VOLUME X

feminist futururities
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BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER
EM MITTERTREINER

REIMAGINING FUTURES FROM A PLACE OF QUEER INDIGNEOUS LIMBO
SAGE BROOMFIELD
Dear readers,

We share with you Volume X: Feminist Futurities, the tenth edition of Ignite Undergraduate Journal, in a moment defined by its paradoxes. Our corporeal comings and goings have slowed, but an ever-increasing reliance on technoscience accelerates the growth of our unruly cyborg selves. We have endured physical isolation in recognition of our inherent connectedness, the porousness of the boundary between self and other now impossible to ignore. We are saturated with grief and yearning for who and what we have lost – not only to COVID-19 but to the preexisting, structural violences that this pandemic has sharpened – yet we continue to hope that we can enact something better. It is particularly fitting, then, that Volume X is inspired by the scholarship of Donna Haraway, Eve Tuck, Helen Hester, José Esteban Muñoz, Nikki Sullivan, Susana Morris, and myriad other feminist theorists whose works have carved new pathways for imagining our future(s), and the potential for technology to contribute to our liberation. These pathways are unlike the linear narratives of “progress” and “innovation” that dominate our neoliberal zeitgeist, contingent on technologies uncritical and often reproductive of anti-black racism, colonialism, capitalism, cis-heteropatriarchy, and numerous other intertwined systems of oppression. Rather, feminist futurities are broad and often fractious, zigzagging across times, spaces, and disciplines to unearth transformative praxes. The works published in this issue engage with and (re)render past, present, and future in radical ways. Together, they constitute a liberatory technology, a set of tools for building a future oriented toward collective care and healing.
In this moment, it is painfully clear that feminist theorizing is not only important, it is essential. Believing this has motivated us to finish Volume X, despite the enormous grief that we continue to experience. As it is our final year with Ignite Undergraduate Journal, we are saddened that our experience ends in this way, physically apart from all who have made this edition possible. We are especially grateful for our brilliant editors and authors, who have all navigated this unusual process with patience, kindness, and understanding. We are also immensely thankful for the unwavering support of Dr. Kim Snowden throughout our years as editors. We are indebted to Dr. Snowden not only for her guidance vis-à-vis this journal but also for her brilliant pedagogy, which has made us more passionate students. Finally, we dedicate this edition to those we most yearn to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with again – our community. The future is unthinkable without you.

With love and in solidarity,
Alexandra Emery & Mahtab Laghaei
Editors-in-Chief
Ignite Undergraduate Journal is produced on the traditional, ancestral, unceded, and occupied territories of the x̱w̱məθkw̱yahm (Musqueam), sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and sel̓íl̓witulh (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.
MODERN "WOMAN" AS NECESSITIES

De-constructing through Language,
Paradox in Post-colonial Bangladesh

By Sagorika Haque

Content Warning: Sexual Assault

An early memory arrives — in it, I am six or seven, unknowing. Skin still warm with coastal sun, I return from a brief but idyllic stint at the beach with my mother. Our city, Dhaka, is landlocked. I am brimming with the afterglow of escape. During the first encounter with my grandmother, my didu, she says two things to me in quick, stark succession — “how was it?” and “you will need many lemons.”

One of the realities of emerging neoliberal South Asia is rapidity — fast moving economies, increasing literacy rates, and constant political upheaval. As findings of the World Bank’s South Asia Economic Focus highlight, the subcontinent remained the “world’s fastest growing region” in 2019, with GDP growth projected to increase by 7.1 percent in 2020 and 2021. While economic progress is undoubtable, societal progress — and in particular changes in deeply-held notions of value, universality, class, gender, and place — is in a paradoxical place. This progress straddles a volatile line between what liberties and rights come with the advent of liberal democracy, and what can and cannot be tolerated by the status quo. With the social and familial subjugation of women intertwined to the point of normalization in South Asian cultural fabric, discourse must be dually mindful and critical of approaches dissecting the realities of female positionality in these intersections. In this way, we can ensure a conscious, comprehensive, and decolonial understanding of the “New Woman,” the very notion of whom is innately
complicated by historical and political geography. It is a succinct rallying cry that continues to ring true in the present moment, encapsulating the social conditioning women must navigate against their wills, along with the restricted formation of their identities, ambitions, and presence under the fundamentally oppressive structural framework of heteropatriarchy on no other basis than their assigned sex at birth; in her seminal 1949 text, The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir famously imparts that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman.” Intensely relevant for South Asia today, the New Woman has undergone and continues to undergo immense complication, namely in arenas of professional and intellectual merit, autonomy, and — perhaps most integrally — fully realized personhood. Nadia Ghosh draws on the notion of colonial borders to explain the evolution of the subcontinental New Woman, who by virtue of her socioeconomic demographic, occupies a unique space between Western and non-Western ideals. She follows “bourgeois domesticity, ideals of Victorian womanhood” and is “educated and modern in order to be an appropriate wife for these elite men and contribute to the larger body” but “unlike westernized women, [is to] also remain chaste, pious, disciplined, modest, and unselfish” (Ghosh 27-29).

Evolving conceptions of modern South Asian “new womanhood” are coupled with the growing concurrent intellectual and international mobility of the affluent middle-class, whose privileges of material wealth make way to enable another wealth: freedoms long deprived of generations past. Alongside the proliferation of liberal, democratic ideals, these newfound realities are unstable, struggling to reconcile with institutionally patriarchal colonial and post-colonial mentalities. As Nazia Hussein explicates, “the bodies of South Asian ‘new women’ have historically been entangled in satisfying multiple ideals of womanhood . . . social constructions of the ‘new woman’ in colonial Bengal, post-colonial East Pakistan, and neoliberal Bangladesh perceive [her] as a site upon which ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’ are pitted against each other” (98). Globalized capitalism has simultaneously demanded, invisibilized, and proven the “worth” of women in the workforce. Professional and intellectual autonomy are no longer distant causes just for the affluent. In fact, colonial notions of the so-called superiority of the West linger, particularly in academia, resulting in familial pressures on upper middle-class women to import foreign credentials. However, the “necessity” of these academic credentials is at odds with pre-existing “necessities” — the maintenance of traditions, obedience, emotional restraint, “moral” decency, and domesticity. As a consequence, the formulation of the modern nation state takes on
another role as restrictor, with national borders serving as markers that limit professional and intellectual autonomy — clear boundaries indicating what a woman can and cannot think and do while within them. Women survive in the tension between the continually propagated construction of womanhood still embedded in patriarchal convention, and the expectations of an upper middle class women’s role shifting with the globalized market. Language and its representations of oppression and emancipation play an intense role in reinforcing cultures of shame, silence, and subjugation in contemporary South Asia, namely the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. All the while its neoliberal capitalist arenas continue expecting, needing, women to move as the economy does — productively, swiftly, and actively.

Looking back, my didu’s latter statement stands out to me, the language both familiar and foreign. Need. In my mother-tongue Bengali, this word takes many forms — proyojon, laga, korte hobe. Direct translations: obligation, necessity, it must be done. There is no room to be made. My didu was a professor and art historian, educated at Oxford, and her daughter after her on a full scholarship at a prestigious East Coast liberal arts college. I write to you as a student in Vancouver, Canada. The expectations have always been clear for me. The beach had been a kind, fleeting reprieve. Lemon juice is a natural bleach for skin.

i. On Borders and Crossing

First and foremost, it is essential to note that the conceptualization of South Asia as a location relies on entirely colonial divisions. Following the leave of British rule and the subsequent Partition in August of 1947, the subcontinent was split according to religious boundaries: India, West Pakistan (now modern day Pakistan), and East Pakistan (now modern day Bangladesh). Internal discord within a newly-birthed nation state is a tragic, well-documented effect in their post-colonial trajectories, seen taken form in rampant political instability, armed conflict, and civil unrest. As British Partition did not take into account the nuanced socio-cultural geographies of the region, the callous division of the region took root in their exploitation of locational difference, making way for inflamed tensions over once communal land and a harmonious mesh of diverse ways of life, all now hastily separated and labeled.
One communal conflict witnessed violent culmination in the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, which saw the birth of my nation and the genocide of between 300,000 and 3 million civilians by the Pakistani Army. The power of national borders as liberator and oppressor cannot be underscored enough.

Calling back to Ghosh’s framework of colonial borders as a foundation for the South Asian New Woman, it is clear that socioeconomic demographic plays a key role in the determination of the contentious mobility — physical but primarily cultural — such a position in society entails. There is an active conflict between expected roles: the diligent, assertive, headstrong educated woman who is successfully employed, and the meek, obedient, pious, and self-giving daughter/mother/sister/wife, whose calculated, minimal presence is representative of a more holistic set of traditional values. Today, these ideals of modesty, discipline, and adherence to strict hierarchies of respectability must meet the realities of liberal education and democracy, where the realization of rights to free speech and expression are tantamount. In newly “liberated” and formed Bangladesh, a crisis of identity and culture unsurprisingly arises. This is further complicated by the growing demand for university degrees, particularly foreign university degrees, in procuring well-paying, secure jobs.

The ability to speak English is often equated to intellectual capability in Bangladesh. A foreign degree is viewed as a gateway to a more prosperous life. This is merely one symptom of the larger colonial model of Eurocentric supremacy, where the so-called Western world has been constructed as a location of intrinsically greater value. Therefore, a degree from a university in the present day Global North has inherently greater worth, and thus augments one’s professional capabilities and economic potential. This is, of course, incredibly classist, as it makes for work-forces that prioritize hiring only those who can afford this education. At the same time, there is a great tension between the import of Western credentials and the import of Westernized thinking. Inquisition, expressive sexuality, ideas of equality, and critique of heteropatriarchy — concepts more freely discussed in Western higher education — are considered immoral, irrational, and looked down upon in Bangladesh. None of these concepts are compatible with the obedient modern woman, whose role is to be virginal, docile, and small, limited in her demeanour and bodily ambition. While Bangladeshi media represents the modern woman as “educated, professional, bold, outgoing, [who expresses] her desire to be ‘free’ from domestic drudgery”, there is the ultimate depiction and widespread belief of such “modern, cosmopolitan appearances” as “a dark
force, dangerous and slipping out of control” (Hussein 102). A national anxiety takes form, fueled by this apparent moving away from social expectations and places of “honour,” or shamman, all the while encouraging and essentially mandating foreign education, which allows for professional enrichment and entitles women to “worth” in society.

The New Woman is expected to cross her national borders in order to pursue and gain her worth. However, upon return to these borders with her newfound knowledge and awareness of her autonomy, she is forced to acquiesce, once more, to archaic, repressive ideals. Her borders — political, cultural, and by extension spatio-temporal — as a Bangladeshi woman remain ones of suppression and subservience, not to be crossed lest she risks a loss of shamman, of her dignity as human being. To question strata, sexism, or misogyny is resistance, trespassing, or as Hussein formulates, “boundary work”: a form of the symbolic crossing of borders to cautiously “expose, negotiate, and challenge the boundaries of identity around ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’, culture and religion, local and global, class hierarchy, and discourses around sexuality and feminism” (2).

It is shameful to utilize the knowledge that you were expected to gain, and you can expect to be reprimanded or emotionally abused in response. This cycle of shame is extremely damaging to the development of female autonomy, as it devalues and invalidates the safe sharing of lived experience. This shame manifests continuously throughout the lives of girls and women forced to internalize silence and worthlessness throughout their adolescence, while at the same time they are educated in colonial education systems that emphasize individuality, critical thinking, and civil rights. This seemingly contradictory space finds great relevance in my life — having had the privilege of an international school education, I was exposed to and identified with liberal ideals early in life. Beyadob is a word with no translation, but one that has been used against me my entire existence — it encompasses disobedience, wrongness, disrespect. I would question why I could not wear clothes that revealed parts of my body without being slut-shamed by strangers and parents alike; why I was deemed too loud when I spoke in my normal tone of voice; why I could not smile with my teeth out; why I could not be alone in a room with men who were related to me; why I was asked about makeup by my father while my younger brother was asked about school; why I was called joghonno, disgusting, a whore, shameless, disgraceful, and moronic by my own mother for returning after sundown in sleeveless clothes.

