinese Festival for the Dead. While he is noncommittal then, his favorite animal comes back to life two years later on Qingming and unfolds in his lap, revealing a message from his late mother. Unable to read the letter, he wanders around downtown until he finds a Chinese tourist willing to translate it for him.

In her letter, Jack's mother expresses pain at the silence between them and hopes fervently to leave traces of herself behind. She writes, "The animals will stop moving when I stop breathing. But if I write to you with all my heart, I'll leave a little of myself behind on this paper, in these words. […] Because I have to write with all my heart, I need to write to you in Chinese" (74). She goes on to relate the history of her village, the violence of the 1966 Cultural Revolution, and her life as an orphan following the death of her parents that led her to become a mail-order bride. She also describes the isolation that she felt in Connecticut until he was born, writing "I was so happy when I looked into your face and saw shades of my mother, my father, and myself. I had lost my entire family, all of Sigulu, everything I ever knew and loved. But there you were, and your face was proof that they were real. I hadn't made them up" (76). She has written traces of her history into these future-oriented objects, the reticent son and his toy.

We see then that in the face of Jack's emotional distancing, she withdrew into interiority and began a utopic project of writing to another Jack, spinning threads for him to pick up somewhere in the future and follow back to her, and her family before her. She consciously

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chose not to break their silence while she was alive, knowing that he was not ready to treat her as an equal subject and could only ever see her as an unhappy object weighted down with complex, shameful histories both belonging to her and not. Rather than privileging an all-encompassing moment of total conversion, she encodes the most important parts of her story into that single sheet, knowing that not all of it will survive, just "a little bit of myself." Realizing that the unitary self is a contingent, time-bound thing that must eventually disintegrate, she compresses and transforms herself that she might be translated not only across language but also time. Contra Lorde, perhaps the silence of death is not so final after all as her words come back to life through this process of working with her objecthood. Rather than verbalizing a demand for dialogue with her son, she chooses to encrypt her words into a "cheap Chinese garbage," a minor object with just enough affective stickiness to hang around in Jack's life until he is ready to revisit it and work to decrypt what she has not said all those years.

We also see origami functioning as a motif for interiority in Ozeki's (2013) A Tale for the Time Being. Origami is introduced in the first part of the novel as Ruth narrates her father's withdrawal from the world to read Western philosophy and fold origami, "which, as you probably remember from your childhood, is the Japanese art of folding paper" (79). Immediately framed in its introduction as a children's activity for the non-Japanese reader, Nao quickly disassociates her father's works from "your typical cranes and boats and party hats and candy dishes," describing her father's pieces instead as "origami on steroids, totally wack and beautiful" (80). His medium of choice is pages from *The Great Minds of Western Philosophy*, cut out of the book after reading and folded into complex insectoid figures such as Japanese rhinoceros beetles or praying mantises requiring a hundred or more folds (cf. Lang 1990). This

mode of interacting with the text might be understood as an act of desecration or destruction, but Nao's emphasis on its complexity and aesthetics calls for a different reading.

Contemporary origami makes use of the Yoshizawa-Randlett system to diagram folds and operations, allowing for dozens of complicated steps to be coded into a simple algorithm that readers can follow. The simplest folds are the mountain and valley, one simply the mirror of the other, with the distinction determined by the fold's relation to the satellite viewer. As with facial performance, it creates both a surface image as well as a negative space occulted from the viewer in a dynamic process, yet both surface and interior are always two parts of the same whole. Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty expressed this through the idea of the *chiasm*, famously illustrated by his thought experiment of an individual's two hands touching, each simultaneously a perceiving subject and held object (Toadvine 2016). The emptiness of the negative space within an origami piece structures its surface; yet without an external observer, the surface too becomes emptied of meaning. In explaining the principle of pratītyasamutpāda, or (inter)dependent origination, Thich Nhat Hanh (2012) explains this emptiness as the emptiness of a separate self – the reality of interbeing.

This principle of "form [as] emptiness and emptiness [as] form" appears in *A Tale for the Time Being* at Nao's funeral and then again at Jiko's when Nao suddenly sees that Jiko's body has become "empty. A sack. A skin bag. A cold thing. No Jiko at all," and finally understands that "one moment old Jiko was form and the next moment she wasn't" (364). Yet before she dies, Jiko too leaves a trace of herself for Nao and her father in the form of a single kanji character (生) that she then qualifies with a "For now. For the time being" before passing away. Like Jack's mother, Jiko has encoded a fragment of herself into another form, but in this story we see its effect almost immediately after her death thanks to another fragment left by her son

and Nao's great-uncle, Haruki #1. With the discovery of his secret diary in the ikotsu box bringing with it the prospect of a new translation project and renewed connection between them, her father declares "*Ikiru shika nai* […] half to himself, and then he looked up and repeated it, urgently, in English this time, as if to make absolutely sure I understood" (369). Like a strand of RNA, Jiko's 生 serves as a template that must be translated and carried across from the time of her death to the future by another time being. Responsibility and agency thus become distributed, reflecting again the principle of interdependent origination outlined in the Heart Sutra.

Both of these stories end with the successful transmission of written statements that gesture to a new ethos for living but are also fairly narrow in their purpose, relying on an ideal reader as their end points. But Ruth's interaction with Haruki #1's diary leave lingering the question of multiple audiences and readers who might interact with the text in ways divergent from the writer's intention. This is also the case with Nao's diary, starting with an address to an amorphous reader that she can only imagine, and one that she isn't overly attached to if they are not the right reader for her diary. So what happens when these time batteries are intended for, or become shared within, a larger community?

Tiqqun's *Theory of Bloom* (2012) opens with a letter to the publisher comparing the Book to the Subject and denouncing both as dead forms pretending to self-contained completeness. Tiqqun further argue that "beyond their closed nature, the great books have always been those that managed to create a community—that, in other words, the Book has always had its existence *outside itself*" (1). Instead of a Book then, Tiqqun offer to the publisher a *textual virus* contained within the book which "*exposes* the principle of incompleteness, the basic deficiency underlying the published object" while also working to "[precipitate] *the community that it lacks,* the still

virtual community of its genuine readers" (2). While they do not carry the viral metaphor further in the text, it is nonetheless useful to think of in the age of virality and the meme.

Jussi Parikka (2007) notes the rise of public anxiety around computer viruses that arose toward the end of the twentieth century, with widespread cultural awareness rising around the 1980s and 90s with the rise of personal computing. Since then, virality has morphed in meaning to take on positive connotations associated with affectively resonant content organically spread and monetized through forums, blogs, filesharing sites, and other digital social networks. If the printing press made the downstream distribution of Books possible for publishers, then the internet functions as a space for limitless pastiche and parody from the bottom up through the creation of self-referential memes. In The Selfish Gene (2006), evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins coined the term meme to describe "a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation" (192). While archaeologies of digital media might point to chain emails and .gifs of dancing babies as an early example, the advent of meme generators significantly lowered the barriers for audience participation and led to the normalization of shitposting – content of low effort or quality that can be created using free software such as Microsoft Paint or websites like memegenerator.com. While memes are generally viewed as humorous nuisances, all surface like the mask or origami; they are also a democratic form that can contain hidden potentialities.

In 2006, an image macro known as "Dangerous Kitten" started circulating online featuring a line from The Legend of Zelda in 8-bit text under an image of a meowing kitten (Encyclopedia Dramatica). Embedded within the .jpg was a .rar archive containing tools for the neophyte script kiddie, simple programs that would allow them to join a raid against a website or server by taking part in a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack – a method of rendering a website unreachable through the coordinated actions of a network of malicious actors. Of course,

the end user's actions could not be guaranteed once the image was released into the wild where it was realistically more likely to end up in the hands of a technologically illiterate user than one who could utilize it to its full potential. But the sentiment it carries is hopeful, reflecting what McKenzie Wark (2004) has described as an expressive politics that seeks to free information from the commodity form of market monopolies and state bureaucracies, as opposed to a representative politics of "aggregate party alliances and interests" (57).

While Ruth is able to fill in the final pages of Nao's diary in A Tale for the Time Being, the novel also ends ambiguously regarding her fate following the 2011 Tohuku earthquake and tsunami. Ruth writes to her speculatively in the epilogue, expressing her wishes for how she might find her, but only if Nao wishes to be found. Ruth would "much rather know, but then again, not knowing keeps all the possibilities open. It keeps all the worlds alive" (402). Nao remains in a smeared and multiple state of being, following Hugh Everett's many-worlds interpretation of Schrodinger's paradox, and the "either/or" of her fate is replaced by infinite "ands" (415). Perhaps a part of Jack's mother also remains alive by the end of "The Paper Menagerie" as Jack, "following the creases, [folds] the paper back into Laohu" and carries him back home as he purrs in his arm (76). Or perhaps our attention should expand beyond these living individuals to the place they will continue to occupy in a larger, interconnected universe after they, and their writers, have passed.