Why was my worth determined by how quiet and small I
was? Why was my worth determined by fabric? Why was I always viewed as less or told to be less? The costs of trespassing these borders became more evident upon my return to Dhaka following my first year at university. My family members regarded me with new flippancy, a sardonic amusement at my “Westernized” self — all for making use of my voice. I expressed my thoughts on the regularity of reported rapes in the country — 7 per day on average in September 2019, with a total of 13127 sexual violence cases since 2010 (Hasan), my thoughts on the intense stigma and shame exacerbated by systematized rape culture, my thoughts on blooming authoritarianism in the government I could legally vote for now, my thoughts on my place and worth in the family. I had simply exercised the human and constitutional right to express; there is nothing criminal about truth. This should not have been a radical act. In return, however, I received vicious invalidation, callous belittling, furtive calling out for my “audacity,” and pointed, scathing, wilful ignorance. I am the firstborn at a top 40 university, fulfilling their expectations, and yet my 16-year-old brother’s words continue to be given more weight, taken more seriously — by no other virtue than his being. Erstwhile, I am shrunken. Disobedient. Deemed corrupted and not worthy of being allowed significance. I am called beyadob. I am told to be quiet. “Eishob kothabarta uthate hoi na.” These are not things to be talked about.

ii. On Reduction via Institution

Stigma is a potent force. It is an institutional legacy of imperial European ideals surrounding modesty, having evolved structurally from patriarchal hierarchizing based on so-called reason, where the woman is always deemed less, eternal in her inferiority and passivity. It is perpetuated through the normalization of silence and erasure. As I have detailed above, language plays a great role in preserving oppressive belief systems. Demeaning terms like shameless, worthless, disobedient, matthabori (over-stepping) are used to great effect to belittle honest female expression. Therefore, the erosion of stigma becomes resistance against the dominant systems of suppression, rooted indiscriminately across personal, political, and professional arenas. Language proves a powerful tool for emancipation, at the very least in theory. In the face of institutional systems of misogyny and oppression, however, there is unfortunately boundless room for reactionary backlash and struggle among those privileged enough to possess the ability and space to resist. Naming injustice is the first step towards
MODERN “WOMAN” AS NECESSITIES

accountability and social change, but such language must confront great, often painful post-colonial realities — namely intergenerational traumas. Stigmatization of the female body, sexuality, autonomy, and lojja or shame, are deeply ingrained in Bangladeshi society, where identity is increasingly complicated by ideals of emotional restraint and upheaval cultivated through decades of ruthless British-inflicted resource exploitation, state-sanctioned violence, and land-taking, followed by decades under regressive post-Partition West Pakistani rule, all ultimately culminating in the haunting, mass-displacing genocide in 1971, the Liberation War. Azim, Menon, and Siddiqi relay this profound struggle between lived experience and self-actualization by shedding light on how “the women of the nation” have been forced to navigate their own “issues of identity and nationhood,” pointing to feminist historical theorizations of the “complex positioning that women occupy, especially when we consider victims of war rape, and women of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities” (91). These issues of contentious identity formation in the face of interpersonal and state violence impede confidently showing up in the world as a full-fledged individual, which are further exacerbated by the prevalence of stigma and problematic representations of those affected by gender-based violence.

The most apt example to illustrate this is the Birangona. The Bangladeshi Liberation War saw the ruthless use of rape as a genocidal weapon, with approximately 200,000 to 400,000 women and girls brutally sexually assaulted by the Pakistani army, in an attempt to shatter and “taint” the newly declared nation of Bangladesh (Sharlach 89–102). This horrific spree of sexual violence was a premeditated tool used to terrorize and break up the families of independence supporters, because of widespread misogynist beliefs of sexual assault being a “loss of honor” or a violation of the sanctity of a woman’s body — she who is meant to be remain chaste, her sexuality unseen. The army’s sexual violence was a well-known public secret. The cultural and religious stigmas surrounding sexual violence and the fact that the location of this violence was the bodies of Bangladeshi women drove the notion that this “weapon” had stained the nation-state as a whole, providing cause for the social rejection of the rape survivors from Bangladeshi society. Following liberation, the leader of the newfound nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, declared a state program to rehabilitate these women and to reintegrate them into the workforce — the state not only recognized them, but granted them the title of Birangona, Bengali for “war heroine.” The intent behind this surprisingly progressive initiative was on the surface sincere — it was
meant to destigmatize and amplify traits of courage and survival in place of the heinous, well-known truths of the inflicted violence. But the state failed to challenge internalizing societal stigma, and instead further propagated it through colonial, patriarchal language that invoked degrading concepts of dignity and purity. Consequently, the Birangona were socially ostracized, abandoned by their families, and — in some cases — killed for their state-granted status.

Mainstream media did no favors for the Birangona, rarely using the title of war heroine to refer to the women and instead using language like “oppressed,” “disgraced,” and “dishonored.” The Bengali word most often used, lanchhito, connoted numerous states: from disgraced, harassed, and insulted to stained, tarnished, and soiled. In no way did any widely-used language accurately represent the essence of the revered “war heroine.” Promulgated instead were words like biddhosto (Islam 2139), meaning ruined or destroyed, and phrases like “women who have lost their all.” This language aided in developing a reductive portrait of these rape survivors as both physically and socially shattered.

one of the estimated 400,000 women raped during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, also known as Birangona
Photograph: Naib Uddin Ahmed — ABP

This photograph by Naib Uddin Ahmed stands as visual testament to the crude, essentialized misrepresentation propagated through the majority of media outlets — the apparent war heroine is seen hunched, hidden behind unkempt hair, too mortified to exhibit her face. She is stunted, too disfigured for society’s eyes, reduced to nothing but the physical embodiment of shame, of the brutal crime
that was inflicted upon her. It is all she is, has been, and will be. Such reductive portrayals do grievous injustices to women’s experiences of autonomy and pain. Histories integral in attesting to the atrocities of war are lost, doomed to never be learnt from, as women are discouraged, at times viciously, from sharing the nuances of their experiences, often under threat of verbal abuse or publicized social and familial alienation. These reductive portrayals draw on residual binary ideals of colonization, like the homely and virtuous woman who is either pure or defiled, furthering harmful narratives of victim-blaming and misogyny. This demonstrates how deep-rooted colonial legacies continue to shape post-colonial attempts to combat stigma. It is proof of both the lack of comprehensive thought from the state — which continues to use the language of “violated women” in 2019 legislature — and the difficulties in reconciling modern empathy with what has become social tradition, where a full-fledged, actualized individual with a unique, complex life cannot avoid vilification and be disentangled from the activity of her body. Nonetheless, it must be noted that over the last few years, contemporary artistic efforts have come forth in reclaiming the title Birangona as a title of rightful veneration. Various documentarial efforts and published accounts have arisen over the years from a variety of Bangladeshi and diasporic groups in support, solidarity, and reclamation. For instance, renowned educationist, social worker, and Bengali literature scholar, Nilima Ibrahim’s collections of first-person narratives in her two-volume Ami Birangona Bolchi (I, War Heroine, Speak) saw publications in 1994 and 1995, a hallmark feminist historicization that creates space to speak of the unspeakable, a powerful diagnosis of Bangladeshi cultural and religious society’s rejection of these survivors’ trauma, centering the very voices and stories that have been used to justify their erasure. On the other side of the world in London, a one act play by Samina Luthfa and Leesa Gazi entitled “Birangona: Women of War” was staged in 2014 to great acclaim, with a narrative focusing less on the shame of victimhood, instead relocated to survival, resilience, and inner strength. Nonetheless, in the reductive, anachronistic mentality and culture of erasure that these works target and combat, there is simply no other way that the Birangona can be viewed other than having trespassed borders of social acceptance. No matter their title, their circumstance has necessitated their erasure and shaming. It is essential to post-colonial patriarchal structures that they are degraded by society and herself — after all, hierarchies need the inferior to be sustained.

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As a Bangladeshi “modern woman” myself, I must acknowledge my undoubted and immense privilege: I occupy the upper middle class and am able to afford and receive a Canadian education, all of which have enabled me to access to self-actualizing knowledges and to engage in the global economy with the freedom to consid-
er paving my own purpose beyond the restrictions of cultural and moral tradition. Even though I, like all women in this heteropatriarchal world, bear the brunt of sexist mistreatment and continue to face macro and micro-aggressions across personal and professional realms to this day, that I have the freedom to speak out on these injustices without life-upending risk is a byproduct of my privilege. At the same time, I must underscore the complexities with which I — as the women before me have and those after me will — traverse the terrains of post-colonial existence, a temporal and spatial landscape of unwilling hyphenation and tactful hybridization, where my identity finds roots in unstable topography, complicated by Western imperialism and Bengali society, forced to continually navigate an ever-shifting space between what is expected, required, desired, acceptable, and unacceptable. Viewed as inadequate until we “earn” merit, we are constantly shaped by the institutional remnants of colonialism, which have manifested themselves in language at a both familial and state level. Colonialism’s pervasive legacies necessitate resistance, but modern Bangladesh still finds itself entangled in the ideological remains of colonial intellectual supremacy. Neoliberal capitalism has intertwined with these notions of superiority and decolonial disdain to create a paradoxical system — one where Western education is revered, but Western thought looked down upon when practiced within post-colonial borders. National borders have become allegories for the worth I am entitled to, functioning as markers of where I am allowed to exercise rights to liberty, expression, and security, and where despite their enshrinement I do not dare utilize them, lest I risk my required dignified and genteel presence in society.

These borders reduce Bangladeshi womanhood to a construct that is either degraded, idealized, or repressed. Expectation continues to play a great role in shaping the life of the New Woman — we are expected to flourish professionally while occupying minimal, passive presences. Unethical treatment is to be tolerated and never questioned, lest we open ourselves up to social ostracization. We are needed to work to support our families and countries, yet simultaneously needed to be imperceptible: never too visible, prominent, or outspoken. We are expected to propel the nation forward towards economic prosperity and the profitable embrace of globalization, while being restricted from the freedoms and agency that this arena entails and requires. We can be the breadwinners but never the heads of the house. While change is certainly occurring in present day Bangladesh, there is still immense prejudice, disadvantage, and vehement opposition to navigate. Language is a key post-colonial instrument, and as I have
MODERN “WOMAN” AS NECESSITIES

explained above, can both liberate through de-stigmatization, as well as subjugate through misrepresentation. Until there is effective structural discourse on acknowledging and healing from such prevalent, systemic misogynist rhetoric — I, woman, am forced to accept my being as perpetually un-whole.
Works Cited


The black womanist futurities operating within the works of Janelle Monáe, FKA Twigs and Erykah Badu, allow us as viewers to go beyond the limitations imposed on our imaginations by the colonial, imperialist cultural logics that dominate Western societies today. I argue that, through performance, these artists provide the tools for a black womanist speculative futurist lens, what Valerie Thomas calls Afrxfuturism (“Unenslavable Rapture” 50), that allows for imaginative exits from the logics of being that characterize the patriarchal, neoliberal capitalist systems that bind us. I build on this argument by analyzing the music videos “Many Moons” by Janelle Monáe (2009), “Didn’t Cha Know” by Erykah Badu (2009), and “Two Weeks” by FKA Twigs (2014). This analysis focuses on the use of symbolism and beliefs within syncretic religious systems of knowledge practiced by Black people in the Americas and the Caribbean, such as Vodou and Obeah. I will outline how these performances provide commentary on neoliberal capitalism, and how the Afrxfuturistic perspectives that their performances provide propose radical approaches to eradicating systemic violence. This is an ode to the power of the Black woman’s imagination.

Performing as non-human prompts an exploration of what value lies in going outside of the category of “human.” These women, in their portrayal of themselves as robot, goddess and alien, prompt us to question the limitations of humanness. When human ceases to be the reference point for identities and performances, a wealth of opportunities open up for commentary, expression and alternate futures. Specifically, for Black people, a lot of this exploration has been done through “Black speculative art”
as a “creative, aesthetic practice that integrates African diasporic or African metaphysics with science or technology and seeks to interpret, engage, design, or alter reality for the re-imagination of the past, the contested present, and as a catalyst for the future” (Anderson 233). These forms of Black speculative art, such as Afrofuturism 2.0 and Black Quantum Futurism, bring about new questions surrounding identity and humanness, and the boundaries and confines in which people are allowed to operate and explore. It would be appropriate to consider whether these women are indeed human, or even of this world, in their representations of themselves in these videos. In her video, “Many Moons”, Monáe is represented as Cindi Mayweather, The Alpha Platinum 9000 version amongst many clones of a similar android form. Badu, on the other hand, seems to be an alien who has lost her way because she “made a wrong turn back there somewhere” (Badu 00:01:05). It is unclear where this somewhere might have been; perhaps it was while travelling between planets or from another part of this unidentified planet she has happened upon. She travels wearing threads that seem more appropriate for outer space than for planet earth, with her elongated hat and her deeply ribbed shoes. FKA Twigs seems to be neither robot, nor alien, but somewhat like a goddess. Some of the symbolism, i.e. birds flying in the background (twigs 00:00:50), could be read as vultures, which are associated with the Yoruba goddess of love, sensuality, abundance and fertility – Oshun.

Going beyond the human suggests a movement away from boundaries and a constant opening up to that which is beyond, an imaginative space that has potential to disrupt existing orders and systems of oppression that are deemed normal and natural. Referring to Jeff Mills’ sonic fictions, van Veen writes that Mills, by “identify[ing] within his Afrofuturist mythsystem”, undertakes a “becoming”, outlined as “a transformation of subjectivity, toward the alien, android, cyborg or other-worldly” (van Veen 23). Taking on this “becoming” shatters any Earthly boundaries granted to the “performance of identity” and allows for the ungrounding that characterizes “an exodus from raciology in which the markers of blackness are no longer determinant nor referential” (van Veen 24). This alteration of Earthly reality provides for commentary on, and imagination of, the unfolding of black lives beyond the psychological, social, political, economic, and otherwise oppressive and Earthly constraints that are imposed upon black people and their communities. This is the level of deconstruction at which Afrofuturism operates. Beyond being a powerful tool to think through and transcend some of these constraints, Afrofuturism has also
historically been “something of a counter-power to prevailing conditions, socioeconomic and ideological, of white supremacy – or rather the anxiety, reactionary violence and fear borne of its fragility” (van Veen and Anderson 6). Expanding on the notion of Afrofuturism, Valerie Thomas proposes through her analysis of Lemonade by Beyoncé, an “Afrxfuturism” which puts forward “a black womanist aesthetic of futurist, speculative and decolonizing imaginaries” (“Unenslavable Rapture” 50).

Building off of Afrofuturism, but also critiquing it for its “historical phallocentrism,” Thomas outlines the need for a “black womanist speculative futurism,” and its respective functions. Two of these functions are “engaging the black vernacular of diasporic womanist social critique” and “asserting improvisation by reclaiming the crossroads – symbolized by the ‘x’ – as a psychogeography of spiritual transformation and shifting subjectivities in the process of becoming that makes room for loud self-determined voices – particularly black womanist voices – that cross through imposed cultural breakage and silences” (“Unenslavable Rapture” 52). What follows is an examination of the three artistic texts and how they abide by, and function, according to black womanist Afrxfuturist aesthetics and logics through the following interpretations: Cindi Mayweather’s exit through possession by Ogún Ferraille; Badu’s calm through her heart and energy; and, finally, FKA twigs’ take on Oshun and the wisdom of “intelligent sexuality” (Beaumont-Thomas 2014).

Opening Metropolis’ “Annual Android Auction” is the following statement by Lady Maxxa, The Golden Hostess: “Metropolis! In one place we offer you, the finest fashions in Androids money can buy. And now the prototype of the land, the toast of the town, Cindi Mayweather. Let the bidding begin!” (Monáe 00:00:30). Cindi Mayweather is one of the many androids who were “cloned from Monáe’s stolen DNA” (Thomas, “Neon Slaves, Electric Savages” 8). Androids model out on stage with various outfits and personalities, have names and prices that float next to their heads while people in the crowd laugh, and dance and bid competitively for these Androids. Thinking of “robot” as “a metaphor for slave” (van Veen 20) allows us to understand Metropolis’ “Annual Android Auction” as an allegory for a slave auction, a repetition of the past in a dystopian future. This is commentary on the origin of much of the money and power of many nation-states in the West – the commodification of Black people as slaves. The Black woman’s body was the reproductive site at which the economic power of slave-owning states, such as the United States, the Netherlands and France could become the economic superpowers they are today. As Ca-
mae Ayewa puts it: “The black body is the first technology in which man gathered and traveled from far and wide to finance to torture and control” (Ayewa 12). In other words, Monáe’s Android Auction is a commentary on the ways in which neoliberal capitalism operates through the commodification of the Black woman’s body. Intervening in the future to be able to make a statement about the past and present constitutes a “chronopolitical” act on Monáe’s part. Chronopolitics, as elaborated by Eshun, creates “temporal complications and anachronistic episodes that disturb the linear time of progress, [and] these futurisms adjust the temporal logics that condemned black subjects to prehistory” (297). Vodou, in itself, is a syncretic religion that adjusts these temporal logics by allowing for the resurfacing and resilience of the inner thoughts of black people - knowledge systems which existed throughout history, whose knowledge and wisdom pre-date colonialism and Christianity. By using Vodou possession as the primary means by which Cindi Mayweather exits Metropolis and enters “Shangri-La” (Monáe 00:06:08), a faraway utopia, Monáe is Signifyin’ upon death by drawing upon the Afrxfuturist aesthetics of the crossroads and spiritual transformations. Signifyin’, according to Gates, is “the ironic reversal of a received racist image” (71). Although Mayweather short-circuits and essentially dies as a result of the possession, it is made clear that this is not the end as it would be received by a spiritually dead neoliberal capitalist logic – this end is actually a new beginning. The main reference for this is Lady Maestra’s, Master of the Show Droids, calling to Mayweather at the end. Lady Maestra’s brides, with glowing green eyes, approach a dying Cindi Mayweather (Monáe 00:05:59), and circle her body (00:06:01), and Maestra follows by saying: “And when the world just treats you wrong / Just come with us and we’ll take you home” (00:06:05). The “we” in this case are her brides, who could be interpreted as the guede (graveyard spirits within Vodou), and herself, the Lady Maesta, whose symbols parallel qualities of the loa Papa Ogún Ferraille, feminizing the usually masculine warrior spirit. Thompson notes that the imposition of Christianity onto Haitian slaves as a process of Westernization was not a passive process of total assimilation on the part of the enslaved peoples, but rather, they “transformed the meaning of the Catholic icons by observing their similarities to African spirits” (Thompson 172). The figure of Saint James represented in Plate 110 (Figure 1) (Thompson 173), for example, prompted the informants of writer, Michel Leiris, to see the figure of Saint James as “the blacksmith and warrior god, Ogún Ferraille… (the essential attribute of which is a saber and, together with the other Ogun, the color red)”, whereas, the figure in
the background was identified by some as “a guede, or graveyard spirit (Thompson 172).

The figure of Saint James is strikingly similar to Lady Mae-stra (Figure 2), who sings “Come with me” to a possessed Cindi Mayweather (Monâe 00:05:38). As opposed to Ogún holding the saber however, the microphone stand could be interpreted as the “iron bar, standing in the earth near the altar dedicated to [Papa Ogún Ferraille’s] name” (Thompson 172). Traditionally, the iron bar is “heated in a fire,” and the “possessed person will then take this staff or some other equally heated bar and dance with it in his or her bare hands to prove that the possession is genuine” (Figure 3) (Thompson 173).
Through her dance and performance, Mayweather was genuinely able to transcend her life in the world of Metropolis and into the world of what Lady Maestra calls “Shangri-La” (Monáe 00:06:08), representing spiritual possession as a gateway and transition from a capitalist dystopia (Metropolis) to an oncoming utopia (Shangri-La). Monáe emphasizes that the way out of a constructed capitalist society like Metropolis, or neoliberal capitalist societies like the United States and Canada, is through something that is built on entirely different logics, like: “Voo-doo-doo-doo-doo-doo-doo-doo-doo…” (00:01:03).

Moving away from a dystopian world of greed, towards a world of barren landscapes and few organisms, the opening scene of Badu’s “Didn’t Cha Know” takes viewers to desert-like landscapes with a flashing, smoking vehicle in the background (00:00:11). The vehicle seems to be Badu’s vessel of transportation through the universe and to the planet which she roams. Upon arrival, Badu walks around, seemingly aimlessly. She abruptly makes a turn (00:01:19), but there is no particular landmark prompting her to turn, as to the viewer it is all the same, flat landscape. The words: “I’m trying to decide / which way to go / I think I made a wrong turn back there somewhere” (00:00:57), emphasize what seems like the confusion of Badu’s journey. However, she remains relatively calm in her supposed confusion, stating that “when [she] stumble[s] off the path / [She] know[s] her heart will guide her back” (00:02:14), whilst she walks determinedly to nowhere and nothing. As she continues to walk, however, the viewer begins to notice lines in the ground that she has been tracing (00:03:27), a previously unapparent task, which prompts the viewer to question what else is invisible. A shift in perspective from one visual dimension to another reveals a deep hole that reaches out into a left-rotating spiral (00:03:33).

The appearance of the left-rotating spiral is significant within Vodun practices, as it represents a path “out of the earthly plateau, affecting the dispersion of energies” (Owusu 145). In order to access the energies, there’s a particular way of following the spiral that the traveler must undertake in order to be granted access to a different energetic level. If passage is granted: “[t]he area surrounding the center point is at first clad in thick swathes of fog that only lighten after you reach the center point. There, a completely different world opens up. The term “other-world” does not denote a specific place but is rather a collective term for all reachable parallel dimensions that exists in our world in different time and vibration levels” (Owusu 147).

As the camera closes in on the hole at the center of the
SPIRAL,
Badu sings “Free your mind” (00:03:39), and once water is revealed to be at its core, she sings “And find your way” before emerging out of the water with no hair and no clothing. She opens her eyes to reveal green colored eyes, different from the previously brown eyes, looking up to the sky, the lyrics sound in the background: “There will be a brighter day” (00:03:57). This journey of becoming from one form to another is characterized by her navigation of a different plane of existence. In this plane, her journey is guided by her connection to her heart and to a spiritual knowledge that allows her to see a brighter future. When Badu sings “Time to save the world / Where in the world is all the time?” (00:01:56), it can be interpreted as a critique of the notion that things will just get better with time. In fact, how much time do humans truly have before this world ceases to survive due to climate change, before the entire planet might look like the dry, barren land of Badu’s “Didn’t Cha Know”? The only thing that seems to bring her back to the planet’s natural resources, its water, and its life, is her heart and her commitment to connect with her inner, spiritual energy. If we cannot connect to the land in ways that are not extractive and exploitative, and if we cannot connect to our hearts in ways that are meaningful, we risk a loss of connection to the life of this world.

Moving from the earth to the sky, drums and mumbled chants seem to summon the entrance of a goddess-like FKA twigs (twigs 00:00:14). Birds, perhaps vultures, which are associated with the goddess Oshun, fly behind the columns of twigs’ palace (twigs 00:00:49). Associated with womanly power and femininity, Oshun’s powers include having control over one’s desire, healing hurt with love, endowing with fertility, and it is noted that “the erotic is her sacrament” (Wanderling). Colors associated with Oshun are amber and yellow, and metals associated with Oshun are gold and bronze (Journeying to the Goddess), all of which are present in this video. She is represented as large, at least larger than the clones who surround her. twigs feeds a clone of herself milk (twigs 00:02:47), symbolizing the powers of fertility Oshun is known for. Yet there are no men depicted in the video, because all that it takes to keep her women alive lie within her. She is powerful and resourceful and can provide for them while still being able to want and enjoy pleasure. The falsetto in twigs’ voice each time she sings “high” is breathy, and there is an added flash of yellow light that comes from above her as she closes her eyes (twigs 00:02:00), conveying visually and sonically the heights she allows herself to feel in her sexuality and sensuality. Twigs has pointed out how important it is for her to experiment with “intelligent sexuality” (Beaumont-Thom-
as), sexuality that goes beyond the way sex is interpreted by the masses through the media they consume. Where “‘being sexy’ is a mendacious, exhausting bind for many women” (Beaumont-Thomas), the sexy twigs is interested in is for herself, not for others. In fact, it’s vulnerable, and “[v]ulnerability is the strongest state to be in” (Beaumont-Thomas).

Twigs is portraying ‘becoming’ on an erotic level. Thomas points out that Oshun is considered “the deity of love, sensuality and fresh waters, and to many the most powerful among the Orishas because she rules through love, wit and beauty” (“Unenslaveable Rapture” 60). In some ways, the multiple representations of twigs are like Oshun’s “devotees or ‘daughters’ of the water deity” (Thomas, “Unenslaveable Rapture” 60). She trains them with her wisdom of “intelligent sexuality” (Beaumont-Thomas). These women seem to be represented in multiple forms – the dancers, the women dressed in white to the bottom left of the shot, the women who are pouring water, and finally the woman who is submerged under water (twigs 00:04:00). In some ways these versions of twigs represent stages of becoming based on their understanding and ability to practice the divine wisdom of Oshun. Perhaps the woman who is submerged under water represents the birth of each of these women into the guardianship and mentorship of Oshun. No one is around to judge these women but Oshun, as their sexual journeys are for themselves and their goddess. Their journeys are also not for any man or for any other audience, because twigs is Signifyin’ upon the ways in which black women on Earth are often used by the media industry to be gazed at by consumers. They are often fetishized and obsessed over, not leaving real space for them to explore their sexual selves, for themselves. Rather, they are often asked to do so through a historically white supremacist lens of their bodies, wants and desires.