In an article comparing the philosophy of William James and Kitaro Nishida, Krueger (2006) describes Nishida's development of James' concept of "pure experience," a precursor to later phenomenological thought taken up by Merleau-Ponty and others. Describing the "self-as-oscillation" between subject and object that creates lived experience, Krueger identifies three epistemic attitudes of "thought, will, and intuition" in Nishida's work, as well as "three

interrelated worlds of experience around the pole of the subject body: the *phenomenal world*, the *lived world*, and the *actual world*,*"* with these worlds corresponding to subjective thought, active engagement, and acting-intuition respectively (¶25). Krueger explains that acting-intuition dissolves subject-object boundaries as the self "assumes an experiential standpoint from which it engages the world immediately and pre-reflexively, prior to a reflective self-awareness that constitutes the conscious self *as* over against a world of objects;" pure experience then "denotes a state of knowing-by-*becoming*" (¶ 27).

Mel Chen (2012) describes an *animacy hierarchy* that structures our shared phenomenal world and differentially accords varying degrees of subjective agency to the objects that comprise it. They define animacy as "an often racialized and sexualized means of conceptual and affective mediation between human and inhuman, animate and inanimate, whether in language, rhetoric, or imagery" (10). By reaching across topographies of time and space, Ozeki, Liu, and Laymon revitalize subject/objects that are able to jump up and down this hierarchy and act as textual viruses, pulling in the "still virtual community of [their] genuine readers" (Tiqqun 2). They also enact the shift to vectoral power that Wark (2017) calls for, a topological mode that "can bend space and connect points [which] on the surface of a planar Earth appear far apart" (18). Both chemical and potential energy are defined by position and arrangement – whether on the microscopic level of atoms and molecules, or the macroscopic level of objects and bodies. If the first law of thermodynamics states that energy is only transformed and never destroyed, perhaps the same can be said of stories, memories, information. As these authors have shown, stories that have been silenced might remain embedded in all sorts of objects, even when obscured or in the absence of script. There exists an abundance of time batteries containing the

seed of alternate universes for the reader to create; all it takes is the deep attention and slow

processing that allows the reader to slip into the oscillation of knowing-by-becoming.

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[i] Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey, Reprint edition (New York: Picador, 2003), 61.

[ii] Foucault, 61.

[iii] Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (New York: M.I.T. Pr., 1948), 11.

[iv] Wiener, 18.

[v] Wiener, 24.

[vi] Aud Sissel Hoel and Annamaria Carusi, "Thinking Technology with Merleau-Ponty," in *Postphenomenological Investigations: Essays on Human-Technology Relations*, ed. Robert Rosenberger and Peter-Paul Verbeek, Postphenomenology and the Philosophy of Technology (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 73–84.

[vii] Hoel and Carusi, 80.

[viii] Hoel and Carusi, 82.

[ix] Crawford S. Holling, "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4, no. 1 (1973): 1–23.

[x] Holling, 2.

[xi] Holling, 21.

[xii] Holling, 15.

[xiii] Holling, 21.

[xiv] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "The Enduring Ephemeral, or the Future Is a Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2008): 148–171.

5. Conclusion. Against individual-Leviathan politics; a mutual co-arising.

This thesis began by considering the peripheral figure of Awa Gee in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* in order to discover alternative modes of political affiliation and action, against an identity-based politics that seeks formal recognition and dialogue with or through a colonial state apparatus. Reading beyond the surface representation of this techno-orientalist figure to consider his actions within the context of the larger novel, Silko's character reveals an alternative model of what solidarity work might look like when enacted by a non-indigenous accomplice. Gee's exceptional hacking skills allow him to enact an anti-imperialist, Neo-Luddite praxis through his creation and manipulation of technologies both primitive and advanced. By manipulating his peripheral status racially, socially, and within the novel itself, Gee is able to hide in plain sight and surveil global communications and affective structures as they develop in the environment around him. His superior knowledge of network flows then allows him to take advantage of swarm mechanics and affective flows in a scyborg manner, "[moving] at multiple scales [of personal and collective]" (cite) in order to maximize the impact of coordinated physical and digital attacks on national infrastructure. Situationist philosophy, bacterial quorum sensing mechanics, and feminist engagements with animals and the more-than-human world provide a framework through which this coordinated action is interpreted.