Monáe, Badu and Twigs provide a framework for a black womanist speculative futurism in which ancestral and Afro-centric systems of knowledge are valued, vulnerability is appreciated, black women can be confident, and they are free to take on their own journeys without being judged through the gaze of patriarchal, white supremacist institutions. Monáe escapes these institutions by exiting this world through possession, Badu creates her own pathway into the spirit world through her left-rotating spiral, and FKA twigs grows through the wisdom of the Oshun inside of her. These performances provide the basis for modes of becoming that allow for exits from the logics of the neoliberal capitalist and patriarchal structures that underlie the current global socioeconomic system. Performance of the non-human allows for these women to
break away from the intellectual subjugation inherent to identifying with humanity and its current norms. In subverting the spatial, temporal limitations of the human on Earth, these black women artists provide imaginative strategies for exodus from the current oppressive framework that underlies our systems and allow us to consider an Afrxfuturist, liberating framework that is grounded in the wisdoms of Afrodiastic ancestry.
HD.” Youtube, 4 April, 2009.


In this Photovoice essay I analyze Mexico City’s glitter feminist protest, which occurred on August 16, 2019, in response to the rape of a teenage girl by four police officers in Azcapotzalco, in the north of Mexico City, on August 3, 2019. The protest was also a reaction to the labeling of a previous feminist mobilisation as a “provocation” by Mexico City’s mayor, Claudia Sheinbaum (NACLA). I argue that the protest is a form of resistance against gendered violence, including femicide (the intentional killing of women because they are women) and sexual assault, as it is produced and perpetuated by Mexican patriarchy, the police, and the nation-state. I also expand upon Erin Toolis’ idea of critical placemaking to suggest the glitter feminist protest as an act of radical placemaking in public space.

Public space and placemaking are essential terms in this essay; by public space, I mean space that is “‘owned by the government, accessible to everyone without restriction, and/or fosters communication and interaction’” (qtd. in Toolis 185). Consequently, the images of the protest I analyze all happen in the public space: streets, public transit, and plazas. Seeing that public spaces have systematically been “stratified places where women, low-income people, and people of color have been disproportionately excluded and displaced,” they also become sites of resistance for oppressed groups to reclaim their right to exist in physical space (Toolis 185). According to Erin Toolis, placemaking is “a bottom-up, asset-based, person-centered process that emphasizes collaboration and com-
munity participation in order to improve the livability of towns and cities” (185). However, she identifies placemaking as a framework which can be used to promote neoliberal gentrifying practices. Therefore, she proposes critical placemaking as the “efforts that attend to inequities and work to promote social justice by disrupting systems of domination and creating public places that are accessible and inclusive, plural, and participatory” (Toolis 186). Seeing that critical placemaking focuses on accessibility and inclusion, it is not a sufficiently accurate framework in which to analyse the glitter feminist protests, which have been deemed “violent” for their defiant defacement of public space.

Therefore, I introduce radical placemaking as a more realistic term that recognizes the non-apologetic disruptive basis of the glitter feminist protest. According to Nicolas Stahelin, radical placemaking stands for “place-based political activity seeking to transform socio-environmental relations” (Stahelin 263). In my understanding, radical placemaking also allows for “illegal” fierce interventions on public space to be perceived as subversive acts of resistance in response to systemic violence. Finally, radical placemaking in the glitter feminist protest entails the literal physical re-appropriation of public space, even if temporary, by bodies, chants, art, fire, and glitter.

(Iyolquetzal Martínez, 2019)

In this first image we can observe a multitude of protesters gathered at the Glorieta de Insurgentes, a large roundabout in the Reforma neighborhood of Mexico City, the starting point of the August 16, 2019, glitter feminist protest. This protest was orga-
nized on social media, mainly Facebook, by local feminists groups in response to the inadequate reaction by the Mexican government and media to a previous feminist mobilisation. An initial glitter demonstration happened in response to the rape of a minor on August 3rd 2019 by four police officers. Since none of the police officers were arrested or formally investigated, a group of feminists protested in front of the district attorney’s office in Mexico City. Some of the protesters threw glitter at the district attorney, an image that quickly became viral online. However, Mexico City’s current mayor, Claudia Sheinbaum, called the initial demonstration a “provocation,” and local media focused more on the glitter than on the sexualized police violence (NACLA).

As seen on the bottom left side of the image, the yellow cord represents a frontier created by some of the feminists groups, which aimed at creating a safe space where no cis men were allowed to be. According to the online protest organization efforts, cis and trans women would lead the protest, thus taking a separatist approach. Cis and trans women were to be centered as the main voices of the protest as they are also the main targets of the violence which was being protested. Hence, non-binary folks and men were asked not to center themselves and rather support the protest from the sidelines. Cis men were physically removed by protesters if they intruded in our self-made safe space. Hence, the decision to organize the protest as a separatist mobilisation fundamentally constitutes radical placemaking by shattering conventionality and creating our own rules of organizing. Since public space constitutes a key site for gendered violence, it was crucial for women to collectively stand in solidarity by taking to the streets. Although not all violence takes place in public spaces, protesting in them rendered our resistance more visible.

As women, being the ones mostly impacted by gender violence, we felt an obligation to “politically mobilise from [our] material spatial conditions in order to appropriate, dominate and reshape space to create the conditions to expand public political involvement” (Routledge 1172). Considering that protesting in the streets can be seen as communities coming together to fight for liberation, in a way, it also accounts as doing justice. Since social justice activism can be practiced “in ways that are both mundane and spectacular,” protesting stands as a form of “actually existing justice... practiced in the everyday” (Williams 2228). The decision to start the protest in Glorieta de Insurgentes was also strategic in that it allowed us to take over public space, a “shared space, characterized by public ownership, open accessibility, and intersubjectivity” (Toolis 185). Besides, it was decided to hold the protest
there as the city’s Ministry of Public Security has its headquarters on the roundabout as well.

In this image we can observe a different view from the protest taking place at Glorieta de Insurgentes. We can see many protesters with posters and pink glitter/smoke in the air. Since “not all community members find their stories equally represented in the public landscape,” we are pushed to represent ourselves through various modes of protest (Toolis 188). Some of the chants that were constantly repeated throughout the protest said: “we must abort this patriarchal system!” “my body is mine, I decide over it, I have autonomy, I own myself,” and “we are bad, yet we can be worse.” Another chant that was repeated by protesters called for the public not to be indifferent, since “women are being killed in front of people’s faces.” All of the chants functioned to reclaim “the right to belong and participate in physical space, but also the power of seizing control of a story by centering the dominant voice to make room for critical perspectives from the margins,” in this case women in Mexico City (Toolis 185). The chants also worked to use our gendered positionality to reclaim agency in public space, standing as an act of radical placemaking. Seeing that public spaces are “vital sites of political engagement where community members can exercise their rights of expression and assembly,” the use of glitter serves not only as a tool for
freedom of expression, but also for demonstration (Toolis 185). Pink glitter served as a subversive symbol for the Mexican feminist resistance against gendered violence. In contrast with the other tactics utilized along the protest, like graffiti and fire, glitter was meant to be more disruptive than destructive. The creative use of pink glitter was not only meant to draw attention from the media and government to our call for justice, but also as a measure to establish and protect the boundaries of our self-created safe space. For instance, pink glitter was thrown at cis men that had infiltrated the protest or who refused to stay in the back. In addition, the environment was taken into account as the prior online organizing of the protest called for biodegradable glitter to be used, such as pink-dyed sugar, salt or rice, instead of plastic glitter. Moreover, we threw glitter everywhere with the goal to leave a physical mark of the streets, so that it would be impossible to ignore its presence. In a way, we wanted the pink glitter to represent gendered violence suffered by women, confronting the public to look at it. Fundamentally, the use of pink glitter in the August 16th protest is an act of resistance and radical placemaking in a femicidal country where 9 women die daily at the hands of gendered violence (Sanchez).

(Iyolquetzal Martínez, 2019)

In this selfie, we can appreciate myself in the midst of the protest, after having had glitter fall across my face. I am wearing a pink bandana on my head in the event that I had to cover my face,
as some of the protesters are doing in the picture. The green bandana being worn by some of the protesters is particularly symbolic of the Marea verde (green tide) feminist movement fighting to decriminalize abortion across Latin America. By the time I took this selfie I remember feeling empowered by the protest, specifically by physically feeling the creation of a safe space by and for women. Being born and raised in Mexico City, I have witnessed and experienced patriarchal violence and its intergenerational effects on our people. Even though the empowerment I felt was situational and not necessarily reflective of systematic change or reduced societal marginalization, coming together with like-minded folks and transforming public space felt like gaining some control over our lives and environments. While it may seem that “men are losing their advantages in... a traditionally patriarchal society and are facing new challenges in the labour market,” the truth is they are still the main perpetrators of sexualized violence in Mexico (Tai 1155-1156). So being surrounded and protected by self-identified women allowed me to personally feel and experience the power of solidarity.

In this sense, the protest as radical placemaking promotes empowerment by “reimagining and transforming our relationship with place, our relationships to others, and our understanding of what behaviors and actions are possible in public places” (Toolis 189). I have passed through Glorieta de Insurgentes, the starting point of the protest, countless times, yet taking it over with fellow protesters reshaped my conception of how social justice mobilization is capable of taking control over land. Since everyday involvement in public space limits people to inhabit public space simply as spectators, radical placemaking means that people can take a more agentic role in shaping what the streets look like and whose purposes they serve.

Libby Porter explains lived space as “the ‘life story of space’... that encapsulates the everyday lived experience and expression of the social in space” (Porter 15). Thus, this protest has become part of the life story of space, even once the graffiti is washed away and the fires are extinguished. The protest remains alive in the collective imagination of those of us who were physically present, and those who witnessed it through the media. Radical placemaking in Glorieta de Insurgentes and Reforma entails a turn towards creative envisioning of what public space can look like. Being part of the protest made me understand that thinking of the present as a place for conceiving other realities is freeing and empowering.
In this image we see the Insurgentes station from the city’s metrobus being painted by anarchist feminists. Some of the paintings read: ACAB (All Cops Are Bastards), RAD FEM ( Radical Feminism), “demanding justice is not a provocation,” and “the press lies.”

At this point in the protest, the anarchist feminists were taking up space by physically altering and damaging public space since the station was not only painted, but the facility was also destroyed, the windows were broken and a fire was started. As some of the people began altering the metrobus station, other protesters started leaving because they did not agree with the defacing of it, or thought that these actions would provoke a violent response from the police. However, other protesters, myself included, decided to stay to witness the defacement of the station, and even shouted encouragement to the anarchists’ acts.

Many protesters only came with glitter and were not planning on further transgressing public space, yet once these more “aggressive” acts started being carried out, some of us understood them as radical placemaking. For some of us, it became clear that
the “vandalism” truly signified a call for action and a longing to be heard by the police, government, and general society. In our eyes, such alterations to the public space were justified in that we were protesting for our lives, and our reaction was in no way as violent as sexual assault or femicide. On the other hand, transgressing the metrobus station counts as radical placemaking by the disruption of public transit, a site where women are common targets of sexual assault. Transportation poverty and a lack of accessibility have been identified as “the main problems to be addressed by transportation policy since people need a sufficient level of accessibility to participate in society” (Vanoutrive and Copper 112). Similarly, gendered violence on public transportation contributes to its lack of accessibility, since women and girls are specifically vulnerable to sexual assault and even kidnappings, in the case of Mexico City. As a result, burning the metrobus station stands as overt rebellion against the everyday sexualized violence experienced in Mexico City’s public transportation system.

Similarly, David Harvey calls for the adoption of “the right to the city as both working slogan and political ideal” because it focuses on “who commands the necessary connection between urbanization and surplus production and use” (Harvey 331). However, in the context of the glitter feminist protest, I think of the right to the city as the right for women to exist safely in physical spaces. The right to the city being fought for in this protest “is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources” (Harvey 315). It entails the right to life and to be taken care of, instead of abused.

(Iyolquetzal Martínez, 2019)

In this image we can appreciate the Florencia police station, located in the Reforma neighborhood a few blocks away.
from Glorieta de Insurgentes, where the protest started. By the time this picture was taken, protesters had marched across Reforma and drawn graffiti all over the facade of the station and had managed to enter it and start a fire. This was possible because the station was empty, meaning there were no police officers or government workers inside.