This concern with the more-than-human world is then extended across species and national boundaries in chapter 3, which reads Bong Joon Ho's *The Host* (2006), *Snowpiercer* (2013), and *Okja* (2017) as part of a post-colonial ecocritical trilogy where the girl and her relational interactions with the external world come to take precedence over Man and his heroic narrative. The girl (Hyunseo) is initially framed as an ephemeral symbol of vulnerability among Korean society's most downtrodden in *The Host*, snatched away from the nuclear family unit by

a monstrous embodiment of U.S. military imperialism and environmental pollution. Despite her family's best efforts, they are unable to rescue her and the nuclear family unit is left bereft. While the film closes with an ominous warning to remain ever vigilant against the disruptive aberrations to traditional family life all but guaranteed under the frustrating cycles of degradation and loss under U.S. military influence, moments in the film also call for a shift from living the everyday *impasse* to more ethical modes of relationality, as per Alain Badiou's *event*. A scene of mass protest against biochemical weapons testing provides one such moment, as does Hyunseo's father's decision to adopt an orphan boy at the end of the film. Yet this ethical relationality remains decidedly anthropocentric, with the inhuman monster's creation and death both ultimately overdetermined by human biopolitical influences.

2013's *Snowpiercer* remains firmly rooted in this humanistic framework for most of the film, with the central conflict revolving around a conflict between classes of people defined by their relative distance and mobility between clearly demarcated cars on a train representing the entire world-system. Yet aboard this life-sustaining train, interactions with the more-than-human world have become ever more important and symbolic. The film begins with an extended characterization of CW-7, the manmade chemical released into the atmosphere by scientists in order to counteract global warming that has ultimately morphed out of control and created the everlasting winter that entraps humanity. Scenes involving cars dedicated to the cultivation of crops and fish for human consumption cast agricultural and factory farming practices as rather contrived and artificial, a concern that Bong goes on to examine more deeply in *Okja*.

But here the girl (Yona) begins to take on a somewhat more active role as she follows her father (Minsoo) and the rebellion that has recruited him to their cause. While her primary role is that of a good daughter or student taking instruction from the father figure, she exercises her

agency by translating between her father and the group in moments, and eventually taking on responsibility for the safety of a young orphan (Timmy). Her father Minsoo spends the film orchestrating her escape, again acting in a manner best explained by a viral metaphor – acting in the manner of a bacteriophage to hijack and exploit a sudden overwhelming of the system's defenses. Here in this moment of escape however, Bong reaches the limits of the merely human and the film ends with Yona and Timmy released into an uncertain world where traditional interspecies hierarchies have been disrupted, rendering them one among multiple species navigating a shared environment untamed by technology.

Finally, *Okja* provides an alternative epistemology to the world by beginning and ending with a framework that departs from grand existential questions of species survival to focus instead on the mundane and the everyday. Here, the compassionate relationship between a girl (Mija) and her pet superpig frame the primary concern of ethical interspecies relationality under a world-system of corporate factory farming. Mija's childish concerns with non-human animal life are thrown into conflict with the humanistic logic of a grandfather who seeks to ensure a stable future for his lineal descendant based in what Jack Halberstam (2005) calls the "middle-class logic of reproductive temporality" (4). These values also overlap, but are ultimately incongruous with the benevolent advocacy of a group of adult animal rights activists associated with the Animal Liberation Front. While they work in tandem towards individual and larger-scale animal liberation for a time, Mija is ultimately able to save her companion only by operating infidelitously under the logic of capitalism, trading object for object in a sale that reduces her friend Okja to mere commoditized flesh.

Yet the film's deeper ethical explorations remain oriented towards a larger external audience of viewers imbricated within larger foodways that can only be sustained by the constant

reproduction and expansion of global factory farming systems. Interventions against this corporate colonial model of species thriving through surplus generation (Mirando's "harvest for the world") jump between the digital global and the mundane local. The critical weapon (information, knowledge, a leak) in the group's fight against Mirando is harvested on the ground in a factory situated within an industrial segment of Paramus, NJ. This information is then revealed to a nation-wide audience of viewers at the Mirando Corporation's Superpig Festival in cosmopolitan New York City, before being released online to the world through an uncensorable website.

Bong's trilogy then takes a slow but determined turn towards the posthuman in order to recontextualize human relationships with the more-than-human world in a manner that allows viewers to escape the hierarchical dualism structuring Man-over-the-world into girl-in-the-world. This latter model utilizes the local to expand into the global, synthesizing a glocal model of concern for the world that is being pulled together by capitalism and colonial human networks of power. Attention shifts from the noble everyman to the world-saving superhero before finally refocusing on the marginal everyday in the figure of the stubborn girl and her childish concern for politically unqualified life (flesh). But the onus then lands firmly in the hands of the viewer in *Okja*'s final cutscene, where Animal Liberation Front members hand a mask symbolizing anonymous inclusion and disruptive power to a shocked onlooker, inviting participation from another marginal figure, the geriatric senior citizen.