Outside of the station we can observe a group of protesters gathered, witnessing the defacement of the police station. One of the protesters is holding a pink sign which literally reads: “too much close your legs, very little keep your penis away” (emphasis added). This sign alludes to the common saying that tells women we should “keep our legs closed,” which victim-blames women by imposing the responsibility of sexual assault solely on women. However, by telling cisgender men to keep their genitals “away,” instead of telling women to keep their legs closed, this sign encourages its readers to place responsibility on the perpetrators of sexual assault, rather than on the victims. Moreover, this sign presents a counter-narrative to sexist common-held beliefs that let the sexual assault of women remain unquestioned.

On the other hand, drawing graffiti on the police station and starting a fire is in itself an overt act of defiance against the state, as without a police force holding the monopoly on violence, the state is mostly powerless. As protesters, we understood the link between cisgender heterosexual patriarchy (a sociopolitical system where cisgender heterosexual men have authority over “[cis and trans] women, sexual minorities, and additional sex/gender oppressed peoples”), the state, police, and society in general (Valdes, 4). Under these circumstances, lighting a fire in the police station stands as a threat to entities beyond the police itself, such as the nation-state and the status quo. It also represents doing justice through radical placemaking since these transgressions were carried out as responses to grave injustice, in the form of police forces, the supposed “protectors of the nation,” getting away with raping women and girls.

At the same time that protesters created graffiti and started the fire, other protesters chanted “no me cuidan, me violan,” meaning “police do not protect us, they rape us.” In a similar manner, other posters asserted “me cuidan mis amigas, no la policía,” meaning “my friends take care of me, not the police.” By “setting [alternative] narratives” the chants and posters served to “ disrupt master narratives and work to reclaim public space for public use,” specifically for women (Toolis 188). Therefore, demonstrators in the glitter feminist protest can be said to view the “right to the city” as “not something that can simply be achieved locally, without
attention to wider causal processes” (Fincher and Iveson 239). As a result, a feminist critique of structural inequalities accounts for the deeply entrenched machismo, misogyny and sexism in institutions like the nation-state, the police, marriage, and family.

In this picture we can appreciate the Ángel de la Independencia, a victory column monument, the day after the glitter feminist protest. To give some context, the monument was built in 1910 to commemorate the centennial of the beginning of Mexico’s War of Independence. It was also made into a mausoleum for some of the most popular “heroes” of the war, often named “fathers of the nation,” since only one of them, Leona Vicario, is a woman. Besides being one of Mexico City’s most popular landmarks, it is also a site for celebrations and protests.

The graffiti seen in this picture, painted by some of the protesters from the glitter demonstration, denounces Mexico as a femicidal entity, calling out the nation-state as a killer. It also names the police as rapists and asserts that women are not to be played with. Other graffiti says that “the patriarchy will not fall, we will overthrow it.” Erin Toolis explains that monuments “are common features of public space that represent the identity, values, and past of a community,” however, “not all community members find their stories equally represented in the public landscape” (Toolis 187-188). Thus, feminists transgressing the Angel de la
Independencia monument is doing justice by representing our stories in the public space, which otherwise would remain silenced. Interestingly, the graffiti on the monument was described by the Mexican media as violent vandalism and used to delegitimize the protest (NACLA). Not surprisingly, the Mexican media was reproducing the invisibilization of gendered violence, as well as enacting macho paternalism over feminist praxis. The local media’s reporting suggests that the transgression of the monument was not an appropriate form of protest, and this is fundamentally paternalistic. Paternalism happens when “some institution is assumed to know better than affected parties where the interests of people lie, and is therefore mandated to organize part of their life and steer people’s choices” (Vanoutrive and Copper 114).

In this case, the Mexican macho media assumes to know better than the feminist protesters, which in turn steers public opinion towards condemning protesters for transgressing public spaces, rather than condemning police and state violence. Therefore, the media as an institution holds power over building master narratives which can influence public opinion. Essentially, the media’s paternalistic representation of the glitter feminist protest, focusing on the monument’s defacement, leads the public to perceive the protest as more violent than actual gendered violence.

Additionally, the graffiti and “vandalism” on both the police station and the Ángel de la Independencia monument breach physical and symbolic public frontiers. An urban frontier separates “the private from the public and define[s] appropriate territories for different social groups…[they] are physical, symbolic, tangible, intangible, artificial or natural” (Delgadillo 20). In the particular case of the Ángel de la Independencia monument, the breach was symbolic in that it accounted for an unmistakable rebellion against nationalist master narratives. As a result, the glitter feminist protest becomes a site for radical placemaking as the core foundations of a femicidal society are defiantly delegitimized.

This Photovoice essay has discussed how fighting for justice is taking place in Mexico City through the feminist glitter protest of August 16th, 2019. Regardless that “everyday forms of activism are often missed in favour of more dramatic, spectacular protest movements,” these forms of political action still hold radical possibility for justice and empowerment (Williams 2221). Reflecting on my lived experience being part of the protest, I am left empowered and hopeful that radical placemaking feminist mobilisation can reappropriate public space and push urban frontiers to obtain justice.
Furthermore, the media outrage at the defacement of public spaces is reflective of the normalization of violence against women in Mexico. As such, chants, art, fire, and glitter are strategic radical placemaking means that serve to visibilize and resist gendered violence. We will continue to protest and do justice for the women who are no longer with us, and for those of us who are still surviving and resisting.
RADICAL PLACEMAKING

Works Cited


The 1992 Los Angeles riots are often cited as a decisive moment which violently exposed the racial tensions that have existed for decades between Korean Americans and Black Americans. Initiated by public outrage against the excessive use of force by police against Rodney King and the shocking acquittal of four police officers involved in the incident, the event is often portrayed as a site of Black retaliation against the abuses committed by law enforcement. The supposed racial cleavage between the Korean and Black community in Los Angeles fueled a dangerous rhetoric which suggested that Asian communities were “abandoned” by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and caught in a conflict that only concerned Black and white Americans (Nopper 75). The lack of culpability for the Korean American community during the L.A. riots then did more to re-pathologize the Black American subject than it did to establish an Asian American identity. I will interpret the L.A. riots as an event within the genealogy of American race relations through reterritorialization and as an incident that recentres and strengthens the presence of the police state. Thus, I read this pivotal crisis as a definitive moment that foregrounds white supremacy while also establishing the complacent “constant foreigner” Asian American. By viewing events during and prior to the L.A. riots through two films – John Ridley’s Let It Fall (2017) and Dai Sil Kim-Gibson’s Sa-I-Gu (1993) – I consider how the Asian American subject is materialized and assembled in events of significant distress, and how racialized bodies are stratified at the behest of state-sanctioned white hegemony. In this piece, I interpret
formations and assemblages of race through the events of the L.A riots alongside process of migration, neoliberalism, and law enforcement to provide insight into how systems of state hegemony and capitalism have established Asian American identities, both as “bad” subjects and model minorities.

Locating Asian Americans within North American racial discourse requires an analysis of the model minority theory. The model minority theory suggests that there exists a higher achieving group than the population average. In North America, the model minority theory is commonly understood as a form of social stratification where Asian Americans create a mediating force between white Americans and Black Americans, though this is not to say that other ethnic minorities may not also be portrayed as model minorities depending on the demographic context. As such, Asian Americans are inscrutable to the white American but still understood as “good” subjects. Viet Tranh Nguyen suggests that the formation of the acceptable Asian subject is linked with Asian American subjects’ complacency with late capitalism, where a “commodified essentialism serves as the dominant form of Asian American identity” (150). In this reading of the model minority, Asian Americans become a scapegoat for the systemic oppressions that other minorities experience (Nguyen 146).

Operationally, the model minority archetype may account for and explain certain aspects of Asian American experiences, namely those which situate Asian Americans as the unassimilable Other in a racial triangulation within the American racial paradigm (Kim 108). Taking the model minority theory at face value then does not adequately interrogate the events and historical implications that have led to this particular kind of racialization. Nor does accepting the model minority theory consider the relationality between Asian and non-Asian minority subjects, or stratification within the umbrella term “Asian American.” Furthermore, the model minority myth does not address the power structures that validate white supremacy. Perhaps most importantly, accepting the model minority theory does not leave the Asian American as a culpable subject; Asian Americans are left as scapegoats to the condemnation of white subjects and other minorities, which dismisses the ways in which Asian communities, too, are guilty of upholding oppressive structures.

Considering the contexts that have cemented the “model minority” through a historical and social evaluation of race relations is necessary to complicate the ontological formation of the Asian American identity. Understanding identity formations through systems of social and political conditions suggest that
bodies manifest as “unstable entities that cannot be seamlessly disaggregated into identity formations” (Puar 56). In considering how the Asian American subject is reconfigured through events like the L.A. riots, the riots can be read as an instance of territorialization, where there exists a “variation to variation” in the nature of social constructions, such as race or other social identifying markers (Puar 58). Understanding the limits to accepting the model minority thesis, which often renders Asian Americans as a monolith and as an inscrutable demographic, we observe how cultural phenomena and social tension shape racial assemblages and the structures and processes that then materialize the Asian American.

Contemporary images of Asian Americans as the “unassimilable Other” have their roots in the Yellow Peril throughout the mid-19th century, where Chinese and Japanese labourers were often depicted in newspaper cartoons as “grasshoppers attacking Uncle Sam… trying to take jobs from whites” (Shim 388). Popular media and exclusionary legislation validated these notions of the alien coolie, which appealed to white American working and ruling class voters (ibid). Asian labourers were thus positioned as subhuman. This messaging also provided the foundations for understanding Asian migrants as fixated on economic success, and presented Asian migrants as threatening to take away jobs from white Americans. By stoking fears of the "coolie," the figure of the Asian American then simultaneously became an inculpable foreigner and inscrutable automaton whose labour was both threatening and vastly useful for the capitalist classes. Throughout the 20th century, the image of the Oriental began to change as the United States lifted anti-immigration laws and as notions of the American Dream began to rise in popularity. Thus, the inscrutable yet inculpable Asian American emerged from a combination of the narratives of entrepreneurship, and of reforms in state legislation, such as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which sought to repeal the ethnic/state-based quota immigration system that favoured immigrants of European-descent and promoted immigration based on skilled labour (Chuh, 7). After such a change in legislation, Asian Americans were seen as foreign, although they would face less scrutiny for their perceived alien-ness than they did in the 19th and early 20th century. As “economic” migrants, this change in perception of non-European immigrants was enmeshed in the nationalist ethos of the American Dream through liberal values and the presumption of universal upward social mobility. Despite the change in legislation, the experience of economic migrants and other immigrants from non-European countries would
greatly vary.

In Dai Sil Kim-Gibson’s film Sa-I-Gu, which focuses on Korean women’s accounts of the L.A. riots, most of the women interviewed are small-business owners, and many detail the challenges they faced when arriving in the United States. The film introduces Choon Ah-song, a business owner, who states that she moved to America for her children to have a better life; her son echoes his mother’s self-sacrificing decision, stating that she, “gave up absolutely everything just for [her children].” By having this family echo the American Dream, the film portrays the sympathetic Korean American immigrant who makes a modest income while working exceptionally hard in the process. Moreover, this sentiment cements notions of American exceptionalism, creating a less suspect Asian American foreigner by once again recentring the economic hegemony of the United States. Interviewees in Sa-I-Gu often depict an image of the Korean American scapegoat. For instance, one interviewee states, “we Koreans were sacrificial lambs,” in a conflict that she alleges only concerned Black and white Americans. By removing Korean Americans from any sort of race-based conflict, the Asian American subject is then positioned not only as inculpable, but is reasserted as placeless, not fitting with the racial paradigm of the American identity. Unable to fit clearly within a racially charged conflict, the assemblage of the Asian American denotes foreignness while still remaining complicit within narratives of capitalism, using these to validate their innocence.

As Nguyen contends, the ambivalent, complacent Asian American who appears to not be dependent on the state for their success creates a “bad subject” who opposes the hegemony of capitalism (150). Speaking to how assemblages of the Asian American subject inform the creation of the “bad subject” described by Nguyen does not allow for the innocence of the Asian American subject. That is, for there to be a “good,” inculpable subject, there must exist a “bad,” guilty subject. The seemingly harmless stereotypes of “good,” hard-working minorities do not exist in a vacuum, as this particular racialization acts as a foil to others. In this case, the innocence of the model minority is challenged as such so-called exceptionalism pathologizes those of other races. As Korean grocers, Chinese computer scientists, and other Asian subjects generally began to slowly reflect “family values,” and as these images of economic migrants were formed in tandem with the rise of neoliberalism in the United States in the 1980s, Black Americans were re-emphasized as deviant subjects within the American racial paradigm (Shim 397). To destabilize these understandings of how the “good” and “bad” subject are formed, we can observe the case
ASSEMBLAGES OF “BAD” SUBJECTS & MODEL MINORITIES

of Soon Ja Du and the murder of Latasha Harlins in the lead-up to the L.A. riots.

In Let It Fall, director John Ridley dedicates a significant portion of the film to suggest that Du’s lenient sentence, despite her being found guilty of voluntary manslaughter, helped to build tension leading up to the Rodney King trial. Du was sentenced to a mere 5 years probation, covering funeral costs, 400 hours of community service, and a $500 restitution (Time, 2007).

Lakeisha Combs, a witness to Harlins’ murder details the scene where Harlins is suspected of stealing in Du’s store. She recalls the incident and finishes her interview by stating, “for [Du] to come from Korea all the way over here to America [and murder Harlins]”. This statement, along with the rest of the Soon Ja Du trial exposes how material points of tension and human loss reterritorialize abstract notions of borders and nationhood. Firstly, this framing of the event reveals a perception of how Korean (or other Asian) immigrants are supposed to behave, one where they are indebted to the American state and thus must behave as ideal, assimilated citizens. That is, Harlins’ death at the hands of an immigrant is considered especially distressing, as the death is conducted by an individual who is expected to perform upstanding citizenry.

Second, the framing of Du’s trial suggests that Harlins’ murder was done in self-defense, justified to some extent due to the importance of protecting Du’s private property and business. Du’s lenient sentencing contributes to the creation of the respectable liberal American subject, more so than it does to establish any particular racialized or pathologized identities such as the “Black American,” “Asian American”, “foreigner” or the “deviant”. This illuminates how emphasizing difference does not challenge the nation-state nor the nationalist subject that abides by and benefits from exclusionary formations of the nation-state. The nation-bound subject, exemplified through the model minority, then fails to critique the role of the state in defining respectability, or the state’s role in instantiating barriers to acceptability. The framework of liberal acceptability that is embodied in the model minority myth is emblematic of the contradictory socio-political status occupied by so-called “model minorities.” Within the state paradigm, foreigners both ought to be grateful and indebted to the state and act as individuals who reproduce liberal values. As Kandice Chuh suggests, there is a particular inadequacy in operating within the “hegemonic national paradigm” to obtain justice and liberty through citizenship and state recognition (22).

The formations of both the “good” and “bad” subjects are unstable subject formations, and these categories have historically
shifted, for instance through neoliberal economic practices and processes of state-building during the rise of transpacific migration. Different global and political conditions thus produce different types of acceptable or “good” subjects. The cases of Rodney King and Latasha Harlins can both be recognized as significant events in nation-building, as these events establish respectable subjects through “inclusion”, while validating and upholding notions of capitalism and institutions such as the criminal justice system. As Min Hyoung Song suggests, the L.A. riots arose in the context of the rise of transpacific immigration, a shrinking white middle class, and increasingly visible poor Black communities – these tensions left America facing somewhat of an identity crisis (6). No longer could the United States continue to be “the best” simply because it had excelled militarily, and had high economic and quality of life indicators. In Sa-I-Gu, one of the interviewees admits her dismay by stating that she thought “America was perfect, since [the country] helped others abroad,” but the riots troubled her previous perceptions of a bountiful, opportunity-abundant America. Therefore, it is possible to locate the L.A. riots as a point of tension and outburst as a response and acknowledgement of a nation in stagnation and ineffective approaches to maintaining order and control through policing. That is to say, the L.A riots serve as an episode of creation as much as of destruction, and the riots do not exist as discrete events, but rather as part of a genealogy of subject formation of the American identity in the United States. The state’s instability then becomes a process of racial instability, and racial instability reflects the instability of the state. The “becoming” of the nation-bound model of domination and surveillance occurs when both the national guard and LAPD are effectively unable to quell the 5-day long riots. As police forces stand in as the image of the state, as the authority of the state is challenged in the state’s inability to control the unrest, the groups in opposition to the state are considered deviant. To that end, the police and state play a significant role in establishing “bad” subjects. “Bad” subjects are constructed as the Korean store owners that were unable to get support from the police department, seemingly undeserving of police protection. “Bad” subjects were established too when four police officers were acquitted during the Rodney King trial which reemphasized the power of the justice system and who it seeks to protect. Throughout Sa-I-Gu, the interviewees often ask “where were the police?”, but perhaps instead what should be interrogated is the limitations of both the police and state’s authority and ability to foster peace. Many of the Korean shopkeepers frame the L.A. riots as a failure of the police to contain the Black
population and prevent them from looting or destroying property. This not only reveals attitudes of paternalism towards the Black community by non-white populations, but also reveals a perception of the police and state as a means to corral and control communities that are perceived as inherently deviant and more prone to engage in violent activity. As such, the L.A. riots were a site of reterritorialization with respect to state power, as civil disobedience challenged state power, and nation-bound models of domination are disrupted. Thus, as much as the L.A. riots served to destabilize the notion of the “bad” subject, it also destabilized the idea of power centralized through traditional mediums of domination and civil peace-keeping.

Understanding and subsequently recognizing the establishment of “good” and “bad” subjects, especially as they are co-constructed with and through race and identity, allows us to destabilize essentialist notions of race and subjectivity. That is to say, identity exists in relationship to others and to institutions, and is reformulated from event-to-event as an ongoing phenomenological process. Through the L.A. riots we observe the role of immigration legislation, law enforcement, legal institutions, and neoliberalism in the discursive assemblage of racialized subjects. As Chuh suggests, it is then necessary to theorize subjectivity as “earlier models of subject formation [that] face revision to better correlate with this [current] globalized scene” (7). That is to say, the roles of migration, nation-bound models of subjectivity, and global capitalism should be considered in order to comprehend the formation of race and the subsequent creation of deviant bodies. How the body is materialized and (becomes) raced allows us to not take race for granted as essential to certain bodies. Through the social schema of de/reterritorialization, seemingly unrelated events such as the L.A. riots and forms of legislation like the Immigration and Nationality Act allow for the creation of a genealogy of race. The creation of “bad” and “good” subjects, then comes down to which events destabilize mainstream and commonly held narratives of racialized bodies in nation-building projects.
Works Cited


Good evening. My name is Kapwani Kiwanga. I'm a galactic anthropologist from the year 2278. I specialize in ancestral earth civilizations. I am pleased to be with you today to share some of my findings on my current research on forgotten Earth-Star complexes in terrestrial memory (Kiwanga).

In 1993, Mark Dery coined the term “Afrofuturism” to describe “speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and […] concerns in the context of 20th-century technoculture, and more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future” (Dery 735). Literature, artwork, and music in this category—unlike most African-American cultural production that looks to the past, prioritizing the construction of “countermemories” to reclaim a long history of culture destroyed by imperialism and slavery—looks to the future, turning its gaze to the proleptic, rather than the retrospective (van Veen 80). Authors, musicians, and artists who apply the Afrofuturist lens often make use of Sci-Fi tropes to create speculative, alternate worlds in which African/Black diasporic identity is the epicentre of technology and civilization. One artist that makes use of this genre is Paris-based artist Kapwani Kiwanga, whose academic background in anthropology and comparative religion informs her research-based art practice, blending speculative fiction with “institutional truth” (Steingo 3). More specifically, her Afrogalactica series engages in what Kodwo Eshun calls “chronopolitics”—“the [intervention] in the production of collective memory, and the “political structuration of time” (Eshun 292). Another more commonly cited instance of institutional criticism is Fred Wilson’s Mining the Museum. By taking the existing artifacts
found in the Maryland Historical Society and re-framing them as an act of curatorial invention, he reorients the predominantly white cultural memory, bending the narrative to openly display instances of racial violence and slavery. This curatorial project is commonly cited as one of the most incisive instances of using an internal position within a institutional space—in this case, a museum—to deconstruct racist narratives (Foster et. al). By examining the chronopolitics in Kiwanga’s Afrogalactica and using Wilson’s Mining the Museum as a comparison, I hope to explore the ways in which Kiwanga “[reorients] the intercultural vectors of Black Atlantic temporality” to both the future and the past (292).

Afrogalactica is an ongoing trilogy of lecture-style performance pieces that first originated in 2011 with its first part, Afrogalactica, Part I: A Short History of the Future. Each performance, lasting around 40 minutes long, mimics the conventions of the academic lecture, often taking place in real university lecture halls. Kiwanga poses as an anthropologist from the future, flipping through a slideshow of pictures while she recounts the long history of African/Interstellar connection. Drawing together “histories and memories of anti-colonial struggle,” she uses conference-style lectures, academic articles, and documentary style videos to imagine potential speculative futures (Bould 2). As the artist specifically prohibits video recordings of her work, I will be relying on a 5-minute excerpt of A Brief History of the Future found on her Vimeo page, an excerpt of her script, photos graciously sent to me from the Illingworth Kerr Gallery at AUArts, and Gavin Steingo’s written accounts of Afrogalactica Part III: Deep Space Scrolls.

In A Short History of the Future, Kiwanga stands at a podium or sits at a table on stage, reading through notes on a laptop, clicking through seemingly unrelated images on her PowerPoint slideshow. Wearing a plain orange Star Trek-esque top and her hair sculpted into a pompadour, she recites the history of the United States of Africa and the story of the Immamou crew. According to Kiwanga, the United States of Africa was first established on December 8, 2058 to honour the one hundredth anniversary of the All-African People’s Congress in Accra, 1958 (Kiwanga). After developing its own Space Agency, 3000 Afronauts aboard a huge mothership called the Black Star were launched into outer space to live there permanently. Six months into the voyage, 200 of those Afronauts who were on board the Immamou on a routine mission suddenly lost all contact with the mothership (Kiwanga 1:08). This event, known as the “Great Separation,” was the event that marked the loss of all technological and cultural knowledge stored in the Black Star’s library (1:56). The Immamou crew at-
tempted to record what each of them could remember, even though it was impossible to record a detailed, coherent, or systematic record of their civilization and history (2:51). While she recites the tale, she flips through a variety of images including: screenshots of 2001: A Space Odyssey, photos of Sun Ra and his Solar Arkestra, Star Trek’s Lieutenant Uhara, the paperback covers of Samuel R. Delany’s The Ballad of Beta-2 and Octavia E. Butler’s Wild Seed, as well as 18th century diagrams of slave ships, and images of pre-colonial African artifacts. The images, who have no written labels or any surrounding context, are seemingly haphazardly placed in a non-chronological order. The images, which seem to be disconnected from her script, suddenly make sense when she describes the loss of the great archive aboard the Black Star. One could make the conclusion that these bits and pieces of African-American culture spanning the last couple of centuries are actually what the Immamou crew managed to salvage from their memory, albeit fragmented and out of order. The “Great Separation,” similar to the notion of the slave trade that fragmented Black diasporic cultural memory across the Atlantic, ruptured the Immamou crew and its descendants’ notion of time. In her script, she reads: “Realising that they are cut off from the technological and cultural knowledge stored in the Black Star’s vast library, they recorded what each of them could remember. […] That is, they institute an archive” (3:03). Kiwanga highlights the importance of an archive in preserving cultural memory by directly addressing it in her lecture, as well as by presenting herself as an anthropologist from the future whose research is focused on re-assembling a historical narrative based on a disjointed, incomplete archive due to a catastrophe.

In the article, “Kapwani Kiwanga’s Alien Speculations,” Gavin Steingo argues that Kiwanga’s art practice allows the viewer “the possibility of thinking about Afro-futurism outside the rubric of allegory” (12). She states that Kiwanga’s work offers a “window into what Afro-futurism might look like if we think about it in terms of a speculative exploration of the unknown—[…] rather than a metaphor” (12). With this, Steingo claims that Kiwanga’s work functions perfectly well as a narrative outside of the scope of a criticism/engagement with present-day futuristic imaginings, acting only as an example of institutional criticism. However, her deliberate use of recognizable Afrofuturist icons from the present day and placing them in the “past” is an invitation to analyze her subversion of temporality in her work.