Finally, chapter 4 turns from considering intersubjective relations between beings in the world to the slippages and interplays between the subject-object boundary in the form of time batteries. This chapter expands the scope of analysis to consider texts as artifacts and their relation to the reader or viewer who interacts with them. Read through a framework of

encryption/decryption and time batteries, texts are read for their potential to transmit information across time and other boundaries. This cryptographic, transtemporal movement is read as an important component of cultural survival, as well as the reproduction of possibilities for future communities imagined across time. The novel that begins this thesis serves as yet another example of the potential contained within such time batteries – speculative fictions designed to magnetically draw in what Tiqqun (2012) refers to as "the still virtual community of its genuine readers" (2).

These jumps in scale between subjectivity and objecthood, shifts between the digital and the natural world, call for a more expansive notion of (inter)being that incorporates but moves beyond the individual at the heart of Western philosophy and the literature it has influenced. Humanity's survivability was compromised from the moment of its setting-apart through Cartesian modernity, and even the most humanistic state government can only serve to reproduce a destructive, anthropocentric logic. In an era of creeping panopticon surveillance and climate change under the Capitalocene, it is necessary to imagine an alternative that does not create an artificial distinction between the savage, primitive wild and the technologically advanced but instead fuses the two together into a moldy motherboard where electric pulses might be stored and occasionally cycle between the biotic and abiotic.

Abstruse Goose is a webcomic published anonymously (perhaps by a [physicist](#)) that touches on themes of natural science and technology. In a longform vertical comic titled "Artificial," the universe begins 13.7 billion years ago with the big bang. Life then flows and filters downward from this point into the known universe, earth, and the lifeforms that have evolved upon it. At one point, the phylogenetic tree branches from the category of "animals" into separate paths of invertebrates (represented by ants in their colonies) and vertebrates (represented

by humans in their cities). Below, the subtext reads "the distinction between 'natural' and 'artificial' always struck me as somewhat… artificial." Retracing the phylogenetic tree to its origins, all animal life is shown to be descended from the domain eukaryota and this (and other) domains from a strand of DNA.

Recent research has been uncovering the impurities, corruptions, and pre-human time batteries encoded in the DNA shared by all human life. Wildschutte et al. (2016) note the processes by which endogenous retroviruses (ERVs) have integrated themselves into human DNA to the point that they now "[contribute] to more than 8% of the human genome" in the form of proviral segments (E2326). Nicholas Parrish and Keizo Tomonaga (2016, 2018) note that "across the Therian subclass (including mammals such as humans), there have been at least ten independent retroviral integration events" (2018, 8). Ashley et al. (2018) report in the same issue of *Cell* the discovery of another possible retroviral integration event in the form of a "mechanism of *trans*-synaptic communication with several properties resembling retroviruses and retrotransposons" that may indicate "either the domestication of viral mechanisms to shuttle material across cells or the co-option of an endogenous cellular mechanism for viral infection (270-271). Our bodies have always carried endogenous information, genes that sometimes function as memes, telling a story of dependent origination that demands the human body be historicized not just socially but also ecologically.

This reality of ecological entanglement is also reflected ontologically in another *Abstruse Goose* webcomic. "World View" is comprised of two panels sharing the same base image of a rabbit eating a carrot by a stream in a sunny clearing as a flock of birds flies overhead. Equations detailing the processes of respiration, digestion, photosynthesis, flight, and the carbon cycle are laid over the same scene in the second panel. While this comic strip interprets the natural world

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through a positivist framework, it does not impose a civilizational or Heideggerian *Gestell* upon it. It merely describes the flow of energy between bodies, without qualification or hierarchization. The entire world is rendered as a shared realm of skillful coping and mutual co-arising, prior to any politics or economy.

The Cartesian subject seeks to control a chaotic world through strategies of biopolitical risk management and enframing matter as standing-reserve in order to mitigate uncertainty and guarantee species survival. While a colonial, anthropocentric enframing of the world seeks to regulate the larger environment cybernetically towards the goal of achieving an anthropocentrically defined state of stability and balance, the short-sighted deferral of the risk and chaos immanent within a system onto other populations and timelines assumes differentiated spaces (whether by logics of race or species) to be closed systems. In reality, these regions remain part and parcel of the same universe to which all life belongs. Stability and balance are universal processes, and survival is a collective effort. Freedom is not freedom from risk, but an equitable distribution of risk

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