Kiwanga’s work engages with Kodwo Eshun’s observations on chronopolitics as she participates in the revisioning of the past
in order to change the present moment, from which all futures are imagined. In Eshun’s fundamental 2003 essay, “Further Considerations on Afrofuturism,” he states that chronopolitics intervenes in the production of collective memory—institutional, pedagogical, epistemic and museological histories, oral traditions and myths—as well as in the schematic projections of the future (qtd. in van Veen 80). Although he separates the methods of chronopolitic intervention into a past/future dichotomy, both are accomplished by Kiwanga’s work. By placing herself in a retrospective position, she looks back at the viewer’s present from a fictional speculative future.

To illustrate this point, I will examine Fred Wilson’s Mining the Museum, another work of institutional criticism that chronopolitically engages the archive by using the language of the museum. However, unlike Kiwanga, he engages only in the direction of the past, producing a “countermemory” in order to intervene in a whitewashed collective memory built from the collection of the Maryland Historical Society (Corrin 11). In 1992, as an act of curatorial intervention, Fred Wilson re-arranged a whole floor of the existing historical museum, using objects and artifacts that were already in the collection, juxtaposing them in unconventional ways in order to highlight the exclusion of, and violence against Black and Indigenous voices (11). In a museum dedicated to preserving the history of Maryland and its colonial legacy, objects such as Ku Klux Klan hoods and iron shackles were displayed in plain view, next to antique silverware, strollers, and other household objects found in upper-class colonial homes (11). Although Fred Wilson’s curatorial intervention participates in the lineage of Afrofuturist works by deconstructing the collective memory, he draws only from the past, re-shaping the archive to reflect an Afrocentric subjectivity. As Eshun states, “creating temporal complications and anachronistic episodes that disturb the linear time of process, Afrofuturism adjusts the temporal logics that condemned black subjects to prehistory” (Eshun 297) thereby disassembling manufactured histories that reinforce ethnocentrist narratives (van Veen 80). This act of disassembling the past “releases the trajectories of an unpredictable futurity,” drawing Eshun’s “vector of Black Atlantic temporality” towards the future (Eshun 297).

Afrogalactica, like Mining the Museum, participates in a retrospective exercise, contemplating the use of institutional archives that create an ethnocentric narrative of the past. While Wilson uses the institutional framework of the historical museum and its collection, Kiwanga uses the institutional framework of “the scholar,” using lectures and academic articles to imagine a speculative
future. Kiwanga’s article, “Comprehensive Methodology in Ancestral Earth-Star Complexes: Lessons from Vela-Zimbabwe,” a purposefully wordy article published in Manifesta journal, cites both real and fictional sources as footnotes, sometimes using existing information from the official National Museums and Monuments from Zimbabwe site, while also citing articles from the 183rd issue of the Interstellar Archaeology Journal (Kiwanga 57). Much like “autodidact historians like Sun Ra and George G. M. James of Stolen Legacy,” Kiwanga uses bits and pieces of historical information to construct a “revisionist past” (van veen 80). However, Kiwanga goes beyond simply creating an alternative future, as she is writing from the speculative future itself, looking back at our present. By imagining a future where institutions themselves are Afrocentric, Kiwanga solidifies both the “past-oriented vector” that re-interprets historical cultural memory, and the “future-oriented vector” that imagines Africa as the epicentre of technological advancement (Eshun 297).

Kiwanga’s artwork, acting simultaneously as a work of speculative fiction and a site of futuristic imagining, elevates its power by inserting itself into existing institutional frameworks upon their completion. In an interview, the artist writes: “The conference is an apparatus of authoritative knowledge production. By appropriating the conference to an Afro-futurist end, I am at once “queering” this institutional device and proposing alternative visions of collective pasts, speculative futures, and the under-considered elements of the present” (Steingo 9). In both Kiwanga’s and Wilson’s case, they each use their respective artistic mediums in order to act as historiographers, using an internal position within the institution to appropriate it from the inside out. They both bend the white-dominated narrative inherently found in the institution to transform it to a space where racial discrimination can be openly discussed, and criticized. To conclude, while the utopian idea of having an Afrocentric interstellar society is unlikely to be complete in 2058, Kiwanga’s work offers the potential to engage in a cognitive shift and allow oneself to imagine infinite Afrocentric possibilities.
Works Cited


BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

A GENDERED DIAGNOSIS

By Em Mittertreiner

Throughout history, from Ancient Egypt’s first mention of hysteria in 1900 BC to the 17th century Salem Witch Trials, institutional structures have pathologized the strategies used by marginalized individuals to navigate systemic oppression and abuse (Shaw and Proctor 485). While the western canon often presents classifications of this nature as objective and unbiased, feminist scholars in Science and Technology Studies (STS) have unveiled how power and privilege shape the production of all scientific knowledges, including psychopathology (Tsou et al. 2). These social processes are vividly demonstrated by the American Psychiatric Association’s “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5” (DSM-V). In North America, many practitioners consider this medical handbook to be “the bible of modern psychiatry” (Shnittker 12), but skeptics of the DSM-V contest its alleged ability to “split scientific evidence from all the other issues that psychiatric disorders intersect with” (17). Feminist STS scholars are especially critical of diagnoses that exhibit markedly gendered prevalence rates and criteria. Boasting a prevalence rate three times higher for women than men, borderline personality disorder (BPD) may be the most notorious diagnosis of all (McDonald et al. 86). The DSM-V describes BPD as “a pervasive pattern of instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image and affects, and marked impulsivity”, often characterized by “historically ‘feminine’ predispositions such as emotionality, dependency, and instability” (Lester 71). Through assessing the available North American literature, I will examine how state institutions have formulated BPD’s diagnostic criteria to intentionally ostracize those who express distress in ways that do not conform to gender norms. I will use the gendered symptomatology of borderline personality disorder to explore the state’s motives for regulating emotional expression, the contextual sig-
nificance of locating the diagnosis in patriarchal society, and the resulting gendered barriers to healthcare.

While still a relatively unacknowledged sentiment within the medical community, the last few decades have seen emerging bodies of STS, feminist, and social justice scholarship that highlight the socially constructed nature of psychiatry. The idealization of the “scientific method” renders invisible the social and cultural assumptions that researchers’ empirical findings are dependent upon (Haraway 576). In her theory of situated knowledges, Donna Haraway uncovers the hidden “axes of domination” from which all knowledges originate (585). This refutes the pervasive belief that scientific disciplines are built upon universal, impartial, and natural truths, instead acknowledging the “powerful but disembodied knower[s]” who promulgate dominant societal paradigms according to their vested “interest in reproducing the status quo” (Thompson 2). This body of feminist work suggests that ostracization is an intended outcome, rather than an unfortunate byproduct, of the hegemonic processes that classify certain individuals as disordered.

Feminist critiques of psychiatry often assert that the so-called “scientifically determined” diagnostic criteria of BPD have been formulated to discourage behaviors that are not conducive to gendered notions of capitalist production and reproduction (Shaw and Proctor 485). Here ensues a dissonance between clinical psychology and feminist theory: the former sees the BPD diagnosis as demonstrating a “dysfunction of personality” while the latter considers it a “mechanism of social regulation” (Lester 74). For example, femme-identified persons are often expected to demonstrate behaviors that are conducive to the monogamous, nuclear family model (Lester 73). When feminine subjects embody traits like sexual promiscuity or hotheadedness, it demonstrates incongruence with gendered norms and can lead to correctional measures. Yet, the same actions are “socially normalized if not valorized” when the actor occupies a masculine role in society (71). These norms construct explanatory models “through which people can narrate their experiences and make sense of their behaviors” (72), and those who do not fit into these models are portrayed as deviant or even monstrous (Lajoie 547). Therefore, the BPD diagnosis is not simply an objective description of behavior (Schnittker 179); it is a disciplinary label that prescribes further uncertainty and ostracization upon those who cannot be categorized within the dichotomies of the white, capitalist patriarchy (McDonald et al. 86).

This pathological/sociocultural dialectic brings us to the first of two frequent critiques of BPD. Gendered power relations have created institutional biases within psychiatry that see irra-
tionality and femininity as equally undesirable (Shaw and Proctor 485). Society’s patriarcal conditions disproportionately force femme-identified people into distressing situations, and the emotions and behaviors adopted to cope with these life events are then interpreted as disorderly. A feedback loop emerges, where BPD diagnostic criteria disproportionately target behaviors associated with femininity, and femininity subsequently is equated with irrationality. For example, BPD criteria such as self-mutilation and “frantic efforts to avoid abandonment” are used as evidence of irrationality (APA), yet these are also effective methods of internalizing feelings of anger in order to navigate complex and unstable social circumstances (Roth and Fonagy 198). Self-mutilation is discouraged by the state because of “assumptions about normal behaviour that relate to productivity, unity, moderation and rationality”, again creating a link that ties irrationality and femininity to BPD (Crowe 1). Given the state’s vested interest in the regulation of productivity, one can see why self-mutilation is labelled as “self-damaging impulsive behaviour” while more productive forms of self-harm are endorsed, such as athletes risking their physical well being or office workers forgoing sleep for the success of their companies (Lajoie 553). These self-sacrificial coping mechanisms are seen as marks of rationality and independence only when performed within the capitalist paradigm for reasons of increased productivity and economic gain. Marginalized individuals such as migrant workers and unpaid caregivers are often excluded from the benefits of this paradigm despite their forced participation in capitalism. They may pursue coping mechanisms like self-mutilation, where the end goal is often to instill a sense of control rather than to increase productivity. Increased feelings of control are especially protective when an individual is denied agency in other areas (Shaw and Proctor 486). Therefore, the conditions created by the state’s need for economic growth are both the cause of BPD symptoms and the reason they are seen as symptoms at all. The state’s interests in maintaining productive domestic and occupational spheres are well-served by the pathologization of the above-mentioned coping mechanisms (Shaw and Proctor 487). The existence of BPD implies that there are objectively correct ways to express emotion, and that those diagnosed with the disorder are failing to do so. The institutional biopower of the DSM-V blinds the public to the state’s role in generating this gendered emotional burden, creating prescriptive and damaging diagnoses that appear to be essential, biological truths (Lester 75). By attributing BPD to “intra-psychic biological forces”, clinical psychologists discount the correlation between BPD-related behaviors and experiences
of marginalization, blaming individual personalities rather than holding society accountable to systemic abuse (Shaw and Proctor 488). Lester argues that for women with past experiences of trauma, BPD symptoms are learned tactics that “indicate enormous resilience, adaptation, creativity, and a struggle to survive environments that have been invalidating, abusive, or erasing” (72). Many feminist critiques of BPD suggest that psychiatry mistakenly pathologizes responses to gendered abuse as abnormal, when in fact anyone who is required to adapt to and overcome chronic interpersonal trauma is likely to exhibit these so-called disordered symptoms of BPD (Becker 423).

By pathologizing “experiences that could be regarded as responses to life events”, the DSM-V commits the fundamental attribution error (Crowe 1). In particular, by classifying its patients as “ill-fitted for the world”, the BPD diagnosis attributes the emotional consequences of abuse to the survivor rather than the situation (Lajoie 559). However, Crowe’s critique of the DSM-V’s strong jurisdiction over what is considered normal suggests that society’s unquestioning acceptance of patriarchal violence is the real problem here, rather than “faulty individual functioning” (Crowe 1). In fact, scholars argue that under abusive conditions, “excessive sensitivity to environmental circumstances” can be protective (Lajoie 553); it can help one resist invisibility, take on roles and identities as needed, and locate safe allies. Even self-harm can serve as a reclamation of autonomy over one’s body, or as a necessary cry for help. However, once removed from the threat, these attributes are deemed “‘frantic’ or ‘inappropriate’ or ‘manipulative,’ or ‘paranoid’” (Lester 75). Through this lens, the behaviours are essentialized as chronic and static personality traits rather than acute, learned psychological responses. The subject is rendered incurable and defective.

Such an absolute conclusion leads many mental health practitioners to “believe that the damage done to the borderline’s sense of self is irreparable” (Miller 169). Considering society’s reliance on the DSM-V to determine what is normal, public perception of an individual with BPD can be heavily consequential, leading to severe implications for those who seek medical care. As “mental health practitioners are more likely to have negative reactions to supposedly borderline clients than any other group”, it is common for clinicians to decline potential clients who present with BPD traits (Miller 162). Femme-identified and gender nonconforming individuals already face disproportionate barriers when accessing care, and an experiment by Lewis and Appleby confirmed that psychiatrists are more likely to declare these patients “likely to annoy”
and “not deserving NHS resources” when primed with a personality disorder diagnosis (47). Experiencing rejection from care may only be “reinforcing their suspicions that other people and the world are uncaring”, and consequently may trigger survival skills such as attempts to avoid the abandonment or disapproval of others through manipulation. Tossed from institution to institution, La- joie describes her diagnosis of BPD as eliciting “disorientation”: a feeling of being lost, out of place, and divorced from any sense of belonging (555). By denying those with BPD appropriate care, BPD becomes a biopolitical diagnosis which allows the state to dictate not only which patients are deserving of recovery, but whether patients are embraced or estranged from society. Cisnormativity collides with capitalist values to make BPD “the most pejorative of all personality labels”, often given to the “difficult, angry female client certain to give the therapist countertransferential headaches” (Becker 423). In the media, BPD is often known as “crazy bitch syndrome”, a crass coming-together of ableism and misogyny that paints femininity as overly emotional, unreasonable, and hysterical (Lajoie 551). This is also reminiscent of the historical diagnosis of hysteria, which has a large overlap in symptomatology with BPD criteria (551). All of these labels are barriers which have continually made it more difficult for marginalized individuals to access appropriate mental health care during vulnerable times of crisis.

To conclude, borderline personality disorder has been constructed using gendered symptomatology in a way that serves the state’s goals of monitoring production and reproduction. Through the stigmatization of behaviours that emerge in response to patriarchal and abusive conditions, the diagnosis of borderline personality disorder regulates the ways in which individuals are permitted to express themselves. This ensures that community members conduct themselves in a manner fit for society’s ideal, heterosexual, monogamous, and patriarchal family systems. Overall, the diagnosis of borderline personality disorder is often more harmful than helpful to the patients whom it is bestowed upon. We must acknowledge the power dynamics inherent within our current methods of psychopathological classification, and commit to creating systems that leave nobody behind. Like Lewis and Appleby who state that BPD “has no justification and should be abandoned” (47), I believe that the diagnosis only serves to exacerbate suffering and legitimize oppressive norms and expectations.
Works Cited


REIMAGINING FUTURES FROM A PLACE OF QUEER INDIGNEOUS LIMBO

By Sage Broomfield

I am a rebel and a renegade shapeshifter changing my skin every hour and walking between the red earth and the blue sky a violent integration of two worlds yet belonging to neither

Amy Malbeuf
Kayas-ago (2014)

Liminality, the state of existence in between definite categories, is the foundation of both queer and Indigenous identity. In another work from Kayas-ago, the series from which the opening quote is taken, Cree artist Amy Malbeuf, states: a ‘Cree person/ is not the opposite/of a European person any more than/a man is the opposite of a woman’ (2014). Living in a queer Indigenous body requires the continued rejection and unlearning of colonial binaries that define identity, sexuality, and gender by difference. These heternormative colonial binaries not only police the present but also work to construct a future void of queer indigenous bodies. To combat these processes, the-inbetweeness of queer indigenous identity holds a generative power one that identifies practices of radical and intimate queerness as worlding and therefore allow for the embrace of potentiality for the self, partnerships and within communities.
These generative processes can be intimate, communal and temporally expansive. The term world has been conceptualized in queer and Indigenous writing as referring to both the external world and the internal world of one’s body. Crucially, the process of worlding is expanded to refer to the creation of new or re-imagined worlds. These worlds created by queer folk become ‘a version of reality that naturalizes cultural logics such as capitalism and heteronormativity,’(Muñoz, 2009). This paper seeks to answer the following: How might processes of worlding combat the fragmenting impacts of colonialism on queer Indigenous bodies to create feelings of wholeness?

In this paper I will discuss the processes of worlding as interpreted by queer and Indigenous theorists and writers with an emphasis on potentiality and the generation of ‘subversive countercultures’(Nixon, 2018). Additionally, I will discuss the ways queer love transcends intimate relationships and engages with historical time-scapes to reify inclusive futures. This analysis will also incorporate my own lived experience.

Positionality

I approach this conversation as a queer and non-status nehiyaw iskwew. My cultural practices exist in the sweet grass fields of Treaty 8 Territory. My father, my late Kokum and much of my paternal family belong to the Sawridge Cree First Nation. However, I grew up as an uninvited guest on Coast Salish territory on Vancouver Island, with my English Irish Mother. For myself, the liminality of racial ambiguity fed a suffocating need for certainty. Yet, my indigeneity has through familial relationships, cut across provincial barriers and, in the case of my late Kokum, temporal boundaries. My Indian Status is constrained by blood percentages and colonial law. Yet, my Cree-cheeks still claim me.

The second wave of dissonance came when I felt the first prickles of queer desire. I thought the most daunting part of ‘coming out’ would be the first step out of the closet. However, upon uttering the words ‘I think I might be gay’, I was quickly overwhelmed with a new set of labels and expectations. These constructs were limiting, not only for my body and identity but also in the ways I was able to imagine my future. As I continue to discover how I relate to my own queerness, the trajectory/time-frame that I had subscribed
to, together with its expectations and checkpoints, becomes less relevant. The process of reckoning both queerness and Indigeneity continues to be a process of welcoming and reimagining the uncertainty the external world presents me with.

**Intimacy and Worlding**

The generative power of worlding is compelled by a hunger to feel whole: ‘the earth hasn’t held all of me for quite some time now and I am lonely in a way that doesn’t hurt anymore.’ (Belcourt, 2017) This is a feeling explored in Cree poet Billy-Ray Belcourt’s work This Wound is a World (2017), as well as Oji-Cree poet in Joshua Whitehead’s Full Metal Indigiqueer (2018). Indigenous desire has been disfigured by colonialism to the point where ‘sometimes bodies don’t always feel like bodies but wounds’ (Belcourt, 2017). Queer Indigenous bodies are identified/defined by their deficiency: ‘Why is my ethnicity always lacking proof?/Are two brown boys in love not enough?’ (Whitehead, 2018).

Coloured skin both identifies and polices Indigenous bodies. By being both and neither I was able to camouflage. I learned a new indicator when I heard a friend describe another Indigenous person as not being ‘built like a settler’. I had long felt that my body was ‘too much and not enough’ (Belcourt, 2017). That feeling was in part a reaction to being perpetually othered; the ambiguous colouring of my skin privileges me but Indigenous bodies are still made of undesirable bones.

Worlding through intimacy is a process of disentangling the self from these feelings of absence: ‘love and despair can fill out a body/ together and we call it indian’ (Belcourt, 2017). There is generative power in desiring what the world would deny you. Intimacy becomes an exercise in vulnerability, in ‘having nothing & wanting everything’ (Whitehead, 2018). Worlding can be a form of escapism when ‘sex is the only thing that can stop/the hurt for a little while’ (Belcourt, 2017). In this case wanting is a product of deprivation so that wholeness is the presence of another body. Embracing the vulnerability of sexual, romantic or other forms of desire is ‘[running] off the edge of the world/and into another ’ (Belcourt, 2017). In this way, the collapse of two fragmented worlds becomes a generative process, whereby the same worlds are rebuilt, more whole than they began. What is essential is that worlding in any form can be an intense reaffirmation of queer

Kin, Community and Place

The integrity of a connection to ancestral lands cannot be understated, but place as the penultimate source of culture must be interrogated. First, because place is not immune to the effects of colonialism; a community, like a body, may hold intergenerational trauma. In their chapter Queerness; Cree, Saulteaux and Métis writer Lindsey Nixon remembers, “the time an elder refused to hug me in ceremony after I told them I was 2s” (2018). This reflection echoes Belcourt’s words: ‘an elder told me to be a man and to/ decolonize in the same breath.’ (2017) Both authors identify the ways that queerness has been vilified in Indigenous communities through the imposition of settler-colonial, Christian notions of gender and sexuality. Second, we must expand our understanding of Indigeneity as urbanization continues to bring our kin, many of them queer and 2Spirit, into cities. Generating queer Indigenous community in urban spaces is discussed by Nixon, when they recount moving to Edmonton, Alberta from their reservation; “We created our families into being out of nothing. Us queers brought with us to the city our broken bones, our tired blood, our own secret traumas, and we were met with love. Queer love.” (2018).

I seek to echo Nixon when I articulate that it was in Vancouver, a city I had no prior cultural connection to, I found my queer Indigenous community. In Warehouse dancefloors and in sound booths in my university’s Radio station, I built my community. During the weeks of blockades in solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en peoples held in the city, country and continent, it was this community I leaned on. As queer Indigenous kin we sang the women’s warrior song, loudly in the centre of an intersection; we Round Danced together, our feet numb despite wearing two pairs of socks; and in the quieter moments we embraced each other gently and held on. ‘As queer kin we gifted each other the ability to name desires I had been told I wasn’t worthy of, and let me believe I’m worthy of love, worthy to take up space.’ (Nixon, 2018). My queer indigenous community claimed each other’s fragments and made moments into worlds.
Reimagining Futures

Reimagining futures that are ‘otherworldly’ allows Queer-Indigenous narratives to be temporally expansive and, as a result, strengthened in the present. This is a necessary process because, as Lou Cornum details, ‘in the colonial imaginary, indigenous life is not only separate from the present time but also out of place in the future’ (2015). History, when conceptualized as fluid, allows for one’s narratives to coalesce; for example, my body in a Wet’suwet’en blockade in East Vancouver in the year 2020 stood in relation to my late Kookum’s body that stood in a 1982 logging protest in the Stein Valley Nlaka’pamux Heritage Park. This kind of relational resurgence may be carried into classrooms, into conversations and into the actions of said body at any present moment. Indigenous identity is so often identified by a violent colonial past; it is therefore essential to engage with the impossibilities of both history and the future in order to rectify either.

Dreaming of new worlds is also a powerful form of worlding, wherein historical and futuristic narratives brought together can create a new way of interacting with the present world. Importantly, so much of the generative power of worlding is in the existence of black, brown and othered bodies. Queer Indigenous Futurities, the efforts to imagine and actualize a future wherein Indigeneity is not only present but celebrated. These imagings stand in relation to queer and racialized thinkers such as Cuban American academic, José Esteban Muñoz and intellectual movements such as Afrofuturism. Efforts made to centre these bodies in alternative futures have created entirely new genres. Indigenous futurism as a genre hopes to redefine Western conceptions of technology and progress (Cornum, 2015). This is most often done through creative works such as The 6th World, a short film that retells the Diné creation story aboard a spaceship, by director Nanobah Becker (2013); or Zainab Amadahy’s 1992 novel, The Moons of Palmares, which deals with themes of Black slavery as well as Indigeneity, a narrative she is comfortable in as she identifies as having mixed black, Cherokee and European ancestry. These works that centre Indigenous and racialized narratives in extraterrestrial futures not only create inclusive media we get to enjoy. These works show how ‘Indigenous and other oppressed people’ can relate to each other outside of and despite the colonial gaze’(Cornum, 2015).

In his seminal work Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer
Futurity, Muñoz critiques the images of Utopia presented in contemporary political thought often attributed to the Frankfurt School. Muñoz asserts that queerness is a rejection of the present and an insistence on potentiality because without these alternative ways of imagining, ‘the only futurity promised is that of reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality, the spectacle of the state refurbishing its ranks through overt and subsidized acts of reproduction.’ (2009). By expanding Western definitions of the future there are also implications on relationship building and understandings of intimacy. Worlding is at its most generative when all of these thinkers are in relation to each other. When this is the case, words like mother or partner, the seemingly clear definitions and timelines ascribed to these words, that seem to exist somewhere in the future begin to blur into multicoloured uncertainty.

Conclusion

The generative power of Indigenous queerness exhibited through processes of worlding is able to counter manifestations of colonial pain and feelings of grief for one’s own body by catalyzing new worlds into being. Queer Indigenous existence is one that means to ‘repeatedly bear witness to worlds being destroyed, over and over again’ (Belcourt, 2017); it is also an existence that necessitates repeated work to rebuild, construct, and reimagine worlds. This work is never-ending; it is the constant interrogation of the spaces and interactions we find ourselves in, critiquing, evaluating and morphing to a world that doesn’t feel right. But it is also existing in the space between a first queer kiss; it is fumbling through friendships that turn to relationships and then back again; and it is dancing in a warehouse where eye-contact, held just long enough, is a call to a new world. My world is one that exists in a place of liminality, but one that allows me to exist in my bedroom that smells faintly of sage smoke, and in the Longhouse on my university campus with my queer Indigenous kin, and with my chosen family learning to bead on my living room floor. Decolonization is a revolution, but ‘to revolt is not merely to attack the fucked-up, to point to the problems, but to dream up worlds in which those problems cannot exist’ (Belcourt, 2016). My world is one in which visions of futures not yet actualized interact with a past I inherited and a present I interrogate. Indigenous and specifically queer Indigenous bodies must actively engage with past and future or risk accepting a
present that was constructed around us but not for us.
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